

Private firms' adaptation to climate change within the context of developing countries: A pitch

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Abstract: This short paper applies the pitch template developed by Faff (2015b), for a proposed strategy research topic that investigates private power and electricity firm's adaptation to climate change within the context of a developing country. I begin by giving a brief background to writing the pitch. I then give a brief commentary on my pitch, followed by a few key personal reflections on the pitch exercise itself.

Keywords: Climate Change; Organisational Adaptation; Pitching research; Qualitative research idea; Doctoral students

JEL codes: M10; L21; L25; L94

1. Introduction

This letter discusses the application of the pitch template developed by Faff (2015b) to a strategy research topic. I am currently studying full time towards a PhD, at the University of Queensland. I was initially attracted to the idea of a pitch template while studying the course of 'Research Process in Business' taught by Robert Faff--the 'pitch doctor' himself. From my presentation of pitching research topic, I was able to incorporate feedback and develop the idea into a publication. In the context of Section 4.3 of Faff (2015b), my pitch is 'reverse engineered',

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classified, as 'ex post' and 'owned'. The pitch discussed in this letter completed in November 2015. Faff's (2015b) pitching template made a very important contribution by providing a systematic approach to organise, plan and structure the research ideas. However, the current pitching template design is primarily focuses on quantitative research method, thus constraining its applicability for qualitative research. Using the example of my PhD research topic, I discuss how standard pitching research template developed by (Faff, 2015b), can be applied to a qualitative research study. I expect that the 'adaptive use' of IDioTs guide for pitching a qualitative research topic will supplement the current pitching research template. It will also help further promote the use of the current pitching template to benefit pitching research ideas in circumstances unique to studies using qualitative, mixed, or sequential research design (Faff, 2015a: 323).

The remainder of this pitch letter is organised as follows. Section 'application of the pitch template' contains a brief commentary on the completed pitch. Section 'Using Faff (2015b) pitching research template for qualitative study—a personal reflection' offers personal thoughts on the exercise of completing the pitch for qualitative study and some suggestions whilst section 'Conclusion' concludes.

2. Application of pitching research template

Table 1 shows the completed pitch template for the 'organisational adaptation' topic in strategy research with particular focus on private firms' adaptation to climate change within the context of a developing country. This pitch relates to my PhD study, which investigates the research question (Item B), "which are the possible direct or indirect impacts of climate change on business activities that private power and electricity firms in developing country/Pakistan should adapt to? How will adaptation to climate change impact business performance?" Three key papers (Item C) identified are (Linnenluecke *et al.*, 2013; Tashman *et al.*, 2015; Busch, 2011). Although, the selected key papers are a small sample but they are relatively recent and help me "focus [my] attention on what is currently 'known' and what is still unknown [about organisational adaptation to climate change]" (Faff, 2015a: 325). Motivation and puzzle (Item D). The motivation of my study originates from ever increasing research evidence that the climate change is one of our most urgent challenges, and will have far more adverse effects on developing countries. To survive and prosper, businesses must address the strategically important issue of climate change adaptation (Linnenluecke *et al.*, 2012). How firms should adapt to the climate-induced changes in business environment is the puzzle. While it appears imperative for private power and electricity firms to adapt to the direct and indirect impacts of climate change, unique conditions specific to the context of a developing country – Pakistan, impose significant constraints on their engagement in climate change adaptation.

The Idea (item E) describes the core of my research and the underlying assumptions. The idea is to use a qualitative case study approach: to see if direct observations, interviewing organisational and institutional actors, and reviewing policy documents help understanding the strategic implications of climate-induced changes in the external business environment. Item (F) of the completed pitch template addresses many dimensions of the data: country settings, unit of Analysis, sampling, and data sources. Item (G) of the completed pitch template comments on the anticipated toolkit. In case of the pitching research idea discussed in this letter, I've created an 'add on' to the 'toolkit' of Faff's (2015b) IDioTs guide. This helps demonstrate that pitching a research idea based on qualitative research ensure that proper triangulation is attained. To show how this will be done I propose to use a table that shows the different groups of participants that will be interviewed (e.g. different organizational levels, stakeholders from regulators and government and others) and link this to the overall study objectives and types of questions that will be asked of each group. This table also reflects other sources of data to show how they will inform the research questions.

What's new? Item (H) in the completed pitch claims that it is still fairly novel to view the firm as vulnerable to climate change impacts, instead of responsible for global warming. This study draws in new insights from the literature on organisational adaptation and combines the resource-based view of the firm and the institutional theory to expand our understanding of the interdependencies among institutional requirements, organisational resources and capabilities; and how these combine to impact private power and electricity firm's strategies for climate change adaptation within the context of a developing country. So What? Item (I) in the completed pitch contends that there has been little scholarly attention given to developing frameworks for understanding organisational adaptation to the impact of climate change in vulnerable sectors in developing economies. Therefore, further research on climate change adaptation in the context of the developing country is needed—where the antecedents and outcomes of private sector engagement in climate change adaptation are difficult to investigate and complex to decipher.

In the completed pitch of Table 1, the bottom line, primary source of the contribution is claimed to be a simple idea that an integrated resource-based view and institutional theory perspective (helps) resolve(s) a big puzzle that's organisational adaptation to climate change. If successful, this research will go a long way to 'reconciling' existing concepts guided by rules that embody contrasting rationale based on (economic) and normative (institutional) logic underpinning organisational adaptation to the changes in external business environment.

3. Using Faff (2015b) pitching research template for qualitative study - a personal reflection

Faff's (2015b) pitching research template provides a 'toolbox' to assist early career researchers in general, and particularly doctoral students to clarify their thinking around a broad topic with the aim of isolating a focused and unique research topic.

3.1 Using 'Cocktail glass'

As depicted in Figure 1, I found Faff's (2015a: 326) 'cocktail glass' analogy helpful in filtering the literature review and for theoretical framing of the study. For instance among three papers identified for this pitch, the most important papers are Linnenluecke *et al.* (2013) and Tashman *et al.* (2015) because the former paper helps positioning the study of climate change adaptation in the business and management field, while the latter provides an update on relevant literature about corporate adaptation to climate change.

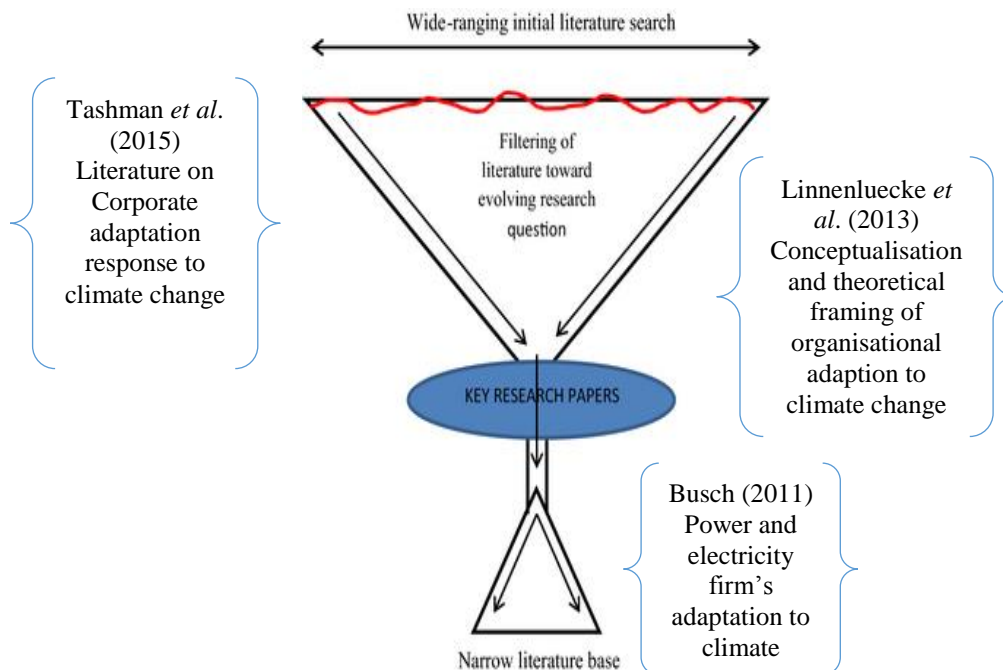


Figure 1. The cocktail glass approach to filtering the literature/theoretical framing of the study
(Source: Faff, 2015a)

3.2 “The ‘Micky Mouse’ Device”

Following Faff (2015a: 318) suggestion, I apply the ‘Mickey Mouse’ diagram, to demonstrate my conceptualisation of the novelty that I am attributing in this pitch. In terms of this pitch, Figure 2 ‘**Mickey Mouse diagram characterizing novelty of research idea**’ depicts a version of Mickey Mouse, relevant to the current pitch: You can see climate change adaptation in one circle (theoretical framing—the head); private power and electricity firms (unit of analysis); and the context of a developing country in other two circles. The area of novelty is defined by the triple-intersection zone. It is important to mention that finding the novelty zone for my research project remains a challenge for me while working on my confirmation document. However, while attending the course (Research Process in Business-RBUS6914), I happen to get answers to most of the questions raised by the committee about the potential contribution of my study. The discussion at the end of my pitching research presentation in general, and feedback/suggestions regarding the ‘deal breaker’ of my study enable me to clearly articulate and synchronise links among different components of the confirmation document.

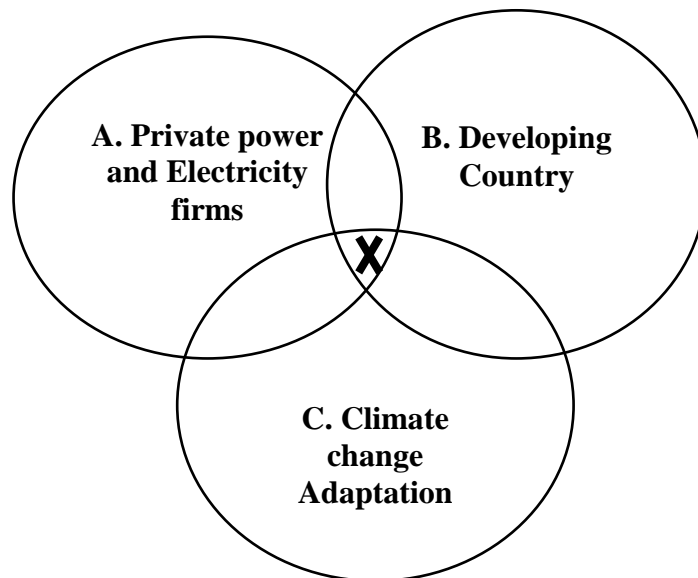


Figure 2. Mickey Mouse diagram characterizing novelty of research idea

3.3 On the ‘Adaptive use’ of pitching template

One important part (section 4.3) of the Faff (2015a) paper is the ‘Advice on alternative ways of using/adapting the pitch template’. Faff (2015a) suggests devising template guides to aid pitch application to other research areas. However, with few exceptions, most of the illustrative pitch examples available online and

used in Faff (2015b) take a quantitative/empirical approach. This constraint potentially limits the broader take-up of the template across the research community. As noted in illustrative pitch example¹ in qualitative setting, “the considerations that underlie the development of a research question and a research methodology using qualitative methods require equivalent rigour in the planning stage and equivalent style in terms of the “so what” question.” The process of designing a qualitative study that uses multiple data collection tools can be a daunting task for novice researchers, particularly doctoral students looking to commence their peer review journal pitching. Doctoral students considering the use of qualitative methods and triangulated data collection techniques face a branching path of design decisions that shape research quality and credibility. This requires them to initiate their qualitative research approach with a clearly articulated purpose and focus, connecting the data and the research questions, and linking data sources to findings (Kaczynski *et al.* 2013).

Based on my personal experience and following Faff's (2015a: 326-27) ‘advice on alternative ways of using/adapting the pitch template’; I suggest adapting Faff's (2015b) “IDioTs Guide” pitching research template for qualitative research pitches. Using a standard template skewed towards qualitative research would assist doctoral students to demonstrate methodological rigor in order to enhance the analytical defensibility of qualitative research. The proposed ‘toolkit’ in IDioTs guide for qualitative research pitches will augment the scope of IDioTs Guide making it more suitable for qualitative research pitches. In addition, providing a qualitative ‘toolkit’ to “IDioTs” guide supplement Faff's (2015b) existing “pitching template”, and relieve the constraints of the current template, assist qualitative researchers to pitch a research idea and track application of proposed methods. This also helps researchers derive their own theoretical contribution (the Holy Grail) while avoiding the risk of superimposing existing theories onto data before actually knowing what the data holds.

4. Conclusion

This pitch letter provides a brief explanation of a pitching template example for a strategy research topic on private power and electricity firms' adaptation to climate change in a developing country. The pitch presented was constructed at a later stage of the research (post confirmation). Hence, this pitch letter demonstrates the flexibility of using Faff's (2015b) pitching research template to any stage of a research. Completing this pitching template has helped me to reconcile the core elements that form the basis for the proposed framework of my research study.

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¹ Internet Appendix A5: Illustrative Pitch Example in Qualitative setting. Source: Supplementary material for "Pitching Research" Available at [http://www.business.uq.edu.au/sites/default/files/pages/PitchingPaper_Internet_Appendix_A5_Qualitative_15September2014.pdf]

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Table 1. Completed 2-page pitch template on climate change

Pitcher's Name	Shahzad, Syed Khuram	FoR category	Strategy (Climate change Adaptation)	Date Completed	22/11/2015
(A) Working Title	Private firms' adaptation to climate change within the context of developing countries				
(B) Basic Research Question	Which are the possible direct or indirect impacts of climate change on business activities that private power and electricity firms in developing country/Pakistan adapt to? How will adaptation to climate change impact business performance?				
(C) Key paper(s)	<p>Tashman, P., Winn, M., and Rivera, J. E. (2015). Corporate climate change adaptation. The Routledge Companion to Non-Market Strategy, pp.295-314</p> <p>Linnenluecke, M. K., Griffiths, A., and Winn, M. I. (2013). Firm and industry adaptation to climate change: a review of climate adaptation studies in the business and management field. Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change, 4(5), 397-416.</p> <p>Busch, T. (2011). Organizational adaptation to disruptions in the natural environment: The case of climate change. Scandinavian Journal of Management, 27(4), 389-404.</p>				
(D) Motivation/ Puzzle	Climate change is one of our most urgent and complex challenges and human beings are the cause. In the absence of adequate response to stabilise greenhouse gas emission, further warming will take place. This causes vulnerabilities, especially in developing countries and climate sensitive sectors. Physical changes in climate may pose major challenges, and significantly alter the business environment. To survive and prosper, businesses must address the strategically important issue of climate change adaptation. How private firms can adapt to direct and indirect impacts of climate change? <i>It is a puzzle</i> . While it appears imperative for private firms to adapt to the direct and indirect impacts of climate change, unique conditions specific to the context of developing country impose significant constraints on their engagement in climate change adaptation.				
THREE	Three core aspects of any empirical research project i.e. the "IDioTs" guide				
(E) Idea?	Private firms face direct and indirect climate change impacts that negatively affect firm's cost and revenue structure and increase the vulnerability of firm's strategic assets. There are multiple internal and external factors may be important reinforcing or inhibiting influences on the ways a firm should adapt to climate change. Thus, the idea to see if interviewing organisational and institutional actors help understanding the implications of organisational adaptation to climate-induced changes in external business environment; and provide adequate information for analysing whether potential performance benefits.				
(F) Data?	<p>Country settings: Pakistan— Because it is a country not only threatened by the impacts of climate change and weather extremes, it also faces additional challenges from terrorism and a persistent electricity crisis. The private sector in Pakistan dominated by a heavily concentrated corporate shareholder base in which political connections are important. 'Soft state conditions' prevail; formal rules tend to be superseded by informal norms, values, and practices which form a strong institutional basis for organisational and social behaviour. Over time, these conditions become a stable set of rules in their own right.</p> <p>Unit of Analysis: Individual private firms in Pakistan's power and electricity sector.</p> <p>Sampling: Stratified purposive sampling; Sample size: 12 case units (9 independent and 3 group affiliated firms) ;</p> <p>Data sources: Triangulated data collection technique (interviews, observation and archival data); Participants: organizational and institutional representatives</p>				
(G) Tools?	Basic theoretical framework: This thesis combines the resource-based view of the firm and the institutional				

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	<p>theory perspectives to study organisational adaptation to climate change, encompassing the institutional contexts surrounding resource decisions relevant to establishing competitive priorities.</p> <p>Research design: Qualitative research design using comparative case study method</p> <p>Interview design: Semi structured interview using set of indicative questions—refined through piloting; interview protocol; ethical clearance and gatekeeper's approval;</p> <p>Software : QSR Nvivo to transcribe and analyse data.</p> <p>Knowledge of implementation: own +collaboration</p> <p>Is validity an issue? I am mindful of the issues related to content validity, construct validity, generalisability in qualitative research.</p>				
TWO	Two key questions				
(H) What's New?	<p>It is still fairly novel to view the firm as vulnerable to climate change impacts, instead of responsible for global warming; and organisational adaptation that involves progressive modifications and optimisation attempts to achieve better performance of an organisation in "or fit with" its business environment in response to climate change and related weather extremes, is less well understood. This study draws in new insights from the literature on organisational adaptation and combines the resource-based view of the firm and the institutional theory to expand our understanding of the interdependencies among institutional requirements, organisational resources and capabilities; and how these combine to impact private power and electricity firm's strategies for climate change adaptation within the context of a developing country.</p>				
(I) So What?	<p>The study of organisational adaptation to climate change is emerging. Recent work has studied climate change through the constructs of organisational learning, risk management, vulnerability and adaptive capacity, resilience, and the mechanisms underpinning firm's adaptation to climate change in the context of developed economies. However, there has been little scholarly attention given to developing frameworks for understanding adaptation to the impact of climate change in vulnerable sectors in developing economies. Little is known about the factors that influence private firms in Pakistan to adapt to climate change and there no evidence that regulatory pressures can drive firms to engage in climate change adaptation.</p>				
ONE	One bottom line				
(J) Contribution?	<p>Major contribution— study will make a theoretical contribution by integrating existing theories to develop a research framework for private firm engagement in climate change adaptation by refining existing concepts guided by rules that embody contrasting rationale based on (economic) and normative (institutional) logics.</p>				
(K) Other Considerations	<p>Target Journal(s)? Business Strategy and the Environment (John Wiley & Sons); Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change (John Wiley & Sons); Organization and Environment (Sage Publications)</p> <p>"Risk" assessment: Low [competitor, obsolescence and others)</p> <p>Ethics clearance? Will be obtained ; the anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured for all the participants</p> <p>Is the scope appropriate? At the inception, the scope of study is broad, will gain more focus after the exploratory phase of the study.</p>				