

MISQ Archivist

Grounded Theory Methodology in Information Systems Research

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Abstract

Grounded theory methodology (GTM), with its espoused goal of theory development of novel phenomena, has found broad application in Information Systems (IS) research. To investigate how GTM is applied in IS research and how the research contributions are contingent on those applications, we review 43 GTM-based articles in major IS and related journals. Ten of the articles develop theory. The other 33 articles use GTM to develop models and rich descriptions of new phenomena as their theoretical contribution. We show that each of the three forms is valuable to the IS community. For example, studies that develop theories and models are highly cited in the IS literature. We identify nine GTM procedures that are applied in various combinations to develop the three forms of research contribution. Treating GTM as a portfolio of the nine procedures, we examine the implications for the research contribution of adopting the core GTM procedures compared with a partial portfolio of those procedures.

Keywords: Grounded theory methodology, explorative, qualitative, research method, procedures, portfolio approach