The Role of Classification in Mid-Range Theory Building: The Case of Business Model Research

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ABSTRACT

Classification of research objects is critical to many management research studies with taxonomies and typologies providing the means by which research objects are organized and differentiated from one another. However, the nature and structure of the classifications are frequently presupposed with little attention given to the objectives, functions and characteristics of the classifications, not only to the immediate study but to future related research. I bring to the fore the scientific significance of classification and its role in theory development in organizational science and business model research. The alternative philosophies of classification are described and their relevance to management research proposed. Premised on the need for both deductive and inductive empirical research a case is made for a general classification of business models that can progress the research towards mid-range theory building.