Conveying Strategy Knowledge Using Visualization vs. Text: Empirical Evidence from Asia and Europe

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Problem: Strategy knowledge communication, across cultures
Research question: Can visual representation improve the reception of strategic knowledge compared to text? And is this relationship moderated by culture?
Method: Experiment (3x2): knowledge representation x culture
Sample: 118* graduate students (in executive masters) from Europe and East Asia
Results:
1. Knowledge visualization is superior to text for knowledge reception (2) independently of culture
2. Subjects underestimate the benefits of visual representations of information (4) in both cultures
Implications for theory: Hidden benefits of visualization for knowledge work
for practice: Communicating knowledge with visual representations effective but undervalued

Objective reception, all cultures

Perceived reception, all cultures

Results

Implications
1. Visual representation of information objectively increases understanding and recall both in Europe and East Asia
2. There are cultural differences in the reception of visualization as predicted by theory
3. There are hidden benefits of visual representation for knowledge work: subjects constantly underestimate the benefits of visualization

So what?
Knowledge visualization is better than text, never worse
Subjects are not aware (underestimation)

Future
- Bigger sample (now N=220)
- More cultures (India?)
- Interactive / collaborative
- Field study in a real organization
- Why visualization is less beneficial for Asians? (i.e. training)

Interested in final results?
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*In progress

Research design
Experiment (3x2)
3 Representations of strategic knowledge 2 cultures: Europe and East Asia

Sample (in progress): N=118
30% from Singapore, 70% from Switzerland
Mean age: 27; years of work experience: 5.3; gender: 60% males

Success factors: long term vision, cost monitoring, internal control, competition through international expansion.
Two subgoals: (1) 20% growth in mature business areas, (2) 30% growth by 2012.

Strategy: 50%

Strategy communication
3 information units

Understanding
Recall

Perceived understanding
Perceived recall

Europe
East Asia

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Solution

Knowledge visualization?