

Research methods and data collection

Chapter overview

This topic will introduce you to a key element of the business consultancy project proposal which is the research methodology part. You will be able to learn about how to formulate this section, as well as receive guidance on relevant research approaches. This topic showcases research, discussions, and group activities that will help you continue making progress with the proposal. You will read key texts on formulating business research methods which help enhance your knowledge. By the end of the topic, you will be able to create a draft of the research methodology.

Learning outcomes

- Critically evaluate research methods applicable to business research
- Design a suitable research methodology for your project and acknowledge its limitations

Context

The **research methodology** section is a crucial part of your proposal, as it provides the foundation for how your research will be conducted. This section should demonstrate a clear understanding of the research methods you intend to use, showcasing your awareness of the different approaches and their relevance to your research topic. It is essential to ensure that this section is consistent with the other parts of your proposal, particularly the **challenges, research question(s), aim, and objectives**. These elements must be interconnected to create a coherent and structured narrative throughout your proposal. The methodology section should clearly explain the rationale behind your chosen methods and how they will help address the specific challenges identified in your research.

In writing this part of the proposal, it is important to use formal and precise language to communicate your ideas effectively. The clarity and coherence of the methodology section are critical, as they ensure that your research approach is well-understood by your audience. By maintaining a logical flow of ideas, you can strengthen the overall structure of your proposal, guiding the reader seamlessly from one section to the next.

Moreover, the methodology should not only describe the methods in detail but also critically evaluate their strengths and limitations in the context of your specific research topic. By doing so, you demonstrate that you are aware of the complexities involved in the research process and have thought critically about how best to approach your study. The methodology needs to be supported with evidence and examples, applied to the context of your research.

Following the guidelines provided in this topic is key to completing both your formative and summative assignments successfully. By paying attention to the methodology, you can create a well-structured, cohesive proposal that not only outlines your research approach but also communicates your understanding of the wider research process. A well-written methodology will serve as a solid foundation for the rest of your research.

1 Primary versus secondary research

"Primary research is collecting data directly from patients or population, while secondary research is the analysis of data already collected through primary research."
(Gopalakrishnan and Ganeshkumar, 2013).

Secondary sources are the books, articles, papers and similar materials written or produced by others that help you to form your background understanding of the subject. You would use these to find out about experts' findings, analyses or perspectives on the issue and decide whether to draw upon these explicitly in your research." (Cottrell, 2014, p. 123).

This slide is a reminder of the difference between primary and secondary research. It is essential that you clearly understand the difference between the two approaches. Please note that only secondary data collection is required in the proposal.

Gopalakrishnan and Ganeshkumar (2013) make a distinction between primary and secondary research in their quote. The practice of collecting original data directly from people or a particular group, using techniques like surveys, interviews, observations, or experiments is known as primary research. Researchers can gather data specifically related to their research issue and customised to meet their needs with this kind of research. Secondary research involves analysing data that has previously been gathered through primary research. This information can be re-examined to gain fresh perspectives or strengthen preexisting knowledge, and it is frequently available in published research, reports, or databases.

The significance of secondary materials in research is emphasised in the quotation from Cottrell (2014, p. 123). Books, articles, and papers authored or published by other people are examples of secondary sources that offer important background information on a given topic. These sources allow you to investigate what professionals have already discovered, analysed, or debated about your research topic. Examining secondary sources might help you comprehend many viewpoints on the matter and determine whether to use their conclusions in your own writing. Secondary sources are essentially instruments that assist you in establishing a foundation of knowledge.

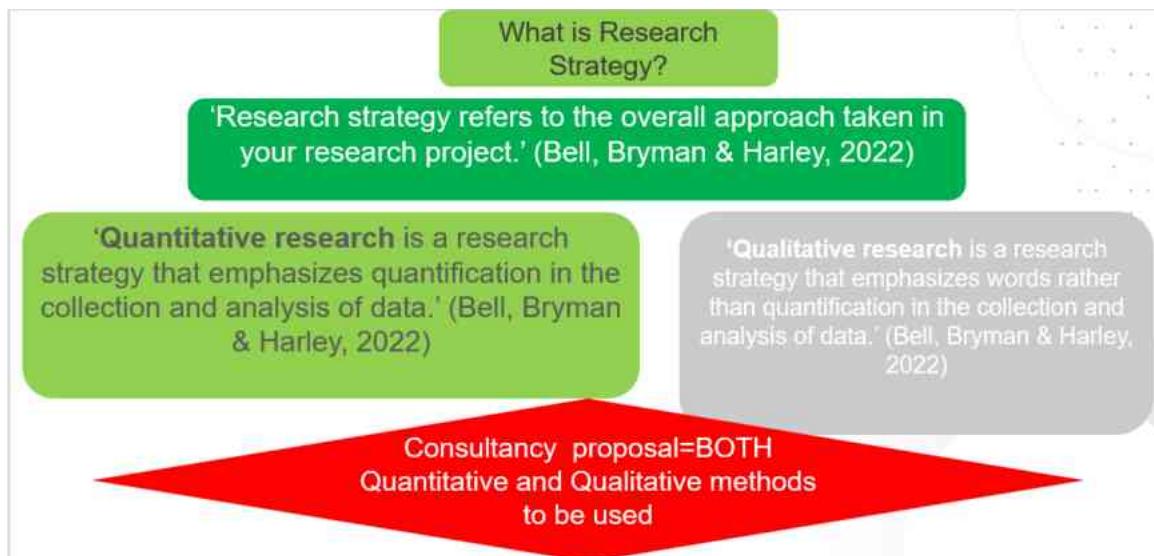
1.1 Comparison of primary and secondary research

Primary	Secondary
<p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data collected is first hand and accurate.• Data collected can be controlled. No dilution of data.• Research method can be customized to suit personal requirements and needs of the research. <p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be quite extensive to conduct, requiring a lot of time and resources• Sometimes one primary research method is not enough; therefore a mixed method is required, which can be even more time consuming.	<p>Advantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information is readily available• Less expensive and less time-consuming• Quicker to conduct <p>Disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is necessary to check the credibility of the data• May not be as up to date• Success of your research depends on the quality of research previously conducted by others.

The approaches used to gather and use primary and secondary data in research are different. Information obtained directly from original sources using techniques like focus groups, online questionnaires, interviews, and observations is referred to as primary data. The benefit of having complete control over the research process is that this kind of data is accurate, first-hand, and adaptable to meet certain study demands. However, gathering primary data can take a lot of time and resources, and in order to get thorough results, it frequently calls for combining several approaches (University of Westminster, 2022).

Secondary data, on the other hand, comes from previously conducted study and is gathered and examined to strengthen future investigations. The internet, public libraries, educational institutions, commercial databases, and governmental and non-governmental organizations are examples of sources. Accessibility, affordability, and speed of collection are the primary advantages of secondary data. However, because the information may be out-of-date or not entirely in line with their research goals, researchers must assess the reliability and applicability of secondary sources. Furthermore, the quality of the initial data collection has a significant impact on the dependability of secondary research (University of Westminster, 2022).

1.2 Let's discuss



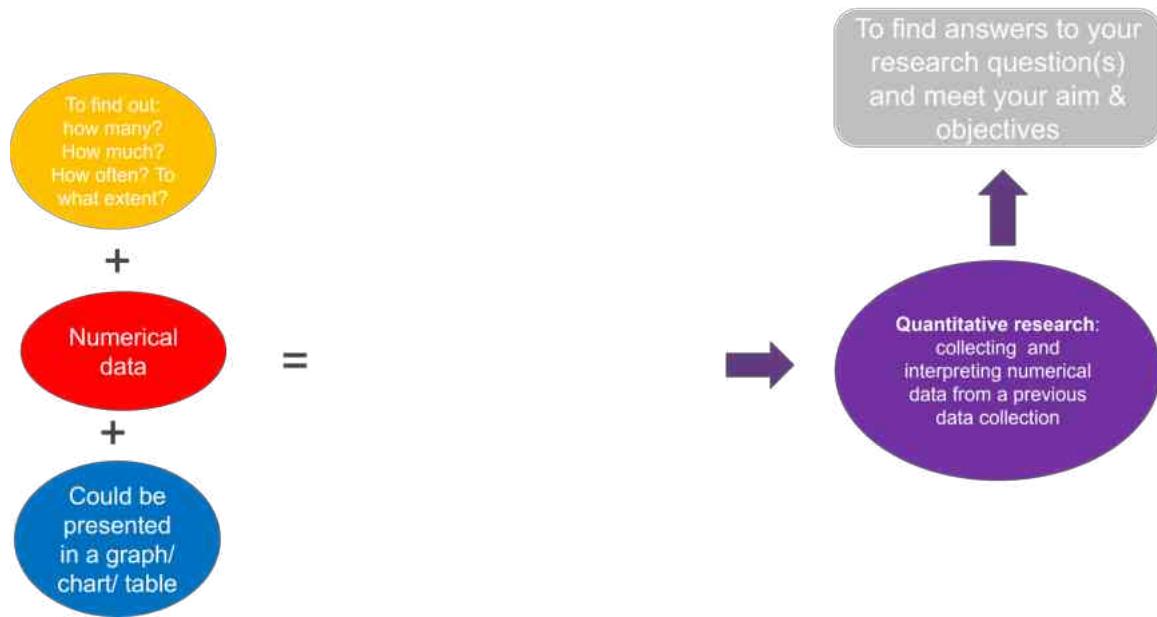
A research strategy is basically the overarching plan or framework that directs how a research project is carried out, as the quote by Bell, Bryman, and Harley (2022) emphasises. It entails making well-informed choices on the data collection approaches and analysis in order to successfully answer the research questions and objectives. Whether the methodology is qualitative or quantitative, this strategy represents the researcher's overall direction. For your proposal, you will be asked to demonstrate evidence of quantitative and qualitative research and to show awareness between the two approaches.

1.3 Types of secondary data



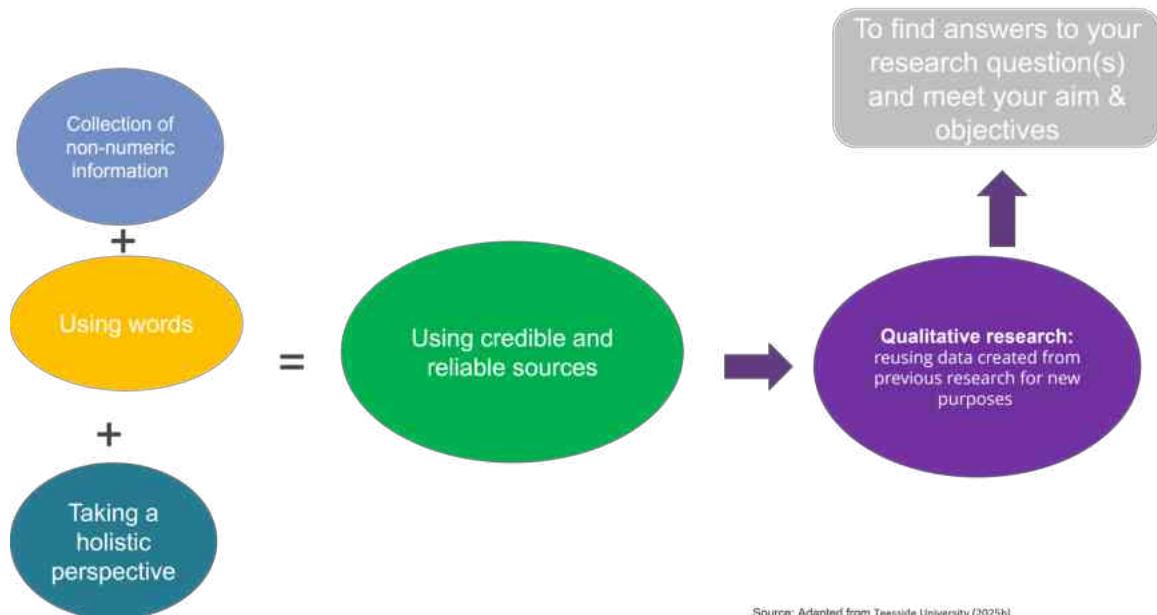
There are a wider range of sources and platforms which you can use for secondary data collection as outlined in the above slide.

1.4 Quantitative secondary research



The gathering and analysis of numerical data is the main emphasis of quantitative research. Using data analysis techniques, this data can be measured, ranked, or categorised. This type of analysis facilitates the discovery of patterns or connections and allows researchers to draw extensive conclusions or generalisations. The capacity of quantitative research to generate numerical and evidence-based insights is one of its main strengths. This method works especially well when the goal is to provide answers to queries like how many, how much, and how often or to what extent? Quantitative research may yield succinct, understandable responses that can lead to evidence-based conclusions (Teesside University, 2025a).

1.5 Qualitative secondary research



Source: Adapted from Teesside University (2025b)

Gathering and analysing data in the form of words rather than numbers is a component of qualitative research. This kind of study concentrates on non-numerical data, including individual experiences, actions, feelings, and social settings. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research takes a more comprehensive approach. It looks at problems as they arise in their

environments and takes into account the larger context of actions or events. In fields including the social sciences, education, and health care, qualitative research offers rich, in-depth insights that are especially beneficial since it considers the bigger picture as well as the complex relationships between different parts (Teesside University, 2025b).

Using secondary sources of information as a researcher entails interpreting and analysing the data. This is due to the fact that secondary data is not created with your research aim in mind and may require processing or manipulation before it can be deemed pertinent to the research topic. There wouldn't be any question regarding the reliability of your selected secondary data if it came from a big, respectable organisation. You might not, however, know who wrote it or whether it has been changed. (The Open University, n.d.)

In qualitative research, dependability is correlated with reliability and refers to the degree to which a study might be replicated by another researcher and yield identical results. It all comes down to how thorough the research process is (Quantilope, 2024).

1.6 Pros and cons of research methods

Direct link to the video is: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NG8P6_jeQZE

There are several benefits to gathering qualitative secondary data, especially when analysing organisations. Its ability to offer deep, comprehensive insights into the experiences, attitudes, and behaviours of people or groups is one of its main advantages. Furthermore, qualitative secondary research techniques are sometimes free or reasonably priced, which makes them an affordable choice for researchers. But there are disadvantages to gathering qualitative secondary data as well. The possibility of subjectivity and bias in the procedures of data collecting and interpretation is one important drawback. The results of qualitative research may be impacted by the viewpoints of the participants as well as the initial researcher(s) because it frequently uses focus groups, interviews, and open-ended questions. Furthermore, the results may not be completely relevant to the topic (University of Westminster, 2022).

On the other hand, there are a number of clear benefits to quantitative data collecting, including the capacity to produce vast amounts of data by the original researcher and these could be further analysed by secondary data collectors. Because of this, it is especially helpful for research projects that involve statistical analysis. Researchers can efficiently gather and process information since quantitative data collection and analysis can be a rapid and simple process. However, gathering quantitative data also presents a unique set of difficulties. One possible problem is that the information acquired by the original researchers might be inaccurate, lacking, or not totally pertinent to the current study subject. Furthermore, quantitative data can occasionally be out of date, which lessens its value in research projects that call for current knowledge. Lastly, quantitative data may give rise to concerns regarding their accuracy and dependability (University of Westminster, 2022).

Using reliable and credible sources is essential when conducting research in order to guarantee the correctness and dependability of the data. Acceptable sources include scholarly literature, peer-reviewed journals, company reports and reliable news articles. Wikipedia and other informal sites should be avoided since anyone can change their information and they might not have thorough fact-checking, which could result in bias or subjectivity. Always check your sources for objectivity, relevancy, and credibility.

2 Key components of a Consultancy Project

Research

Methodology: Applying the methodology to the selected challenges

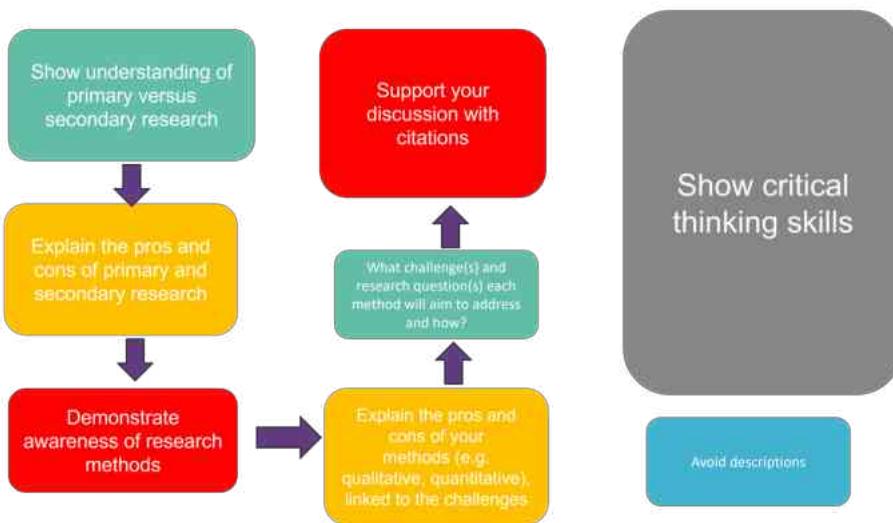
In the below section, we will be focusing on the research methodology part of the proposal.

2.1 Key structure to follow

Research methodology (500 words): Show awareness of primary versus secondary research, research methods and an understanding of the pros and cons.

The research methodology is a key part of your proposal. In the following, we will be exploring how to create this section giving you some tips and guidance as below.

2.2 How to write the research methods part of the proposal



A proposal's research methodology section should demonstrate an understanding of primary and secondary research and applying your research methodologies (e.g. quantitative and qualitative) to the selected challenges. Primary research, which is helpful for gaining precise, first-hand insights, entails getting original data directly from sources using techniques like surveys, interviews, or observations. Secondary research, on the other hand, is analysing pre-existing data from sources such as scholarly publications, official documents, or databases, frequently in order to offer background information. Every strategy has advantages and disadvantages of its own. Primary research can be expensive, time-consuming, and may need ethical approval, but it also provides more control over the process and pertinent, customised data. Please note that only secondary data collection is needed in the consultancy proposal.

Although it is faster and less expensive, secondary research may be out-of-date, irrelevant, or dependent on the reliability of earlier studies. A compelling proposal should clearly explain why the selected research approaches are appropriate for the research. It should also clarify the specific methodologies being employed and how they will effectively address the challenges.

In order to show that you have done extensive research and have read widely, you will be asked to cite a variety of trustworthy and credible sources to back up your insights. Citing reliable sources helps to place your research within a larger context and demonstrates your interaction with previous academic work. This could make your writing seem more credible and let the reader know that your approaches are well researched.

It is essential to support your insights with evidence. This can entail citing earlier research and providing evidence to back up your assertions. Steer clear of ambiguous points by making sure each important statement is backed up by directly relevant sources. By doing this, you may demonstrate critical thinking and make your discussions stronger and more convincing.

Additionally, you should write in a clear, precise, and organised manner. One major topic should be the subject of each paragraph, with seamless transitions to help the reader follow your logic. Make sure your statements are conveyed clearly by using formal language and avoiding ambiguity. When combined with excellent supporting evidence, a strong writing style will help you present your ideas more persuasively and show academic rigor throughout your work.

Do cite sources from a range of credible and academic sources

Remember to cite your sources in Harvard referencing style

Apply the discussions to your own research, as opposed to writing in general terms

Remember to apply the methodology to the selected challenges

Link your responses to the research question(s)/ aim/ objectives

Using the Harvard referencing style consistently throughout your proposal is crucial. This entails referencing sources both inside the text and at the end of the work. Making explicit connections between the different elements of your proposal—for example the challenges, research question(s), aim or objectives—is also very important. This guarantees that your proposal is coherent and focused, making it easy for the reader to understand your reasoning and how each element fits into the research strategy. Your proposal should convey a coherent narrative with smooth transitions between sections.

Drafting a cohesive story that logically ties together all the components of the work is essential for a successful research proposal. This could entail outlining how the research questions will be addressed and how your selected research methodologies could help to accomplish the aim or the objectives of the research. You should connect your strategy to the challenges you are attempting to explore by illustrating how your selected methodology will aid in addressing the challenges mentioned in previous sections. This not only makes your proposal more coherent, but it also demonstrates that you have gained an in-depth understanding of the selected organisation's background and context.

2.3 How to demonstrate critical thinking skills



How can you demonstrate critical thinking skills in the research methodology part?

It takes more than just outlining your intended approaches to show critical thinking abilities in the research methodology section. Comparing and contrasting scholarly texts is one technique to demonstrate critical thinking skills. You can highlight differing opinions and point out the advantages and disadvantages of using different sources/ platforms.

Comparing and contrasting quantitative and qualitative research methodologies, as well as primary and secondary research, is another key component. Although primary research, which

involves gathering original data, can provide helpful insights, it can also be expensive and time-consuming. Secondary research, on the other hand, which analyses already-existing data, may be more effective but may not be as specific or relevant. While quantitative approaches are useful for producing vast amounts of data, they might not yield the richer, more in-depth understanding that qualitative research can offer.

An essential component of critical thinking in the methodology part is identifying assumptions and biases in your sources. For example, some research papers could make assumptions about specific circumstances or settings that are different from the setting of your own research. When releasing news, some media outlets could have their own agendas, which could affect how the public is informed. This bias may show up in the framing of news stories or the highlighting of some parts of a subject while downplaying others. As a result, the audience could be subjected to a distorted perspective of events and the information presented might not always be objective. Sensational headlines or selective reporting, for example, could have the power to sway public opinion in a certain way by misrepresenting the facts and possibly influencing how the audience perceives the subject.

If statistics and numerical data are not appropriately presented in an understandable way, they may also be deceptive. The methodology employed to gather the data or the biases of the researcher themselves can affect the data. The public or decision-makers who depend on that data may be misled as a result of misunderstandings or oversimplifications.

Furthermore, if the media outlet or researcher has a particular narrative they want to support, the facts may be skewed and deceptive. From creating survey questions to analysing and interpreting the findings, this subjectivity can be ingrained throughout the whole research process. For instance, biased sampling techniques or surveys with leading questions may yield data that reinforces a preexisting opinion rather than offering an impartial portrayal of the subject. When this subjective data is shared without critical analysis or adequate context, it can contribute to disinformation, impacting public perception and potentially causing harm to informed decision-making.

3 Key text on business research methods

Students are frequently encouraged to think about conducting further analyses of data that were initially acquired for another purpose and consider how to gather data to address their research question or aims. These are referred to as secondary data, and they comprise both published summaries and data collected by the original researcher(s). These data can be further analysed to give new or different knowledge, interpretations, or conclusions once they have been gathered and deemed appropriate to aid in answering the study question (Bishop and Kuula-Luumi 2017; Bulmer et al. 2009).

As part of freedom of information laws, government agencies all over the world conduct surveys, release official statistics on social, demographic, and economic issues, and publish summaries of these statistics. More and more of these departments also permit access to and download of the data from online databases. Consumer research companies gather information that is later used by a range of clients and summarized for broader use in market reports. Trade associations gather information from their members on things like sales, which is then combined, displayed, and published. Documentaries featuring interviews with politicians and businesses are produced and aired by media organizations; many of them are later stored and made available on demand. There is a lot of information in high-quality daily newspapers, copies of which can be found online and in digital archives at most university libraries. These include takeover bid reports, corporate leader interviews, event photos, infographics and graphs, and lists of share prices.

To support their daily operations, the majority of organisations regularly gather and store a vast amount of data, including financial records, pay rolls, organizational charts, copies of communications, meeting minutes, and business transactions, such as purchases and sales inquiries. Social networking sites (like Facebook) host websites for specific interest groups, including those created by organisations, and search engines like Google gather data on the billions of searches made every day. These websites store these pages along with other data, such as group members' posts, photos, videos, and demographic and geographic location information, forming a digital trail of their users.

Data from government surveys, including demographic censuses, can be downloaded in aggregated form for free. These survey results are also frequently uploaded to and made digitally accessible through online data archives. Websites on social networking sites might be "restricted" to group members exclusively or "open" to everyone. Peer-reviewed journal papers can include connection links, such as QR (Quick Response) codes, to online data supplements and digital archives and repositories, where researchers are increasingly depositing their study data. You may frequently access online databases with business information, like Orbis Europe (formerly Amadeus) and Datastream, or through the webpages of your university library.

Additionally, the websites of businesses and professional associations can have a wealth of information that could be reanalysed for your study. Even though they are becoming more widely accessible digitally, other secondary data, especially historical records like photos, illustrations, and the like, might only be found in their original form in archives or museums. Therefore, secondary data may provide you with access to a far greater range of information from a much larger sample over a longer period of time than you could possibly gather on your own.

Thankfully, the quantity of possible secondary data sources has increased significantly over the last ten years, as has the accessibility of such data.

Both descriptive and explanatory research primarily use secondary data, which can be either quantitative (numeric) or qualitative (non-numeric). The secondary data you analyse further can be either compiled data that has been selected or summarized, or raw data that has undergone minimal processing. They could be unstructured data, which is difficult to search for or process because it does not currently follow a predetermined structure, or structured data, which is arranged in an easily processed format, like a database or spreadsheet. Less than 20% of all stored data is currently structured data, which frequently consists of numerical data (Taylor, 2021).

Unstructured data, on the other hand, includes all other types of information, such as text, audio, visual, and audio-visual data, however they may also contain numerical data and dates. Data that has been re-combined with additional data to form larger multiple-source data sets is a common feature of many digitally accessible secondary data sets. Some may be regarded as large data since they include continuously updated data from multiple sources.

The most common use of secondary data in business and management research projects is in case study and survey research methodologies. Nonetheless, there is no excuse for not utilising secondary data in other research approaches, such as action, experimental, and archival research. The various types of secondary data can be helpfully categorised into three main categories: **surveys**, which include census, continuous, regular, and ad hoc surveys; **documents**, which can be textual, audio, or visual/audio-visual media; **multiple sources**, which are compiled to create a snapshot; longitudinal data, or which are continuously updated.

Surveys

Survey secondary data is pre-existing, quantifiable, and organised data that was initially gathered for another reason through a survey approach, typically questionnaires. Typically, these data pertain to families, individuals, or organisations. They are made available for secondary examination as compiled data, a structured matrix of data, or a downloadable file from a bigger web database.

Typically conducted by governments, censuses are special because, in contrast to other surveys, participation is required. As a result, they cover the population from which data is gathered quite well. Among these are population censuses, which have been conducted in the UK since 1801 and in many other nations from the eighteenth century (Office for National Statistics 2016a, b). For more recent UK censuses, tabulations have been published online, and 100 years after each census was taken, the raw data is accessible online. The purpose of data from censuses carried out by numerous governments is to satisfy the requirements of both local and government departments. They are typically of excellent quality, well-documented, and precisely defined as a result. These data are readily available through data gateways and archives in compiled form, and both individual researchers and other organizations frequently use them.

Surveys that gather data all year long, such the UK's Living Costs and Food Survey (Office for National Statistics 2021c), as well as those that are conducted on a regular basis, should be noted. These include the EU Labour Force Survey, which has been conducted quarterly by member states across the EU since 1998 using a standard set of questions. This indicates that

some comparative statistics for member states are available, but access to these data is restricted by national and European laws (Eurostat 2021b). Regular polls are also conducted by non-governmental organisations. Among these are general-purpose market research surveys.

Given the commercial nature of market research polls, obtaining the data is probably going to be expensive. Regular surveys are also conducted by many large organizations; the employee attitude survey is a typical example. However, access to such survey data, particularly in its raw form, is frequently challenging due to the sensitive nature of such material.

Data from censuses and ongoing, routine surveys are a helpful resource for comparing or contextualizing your own primary data-based study findings. Because procedures can vary and it can be more than a year between collection and release, you should verify the date and method of collection when using this data. If you are conducting research on a single UK organization, you can utilize the Annual Business Survey data to situate your case study organization inside its industry group or division (Office for National Statistics 2021a). The Office for National Statistics, the UK government's statistics web portal, has aggregated results from the Annual Business Survey.

Documents

Text, audio, visual, and audio-visual representations can all be preserved and used in a variety of settings thanks to documents (Lee 2021). Secondary data can be made up of these media representations. Such information can be used independently, in conjunction with primary data, and in conjunction with other secondary data sources, as in the case of corporate history study conducted using an archive research technique. Document secondary data are information that, in contrast to spoken word, may be preserved physically (even digitally) as proof, enabling data to be transferred across time and distance and reanalysed for a different purpose than the one for which it was first gathered (Lee 2021).

Documents always show what their creator or creators intended them to show, not what really occurred or, in the case of a policy, what would actually occur (Lee 2021). This implies that you must assess if the data is appropriate for addressing your research question. Text, audio, and visual media are so included.

Text, audio and visual media: Notices, letters (including emails), meeting minutes, shareholder reports, diaries, speech and conversation transcripts, administrative and public records, and web page content, including reviews, are examples of document text media. Newspapers, journal and magazine articles, and books can also be considered text media. Although prepared secondary data is frequently stored in books, papers, journals, and reports, the text itself can constitute significant raw secondary data. You may access the content of company annual reports to examine how a business is performing in dealing with climate change.

Audio media: Like other types of document secondary data, audio and audio-visual media, including speeches, audio blogs, podcasts, and archived (on-demand) recordings of radio and television shows, can be analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively by transcribing the spoken words and analysing only the text.

Visual media: For instance, yearly reports from organisations or other publications like research papers and web pages may contain visual documentary secondary data. As an alternative, it can appear in television shows and news programs, as well as in pay-per-view and subscription-based streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Prime.

Visual and, to a lesser extent, audio documents are increasingly being used as data by business and management researchers. A large portion of them are online resources created by organizations and internet forums. Even though most online pages' data, such blogs and those created by user groups on social networking sites, were never meant to be used in this manner, they can nonetheless offer secondary data for studies. Finding such data, assessing its value in light of your study topic and goals, and making sure any related ethical considerations are addressed are some of the challenges that come with using it.

Text and non-text materials: You use secondary data when you analyse both textual and non-textual items as part of your study, such as a newspaper article, a web page, or a television news report. These materials, however, frequently serve only as the source of your secondary data and not as the actual secondary data that you are analysing.

Multiple-source secondary data

If secondary data from several sources have a similar geographic basis, they can be combined to generate area-based data sets (Hakim 1982). These frequently gather quantitative data and statistics. Usually, national governments construct them for their country and its component standard economic planning zones, and regional and local administrations create them for their own territory. Data archives, regional administrations' information gateways, or national governments' information gateways can all provide access to these area-based multiple-source data sets. One often used example of snapshot data in Europe is the Eurostat Regional Yearbook (Eurostat 2021a), the annual online publication of the European Union.

Benefits of secondary data collection:

One major benefit of using secondary data for many research questions and objectives is the significant resource savings when compared to gathering your own (original) data. This includes the time and funds you require as a researcher (Vartanian 2011) as well as those currently needed from the organizations or people from whom the data was initially gathered (Lee 2021). Generally speaking, using secondary data is far less costly and time-consuming than gathering the data yourself, particularly when the data is available for download in a format. Additionally, you will have more time to consider substantive issues and theoretical goals, which will free up more time and energy for data analysis and interpretation. Secondary data can be your only option if you need your data immediately. Furthermore, they are frequently of a greater caliber than what you could get by gathering your own (Smith 2008).

One potential benefit of using secondary data in organizations is that it may offer an inconspicuous measure. Cowton (1998) highlights this benefit and calls it eavesdropping. Additionally, using secondary data eliminates the requirement for in-person data collection, which lowers the possibility of hazards to researcher safety.

Many data sets have already been anonymised, and secondary data are frequently in the public domain (Lee 2021). You will still need to think about things like participant damage and how it will be minimised, consent for data to be used for research, even if it is publicly available on social media (Kozinets 2020), and data management. New insights and surprising discoveries might also result from reanalysing secondary data. Establishing the connection between smoking and lung cancer is an example of an accidental finding, according to Dale et al. (1988). In this instance, secondary examination of medical records that had not been gathered with the goal of examining any such association was used to create the connection.

Disadvantages of secondary data collection:

When you gather your own data, you will do it with a clear goal in mind: to accomplish your objectives and find the answer to your research question or questions. Regrettably, secondary data will have been gathered for a purpose that is significantly different from your study question or goals (Denscombe 2007). As such, your research topic may not be well-suited to the data you are evaluating.

Common explanations for this include secondary data that leaves out "things because the people whose information we are using don't think it's important, even if we do" (Becker 1998: 101), data that was gathered a few years ago and therefore isn't current, and different collection methods used by the original data sources that make precise comparison impossible.

It is nevertheless necessary to evaluate the quality of secondary data sets offered by governments and data archives, even if many of these sets are probably of a higher caliber than you could ever gather on your own. Wernicke (2014) points out that while national legislation requires many national statistics organisations to supply high-quality data, this may not always be the case.

The following concept is emphasised by Reichman (1962; quoted by Stewart and Kamins 1993) with reference to newspapers, but the same ideas hold true for many other documents. He contends that publications gloss over supporting information in favour of highlighting what they believe to be the most important facts. As the reporting's goal is to draw readers' attention to these issues rather than to give a thorough and in-depth account, Reichman says this is not a criticism. Generalising from these concepts, however, reveals that the culture, inclinations, and values of the people who initially gathered and compiled the secondary data will have had some influence on the characteristics of the data. Online sources, where there is growing concern about the potential for fake news, reports, and product reviews to be submitted, are particularly prone

to this. Because of these factors, you should carefully consider any secondary data you plan to use.

(Source: Adapted from Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2023)



Essential reading

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