Introduction

Data are facts and figures that are collected analyzed and summarized. Obtaining appropriate information is essential to conduct any research. Data contain information needed to make a more informed decision in a particular situation of any research. Data are the basic source of research.

Some examples:

- A market researcher needs to assess product characteristics to distinguish one product from another.

- An operations manager wants to monitor an assembly process regularly to find out whether the quality of the product that is being produced is conforming to company standards.

- A potential investor wants to determine what firms within what industries are likely to have accelerated growth in a period of economic recovery.

- An auditor wants to review the financial transaction of a company to ascertain whether or not it complies with generally accepted accounting principles.

Reasons for Obtaining Data

- To provide the necessary input to a survey.

- To provide the necessary input to a study.

- To measure the performance of an ongoing service or production process.

- To evaluate conformance to standards.

- To assist in formulating alternative courses of action in a decision-making process.

- To satisfy our curiosity.

Methods of Data Collection (Sources of Data)

The task of data collection begins after a research problem has been defined and the research design/plan chalked out while deciding about the method of data collection to be used for the study, the researcher should keep in mind two types of data viz., primary and secondary. The primary data are those which are collected afresh and for the first time, and thus happen to be original in character. The secondary data, on the other hand, are those which have already been collected by someone else and which have already been passed through the statistic process.

On the basis of sources of collecting information, data is divided into two categories.

1. Primary data
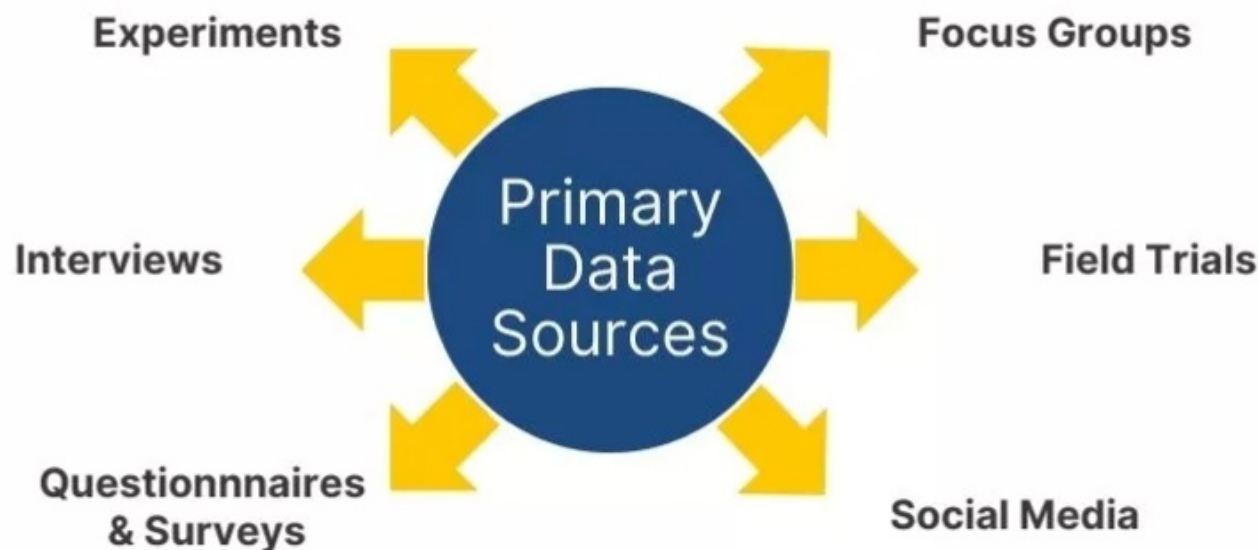
2. Secondary data

Primary Data

Data collected for the first time by the researcher in its original form i.e. First-hand account of an event that has not been interpreted by anyone else other than its creator is known as primary data.

Method of Collecting Primary Data

The various methods of collecting primary data are:

a) Direct Personal interviews

b) Indirect oral interviews

c) Information from correspondents

d) Mailed questionnaires

e) Schedules sent through enumerators.

Collection Methods For Primary Data

Problems in Collecting Primary Data

a) In general, the limitation of time and money is the major problem in collecting primary data.

b) Transportation is another problem for the countries like Nepal where the transportation network is very poor.

c) There is a high degree of non-response error from illiterate respondents.

d) It is likely to get unreliable data in some situations due to biases of enumerators.

e) The trained manpower and expertise may not be available while designing a questionnaire and collecting primary data.

Secondary Data

The use of primary data in any research is not always practicable due to the availability of time, money, effort and so on. So, in such cases, the investigator uses the data which have already been collected and used by others. There is a lot of published and unpublished information from which further studies can be made. Secondary data are indispensable for much of organizational research. Secondary data are compiled data that are taken from several primary sources and synthesized or summarized in some way. The advantage of secondary data is savings in time and costs of acquiring information. The main drawback of secondary sources of information is not meeting the specific needs of the particular situation in terms of reliability and validity of the data.

Secondary Data

01 Diaries

02 Government Data

03 Organisational Declarations

04 Official Documents

05 Statistical Records

06 Schoalrly articles on Databases

07 Books

08 Peer-reviewed Journal Articles

09 Magazines

10 Libraries

The distinction between Primary Data and Secondary Data

Primary data can be distinguished from secondary data as follows:

Primary Data	Basis of Distinction	Secondary Data
Primary data is the collection of original data for the first time.	1. Meaning	Secondary data is basically a complication of existing data.
It is collected by the investigator or his agents.	2. Who collects /complies	It is compiled by persons other than those who collected the primary data.
Its collection is relatively more costly.	3. Cost	Its collection is relatively less costly.
It is usually directly suitable to the purpose of the inquiry.	4. Suitability	It may or may be directly suitable for the purpose of the inquiry.
It may be used as it is for the purpose of the inquiry.	5. Use	It may require certain adjustments to be made to suit the purpose of the inquiry.
There is the possibility of personal prejudice in its collection.	6. Personal prejudice	There is no possibility of personal prejudice in its compilation since such data are already collected.

Note: The difference is the mere degree of detachment of the original source. All data are primary for the collecting agency and are secondary for the rest of the world. For example, data collected by RBI are primary for it and are secondary for all others.