

Primary Source of Data Collection

Primary data is the data that has been collected first hand by the researcher specially for addressing the problem at hand. A survey research can be quantitative or qualitative in nature. Primary data can be collected in a number of ways. However, the most common techniques are self-administered surveys, interviews, field observation, and experiments. Primary data collection is quite expensive and time consuming compared to secondary data collection. Notwithstanding, primary data collection may be the only suitable method for some types of research.

Primary data may be collected either through observation or through direct communication with respondents in one form or another through personal interviews. There are several ways of collecting primary data:

1. Observation

Observation is a complex research method because it often requires the researcher to play a number of roles and to use a number of techniques; including her/his five senses, to collect data. The observer puts himself in the actual situation and watch carefully. On the basis of his knowledge, skills and experience he collects the data without contacting the respondents. The results of observation entirely depend on the talents of the researcher. This method can be used only by expert persons in the research. Observation methods have been developed with the objective of 'observing people in their natural setting - as they go about their everyday lives. Observation methods can overcome some of the criticisms of quantitative research methods (Validity, bias etc.) and can be useful when its subject can't provide information, or can only provide inaccurate information. Out of available methods for collecting primary data, survey and observation methods have been found suitable for the topic study. These have fulfilled the requirements for data collection properly.



Advantages of Observation

- Allows for collection of data in natural settings
- Non-verbal behavior can also be observed
- Occurrence and recording are done simultaneously

- Flexible method of data collection
- Suitable to record the respondent's expression
- Accurate information as the investigator collects it personally

Disadvantages of Observation

- A very time consuming and expensive method
- Little control over variables
- Difficult to quantify the relevant data
- Lack of reliability
- Behavior recorded or observed is interpreted differently by different people
- Cannot be applied where the size of sample is large

Types of Observations

- **Structured vs. Unstructured Observation:** In structured observation the problem has been clearly defined, hence the behavior to be observed and the method by which it will be measured is specified beforehand in detail. On the other hand, unstructured analysis is used in situations where the problem has not been clearly defined; hence it cannot be pre specified that what is to be observed.
- **Disguised vs. Undisguised Observation:** In disguised observation, the subjects are unaware of the fact that they are being observed. Their behavior is observed using hidden cameras, one way mirrors, or other devices. On the other hand, in undisguised observation, the subjects are aware that they are being observed.
- **Participant vs. Non-Participant Observation:** If the observer participates in the situation while observing it is termed as participant observation. In case of non-participant observation, the observer remains outside the setting and does not involve himself or participate in the situation.
- **Natural vs. Contrived Observation:** In natural observation the behavior is observed as it takes place in the actual setting e.g. the consumer preferences observed directly at Pizza Hut where consumers are ordering pizza. In contrived observation, the phenomena is observed in an artificial or simulated setting e.g. the consumers instead of being observed in a restaurant are made to order in a setting that looks like a restaurant but is not an actual one.

2. Focus Groups

Focus group interview is a tool for qualitative market research where a group of people are selected and asked about their opinion or perceptions about a particular topic. The environment is interactive where the participants are free to discuss with each other. Focus groups could provide information about a range of ideas and feelings that individuals have about certain issues, as well as illuminating the differences in perspective between groups of individuals. It is a kind of interview which involves a moderator leading a discussion between small groups of respondent on a specified topic.



Focus group participants are recruited based on their purchase history, demographics, psychographics, or behavior and typically they do not each other.

Few basic **steps in conducting the interview** are as follows:

- Welcome the respondents and the moderator introduces himself.
- Next, the reason for making the respondents a part of this group is explained followed by the purpose of the interview and the application of the results of the interview.
- A guideline with regard to nature of questions that will be asked and the nature of response expected is given. The method used to record the answers of the respondents is also stated.
- While asking questions the moderator need to avoid dichotomous questions like yes/no, and questions beginning with 'why'. Instead introspective questions that encourage the respondents to think are encouraged.
- The closure of the interview is equally important. The moderator should close the interview by using summary questions like, "If you have to sum up the interview in one line or one minute what would you say?"

Advantages of Focus Groups

- It is comparatively easier to drive or conduct.
- One person's response initiates a chain of responses.
- Often new ideas are generated.

- The interviewer or moderator recruited for interview is a specialized person.
- It allows for topic to be discussed flexibly and in great depth.
- Due to large number of respondents, data is collected quickly.

Disadvantages of Focus Groups

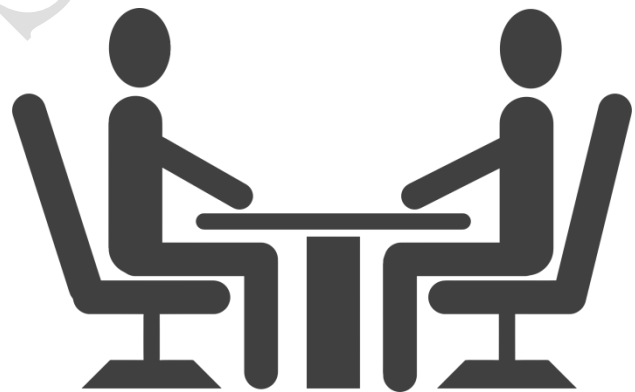
However, like the two sides of a coin, focus group interview suffers from certain disadvantages.

- **Difficult to interpret the results:** The results can be wrongly interpreted since the response is not to any specific question.
- **Coding and Analysis:** Focus group interviews make coding and analysis of data also very difficult.
- **Moderator bias:** Most importantly, it is difficult to find a moderator who can conduct these interviews successfully.
- **Misjudgment:** Some people misjudge the utility of the focus group -A interview on account of the results being inconclusive, whereas the applicability of the focus group interview is highly relevant in exploratory research.

3. Depth Interviews

Depth interview, like the focus group interview is an unstructured type of interview used to collect qualitative data. Depth or in-depth interview is a research technique which is used to conduct intensive individual interviews where numbers of respondents are less and research is focused on a specific product, technique, situation or objective.

Companies employ market research firms to employ In-depth interviews to understand consumer behavior for a new product or to expand sales of existing products.



Advantages of In-depth interviews

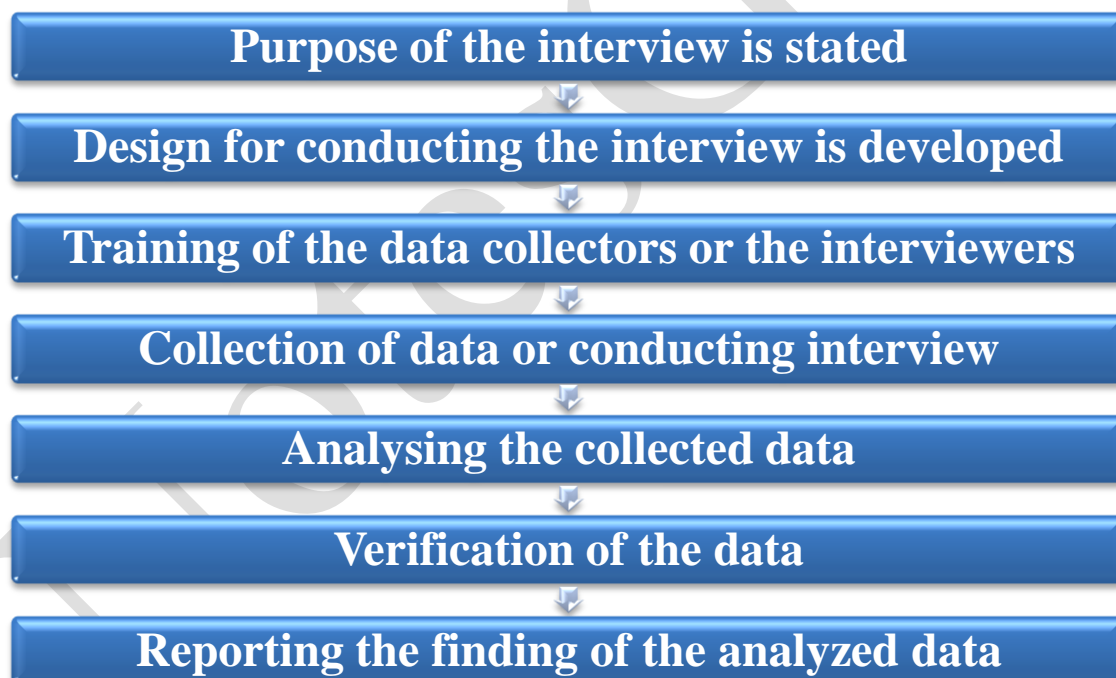
- Comparatively much more detailed information than other data collection methods like surveys and focused group discussions.
- Provide much more relaxed information to collect information- people feel more comfortable in having a personal conversations rather than filling surveys.

- Information obtained is comparatively more accurate.

Disadvantages of In-depth interviews

- Responses are prone to bias. Responses are affected by the community members and other participants of the program.
- Interviews can be time intensive. Interviewer has to match with the availability of the interviewee.
- Interviewer must be appropriately trained for the interview techniques. The interviews have to be structured and thus need appropriate skills.
- Results cannot be generalized as the sample chosen is very small and hence random sampling methods are used.

Process of In-depth interviews



4. Content Analysis

Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some given qualitative data (i.e. text). Using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts. Researchers can then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of surrounding the text. To analyze the text

using content analysis, the text must be coded, or broken down, into manageable code categories for analysis (i.e. “codes”). Once the text is coded into code categories, the codes can then be further categorized into **code categories** to summarize data even further.

Uses of Content Analysis

- Identify the intentions, focus or communication trends of an individual, group or institution
- Describe attitudinal and behavioral responses to communications
- Determine psychological or emotional state of persons or groups
- Reveal international differences in communication content
- Reveal patterns in communication content
- Pre-test and improve an intervention or survey prior to launch
- Analyze focus group interviews and open-ended questions to complement quantitative data

Advantages of Content Analysis

- Directly examines communication using text
- Allows for both qualitative and quantitative analysis
- Coded form of the text can be statistically analyzed
- Provides insight into complex models of human thought and language use
- Content analysis is a readily-understood and an inexpensive research method
- A more powerful tool when combined with other research methods

Disadvantages of Content Analysis

- Can be extremely time consuming
- Is subject to increased error, particularly when relational analysis is used to attain a higher level of interpretation
- Is inherently reductive, particularly when dealing with complex texts
- Tends too often to simply consist of word counts
- Can be difficult to automate or computerize

5. Projective Techniques

Projective Techniques are indirect and unstructured methods of investigation which have been developed by the psychologists and use projection of respondents for inferring about underline motives, urges or intentions which cannot be secure through direct questioning as the respondent either resists to reveal them or is unable to figure out himself. These techniques are useful in giving respondents opportunities to express their attitudes without personal embarrassment. These techniques help the respondents to project his attitude and feelings unconsciously on the subject under study. Thus Projective Techniques play an important role in motivational researches or in attitude surveys.

Some of these techniques are discussed below:

- **Thematic Appreciation Test (TAT):** The respondent is shown a set of pictures and then asked what he perceives of these pictures e.g. he might be shown a picture of a product and his perception of what he interprets from the picture is sought.
- **Item Substitution Test:** This test involves creating two groups of respondents, the test group and the control group. The stimulus, presented as a list of items, is given to both the groups which is similar in all respect except for the substitution of items relevant to the study e.g. a shopping list is given to both the groups with one list having Maggie noodles which gets substituted by 'Top Ramen' noodles and the shopper's characteristics can be judged.
- **Word Association Test:** An individual is given a clue or hint and asked to respond to the first thing that comes to mind. The association can take the shape of a picture or a word. There can be many interpretations of the same thing. A list of words is given and you don't know in which word they are most interested. The interviewer records the responses which reveal the inner feeling of the respondents. The frequency with which any word is given a response and the amount of time that elapses before the response is given are important for the researcher e.g. Out of 50 respondents, 20 people associate the word "Fair" with "Complexion".
- **Sentence/Story Completion:** This is a more developed version of word association. Here, participants are presented with a sentence or story that contains a blank, and asked to fill in the missing word or words. Similarly, to word association, this is often asked to be completed quickly, to capture initial thoughts before the response is rationalized. This encourages creative thinking and can uncover thoughts and attitudes associated with various situations.
- **Expression Techniques:** In this the people are asked to express the feeling or attitude of other people.

Advantages of Projective Techniques

- Suitable for sensitive questions
- Helps to understand consumer behavior
- Applicable on a wider range of population
- Depends upon non-verbal communication

Disadvantages of Projective Techniques

- Highly trained interviewers and skilled interpreters are needed.
- Interpreters' bias can be there.
- It is a costly method.
- The respondent selected may not be representative of the entire population.
- Lack of comfortableness in respondents