

Secondary Data

Secondary data is data that has already been collected and collated by somebody for some reason other than the current study. It may be available in the form of published or unpublished sources. For example, population census data collected by the government in a country is a primary data for that government. But the same data becomes secondary for those researchers who use it later.

Secondary data consist of the information that already exists somewhere, having been collected for other purposes. Hardly problem can be solved only by secondary data. They are used for exploring, defining, and understanding problems, which can be solved by primary data. For collecting secondary data, there is no need for employing qualified, experienced, and capable research officer. Similarly, special methods and tools are not used. Such data can be easily collected.

Characteristics of Secondary Data

1. Secondary data are published data, not original data, for the research on the hand.
2. They give the latest information
3. They can be easily collected from various internal and external sources.
4. They are relatively cheaper; they need less efforts, time, and money.
5. They have been collected by other people for their own problems and situation in the past.
6. They are used as a supplementary to primary data. Mostly, they are used for defining and understanding problems.
7. The use of secondary data is optional. Research can be conducted even without the use of this type of data.
8. They can be used without processing; no need to analyze them before they are used. They can be used directly.
9. Relevance, accuracy, and timing are the main problems related to secondary data.

Benefits of Secondary Data

1. One of the most noticeable advantages of using secondary data analysis is its **cost effectiveness**. Because someone else has already collected the data, the researcher does not need to invest any money, time, or effort into the data collection stages of his or her study.
2. Secondary Data is much more **quicker** to collect than primary data, as we need not that much time on designing and printing data collection forms such as questionnaires, schedules, etc.
3. It is impossible to an individual or small institution to collect primary data with regard to some subjects such as population census, imports and exports of different countries, national income data, etc. but can obtain form secondary data.
4. It helps to **make primary data collection more specific** since with the help of secondary data, we are able to make out what are the gaps and deficiencies and what additional information needs to be collected.
5. It helps to **improve the understanding of the problem**.
6. It provides a **basis for comparison** for the data that is collected by the researcher.

Drawbacks of Secondary Data

1. The biggest disadvantage of performing secondary data analysis is that the secondary data set **might not answer the researcher's specific research question** to the degree that the research would have hoped.
2. Another disadvantage is that no matter what a researcher does to get a secondary data set; they will **never be able to know exactly how the data was collected, and how well that process was executed**.
3. Secondary data is **very risky** because it may not be suitable, reliable, adequate and also difficult to find which exactly fit the need of the present situation.
4. Secondary data **may not be available for some investigations**. For example, bargaining strategies in live products marketing, impact of TV on advertisements on viewers, opinion polls on a specific subject, etc. In such situations, we have to collect primary data.

5. The researcher conducting the study did not collect the data he or she will be using; he or she ultimately has **no control** over what their secondary data set contains.

Evaluation of Secondary Data

During your evaluation process, consider the following factors:

- The data provider's purpose
- The data collector
- When the data was collected
- How the data was collected
- What data was collected
- Whether this data relate to other data

Questions to Ask When Evaluating Secondary Data

Consider the following six questions when evaluating the next data you find before using the results in your own business decisions.

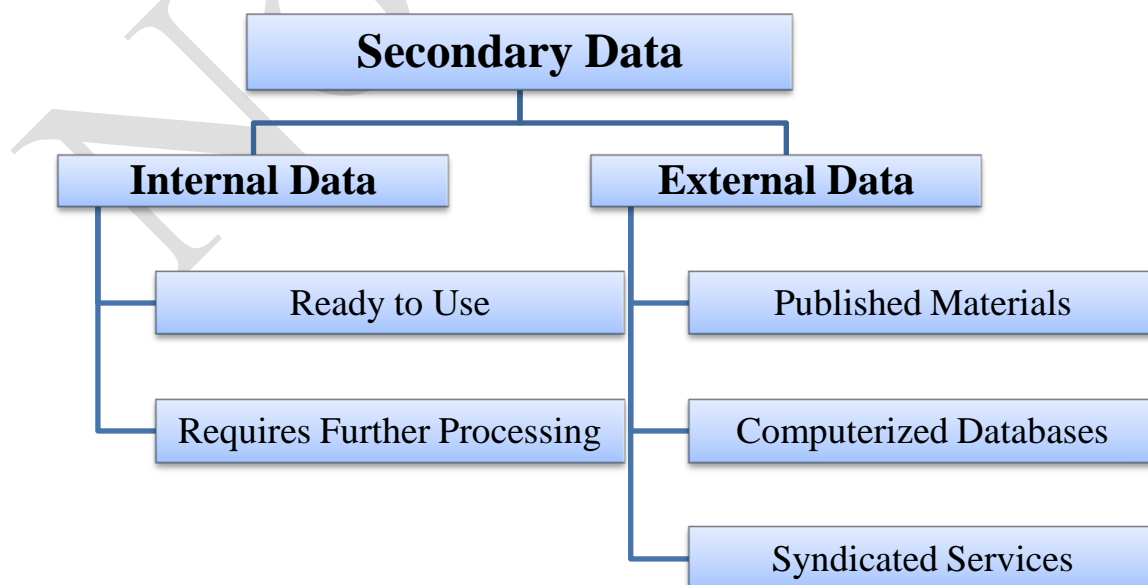
- **What was the research provider's purpose in presenting the data?** It's important to gauge objectivity and intent. Could the data or research be potentially biased? Is there an agenda that's being pushed? Consider these things, especially when examining data from commercial businesses and even political parties posting information online that might favor them in some way or represent their own interests. The integrity of such research might therefore be compromised. Because of this, the information you believe will help your company might not be 100% accurate.
- **Who collected the data?** There's comfort in knowing who originated and collected the data we find. The "who" factor impacts the data's reliability and whether or not we ultimately opt to utilize or trust it. Data from professional organizations, known brands, or government agencies will always have a trustworthiness not commonly associated with information gathered from less credible resources such as personal blogs or websites.
- **When was the data collected?** Time is one of the most important aspects of accuracy. If you are researching the hottest food trends for your restaurant, trend analysis from three years ago

will not help you. Check the dates on all of your data so you know you have the newest and most relevant information available.

- **How was the data collected?** This is especially important when using data directly related to consumer's opinions and needs. If you know how the information was collected, then you will be able to tell which methods were used. This can also inform you if the data is related to the population you need knowledge on.
- **What type of data was collected?** Not all of the secondary data you read is going to be applicable to your research goals. If you need data on mobile internet usage, a report on all internet usage is going to be too broad for your specific needs. There are researches specialists you can partner up with to ensure the reports you want to purchase are going to be effective in answering your market research questions.
- **Is the data consistent with data from other sources?** If you happen to see specific facts varying from source to source, you need to research which answers are most accurate. Utilizing external data is only going to benefit you if it is correct. Take the time to check that your source is reliable so you can trust the data they are providing you.

Asking these six questions is going to help you in making sure you use the most accurate data for your business needs. We all can search for data online today, but getting reliable data is the difference between making a successful or unsuccessful business decision. More importantly, taking these steps will protect your business reputation with clients, colleagues, the media, and others.

Classification of Secondary Data



1. Internal Data

The data which is available internally within the organization conducting research is termed as internal data. The main advantage of this type of data is that it is easily available and greater reliance can be placed on the degree of accuracy and relevance to the study. Internal data may be **ready to use** or **require further processing**.

2. External Data

External data is the secondary data that is available from outside the organization for which the research is being conducted. It can be classified as:

- **Published Data** is the most basic secondary source of information for data collection. Published data can be obtained from various sources like books, magazines, newspapers, journals and periodicals etc. Published data is the most reliable secondary source of information. The validity of published data is greater than unpublished data. Different sources of Published Data are guides, directories, government sources like census data, etc.
- **Computerized Databases** refer to the data which is available in an electronic form. Computer databases can be bibliographic databases, numeric databases, full text databases and directory databases.
- **Syndicated Services** refer to companies that collect and sell data to various clients having different information needs. The data collected by them has the ability to suit the requirements of a large number of individuals or organizations.