

**TY BBA Semester V Pattern 2015**

**Subject Name -: Research Methodology**

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**Unit No-3 Methods of Collecting of Data**

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### 3.1 Primary Data: Methods of collecting primary data

A primary data source is an original data source, that is, one in which the data are collected firsthand by the researcher for a specific research purpose or project. 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.

#### 3.1.1 Survey Method: Types of surveys

There are various types of surveys you can choose from. Basically, the types of surveys are broadly categorized into two: according to instrumentation and according to the span of time involved. The types of surveys according to instrumentation include the questionnaire and the interview. On the other hand, the types of surveys according to the span of time used to conduct the survey are comprised of cross-sectional surveys and longitudinal surveys.

In survey research, the instruments that are utilized can be either a questionnaire or an interview (either structured or unstructured).

#### **1. Questionnaires**

Typically, a questionnaire is a paper-and-pencil instrument that is administered to the respondents. The usual questions found in questionnaires are closed-ended questions, which are followed

by response options. However, there are questionnaires that ask open-ended questions to explore the answers of the respondents. Questionnaires have been developed over the years. Today, questionnaires are utilized in various survey methods, according to how they are given. These methods include the self-administered, the group-administered, and the household drop-off. Among the three, the self-administered survey method is often used by researchers nowadays. The self-administered questionnaires are widely known as the mail survey method. However, since the response rates related to mail surveys had gone low, questionnaires are now commonly administered online, as in the form of web surveys.

- **Advantages:** Ideal for asking closed-ended questions; effective for market or consumer research
- **Disadvantages:** Limit the researcher's understanding of the respondent's answers; requires budget for reproduction of survey questionnaires

## 2. Interviews

Between the two broad types of surveys, interviews are more personal and probing. Questionnaires do not provide the freedom to ask follow-up questions to explore the answers of the respondents, but interviews do.

An interview includes two persons - the researcher as the interviewer, and the respondent as the interviewee. There are several survey methods that utilize interviews. These are the personal or face-to-face interview, the phone interview, and more recently, the online interview.

- **Advantages:** Follow-up questions can be asked; provide better understanding of the answers of the respondents
- **Disadvantages:** Time-consuming; many target respondents have no public-listed phone numbers or no telephones at all

The two different types of surveys: cross-sectional and longitudinal.

### **1. Cross-Sectional Surveys**

Collecting information from the respondents at a single period in time uses the cross-sectional type of survey. Cross-sectional surveys usually utilize questionnaires to ask about a particular topic at one point in time. For instance, a researcher conducted a cross-sectional survey asking teenagers' views on cigarette smoking as of May 2010. Sometimes, cross-sectional surveys are used to identify the relationship between two variables, as in a comparative study. An example of this is administering a cross-sectional survey about the relationship of peer pressure and cigarette smoking among teenagers as of May 2010.

### **2. Longitudinal Surveys**

When the researcher attempts to gather information over a period of time or from one point in time up to another, he is doing a longitudinal survey. The aim of longitudinal surveys is to collect data and examine the changes in the data gathered. Longitudinal surveys are used in cohort studies, panel studies and trend studies.

3.1.2 Questionnaire Method: Types of questions, Essentials of good questionnaire

## **What is a questionnaire?**

A questionnaire is a research device or instrument that is made up of a series of questions which are closed-ended or open-ended. The goal is to collect relevant data from respondents which can then be used for a variety of purposes. When you give the respondent the ability to give a longer answer, it can yield more insights because they can elaborate on their thoughts.

It was first developed by the Statistical Society of London in 1838 and has been in continuous use ever since.

Questionnaires, though versatile, aren't ideal in every situation where you need to understand specific issues. It's not advisable to use a questionnaire to ask specific questions about a product or service you're still considering. This may lead to bias and false positives about the feasibility of the product.

Instead, questionnaires should be used to collect more general information - qualitative or quantitative data - regarding features and preferences. For example, instead of asking if they'd buy a new pink button-down shirt with a unique collar, ask if they like to wear the color pink or if they like the type of collar you're considering.

**Questionnaire** A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions and other prompts for the purpose of gathering information from respondents.

## **Steps required to design and administer a questionnaire**

1. Defining the objectives of the study
2. Define the target respondents and methods to reach them.
3. Questionnaire design
4. Questionnaire pilot testing
5. Questionnaire administration
6. Results interpretation

## **The following are characteristics of good questionnaires:**

- It should consist of a well-written list of questions.
- The questionnaire should deal with an important or significant topic to create interest among respondents.
- It should seek only that data which cannot be obtained from other sources.
- It should be as short as possible but should be comprehensive.
- It should be attractive.
- Directions should be clear and complete.
- It should be represented in good psychological order proceeding from general to more specific responses.
- Double negatives in questions should be avoided.
- Putting two questions in one question also should be avoided. Every question should seek to obtain only one specific information.

- It should be designed to collect information which can be used subsequently as data for analysis.
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A well-designed and considered questionnaire can be the difference between success and failure.

## **Types of questionnaires**

There are two main types of questionnaires and the one you'll use depends on what kind of information you want and purpose of that information.

### **Exploratory questionnaire (qualitative)**

**These are also known as unstructured questionnaires.**

They're used to collect qualitative data which is information that can be observed and recorded but isn't numerical in nature. It's used to approximate and characterize.

An example of qualitative data would be someone giving your feedback about your writing. They may mention things about the tone, clarity, word choice, etc. it helps you categorize your writing but you can't attach a number to the feedback.

Exploratory questionnaires are ideal when you're in the early stages and want to learn more about a topic before designing a solution or hypothesis. For example, if you're in the early stages of product development and don't know enough about the market then exploratory questionnaires are ideal.

Formal standardized questionnaire (quantitative)

**They're also known as structured questionnaires.** These ones are used to collect quantitative data which is information recorded as a count or numerical value.

The data is quantifiable which means it can be used for mathematical calculations or statistical analysis. In essence, it answers the question of how much, how many, or how often.

An example of quantitative data would be the answer to the following question, "how old are you?" which requires a numerical reply.

Standardized questionnaires are best used when you've already formed an initial hypothesis or built out a prototype for a product. You'll use it to stress test your assumptions, designs, use cases, etc. before going further with product development. Because of its clear focus, the questions you ask are narrow in scope and solicit specific information.

Just as important as the questionnaire type are the question types you choose.

## **Questionnaire question types**

Not all question types are ideal in every situation. That's why it's important to understand the type of questionnaire you're



creating first. With that information, it becomes easier to choose the right question types.

### **Open ended questions:**

As the name implies, these questions are open for the respondent to answer with more freedom. Instead of presenting a series of answers choices, the respondent writes as much as little as they want. This is ideal for exploratory questionnaires which collect qualitative data.

### **Multiple choice questions:**

This question presents the respondent with a list of answer options and they can select one or more. The challenge with multiple-choice questions is providing incomplete answer options.

For example, you may ask what industry do you work in and list out 5 of the most common industries. There are more than 5 industries in the world so some people won't be represented in this situation. A simple solution to this problem is adding an "other" option.

### **Dichotomous questions:**

This is a question with only two possible answers. It tends to be a yes or no question but it can also be something like

agree/disagree or true/false. Use this when all you need is basic validation without going too deeply into the motivations.

### **Scaled questions:**

Scaled questions are common in questionnaires and are often used to judge the degree of a feeling. This can be used in both exploratory and standardized questionnaires because there are many different types of scaled questions such as:

- Rating scale
- Likert scale
- Semantic differential scale

### **Pictorial questions:**

The final type of question used in questionnaires substitutes text for images. Respondents are asked a question and shown pictures to choose from. It usually has a higher response rate than other question types.

### **Questions to avoid in a questionnaire**

While you can ask almost anything in your questionnaire, it may not be a good idea to do so. Some questions may give you poor data while others may stop people from completing the questionnaire.

Here are a few question types to avoid.

### **Hypothetical questions:**

A hypothetical question asks a respondent what they would do, think, or feel about a situation that may happen in the future. It's asking people to talk about their future actions and behavior which we're notoriously bad at. This kind of question may give you data that can't be used or will skew your overall understanding of the topic.

### **Embarrassing or offensive:**

Even though questionnaires can be anonymous, it's not a good idea to embarrass or offend the respondent. It may lead to them dropping the questionnaire without completing it or giving you poor answers on purpose. Neither one is a good scenario.

### **Extreme positive/negative:**

You don't want to bias your respondents before they've had a chance to form their own opinion on a topic. If a question is presented as extremely positive or negative then it may create a bias that should always be avoided. In the end, your data will be skewed.

### **3.1.3 Interview Method: Types of Interviews**

An interview is generally a qualitative research technique which involves asking open-ended questions to converse with respondents and collect elicited data about a subject. The interviewer in most cases is the subject matter expert who intends to understand respondent opinions in a well-planned and executed series of questions and answers. Interviews are similar to focus groups and surveys when it comes to garnering information from the target market but are entirely different in their operation – focus groups are restricted to a small group of 6-10 individuals whereas surveys are quantitative in nature. Interviews are conducted with a sample from a population and the key characteristic they exhibit is their conversational tone.

#### **Fundamental Types of Interviews in Research**

A researcher has to conduct interviews with a group of participants at a juncture in the research where information can only be obtained by meeting and personally connecting with a section of their target audience. Interviews offer the researchers with a platform to prompt their participants and obtain inputs in the desired detail. There are three fundamental types of interviews in research:

#### **Structured Interviews:**

Structured interviews are defined as research tools that are extremely rigid in their operations and allow very little or no

scope of prompting the participants to obtain and analyze results. It is thus also known as a standardized interview and is significantly quantitative in its approach. Questions in this interview are pre-decided according to the required detail of information.

Structured interviews are excessively used in survey research with the intention of maintaining uniformity throughout all the interview sessions.

They can be closed-ended as well as open-ended – according to the type of target population. Closed-ended questions can be included to understand user preferences from a collection of answer options whereas open-ended can be included to gain details about a particular section in the interview.

### **Advantages of structured interviews:**

- Structured interviews focus on the accuracy of different responses due to which extremely organized data can be collected. Different respondents have different type of answers to the same structure of questions – answers obtained can be collectively analyzed.
- They can be used to get in touch with a large sample of the target population.
- The interview procedure is made easy due to the standardization offered by structured interviews.
- Replication across multiple samples becomes easy due to the same structure of interview.
- As the scope of detail is already considered while designing the interview, better information can be obtained

and the researcher can analyze the research problem in a comprehensive manner by asking accurate research questions.

- Since the structure of the interview is fixed, it often generates reliable results and is quick to execute.
- The relationship between the researcher and the respondent is not formal due to which the researcher can clearly understand the margin of error in case the respondent either degrades to be a part of the survey or is just not interested in providing the right information.

### **Disadvantages of structured interviews:**

- Limited scope of assessment of obtained results.
- The accuracy of information overpowers the detail of information.
- Respondents are forced to select from the provided answer options.
- The researcher is expected to always adhere to the list of decided questions irrespective of how interesting the conversation is turning out to be with the participants.
- A significant amount of time is required for a structured interview.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews:**

Semi-structured interviews offer a considerable amount of leeway to the researcher to probe the respondents along with maintaining basic interview structure. Even if it is a guided conversation between researchers and interviewees – an appreciable flexibility is offered to the researchers. A researcher can be assured that multiple interview rounds will not be

required in the presence of structure in this type of research interview.

Keeping the structure in mind, the researcher can follow any idea or take creative advantage of the entire interview. Additional respondent probing is always necessary to garner information for a research study. The best application of semi-structured interview is when the researcher doesn't have time to conduct research and requires detailed information about the topic.

### **Advantages of semi-structured interviews:**

- Questions of semi-structured interviews are prepared before the scheduled interview which provides the researcher with time to prepare and analyze the questions.
- It is flexible to an extent while maintaining the research guidelines.
- Researchers can express the interview questions in the format they prefer, unlike the structured interview.
- Reliable qualitative data can be collected via these interviews.
- Flexible structure of the interview.

### **Disadvantages of semi-structured interviews:**

- Participants may question the reliability factor of these interviews due to the flexibility offered.
- Comparing two different answers becomes difficult as the guideline for conducting interviews is not entirely

followed. No two questions will have the exact same structure and the result will be an inability to compare or infer results.

- **Unstructured Interviews:**

Also called as in-depth interviews, unstructured interviews are usually described as conversations held with a purpose in mind – to gather data about the research study. These interviews have the least number of questions as they lean more towards a normal conversation but with an underlying subject.

The main objective of most researchers using unstructured interviews is to build a bond with the respondents due to which there are high chances that the respondents will be 100% truthful with their answers. There are no guidelines for the researchers to follow and so, they can approach the participants in any ethical manner to gain as much information as they possibly can for their research topic.

Since there are no guidelines for these interviews, a researcher is expected to keep their approach in check so that the respondents do not sway away from the main research motive. For a researcher to obtain the desired outcome, he/she must keep the following factors in mind:

- Intent of the interview.
- The interview should primarily take into consideration the participant's interest and skills.



- All the conversations should be conducted within permissible limits of research and the researcher should try and stick by these limits.
- The skills and knowledge of the researcher should match the purpose of the interview.
- Researchers should understand the do's and don'ts of unstructured interviews.

### **Advantages of Unstructured Interviews:**

- Due to the informal nature of unstructured interviews – it becomes extremely easy for researchers to try and develop a friendly rapport with the participants. This leads to gaining insights in extreme detail without much conscious effort.
- The participants can clarify all their doubts about the questions and the researcher can take each opportunity to explain his/her intention for better answers.
- There are no questions which the researcher has to abide by and this usually increases the flexibility of the entire research process.

### **Disadvantages of Unstructured Interviews:**

- As there is no structure to the interview process, researchers take time to execute these interviews.
- The absence of a standardized set of questions and guidelines indicates that the reliability of unstructured interviews is questionable.
- In many cases, the ethics involved in these interviews are considered borderline upsetting.

## **Methods of Research Interviews:**

There are three methods to conduct research interviews, each of which is peculiar in its application and can be used according to the research study requirement.

### **Personal Interviews:**

Personal interviews are one of the most used types of interviews, where the questions are asked personally directly to the respondent. For this, a researcher can have a guide online surveys to take note of the answers. A researcher can design his/her survey in such a way that they take notes of the comments or points of view that stands out from the interviewee.

### **Advantage:**

- Higher response rate.
- When the interviewees and respondents are face-to-face, there is a way to adapt the questions if this is not understood.
- More complete answers can be obtained if there is doubt on both sides or a particular information is detected that is remarkable.
- The researcher has an opportunity to detect and analyze the interviewee's body language at the time of asking the questions and taking notes about it.

## **Disadvantages:**

- They are time-consuming and extremely expensive.
- They can generate distrust on the part of the interviewee, since they may be self-conscious and not answer truthfully.
- Contacting the interviewees can be a real headache, either scheduling an appointment in workplaces or going from house to house and not finding anyone.
- Therefore, many interviews are conducted in public places, such as shopping centers or parks. There are even consumer studies that take advantage of these sites to conduct interviews or surveys and give incentives, gifts, coupons, in short; There are great opportunities for online research in shopping centers.
- Among the advantages of conducting these types of interviews is that the respondents will have more fresh information if the interview is conducted in the context and with the appropriate stimuli, so that researchers can have data from their experience at the scene of the events, immediately and first hand. The interviewer can use an online survey through a mobile device that will undoubtedly facilitate the entire process.

## **Telephonic Interviews:**

Telephonic interviews are widely used and easy to combine with online surveys to carry out research effectively.

### **Advantages:**

- To find the interviewees it is enough to have their telephone numbers on hand.
- They are usually lower cost.
- The information is collected quickly.
- Having a personal contact can also clarify doubts, or give more details of the questions.

### **Disadvantages:**

- Many times researchers observe that people do not answer phone calls because it is an unknown number for the respondent, or simply already changed their place of residence and they cannot locate it, which causes a bias in the interview.
- Researchers also face that they simply do not want to answer and resort to pretexts such as they are busy to answer, they are sick, they do not have the authority to answer the questions asked, they have no interest in answering or they are afraid of putting their security at risk.
- One of the aspects that should be taken care of in these types of interviews is the kindness with which the interviewers address the respondents, in order to get them to cooperate more easily with their answers. Good communication is vital for the generation of better answers.

## **Email or Web Page Interviews:**

Online research is growing more and more because consumers are migrating to a more virtual world and it is best for each researcher to adapt to this change.

The increase in people with Internet access has made it popular that interviews via email or web page stand out among the types of interviews most used today. For this nothing better than an online survey.

More and more consumers are turning to online shopping, which is why they are a great niche to be able to carry out an interview that will generate information for the correct decision making.

## **Advantages of email surveys:**

- Speed in obtaining data
- The respondents respond according to their time, at the time they want and in the place they decide.
- Online surveys can be mixed with other research methods or using some of the previous interview models. They are tools that can perfectly complement and pay for the project.
- A researcher can use a variety of questions, logics, create graphs and reports immediately.

Undoubtedly, the objective of the research will set the pattern of what types of interviews are best for data collection. Based on the research design, a research can plan and test the questions, for instance, if the questions are the correct and if the survey flows in the best way.

In addition there are other types of research that can be used under specific circumstances, for example in the case of no connection or adverse situations to carry out surveys, in these types of occasions it is necessary to conduct a field research, which cannot be considered an interview if not rather a completely different methodology.

To summarize the discussion, an effective interview will be one that provides researchers with the necessary data to know the object of study and that this information is applicable to the decisions researchers make.

### **3.1.4 Experimentation & Observation Methods: Types of observations**

The observation method is described as a method to observe and describe the behavior of a subject. As the name suggests, it is a way of collecting relevant information and data by observing. It is also referred to as a participatory study because the researcher has to establish a link with the respondent and for this has to immerse himself in the same setting as theirs. Only then can he use the observation method to record and take notes

#### 1) Controlled observations

The controlled observation is carried out in a closed space. It is the researcher who has the authority to decide the place and the time where and when the observation will take place. He also decides who the participants will be and in what circumstances will he use the standardized process.

The participants are chosen for a variable group randomly. The researcher observes and records a detailed and descriptive data of behavior and divides it into a distinct category. Sometimes the researcher codes the action as per an agreed scale by using a behavior schedule. The coding can include letters or numbers or a range to measure behavior intensity and describe its characteristics.

The collected data is often turned into statistics. In a controlled observation method, the participants are informed by the researcher about the aim of the research. This makes them aware of being observed. The researcher avoids direct contact during the observation method and generally uses a two-way mirror to observe and record details.

### **Advantages of controlled observation method**

1. The data and information received from a controlled observation method are structured and analytical. It is thus easy to analyze it quickly and is considered less time-consuming than the other observation methods
2. Other researchers can easily replicate the report that has been created through the controlled observation method. They use a similar observation schedule, and this makes it easy to test for reliability.
3. As the controlled observation method is several quick observations can be conducted within a short time frame. Thus the researcher can collect large samples which makes it easier for him to generalize a large population

### **Limitations of controlled observation method**

1. The controlled observation method lacks validity because when the participants are aware of being observed their behavior will automatically change

## 2) Naturalistic observations

Social scientists and psychologists generally use the naturalistic observation method. The process involves observing and studying the spontaneous behavior of the participants in open or natural surroundings. The role of the researcher is to find and record whatever he can see and observe in natural habitat.

### **Advantages of naturalistic observation method**

1. When a participant is in a natural habitat, his flow of behavior is natural and not forced.
2. The studies have gained better ecological validity than the controlled observation method
3. The naturalistic observation method is used by the researchers to create new ideas. The researcher has the chance to observe the total situation and can find avenues that other people have not thought about

### **Limitations of naturalistic observation methods**

1. The naturalistic observation method facilitates observations on a micro-scale. It often lacks a representative sample and thus cannot help the researcher in making a generalization that relates to a broader society
2. In this type of observation method, the researcher needs proper training to recognize aspects that are significant and worth attention.



3. The observations through naturalistic observation method are not as reliable as the researcher wants them to be because it is not possible to control some variables. This is why other researchers cannot similarly repeat the study or research.
4. Establishing the cause and effect relationship is not possible because the researcher cannot manipulate the variables

### 3) Participant observations

The participant observation method is often considered a variant of the naturalistic observation method because it has some similarities with it. The point of difference is that the researcher is not a distant observer anymore because he has joined the participants and become a part of their group. He does this to get a more in-depth and greater insight into their lives.

The researcher interacts with other members of the group freely, participates in their activities, studies their behavior and acquires a different way of life. Participant observation can be overt or covert.

1. **Overt** –When the researcher asks permission from a group to mingle the observation method is known as overt. He does so by revealing his true purpose and real identity to the group with whom he wants to mingle
2. **Covert**– When the researcher does not show either his true identity or real meaning to the group, he wants to join then the observation is known as covert. He keeps both concealed and takes on a false role and identity to enter and mingle in the group. He generally acts as if he is a genuine member of that group

## **Advantages of Participant Observation methods**

1. It is easy to study and observe the natural behavior of the participants in the group by becoming a part of that group. The respondents generally do not know that they are being observed and behavior recorded, so they are not restrained or constrained in their activities and behavior
2. The researcher becomes understanding by following the events of the respondents from such a close angle.
3. During the participant observation method, the researcher develops a good and healthy relationship with the respondents. This rapport helps him to participate in all the activities and make observations with a detached mind
4. The participant observation method helps the research to observe the actual behavior of the respondents and create an inclusive and intensive case study of that group
5. Actual participation in the activities provides the researcher with an opportunity to converse freely with other members about various events, their meaning and their importance to them. He gains an in-depth knowledge which would not have been possible only by observation.

## **Limitations of Participant Observation methods**

1. It is challenging to work undercover. For example, the researcher will have only to observe and not record in front of others because he will not want to blow his cover. He relies heavily on his memory which can be faulty at times
2. Sometimes the researcher becomes too involved in the intricacies of that group. There is a higher chance of losing his objectivity because his reporting will be selective and dependent on his memory

3. The emotional participation of the researcher can result in bias interpretation. He will be influenced to some degree and a time might come when he would start supporting them unconditionally because their views and behavior will ultimately become his. This will result in a personal viewpoint of the scenario and not an objective or scientific report
4. In the participant observation method, the researcher's experience becomes intense because of his proximity to the group members but the range becomes limited
5. The researcher misses many vital points because of his familiarity
6. partial observer with whom everyone is ready to cooperate.

### **Advantages of Observation Method**

- Provides direct access to research phenomena
- By observing firsthand, the researcher can collect, check and record accurate data
- Greater flexibility in terms of application
- Generate a permanent record of phenomena and the researcher or others can refer with it later
- The organization method is one of the simplest methods of data collection. It does not require too much technical knowledge
- The observation method is one of the best ways to formulate a hypothesis. The researcher can observe and come to know about the activities, perceptions, likes and dislikes to form a theory on his subject
- Observation method is one of the most common methods used in all sciences and is very easy to follow and accept

- In some instances, observation is the only available tool to collect essential data and information
- The observation method does not require the willingness of the participant to record. The researcher can observe from a distance and record his findings

### **Disadvantages of Observation Method**

- Faces a severe disadvantage because it takes a longer time frame compared to other data collection methods
- There is a chance of higher observer bias in the observation method
- Several personal behaviors are not open for observation and this proves a limitation in case of observation method
- There is a higher chance of the observer influencing the behavior of a sample group elements
- Uncertainties of the event cannot determine the actual time when the event will take place, and this is why every occurrence that is open to observation cannot be observed
- Many of the incidents are abstract like love, affection and the researcher can't gain an exact and correct account of those
- The social phenomena generalization made by observation are not considered reliable as it cannot be used for lab experiments
- In some cases, it is seen that two persons observing the same phenomena come at different results and this can lead to faulty perceptions
- Observation method is considered an expensive affair as it requires hard effort, plenty of time and high cost

### **3.1.5 Focus Group Methods like Panel groups & Group Discussions**

#### **What is a focus group?**

A focus group is best defined as a small group of carefully selected participants who contribute to open discussions for research. The hosting organization carefully selects participants for the study to represent the larger population they're attempting to target.

The group might look at new products, feature updates, or other topics of interest to generalize the entire population's reaction. Focus group research includes a moderator. Their job is to ensure legitimate results and reduce bias in the discussions.

In 1991, marketing and psychological expert Ernest Dichter coined the name "Focus Group." The term described meetings held with a limited group of participants with the objective of discussion.

- You use a focus group in qualitative research. A group of 6-10 people, usually 8, meet to explore and discuss a topic, such as a new product. The group shares their feedback, opinions, knowledge, and insights about the topic at hand.

- Participants openly share opinions and are free to convince other participants of their ideas.
- The mediator takes notes on the discussion and opinions of group members.
- The right group members affect the results of your research, so it's vital to be picky when selecting members.

Focus groups possess a distinct advantage over other market research methods. They capitalize on the moderator's communication with participants and the flexibility to move the discussion. It allows you to extract meaningful insights and opinions.

The purpose of the group is not to arrive at a consensus or agreement on the topic. Instead, it seeks to identify and understand customer perceptions of a brand, product, or service.

### **Main pillars of a focus group:**

**Participants:** A crucial step in conducting a focus group is the process of participant selection. The main criteria for selecting the participants must be their knowledge about the subject. If you need help selecting members, look for a research-based organization that matches you with qualified participants.

**The role of a moderator:** The moderator conducts the group with confidence and leads members through the questions. They must be impartial throughout the process. As the researcher, you can also be the moderator, so long as you remain objective. You can also hire a suitable professional moderator to run your focus group survey.

## **Types of focus groups**

Your choice of focus group depends on the needs of your research. Types include:

- **Dual-moderator focus group:** There are two moderators for this event. One ensures smooth execution, and the other guarantees the discussion of each question.
- **Two-way focus group:** A two-way group involves two separate groups having discussions on the topic at different times. As one group conducts their study, the other group observes the discussion. In the end, the group that observed the first session performs their conversation. The second group can use insights gained from watching the first discussion to dive deeper into the topic and offer more perspective.
- **Mini focus group:** This type of group restricts participants to 4-5 members instead of the usual 6-10.
- **Client-involvement focus group:** Use this group when clients ask you to conduct a focus group and invite those who ask.
- **Participant-moderated focus group:** One or more participants provisionally take up the role of moderator.
- **Online focus group:** These groups employ online mediums to gather opinions and feedback. There are three categories of people in an online focus panel: observer, moderator, and respondent.

## **Steps to conduct focus group research**

### **1. Recruit the right participants**

A researcher must be careful while recruiting participants. Members need adequate knowledge of the topic so that they can add to the conversation.

## **2. Choose a moderator**

Your moderator should understand the topic of discussion and possess the following qualities:

- Ensures participation from all members of the group.
- Regulates dominant group members so others may speak.
- Motivates inattentive members through supportive words and positive body language.
- Makes the executive decision to end or continue a discussion should it become too heated.

Verify your moderator doesn't know any of the participants. Existing relationships between a member and moderator cause bias and can skew your data.

## **3. Record the meeting for future purposes**

While conducting a focus group, it is essential to record the sessions or meetings. A researcher can record the discussion through audio or video. You must let participants know you're planning to record the event and get their consent.

## **4. Write clear discussion guidelines**

Before the session starts, it is crucial to write down clear session guidelines. Include key questions, expectations of focus group members, whether you're recording the discussion, and methods of sharing results. Give out the instructions in advance and request participants to comply with them.



### **5. Conduct the session and generate a report**

Once participants understand their role, the moderator leads the focus group survey. You can ask members to fill out a feedback form to collect quantitative data from the event. Use your data and generate reports on the overall findings of your study.

### **6. Use the data to make a plan of action**

Share your report with stakeholders and decisionmakers in your organization. A good report helps you design actionable plans to improve products or services according to the focus group feedback. Update focus group members on the changes you make and the results of those changes.

## 3.2 Secondary Data: Methods of collecting secondary data

### **Secondary Data: Definition**

Secondary data that involves using already existing data. Existing data is summarized and collated to increase the overall effectiveness of research.

Secondary data includes research material published in research reports and similar documents. These documents can be made available by public libraries, websites, data obtained from already filled in surveys etc. Some government and non-government agencies also store data, that can be used for research purposes and can be retrieved from them.

Secondary research is much more cost-effective than primary research, as it makes use of already existing data, unlike primary research where data is collected first hand by organizations or businesses or they can employ a third party to collect data on their behalf.

Following are popularly used secondary data collection methods and examples:

**1. Data available on the internet:** One of the most popular ways of collecting secondary data is using the internet. Data is readily available on the internet and can be downloaded at the click of a button.

This data is practically free of cost or one may have to pay a negligible amount to download the already existing data. Websites have a lot of information that businesses or organizations can use to suit their research needs. However, organizations need to consider only authentic and trusted website to collect information.

**2. Government and nongovernment agencies:** Data for secondary research can also be collected from some government and non-government agencies. For example, US Government Printing Office, US Census Bureau, and Small Business Development Centers have valuable and relevant data that businesses or organizations can use.

There is a certain cost applicable to download or use data available with these agencies. Data obtained from these agencies are authentic and trustworthy.

**3. Public libraries:** Public libraries are another good source to search for data for secondary research. Public libraries have copies of important research that were conducted earlier. They are a storehouse of important information and documents from which information can be extracted.

The services provided in these public libraries vary from one library to another. More often, libraries have a huge collection of government publications with market statistics, large collection of business directories and newsletters.

**4. Educational Institutions:** Importance of collecting data from educational institutions for secondary research is often overlooked. However, more research is conducted in colleges and universities than any other business sector.

The data that is collected by universities is mainly for primary research. However, businesses or organizations can approach educational institutions and request for data from them.

**5. Commercial information sources:** Local newspapers, journals, magazines, radio and TV stations are a great source to obtain data for secondary research. These commercial information sources have first-hand information on economic developments, political agenda, market research, demographic segmentation and similar subjects.

Businesses or organizations can request to obtain data that is most relevant to their study. Businesses not only have the opportunity to identify their prospective clients but can also

know about the avenues to promote their products or services through these sources as they have a wider reach.

### **Advantages of Secondary Data Collection Method**

1. Most information is secondary research is readily available. There are many sources from which relevant data can be collected and used, unlike primary research, where data needs to collect from scratch.
2. This is a less expensive and less time-consuming process as data required is easily available and doesn't cost much if extracted from authentic sources. A minimum expenditure is associated to obtain data.
3. The data that is collected through secondary research, gives organizations or businesses an idea about the effectiveness of primary research. Hence, organizations or businesses can form a hypothesis and evaluate cost of conducting primary research.
4. Secondary research is quicker to conduct because of availability of data. Secondary research can be completed within a few weeks depending on the objective of businesses or scale of data needed.

### **Disadvantages of Secondary Data Collection Method**

1. Although data is readily available, credibility evaluation must be performed to understand the authenticity of the information available.

2. Not all secondary data resources offer the latest reports and statistics. Even when the data is accurate, it may not be updated enough to accommodate recent timelines.

3. Secondary research derives its conclusion from collective primary research data. The success of your research will depend, to a greater extent, on the quality of research already conducted by primary research.

### 3.2.1 Evaluating Quality of Data

### 3.2.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of Secondary Data