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Innovation, Entrepreneurship and
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**RESEARCH
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EMPOWERING CHANGEMAKERS FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

‘Is It All About Digital Trace Data? Secondary Analysis of Qualitative Data in the Digital Era’

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ABSTRACT

 In this essay, we challenge the dualism that, in the digital era, the data suitable for qualitative research have to be either of the primary or digital-trace types. We intend to initiate the scholarly conversation on an overlooked type of qualitative data in contemporary IS research—i.e., non-naturalistic secondary data, which are the pre-existing qualitative data solicited and reported for research purposes. We draw attention to the long-established tradition of secondary analysis of qualitative data associated with a global movement for qualitative data preservation and sharing. We also discuss the role of digital resources and tools in supporting secondary analysis in qualitative research and call for pervasive digital initiatives in the IS community to preserve and share qualitative data. Further, we address some major implications of conducting secondary analysis for advancing IS theorizing in the digital era. In particular, we argue for theorizing-intensive research designs, where researchers may perform secondary analysis of qualitative data to supplement primary qualitative studies or studies relying on digital trace data. Finally, we outline a number of major limitations and challenges faced by studies incorporating secondary analysis of qualitative data.