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Are Consumers Fully Aware of How They Are Being Researched?

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Participant-Observation Research on Social Media: Are Consumers Fully Aware of How They Are Being Researched and Do They Have any Ethical Concerns?

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Research Objectives

Given that social media are increasingly used to gather consumer insights and theorise consumer behaviour, the aim of this pilot research entails turning our gaze to research practice. More specifically, the objectives are:

1. To explore whether consumers are aware of the common ethical pitfalls in the various types of social media research conducted by marketers and marketing academics;

2. To understand whether consumers are concerned with any of the potential ethical issues in social media research (beyond privacy issues);

3. To investigate consumers' perceptions about, and attitudes toward how they are being researched on social media; and

4. To examine whether such consumer attitudes and their ethical concerns in relation to research ethics have an impact on consumers' willingness to take part in social media consumer research.

Findings will enhance academic knowledge in the field of consumer research ethics by investigating perceptions, attitudes and concerns in relation to online participant-observation research ethics from the perspective of the consumer, which to date has not been attempted. It will add to the extant literature by exploring and modelling how consumers' attitudes toward research on social media (a new context) might impact their willingness to take part in consumer research on social media.

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