

# Am I being 'spied' on? A Systematic Comparison of Consumer Reactions Between Retargeting and Digital Eavesdropping Incidences

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## **Abstract**

Marketing techniques being legally permitted but crossing ethical boundaries are repeatedly subject of controversies regarding consumer protection and communication effectiveness. We examine the case of digital eavesdropping in which offline conversational data deems as the source of online personalized advertising based on personalization paradox and privacy calculus theory. In one pre-registered experimental lab study participants were randomly assigned to one out of two conditions and experienced either a retargeting or a digital eavesdropping incidence, with the latter resulting in a deterioration of attitudinal and behavioral variables considering the ad and the marketer. Further, results highlight negative consequences of perceived (rather than actual) digital eavesdropping leading to increased perceived creepiness and annoyance. From a marketing-related and ethical point of view, we do not recommend using interpersonal conversational data as a source of personalization attempts.

**Subject Areas:** *Advertising, Attitude, Consumer Behaviour*

**Track:** Social Responsibility & Ethics