Investigating market research ethics

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In academic and practitioner literature, codes of ethics are generally understood to act as a mechanism guiding and ensuring ethical behaviour. However, this premise has not yet been thoroughly explored. Using a qualitative research approach this study examines the tools used in ethical decision-making by New Zealand marketing research practitioners, with a focus on client relationships. Participants reported on their awareness, familiarity, and use of professional and organisational codes of ethics. In particular, information was sought on how ethical issues were dealt with when they arose in their relationships with clients. This empirical research focused on the effects of different variables and emerging constructs, and the interplay between them, on ethical decision-making in client relationships. The paper concludes with a discussion of research contributions, implications for the practice of marketing research, and future research opportunities.