Stop Making Consumers Into Researchers
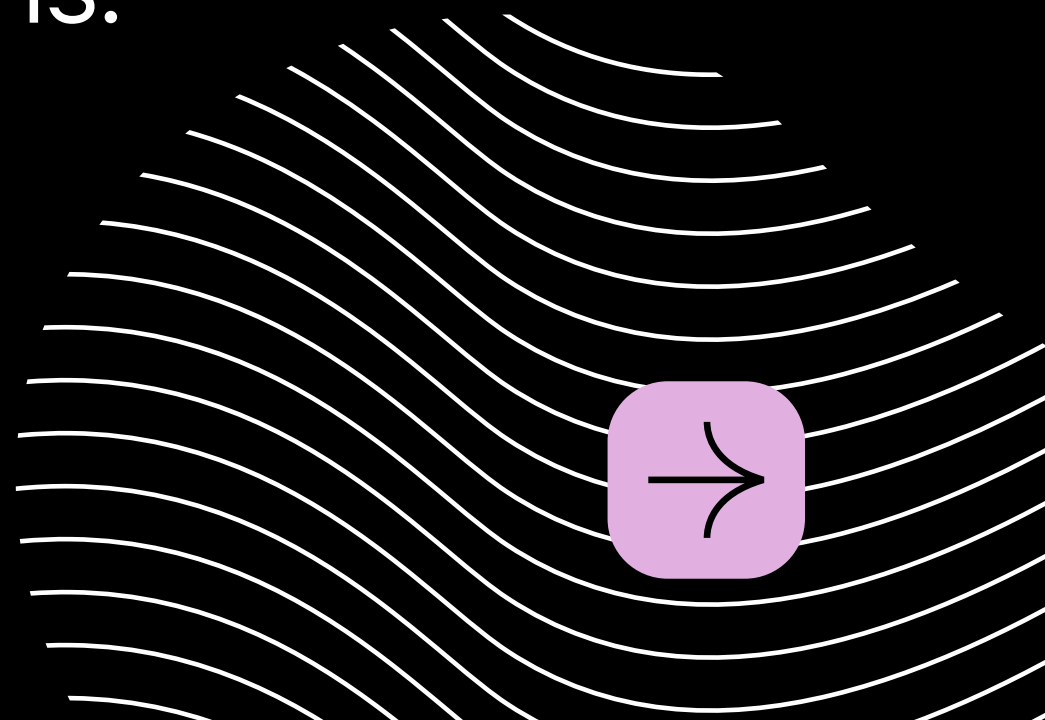
Vinay Thakur
#vtmade

Casual Survey will ask something like this to consumers:

Question: "How does social media advertising influence your purchase decisions compared to traditional advertising?"

The Challenge: Consumers can't analyze abstract relationships. **Their job:** Share Experience and evaluate.

Researcher's Job: Measure accurately and discover connections.

The Hidden Damage of Wrong Questions

Poor measurement creates systematic bias in your data.

Wrong construct operationalization → invalid structural relationships → misguided decisions.

**Every complex question we ask produces noise, not insight.**

The Fundamental Choice:

Every measurement construct follows one of two causal patterns:

- **Reflective:** Construct → Indicators (eg Brand trust causes trust related perceptions such reliable, faithful)

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- **Formative:** Indicators → Construct (eg Income + education + occupation creates Social-Economic class)
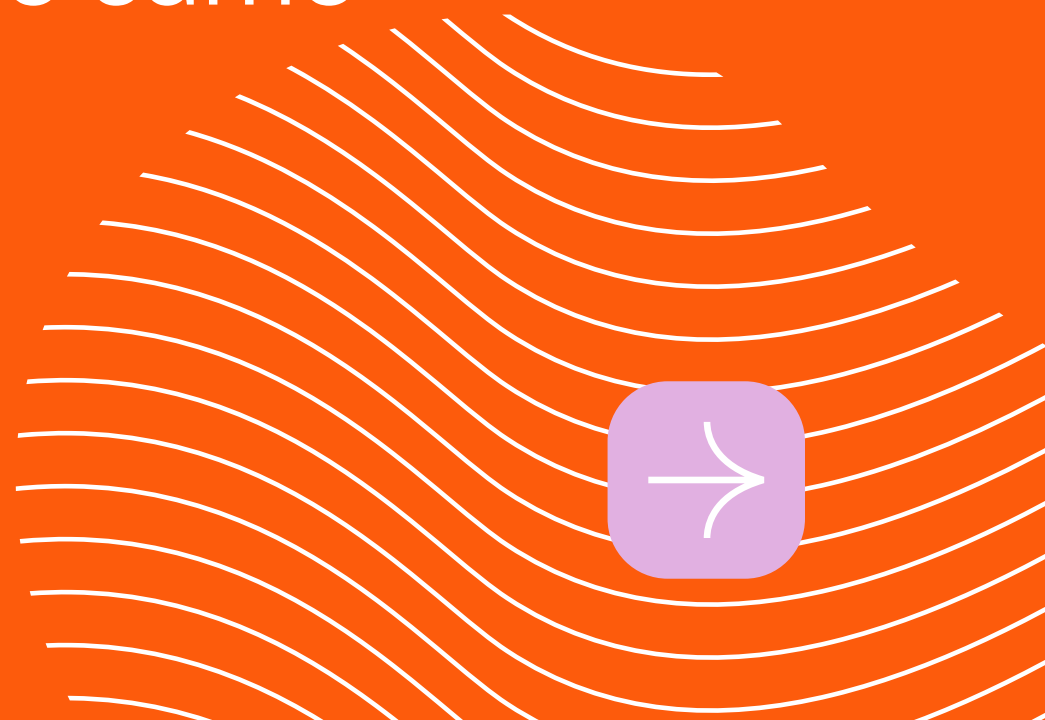
This determines everything else.
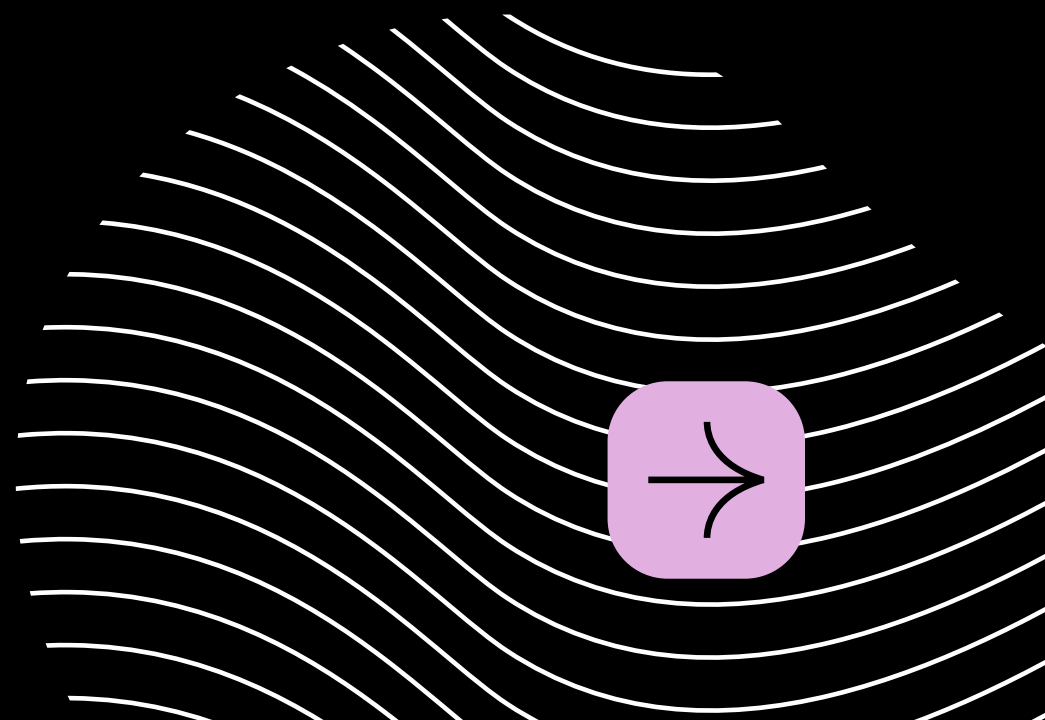
Reflective: When Parts Mirror The Whole

Use when: One underlying factor causes all responses Design: 3-4 similar items that should correlate highly

Analysis: Correlations, check internal consistency

Example: Depression → sadness + hopelessness + fatigue.

All symptoms reflect the same underlying condition.

Formative: When Parts Build The Whole

Use when: Independent components collectively define the construct Design: Comprehensive coverage of all essential parts

Analysis: Weight components, validate against outcomes

Example: Customer experience ← service + product + price + delivery Each part contributes uniquely to the whole.
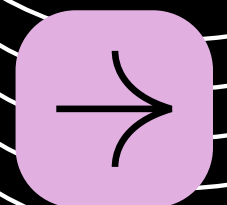
Solving The Original Problem Step-by-Step

Wrong Measurement Q: "How does social media influence purchases vs traditional ads?"

Right: Decompose into measurable parts:

1. Social media ad attitudes (reflective): "Brand A's social ads are trustworthy/relevant/influential"
2. Traditional ad attitudes (reflective): "Brand A's TV ads are trustworthy/relevant/influential"
3. Purchase intention: "Likelihood to buy Brand A next" (0-100%)

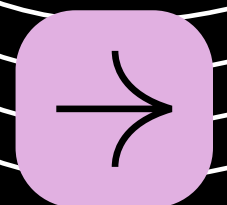**Result:** Social media attitudes predict 73% purchase intent vs traditional's 45%

What Changes With Proper Measurement

Before: Noisy data, fake correlations, wrong drivers After: Clean relationships, reliable insights, confident decisions

Before: "Social media somewhat influences purchase (3.2/5)" After: "High social media disposition: 73% purchase intent vs 31% for low disposition"

Read More on Github Repo

https://github.com/vtmade
/research-edge-series

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#vtmade