

Rice has his finger firmly on the pulse of TNS's automotive division

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Well-known automotive research expert, Richard Rice, now brings his significant skill set to the team at TNS South Africa and heads up the research company's automotive division.



Richard Rice

Speaking of his return to the industry after taking a brief respite, Rice says he is "excited but aware of the challenge ahead". He feels research has been done very much the same way within the automotive industry since the late 80's, but with new technology and thinking, there are big steps to take to break new ground. To elucidate, he says that most automotive research focuses on customer satisfaction, which is important, but there is a need to delve deeper and unpack the customer experience in a different way. This points to a need to focus on what really drives behaviour, rather than just on the sales or service process - in other words, it's time to think about what really attracts and then locks people into a brand.

He is aware that this requires a lot of work, due primarily to the size and maturity of the automotive industry, and notes that the challenge ahead is just as much for the industry as it is for TNS. This is because many of the current measures are very entrenched at both manufacturer and dealer level.

It is for this reason that Rice believes he is particularly well suited to his new role at TNS. He brings with him enormous experience, having been a partner to the automotive industry locally and globally for more than 17 years and developing a great understanding, as well as long-standing relationships in the process. These relationships and his knowledge are essential because the automotive industry is unique in the way it works and in the way consumers interact with its brands, explains Rice. In addition, because of his exposure outside of the industry, he has a clear view of the South African consumer in terms of shifting priorities, decision-making and communication preferences. The challenge now is to unpack what this means for automotive.

With TNS South Africa's research tools and solutions, coupled with a strong global automotive practice and Rice's expertise in the automotive space, he feels the company has a significant role to play in offering the best solutions to a unique, ever-growing industry that is part of the heartbeat of the economy.

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