

TNS and Millward Brown develop new way of thinking around socio-economic status in SA and Africa

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TNS South Africa has developed two important new ways of thinking around LSMs and socio-economic status in the South African and pan-African space. These will be published in the public domain and released at the 2014 SAMRA conference on 13 June as a service to the industry.

The first is in collaboration with Millward Brown and is the development of a short-form LSM (Q-LSM for Quick LSMs). The need for short questionnaires has become an imperative: from the world of neuroscience, which calls for much shorter questionnaires (five to 10 minutes) in order to tap into the System 1 process in the brain; from the need to conduct research via mobile and digital devices as a means of improving in-the-moment research; and from the needs of researchers who need quicker and more efficient questionnaires. With regard to LSMs, TNS's Neil Higgs comments that, "As currently constituted, they are long and laborious and certainly not suited for mobile studies or for traditional questionnaires where better efficiencies are needed."

Erik du Plessis of Millward Brown previously devised a short approach to classifying people into three LSM supergroups in 2003, but the idea was not adopted at the time. More than a decade later, the time is right for such an approach to gain traction. Du Plessis recently approached Higgs at TNS with a view to updating his earlier work, with Millward Brown being the lead analysts and TNS providing data it had available from AMPS, as well as validation and the final written document. The result is a joint Millward Brown/TNS pro bono initiative.

The development of Q-LSMs means that people only need to be asked about the presence or absence of three items to have an 85% chance of being correctly classified into one of three LSM supergroups in non-rural samples. Decision trees can be customised for different LSM splits as desired, and a laminated card containing these will be made available.

TNS's second new development came about when ESOMAR approached SAMRA for information on a short pan-African measure of socio-economic status (PA-SES). On investigation, it was found that no such measure existed in the public domain and as a result TNS South Africa undertook pro bono analysis of a 20-country dataset from Afrobarometer. During this process the Pan African Marketing Research Organisation (PAMRO) also expressed interest in such a measure.

The outcome is that three levels of measure have been developed: a long version at both individual and household levels, a shorter version that will be offered to PAMRO for their exclusive use and a very short version developed for the original ESOMAR request, which will also be made available in the public domain.

Says Higgs, "It is clear that the systems developed are likely to be a useful start in creating a pan-African SES measure. The short version to be publicly released is thought to be most applicable and will be particularly useful for mobile applications."

He is excited to release both Q-LSM and PA-SES at the SAMRA conference on 13 June this year and concludes, "We hope these developments lead the industry as a whole to new opportunities."

For further information on either of these measures, please contact Millward Brown for Q-LSMs and TNS South Africa for Q-LSMs or the PA-SES measures:

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