

Research Surveys director takes top award

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At the 24th annual Southern African Marketing Research Association (SAMRA) Convention held in Gaborone last week, the award for best paper was won by Neil Higgs, a director of Research Surveys, one of South Africa's largest marketing research companies.

His paper looked at the concept of well-being and introduced a new measure for determining one's everyday quality of life (EQL). He looked at the link between a person's level of well-being and how people process information and make decisions, especially those about buying brands. He also looked at how this affects people's perceptions of their economic future and their consumer confidence.

"Today, there is an increasing call for marketers to look beyond the term 'consumers' and to understand people more holistically", he said. "That is what EQL is all about. And it turns out that one's level of well-being also affects how we decide what brands to buy."

This is the sixth time that Neil Higgs has won the best paper award at the annual SAMRA Convention and the second time in two years – last year, it was his work on measuring peoples' socio-economic standing in life that won him the top award.

Research Surveys also fielded two other speakers. Claudia Fenor spoke about how the criteria and processes involved in buying research differ for commercial clients and clients who have to go the tender route. She outlined the necessity for good client relationship management in order to capitalise on the opportunities offered by public services clients. Her paper was widely praised for its openness and for her willingness to share some of her trade secrets. Shaun Dix, of Research Surveys' Webchek division, presented a paper on some of the alternative ways people in under-privileged areas are gaining access to computers and the internet. He showed that we must be careful about the reported figures on internet penetration and that we need to take these new initiatives into account in understanding internet penetration. His presentation was very well-received and opened many people's eyes to the need for lateral thinking in research.

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