

SAARF Board decides on race

Over the past few months the whole question of whether race is still required for target marketing and media planning was discussed widely by different SAARF stakeholders.

In the past the inclusion of race in AMPS was explained by saying that it is just another demographic and that people do not have to use it at all. It was argued that race is a fact of life in South Africa and that it is not SAARF's duty to censor information. AMPS reflects the South African society, and therefore race as a demographic should be available just like any other demographic.

It was also argued that the mere fact that race is made available as a demographic in AMPS might lead to discriminatory practices in the utilization of AMPS data. As race was not essential for media planning or target marketing, its presence in AMPS was therefore not only unnecessary, but indeed harmful to AMPS and the industry it serves.

At the SAARF Board meeting held on 6 March 2002 and attended by directors of its stakeholders, the Association of Marketers (ASOM), the Association of Advertising Agencies (AAA), the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB), the Outdoor Advertising Association of South Africa (OAASA), and Print Media South Africa (PMSA), it was thus decided to remove all reference to race from its surveys in future.

In explaining the above recommendation, the SAARF board indicated that it hoped that move would lead to a debate and self-examination by the industry and that stakeholders would take this opportunity to think anew about current practises used in target marketing and media selection.

This process has now run its full course and it is clear to everyone inside and outside the industry that the problem does not lie with the research and that the removal of race as a demographic might in fact lead people to believe that all problems have now been resolved and thus actually inhibit the necessary debate and action that should centre on the attitudes and behaviour of people.

Consequently the SAARF Board of Directors at their meeting held on 23 July 2002 have decided that the status quo regarding the reporting of race will remain and that this demographic will be researched and released in exactly the same format as for AMPS 2001B.

The feeling at the SAARF Board meeting was that the time has come for its stakeholders to address possible areas of concern with their own members and that senior people in the industry must play a more prominent role in the current debates that are being led by the GCIS.

In order to assist the industry in this process, a working group has been appointed under the leadership of SAARF Vice-

Chair Maserame Tshwaedi to look at ways and means of moving forward with issues of transformation, discrimination and education.

The members of the group are:

- Brenda Wortley
- Gordon Muller - to be invited
- Harry Herber - to be invited
- Howard Gabriels
- Humphrey Birkenstock
- Ian Shepherd
- Les Holley
- Marlon Hitzeroth
- Ross Jenings
- Thabiso Buku

"We believe that the vigorous and widespread debate that has taken place over the past few months has led to a much deeper understanding of the problem by all stakeholders," says Paul Haupt, MD of SAARF, "and as such the process has been beneficial to all of us."

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