TNS launches new algorithm to get to the heart of small area classification

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With its long history of urbanisation measure development, TNS South Africa has devised an algorithm in order to create an objective system of classifying small areas or suburbs and villages into metropolitan, small urban and rural components. The result, called the Census Rural-Urban Measure (CRUM), was published in the public domain and released at the 2014 SAMRA conference on 13 June as a service to the industry.

TNS identified the need for such a system when the 2011 Census data became available at a Small Area and Sub-Place level. TNS's Neil Higgs explains, "The further classification of suburbs into metropolitan, small urban and rural components, as CRUM allows, enables lower costs, more efficient trip planning and better sample design when implementing any national survey." It is also a useful tool for marketers in that urbanisation is largely a function of infrastructure and the provision of services and facilities, so such knowledge is critical as it is one of the fundamental factors driving how people live and make decisions in the context of their living situations.

TNS will use the CRUM algorithm, which provides an objective system of classifying areas into the three types, internally to design and execute better samples. However, it will also be made available to the industry to help marketers and advertisers understand geographical areas as well as the living conditions of the people to whom they direct brands. This also means that it can be used as a measure of service delivery by policy-makers as well.

Higgs ends, "With CRUM's threefold advantage of improving sampling systems, measuring service delivery and helping marketers to better understand how people actually live, it is set to become a particularly useful tool for researchers and marketers alike."

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TNS advises clients on specific growth strategies around new market entry, innovation, brand switching and stakeholder management, based on long-established expertise and market-leading solutions. With a presence in over 80 countries, TNS has more conversations with the world's consumers than anyone else and understands individual human behaviours and attitudes across every cultural, economic and political region of the world.

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