

SA customer satisfaction research methods and technology launched across the USA

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Synovate South Africa has announced that its locally designed research technology and methodology will be used, in part, to improve customer loyalty in the US automotive industry.

In the USA, January 29 saw the launch of a customer loyalty programme called NADA-24 - a unique approach to measuring customer satisfaction. The NADA-24 programme represents a collaborative methodology, designed by the American National Automobile Dealer Association (NADA) and Synovate Motoresearch in the USA, UK and South Africa. This collaboration is the first part of a joint venture between NADA USA and Synovate called NADA Customer Link.

"In recent months, dealers in the USA have urged NADA USA to explore ways to help them develop higher levels of customer loyalty," said Albert McLean, managing director of Synovate South Africa. "To this end, more than 1 500 dealers from seven automotive manufacturers were interviewed. Both the dealers and manufacturers recommended the same solution: a systematic follow-up survey, within 24 hours of the transaction to identify unhappy customers immediately, and therefore, better facilitate resolution of any causes of dissatisfaction."

NADA called on world-leading market research company, Synovate, to create a state-of-the-art application and research technology for the programme. In addition to having very extensive experience in automotive market research, Synovate also runs many large-scale customer research programmes throughout the world.

Synovate South Africa, previously known as Proactive Insight, has offered similar services to manufacturers and dealers in the local market for several years, and it is this technology that has been adopted for the NADA-24 programme. The technology was a natural extension of Synovate's 15 years of experience in measuring customer satisfaction and loyalty as well as the use of on-line technologies.

Synovate South Africa has also been substantially involved in the development and design phases of the programme and their 15 years of experience in the South African automotive environment has lent enormous insight and value.

"This programme empowers dealers with the tools they need to identify and resolve customer problems immediately, which will lead to a higher level of customer satisfaction and loyalty," said McLean.

A number of features make NADA-24 unique and it blends leading thinking with the very latest technologies. NADA-24 uses a newly created system where customers are interviewed independently by NADA-24 by telephone the day after their visit to the dealer. Each customer interview is completed in less than three minutes and dealers have on-line access to feedback within 24 hours.

"Importantly, if a customer has a complaint, the system works even faster," said McLean. "An alert message is sent back to the dealership during the interview, explaining the problem and providing follow-up instructions to the dealership. An on-line audio file of each customer comment can also be listened to over any computer terminal." This is done using Synovate's Viewscast technology.

NADA-24 was showcased for the first time at the past weekend's NADA USAs convention in New Orleans by NADA and Synovate. "Approximately 10 000 dealers attended the conference, and Synovate and NADA are extremely excited by the approach and the change that it could introduce into dealer perspectives on customer satisfaction."

"Our partnership with automobile dealers and NADA was a natural fit," said Albert McLean, managing director of Synovate

South Africa. "Synovate has been conducting automotive research for more than 25 years. However, the creation of NADA-24 is truly an exciting advancement and despite different opinions on the matter, proves that customer satisfaction research is still very much a key measure of business health for an automotive dealer. This is a robust methodology that will allow dealers to listen to their customers with a frequency and consistency that was just not possible before."

The National Automobile Dealers Association in the USA was founded in 1917 and represents more than 20 000 new car and truck dealers, with more than 43 000 franchises nationwide, both domestic and international. (www.nada.org)

Synovate is one of the leading market research companies in the world with 4 500 employees in 44 countries, including South Africa. Synovate provides clients with industry specific and branded solutions utilising best-in-class research tools and proprietary practices. (www.synovate.co.za) "Synovate harnesses the latest technology and thinking in both our methodologies and knowledge delivery to ensure solid scientific, independent and objective research," said McLean. "Although we are well-established, we continue to re-invent ourselves and our methods in line with the changing economic, social, commercial and consumer environments."

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