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SYNOVATE PUSHES ENVELOPE IN SA AUTO RESEARCH

JOHANNESBURG (April 3, 2006) – Synovate's Competitive Customer Satisfaction Index (CCSI) has again ably demonstrated the efficiency of telephonic tracking surveys in the automotive sector.

"It quickly and accurately sorts out the men from boys in the service and sales components of an extremely competitive industry," says Jon Salters, the global research company's Managing Director for Sub-Saharan Africa.

The research, which is recognised and endorsed by the Department of Trade Industry (dti), has been recording customers' satisfaction in motor vehicle sales and service since 1991.

"Synovate's CCSI has become the benchmark for sales and service excellence in South Africa," asserts Salters. "The CCSI is undertaken monthly, but Synovate publishes a full year of data, annually."

"The results are of major relevance to manufacturers. The customer is king – or queen -- and, when he or she speaks, the industry listens!"

Salters says the close rankings in sales and service in the various award categories are evidence of the credibility and respect the survey has earned.

"The industry has upped its game in sales and service. Manufacturers and their staff are motivated to give their customers optimum client service in sales and after-sales backup."

Salters believes that the industry's reverence for the CCSI is based on its "robust and reliable" results. "Response rates are as high as 96 percent and the data is captured within four weeks of the actual sale or service experience."

"Synovate's computer-assisted telephonic interviews are very well-suited to the South African market, and particularly for measuring customer satisfaction, and of course, dissatisfaction."

"A customer or respondent who has experienced problems would be more motivated to vocalise their discontent," Salters explains. "It is human nature to complain and, of course, a

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mail survey allows the respondent to select him or herself for participation, which in research terms is known 'self-selection bias'."

That's why, in the one-on-one Synovate research, the satisfaction results accurately reflect the general perceptions of the market and are not biased towards those customers who have experienced problems.

"The mail technique is not ideally suited for data collection in satisfaction tracking studies, simply because you usually hear only the bad news. It's the bad news that gets the press," Salters says.

Synovate annually contacts in excess of 50 000 passenger car and light commercial vehicle owners each year. "It is estimated that Naamsa represents about 95 percent of the new vehicles sold every year, and the respondents are extracted from this data base."

The manufacturers supply lists of all their customers, and the lists are scrutinised and independently audited before any random sample selection takes place.

"The research methodology is home-grown, and honed to suit the South African market," Salters says.

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About Synovate

Synovate, the market research arm of Aegis Group plc, generates consumer insights that drive competitive marketing solutions. The network provides clients with cohesive global support and a comprehensive suite of research solutions. Synovate employs over 5,000 staff in 50 countries.

More information on Synovate can be found at www.synovate.co.za and www.synovate.com

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