



AMSTERDAM RESEARCH  
PROJECT

SOUTH AFRICA 2015

Amsterdam  
Research  
Project



## PREFACE

As you probably know best, doing business has to be to the benefit of the parties involved. So, what are the mutual advantages? Our faculty educates students in economics and business administration. They are well trained and knowledgeable. But, to be successful as academics in this globalizing world, they need more executive education and international experience.

That is exactly why I firmly support the Amsterdam Research Project 2015, geared to the growing South African market.

The participating students are particularly interested in investigating the market conditions and sales opportunities in South Africa. They carry out the assignments and research projects with great enthusiasm and frankness, supervised by senior staff members of the faculty, from the very beginning to the final report and presentation of the research results. This way, students achieve greater success in implementing their knowledge and skills, and perform better in their professional life and in society. In economic jargon, they become a real positive external effect to the business community and society. Creating these effects is our social service, and justifies government funding.

However, this is not enough, and that is why I invite you to do business with the Amsterdam Research Project 2015, by commissioning research assignments and sponsorships. To be clear, the Amsterdam Research Project has a non-profit objective by only covering the expenses.

The return on your investment is threefold, although difficult to measure in any real way. To begin with, you support our social responsibility. Second, you can take business advantages from the research results and insights gained by the students in a foreign market. Finally, you get to know our students on mission: an excellent opportunity to meet possible future employees. Then you turn the positive external effect to society into a private advantage for your company.

I kindly invite you to join us,

Prof. dr. W.F.C. Verschoor  
Dean

Faculty of Economics  
and Business Administration  
VU University of Amsterdam



## WHY SOUTH AFRICA?

Today's South Africa is one of the most sophisticated, diverse and promising emerging markets. Strategically located at the tip of the African continent, South Africa is a key investment location, both for the market opportunities that lie within its borders and as a gateway to the rest of the continent, a market of about 1 billion people.

The McKinsey Global Institute has identified Africa as the world's second-fastest growing region. South Africa is an economic powerhouse of this growing region, with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 1.9 trillion rand which is four times that of its African neighbors and comprises 30% of the entire GDP of Africa. It is part of the BRICS group of countries and has trading relationships with more than 200 countries and territories.

With its rapidly expanding middle class that has growing power and, South Africa is full of business potential. It is one of the least expensive places in the world to do business with excellent facilities and ranks amongst the top countries for ease of doing business.

South Africa has disciplined fiscal and financial frameworks that are aimed at promoting domestic competitiveness, growth, employment and increasing the economy's outward

### Reasons for doing business in South Africa:

- Sound economic policies
- Favourable legal and business environment
- World-class infrastructure
- Gateway to Africa and access to markets
- Trade reform, strategic alliances
- Cost of doing business in SA
- Ease of doing business in SA
- Industrial capability
- Cutting-edge technology
- Competitiveness

orientation. The Netherlands ranks high on the list of major foreign direct investors in South Africa.

Still, entering the South African market is not always easy and without risk. There is still a capacity lack with government, bureaucracy can be stifling and corruption remains a challenge. There is a lack of skilled labour, some legislation (BBBEE and labour regulations) may impede opportunities and labour productivity is generally low. It is important to realise there are no quick wins.

Nevertheless, South Africa offers real economic opportunities. But to succeed one needs to be willing to invest economically and socially, with a long term strategy. The Amsterdam Research Project is able to help overcome hurdles and to reduce the risk. It gives a voice to a group of young, carefully selected and high-skilled students, ready to analyze the South African market according to companies' wishes.

H.E. Marisa Gerards  
Ambassador Embassy  
of the Kingdom of the  
Netherlands to South Africa

## THE AMSTERDAM RESEARCH PROJECT

For the 15th consecutive year a group of 21 students is motivated to start with the Amsterdam Research Project. Our history shows our expertise in business consulting and capabilities for research in foreign countries. As part of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam we can give you a competitive advantage through our research.

### Why us?

- Tailor-made research
- Extensive one year preparation
- Trained consultants
- Access to the university network
- Current academic knowledge
- Field research in South Africa
- Opportunity for recruitment



### WHAT WE DO

The Amsterdam Research Project conducts research tailored to the specific needs or challenges of your company, covering a diversity of subjects and markets. We have delivered several reports that have aided companies in expanding their activities in overseas areas. Also, this year we work closely together with South Africa experts and consultants to ensure quality.

### Examples of research topics:

- Market Analysis
- Distribution and Logistics Research
- Finance or Investment Opportunities
- Outsourcing and Offshoring
- Corporate Social Responsibility Management
- Identification of Possible Partners
- Import and Export Analysis
- Market Expanding Opportunities



### HOW WE WORK

Depending on the assignment, students will conduct research in teams consisting of at least three people. Every team will be supervised by a senior staff member and will be in close contact with your company. After the research objectives are determined the students proceed with preliminary research. Subsequently, the students will visit four cities in South Africa in April and May 2015 for a five-week period. This period includes interviews and visits to companies, universities, governmental institutions and other concerned entities to obtain information required for the research. After the field research phase, the findings will be formalized into a report and presented to the concerned organization.

## AMBITIOUS, EAGER AND DIVERSE STUDENT CONSULTANTS

### WHO WE ARE

The Amsterdam Research Project consists of twenty-one third year Bachelor and Master students. During the course of one year the students are turned into consultants with in-depth knowledge of South Africa.

Senior academic staff and professionals from the private sector provide extensive training and guidance.

With educational backgrounds from marketing, finance, strategy, and consulting, the Amsterdam Research Project represents a wide variety of specializations, which results in a multidisciplinary look on matters.

In the final stages of their studies, our students see the Amsterdam Research Project as a perfect stepping stone towards their future careers. As a result, they are eager to learn practical consultancy and research skills to aid them in the development of their careers. It is not just the student's motivation which brings the Amsterdam Research Project to a success, it pays off as well. For instance, some of our students have become

full-time consultants and others have even started working with a company they conducted research for.

## SUPERVISING PROFESSOR

Dr. D.A. Driver-Zwartkruis lived and worked in four regions of the world where she was involved in the private and public sector. She has more than twenty years of experience as a lecturer, researcher, consultant, diplomat and public speaker. Donna is American-Dutch and has a BSc in Sociology (Lamar University), an MSc of Public Administration (Texas Southern University) and a PhD degree in Applied Sociology (The Union Institute & University).

Dr. D.A. Driver-Zwartkruis



## PAST EXPERIENCES

### MARKET ANALYSIS FOR ZOLL

# ZOLL®

"THE REPORT NOT ONLY PROVIDED A CLEAR MARKET ANALYSIS, BUT ALSO STRATEGIC ADVICE ON HOW TO BEST APPROACH FUTURE MARKET DEVELOPMENTS."

In 2008, ZOLL Medical was introduced to the Amsterdam Research Project for the first time. The student's research project destination for that year was Brazil – a country in which ZOLL, being a leading producer of cardiac resuscitation equipment, had promising opportunities for new market development. After extensive preparation and on site research, the Amsterdam Research Project students produced an excellent summary of the Brazilian market. The report not only provided a clear market analysis, but also strategic advice on how to best approach future market developments. Based on the success of their first research project in Brazil, ZOLL partnered with the students again for their 2009 project for Indonesia and Malaysia.

Ronald Melieste  
Vice President International Business Development

### RESEARCH FOR PHILIPS

# PHILIPS

"THE RESULT IS EXCELLENT AND CAN BE USED IMMEDIATELY. I WOULD CERTAINLY RECOMMEND THIS TEAM TO MY PEERS TO PERFORM SIMILAR ASSIGNMENTS."

The Amsterdam Research Project performed a market scan for business opportunities for growth lighting, in particular LED, in horticulture in South Korea for Philips Lighting. The results were excellent and could be used immediately. The team provided a thorough market mapping from an interesting point of view. Their presentation is inspiring and their reporting is clear and comprehensive. I would certainly recommend this team to my peers to perform similar assignments.

Beate Walles  
Director Marketing Horticulture Venture  
LED Lamps and Systems, Philips Lighting B.V.



### FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR LILIANE FOUNDATION



"IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE TO WORK WITH THIS ENTHUSIASTIC TEAM OF BUSINESS ECONOMICS STUDENTS WHO PROVIDED US A NEW AND FRESH PERSPECTIVE."

ARP approached the Liliane Foundation for the research project of 2013 in India. We asked the student consultants for a study that focused on the sustainability of a new project initiated by the Liliane Foundation which required the research team to speak with a variety of different stakeholders. We are satisfied with the conclusions from this research, which we can use for further research and practical actions. Throughout the process the students were very professional and independent. They continuously acted at our discretion and provided timely feedback. We certainly recommend others, companies and NGOs alike, to work with the Amsterdam Research Project.

Jorrit Frankhuizen  
Programme Officer team Asia



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