

A review of the talk by Petra Boynton entitled: “The misuse of surveys in PR campaigns”

Janet Shapiro

Petra’s presentation contained illustrations of hilarious quotations from the popular press that made us laugh but raised concerns.

The absurd nonsensical headlines quoted were apparently derived from large surveys, although in several cases the headline contradicted survey findings. The popular press clamours for surveys of this sort, with no regard for intelligent interpretation let alone statistical rigour. However, when the survey is undertaken to promote a product, professional mal-practice cannot be challenged.

The session was intended to launch a debate on what the Radical Statistics Group should do.

Questions were posed:

‘Is the increased use of surveys for PR (Public Relations) purposes a problem?’

‘If it is a problem what might the impact of such surveys be?’

‘What might we do to address this issue?’

A lively discussion followed and the issue will be taken seriously. Other comments are welcome.

A full article on this topic will be carried in a future newsletter.

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