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> SUPPLEMENT <

A case of lemming-itis?

It's not all black and white. Neither is it only downhill from here for print newspapers, nor is its entire future online

BY BRENDAN SEERY, EDITOR AT INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS

FUTURE GAZING is an inexact science – and nowhere more so than in the realm of media. The conventional wisdom is that newspapers – part of the ‘old and ‘traditional’ communication media – are going to go the same way as the dinosaurs.

Yeah, yeah, yeah...

Let's take a quick look at how accurate people have been in predicting how this rapidly morphing World Wide Web would evolve.

No less an august geek than Bill Gates predicted, in the book he wrote about 15 years ago, that five years from then (in other words, a decade ago) we would all have internet-enabled fridges which would know when we were running low on milk and automatically log on and re-order. Bill also believed our lounges and bedrooms would be adorned with huge digital photo frames which would change pics to suit our moods.

Sorry... epic fail, Bill.

Then, everybody believed the BlackBerry was the future of communication. No-one saw the iPhone and iPad coming. And now, of course, everybody is besotted with new Apple products.

Why did none of our digital ‘clevers’ in SA – who widely believe we are the best on the continent in this sphere – not see a product like the Mpeza money service coming? It was developed in a ‘Third World’ country – Kenya.

The lesson from all of this is that you should be very careful in predicting the future based on your own likes

and dislikes...because in media, as in marketing, the cardinal rule is simple: You are NOT the target market.

That is the thing a lot of the digital lemmings are forgetting in their haste to punt the internet as the answer to any and all marketing prayers.



REMEMBER...

Firstly, not everybody is as wrapped up in Facebook and Twitter as you are. And, from a marketing perspective, to reach the comparatively small numbers who are and who are ‘engaging’ with you and your product is going to cost a lot of money... money, which would be much better spent on traditional media.

Secondly, much as the movie Alien told us that in space no-one can hear you scream, so it is that, in cyberspace, no-one can see your lies. Getting accurate and useful figures – the sort of things you can use in planning a marketing campaign – from the digital snake oil salespeople out there is very difficult.

Take the recent shocking examples of 2oceansvibe Radio and Ballz Visual Radio, which claimed audiences of 35 000 and 50 000 respectively. When a cynical clever digital sleuth ran the numbers, they simply didn't compute. The real audiences are in the hundreds.

That's something I could have told you – or, if you applied your common sense, you could have deduced yourself. Why would anyone bother listening to digital radio on a computer or other device – paying for bandwidth and then having it hang periodically – when they could be listening to a crystal clear FM station?

Then, let's look at Facebook, or Smoke and Mirrors Book, as it should be called. It has far less real, frequent users than it claims; and its ads are terrifyingly ineffectual. Why? It's private space and people don't like junk mail. Just because the medium's digital doesn't make that truth any less true... Look at the current Facebook share price if you don't believe me. Not even the Titanic went down that fast.

I am not disputing that the internet is a great communication medium – all I am doing is questioning whether it is an effective marketing medium. And I am doing what so few other people do when it comes to this technology – I am asking the question: Why? That's the least asked marketing question in the digital sphere today. Perhaps people are too scared they will be considered a technophobe or old-fashioned and behind the curve.

From where I am, though, the digital Emperor looks like he is unclothed.

OFFERING...

So, what do newspapers have to offer? For a start, in this country particularly, most of us have strong credibility because we break stories of national importance. Ask yourself who the ANC would like to muzzle... It's us in Independent Newspapers, it's the *Mail and Guardian*, *Sunday Times* and *City Press*.

Jointly and severally, we are setting the national news agenda. There can be no argument about that.

And we offer a real, purchasing power-enabled audience, which actually buys the products our advertisers want to sell. We can give you real CPM (cost per thousand) figures that don't vanish in the mist when someone looks into them, as happened with digital radio. The same amount of money goes much further in print – and more effectively – than it does anywhere on the internet.

CLEARER THINKING?

We are far from perfect though. For a start, we as newspapers continue to follow



Brendan Seery

what is, in my view, a silly ‘monkey see, monkey do’ attitude to the internet. In other words, we put our precious, and expensive-to-produce, content on the Web for free. Because it's a new medium, perhaps we have believed that it would conform to some new business logic where you could still make money by giving away your products for nothing.

There is a new reality creeping in now and most major newspaper groups are rolling back their Web presence and putting up paywalls.

Digital has also enabled us to tackle the reality of why people are turning to the internet. People go to news websites not because the content is better (most of it comes from traditional media anyway) but for convenience. Technology now enables us to take the paper to people – via apps on phones and tablet devices – as opposed to the other way around.

In the future, we may see a pendulum swing away from the current fixation with digital products as people realise that consuming so much news and social candy floss gives leaves you unsatisfied and suffering from intellectual flatulence. Which would leave us in a space I like to think of as the ‘post digital world’ where human interaction resumes its important place in society.

Who knows? I don't pretend I have answers but I think we should all be asking many more questions.

**Brendan Seery is an executive editor on The Star newspaper and media and marketing editor for Independent Newspapers.*

“ALL I AM DOING IS QUESTIONING WHETHER THE INTERNET IS AN EFFECTIVE MARKETING MEDIUM”



ED'S NOTE

For keeps

BY MAGDEL LOUW,
SUPPLEMENT EDITOR

I'M A BIG advocate of newspapers, specifically those in print form. Fond memories of the medium include early morning tussles with my father before school over who'd get to read it first, which I have to say usually went in my favour as I was the one who had to brave the frosty Free State winter to fetch

the paper from our letterbox. I remember the anticipation of first seeing the front page after a big news event occurred, and then being left with black ink-stained fingers in my hasty attempt to absorb every bit of the news before I had to leave for school. I also recall my eagerness in finding the spot where my name was printed for the very first time among the school *Volksblad* (even if the item was no more newsworthy than eisteddfod results) – and then of course the biggest one, picking up the 'all important' matric results issue while on summer holiday with my family.

But today I also have the even greater benefit of tangible memories, to be found at any time in the many newspapers I've kept as mementoes. Amongst them are the newspapers that reported on Princess Diana's death (and funeral) along with a multitude of photographs, as well as those spectacular 9/11 editions. I've also kept a few that spoke of great (and sometimes disastrous) moments in sport. And, naturally, the one with my matric results.

When I pick up any of those now, I am instantly reminded of that particular time, in all its richness and emotion. Those keepsakes are irreplaceable.

So my question is, simply, how do you 'keep' news that appears on the internet? How do you go about storing memories of news that literally make our world go round, when it's only available on the web?

It just won't be the same to press 'print,' now will it?

What's standing in newspapers' way?

Gordon Patterson, chairman of VivaKi South Africa, explores the challenges facing newspapers



GORDON PATTERSON

BROADLY SPEAKING there are three main challenges facing our print industry. Let's start with the rising input costs and distribution. We all know that the cost of transportation has grown by 40% and with another 23c increase on petrol prices it puts more and more pressure on newspaper houses. We need to find a more amicable distribution method.

Most newspaper groups either own or have significant interests in distribution, which means there's almost a monopoly situation in the industry. The consequence comes into the product itself and places more pressure on journalists. The good ones are expensive, and management are expected to reduce the number of expensive (or experienced), journalists and to bring in less expensive, and less experienced ones.

Senior journalists don't have the time to do in-depth reports anymore which means that the quality of reporting drops, leading to insufficient investigative reporting. For a paper to survive it has to know who its readers are and be stable in its views and un-swayed by reader or industry opinions.

A second factor for me is the credibility issue. It used to be that if something was written down you could believe it, you could trust it. That's no longer the case, certainly not to the same degree. The lessening credibility is unfortunately playing into the hands of the online sphere and allowing consumer journalism to become the order of the day. We've seen it in China and the Middle East where people in the thick of heated situations are tweeting, Facebooking and blogging.

Journalists today aren't providing that objective viewpoint, they're much more subjective as opposed to someone on the street who may not be entirely accurate but they're there and trustworthy. Social media platforms like Twitter are so popular because as a consumer or reader you decide who you can trust and who you want to follow.

My third factor is that of lack of management

and leadership of newspapers. Leaders have forgotten why they're there – what it is to be leaders, set the direction and have a vision. In my opinion they've lost confidence in their own product and as a result we're seeing shoddy research, information that is generic and lacking actionable insights. Expediency is taking over from efficiency. An example of this is the death of sales skills. Press Sales Representatives are increasingly becoming glorified order takers. There's no compelling argument as to why my clients should advertise in one product over another. Proposals tend to be excel driven at best and those written proposals often have mixed client names within the copy!

Then there's the news of certain papers unbundling, for me the most concerning of which is the Independent Group – it's a national heritage and its value lies in the combination of its iconic brands – *The Star*, *The Argus*, *The Daily News* etc. What is refreshing and comforting is that I've read that Independent employees have indicated their willingness to take a 15% share in the business. That's fantastic and shows they have belief in their product. The question is do advertisers and readers?

I think readers do believe in print, certainly the heavy readers do. If print didn't have a future, we wouldn't have people like Warren Buffet, one of the smartest people alive, investing in newspapers. There's a definite vision for newspapers, but it cannot be more of the same – the extravagant profits and models of the past will no longer work.

So before we all rush out and say that print is dead we need to acknowledge that it will survive, but just in a different format. Some publications which have gone online, like the *Daily Maverick* will survive only by the grace of their founders, in this case Branko Brkic, with his commitment, belief and high editorial standards. It would not be the success it is today if not for Brkic's almost evangelical passion no matter the financial cost to himself.

Another point of difference is that the *Daily Maverick* has enlisted key credible journalists to write for them, people with brand reputations in their own right.

From an advertiser's point of view, if print didn't have a future, advertisers wouldn't commit to ensuring accurate research projects and making sure that circulation data is accurate and fair.

Convergence of papers and online will of course continue, but digital versions must offer different yet complementary content to its printed counterparts to be viable. Digital publications should offer short, sharp and fast news while newspapers can offer a more in-depth look at the news, perhaps unpacking how the news affects the reader.

There is most certainly a future for print, but as an industry we need to invest in objective journalism, become more accountable, have strong visible leadership and get the financial model right. The industry needs to open up and be more competitive when it comes to printing and distribution – particularly distribution, as this is the final connection between the paper and the consumer. That cosy relation, I believe, is unhealthy to print as a whole.

We need to see more passion and enthusiasm from our print leaders and as we go forward, and newspapers will have to dig deep to find that commitment to their own future because advertisers are not going to do it for them.

With expanding reader choice to access news there is not only growing reader intolerance to poor newspapers, but more importantly simply no excuse for a paper not to deliver a quality product. If print is to have a future then it has to write it, one credible word at a time.

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Quality to come standard

Newspapers have over the past few years undergone the most difficult years of their existence. Many describe the past few years as the 'Perfect Storm'

BY NAZEEM HOWA, CEO OF TNA MEDIA

THE 'PERFECT STORM' has been a period when other media (including digital) has grown in share at a time when newspaper advertising was under its heaviest strain.

I can hear my colleagues in newspapers saying, the new media has only grown revenues in the 10s of millions, and remains very small compared to print. But what of the decline in print advertising against this growth in electronic and digital media. Surely, this should make us all sit up and take notice.

For all intents and purposes, many expect classifieds to move in its entirety to the web over the next few years – with smart technology to alert consumers of the goods they desire being available on websites. Already, estate agents warn that 40% of referrals now come from the web, with a dwindling response from print. Similar statistics are coming through for jobs, motors and general classified.

As a print operator primarily, I take no pleasure in admitting to these harsh realities. Our view at *The New Age* is that we can take an ostrich view on these realities or we can come to terms with them and find a different and better way to ensure that we will succeed as a print title.

We have taken the view that print as we have known it over the past few decades will have to undergo radical change if it wishes to survive the Perfect Storm.

It is clear to all of us that if we are going to survive – never mind compete with the multitude of news sources available today to consumers – we will need to take some bold steps and a radical new direction. We certainly don't believe we have all the answers, but we know that staying as we are is not the answer. Right now, *The New Age* is taking its first risky steps to ensure that we survive.

We have to live by the adage that we should 'do it to ourselves, before someone else does it to us'.

THE PLAN

As part of this approach, we have embraced our digital operations in deed and action (and not only in words) as the pure players certainly do not have the conflicts we have between good revenues in print and challenges revenues in online.

It may mean that we will need to accept that margins of 20% and 25% for print may be a thing of the past – and for heaven's sake do not believe you are going to get those margins in digital.



NAZEEM HOWA

Most importantly, charging for digital content only works if you have unique, quality content that will attract an entrance fee. Let's spend more time on ensuring great content for our print titles and less time discussing paywalls as this approach will only work if we have quality, relevant content that will make consumers engage with your paywall. Currently, the jury is out on many paywall implementations.

On the print side, we will need to understand the model of 65%-70% of our revenue coming from advertisers and the rest from cover price will need to change. *The Times of India*, the world's largest English language newspaper (and still growing) has adopted the approach of only 5% of revenue coming from coverprices. Their view is that as publishers we need to ensure copies in people's hands, no matter what revenue we get as the critical function is to get a response for our advertising as it will bring the advertisers back. This will need some bold steps from those in control of the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) to find a way of accurately measuring our activities. Perhaps, a visit to the ABC's in India is called for.

We should also accept the role of social media in the content provision stakes.

"LET'S SPEND MORE TIME ON ENSURING GREAT CONTENT FOR OUR PRINT TITLES AND LESS TIME DISCUSSING PAYWALLS"

It exists and many consumers use it. Just look at the recent cinema shooting in the United States and understand how it played out almost immediately via social media. It does mean that as newspapers we will have to live by our adage that content is king – and understand that we have lost our role as newspapers of record and that we will have to find very different ways to ensure that our content remains relevant many hours after it has broken in the digital world.

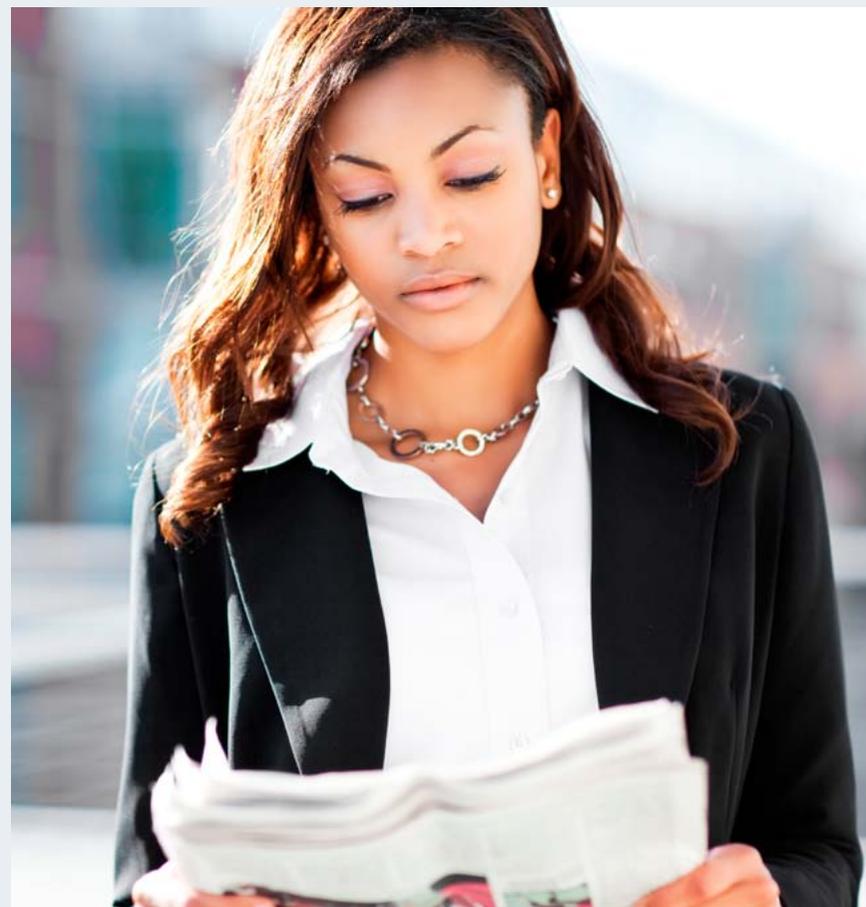
Fundamentally, we need to accept that we need to be producers of great content – and use that content across a multitude of channels, be it social media, web, mobile and print. They all have a place in the new value chain, and we need to respect the role of each.

IT ALL ADDS UP

Costs will be a major challenge going forward as newsprint prices increase. It will place increasing pressure on all of us as we manage margins at a time when revenues are under pressure in our current inflationary environment. By the same token, investment will need to be carefully reviewed to ensure that each decision plays to a channel-agnostic approach.

This month **Moegsien Williams** took over the reins as editor at the *The New Age* after Ryland Fisher resigned. Williams was the editor-in-chief of Independent Newspapers Gauteng, which includes *The Star* and *Pretoria News*, as well as the editorial director of the group. He was also editor of *The Star* and *Saturday Star* until March this year. He previously edited the group's Cape Town titles, the *Cape Times*, the *Cape Argus*, *Weekend Argus* and the *Pretoria News*. Before that he had also been the managing editor of the *Sowetan*.

Finally, we will need to challenge existing paradigms in our own businesses, breaking down the Chinese walls between disciplines to ensure that we continuously provide a great return on investment to our current advertising base. This will mean that we need to go the extra mile to provide a more exciting, creative option to our advertisers without unnecessarily compromising editorial integrity. On the editorial side, we will need to open ourselves to these new ideas and understand that sometimes a new and different shaped advert does not necessarily mean we have sold out.



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Readership 912 000 (AMPS 2011B). Circulation 113 786 (ABC Apr-Jun '12).



Newspapers: still winning readers and influencing people

If the rise of digital is meant to spell the end of the newspaper as we know it, the numbers certainly don't support this. The South African Audience Research Foundation (SAARF) tells *Megan Chronis* that at least in SA, newspaper readership remains robust

SINCE AMPS December 2009 and the introduction of the new benchmark in print's currency, there has been an upward trend in readership for newspapers as a whole, though with no gains worthy of stopping the presses.

Nonetheless, readership has edged up steadily from 47.2% in AMPS 2009, now reaching 48.9% of the adult population (aged 15+). And while the shift to Double Screen-Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing (DS-CAPI) in 2009 renders all data prior to this technically incomparable, it is still worth noting that newspaper readership is up 34% from 10 years ago when it stood at 36.4% (AMPS 2001).

The last three years of AMPS releases show that the uptick in newspaper readership can be laid at the door of the dailies, where readership has risen from 28.6% in 2009 to 30.8% today. In contrast, weekly newspaper reading has declined somewhat, from the 2009 readership figure of 35% to 34.1% in AMPS Dec 2011, although the sector continues to deliver strong audiences, especially in the Sunday market.

GROWTH POINTS

"We see two growth points in newspapers," says Dr Paul Haupt, CEO of SAARF. "The first is definitely the tabloids, which is where the action has been for quite some time. *The Daily Sun* especially has been a significant driver in the newspaper market over the past decade, responsible for much of the growth that has occurred over this time."

From its first AMPS readership figure of 1.755 million readers in 2003, *Daily Sun* has grown its audience to 5.561 million in AMPS Dec 2011.

Titles like *Son* and *Daily Voice* have also helped prove the pulling power of tabloid journalism in SA. *Son* has grown from its first AMPS count of 744 000 readers in 2004, to 1.097 million in AMPS Dec 2011, while *Daily Voice* is now the 6th-top-read daily, with a readership of 556 000.

Haupt says that while growth has been limited to a handful of tabloid publications, the success of these titles is still good news for the medium as a whole. "I think the tabloids have expanded the newspaper reading pool, creating new readers, readers who have the potential to expand their reading horizons to

benefit other newspaper titles as well."

Another area of growth is in the Zulu newspaper market, with *Isolezwe* and its Sunday edition *Isolezwe ngeSonto*, and *Ilanga* and *Ilanga langeSonto*, posting steady growth since launch. From an initial 339 000 readers in AMPS 2003, *Isolezwe* has now cultivated an audience of 912 000, with its Sunday edition rising from 645 000 to 889 000 readers in just three years. *Ilanga's* initial pool of 550 000 readers in AMPS 2003 has risen to 971 000 in AMPS Dec 11, with *Ilanga langeSonto* up from 441 000 readers in AMPS 2006/7 to 950 000 currently.

These growth areas aside however, for the most part, readership of individual titles has remained largely stable since AMPS Dec 2009 and the advent of the new print benchmark.

COMPARING THE PRINT COUSINS

The same is true for magazines, which have shown little significant growth. The introduction of DS-CAPI in AMPS Dec 2009

resulted in a significantly higher measure for the sector, with magazine readership setting a new benchmark high of 50%, up some 25% on year-previous figures.

Since then however, the sector has shown no significant growth overall, with readership rising slightly to 50.5% in AMPS Dec 2010, remaining at the same level in AMPS

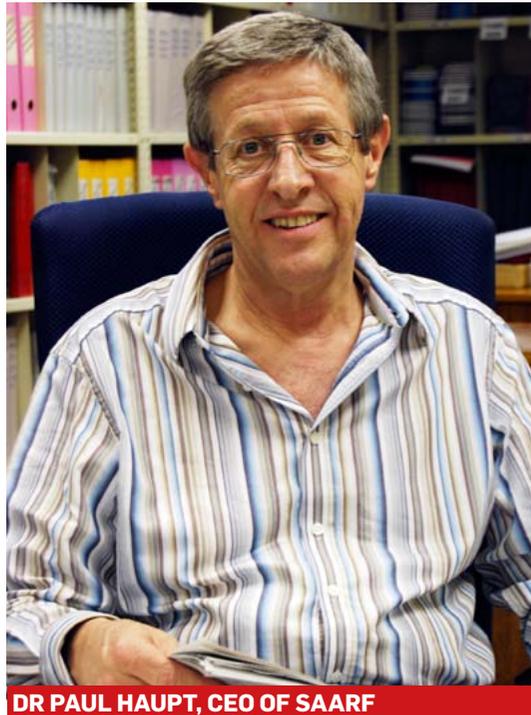
Dec 2011. Today, total readership is 17.624-million adults (aged 15+).

A DIGITAL FUTURE?

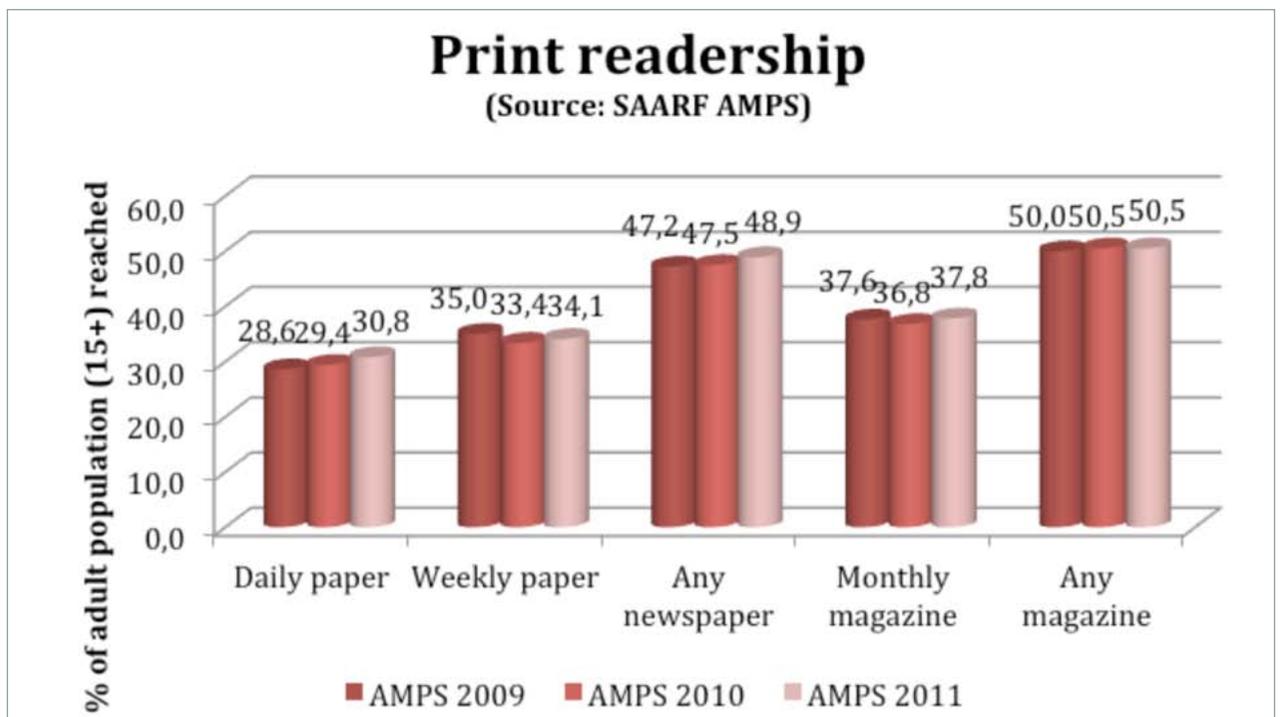
If there has been little growth in newspaper readership in its traditional format, what of readership on digital and mobile platforms? Compared to 2010, digital readership of any print title is significantly up, but not enough to get excited about just yet. Digital reading accounts for a mere fraction of total readership: only 3.8% of adults read a print title online (up from 2.6% in AMPS Dec 10), and 1.8% read a title on a cell-phone in a month (up from 1.3% in 2010). AMPS Dec 11 also shows that despite the hype around them, tablets have hardly made a dent locally, with only 0.4% of the total adult population owning one.

"The impact of digital has yet to hit our local market, which is less advanced with regards to online than many of those in the first world, hampered as it is by a lack of decent bandwidth at an affordable price and a population without the financial resources to fully embrace new technology," says Haupt.

"This is not necessarily bad news for the traditional print industry, as it affords the industry an opportunity to watch and learn from other markets, allowing print owners to better plan for change and avoid pitfalls."



DR PAUL HAUPT, CEO OF SAARF



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Don't drop the ball

Sazi Hadebe is the new editor of the daily, Saturday and Sunday editions of *Isolezwe*. But being the top dog at one of the biggest success stories in the country's newspaper industry sounds easier than it actually is, he told *Magdel Louw*

First tell us a little about the road that led you here?

I was born in Durban in 1974 with my early years spent mostly in Dube Village at Inanda. I went to Shembe Memorial School until standard five and then to several senior schools as my father tried his best to keep me – as well as my two brothers and a sister who were also at school at the time – away from the political violence which had engulfed the whole area. The family moved to Mtubatuba for two years but then my father died tragically in car accident at work. We relocated to Durban where I completed my matric at Mqhawe High School in 1994. Unrest was very much part of everyday life for me growing up in the townships.

From 1995 I studied for a National Diploma in Journalism at the Durban University of Technology while freelancing with *Umafrika* and other papers. *The Witness/ The Echo* later employed me as a sports writer, after which in 1999 I moved to Johannesburg taking on various part time jobs including working at SAPA, lecturing journalism at ICESA College and sports reporting at the *Independent* on Saturday. After that it was back to the *The Witness* to cover general news, but I kept on writing about football. I then joined *Isolezwe* as a sports reporter when it launched 10 years ago, which was the first time I could write full time, in Zulu, about my passion – football! Next I went to the *Sunday Times* in Johannesburg

as a soccer writer, but returned that same year as sports editor at *Isolezwe*, a position I held until the end of 2010 when I was appointed deputy editor.

The daily edition of *Isolezwe* is now at an ABC circulation of 113 786 total circulation compared with 108 138 a year ago (April to June), *Isolezwe ngeSonto* at 90 092, compared with 80 608 a year earlier, while its Saturday sister, *Isolezwe ngoMgqibelo*, has already reached 76 127 after only launching in August last year. Do you feel confident in taking over such an impressive force?

It is without doubt an awesome challenge, but one which I am excited about and have thrown myself at. The success of a newspaper is rarely the work of just one person – it's usually due to the input of everyone working hard towards a common goal. There is a system in place at *Isolezwe* that is achieving great results and I don't see anything on the horizon changing that progression. I learned a lot from the previous three editors and, believe me, the learning continues every day. The pressure though is now on me not to disappoint anyone – particularly our readers.

Will you be hands on with all of the three titles?

I will do my utmost to give attention to all the papers, but my focus is on the daily title. It is critical to get the right people to

handle our weekend editions and I believe we have them.

What do you think makes *Isolezwe* so successful in today's tough market conditions?

We touch our readers through our stories that are aimed at being relevant to them, and we have to grow with our readers in every aspect. Yet, although we focus on local news – and this is what keeps *Isolezwe* going – we don't shy away from international stories that also affect our readers.

What changes can we expect to see in the newspaper under your editorship? Will there be any political realignment?

It's still early days for me, but there's a lot I want to introduce gradually to editorial management. I will consult with my colleagues and seek opinions before introducing anything – *Isolezwe* is not a one-man band. I am taking over in exciting times though – feedback from the launch of our new *SiyaPhola* lifestyle magazine at the end of June is that it boosted sales significantly. In July we've also introduced a Sunday property section and will focus on good guidance for our readers in what to many is a brand new market.

Do you think there is sufficient analytical/ in depth writing in the paper generally?

There is room for improvement, but I am confident we have the calibre of journalists to

get us where we want to be. We don't avoid politics but, to be honest, it's not a priority. The emphasis is to report on political issues in a balanced way.

What in your opinion are the hallmarks of a successful newspaper?

Most critical is understanding who your readers are. We want them to grow with us and we want to empower them.

Where would you like to see *Isolezwe* in three years' time?

To be way ahead of the pack, still growing and maturing in all facets of newspaper life – we have to always be the market leader.



SAZI HADEBE

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From dusk till dawn

In June Mazwi Xaba, former editor of *Isolezwe*, took over as editor of the *Daily Sun* and *Sunday Sun*. But who is this man who created the 'monster' that is *Isolezwe*? And what does he intend doing with his new baby?

BY MAGDEL LOUW

THE DAILY SUN is no stranger to strong personalities. The legendary Deon Du Plessis who died last year, was founder and publisher of this phenomenon that once peaked at a circulation of 500 000. And now Xaba has taken over from Themba Khumalo who resigned a year ago, leaving in his wake the highly successful Zulu-newspaper *Isolezwe* that in the first four years after its launch in 2002 went from zero to over 97 000 daily sales – and it's still growing.

The *Daily Sun* is quite similar to *Isolezwe* though, says Xaba, the main difference being the language. They carry the same type of content and target similar sections of the market. But while *Isolezwe* is regional and in Zulu, *Daily Sun* has a much wider net across the country. "But it basically still serves the same sort of Mzansi person," he smiles.

The challenge now is in terms of newsgathering and distribution as well as management, as he concedes the *Daily Sun* is a huge operation. But with a good team as he has now, he's sure it'll become easier.

"I was very excited to be appointed as editor. It's a wonderful opportunity to lead a leading newspaper that's the top selling newspaper in SA and the continent."

A WINDING ROAD

But to know who Xaba is, it's good to retrace some of his steps. Born in an informal settlement near Pinetown in Kwazulu-Natal, his family was moved to Umlazi Township where his father worked as a bus driver and his mother as a factory worker in Durban. One of five children he lived a typical township life.

An excellent student at school, he especially loved languages. "When someone beat me at Afrikaans or maths, I didn't like it. I loved school; it was really the best phase of my life. I was an exemplary student," he smiles with fondness. But he had liked writing most. "I don't know if it was to make up for being shy and not that outspoken. But my plan was to establish myself as a writer."

He recalls how he one day showed his art tutor a rough draft of a novel he was working on. After reading it she mentioned that the *Daily News* was avidly looking for journalists. "That was in 1992, when a lot was

happening in the black townships and rural areas. Newspapers were looking for black writers, but it was difficult then to find someone with a good command of the English language. Journalists also had to have passion for the job, because it was a dangerous job." So he applied and landed himself a job at the *Daily News*, where he soon found himself working at the political desk, then went did a stint subbing and then design, so that he quickly got all round experience of what newspapers are about. He went on to become chief-sub at the *Sunday Tribune*, after which he joined *Isolezwe* from its launch in 2002 fulfilling a series of roles such as chief sub-editor and deputy editor, managing the newsroom plus recruitment and training. He was then appointed editor of



MAZWI XABA

THAT PERSONAL TOUCH

The most valuable thing he learnt during his time at *Isolezwe* is the importance of people, the 'irreplaceableness' of people. "People are special. People in leadership positions have to learn to respect and appreciate people, so that you can motivate them and create that necessary energy." For it had cost hard work, sweat and sacrifice to go from zero to a circulation of 113 786 (ABC's April – June 2012) and today it's still climbing. "That couldn't have been done with the usual eight to four 'o'clock shifts and sitting in the corner without going the extra mile. And I understand the same sacrifices were made by the veterans from the *Daily Sun*." Thus his mission now is to work with this team – "inspire, mobilise, motivate and lead by example" – and point them towards the second phase of the *Daily Sun* 'revolution'.

Sitting back, he muses aloud about the economical and political depression SA is in at the moment, with the looming uncertainty of Mangaung at the end of the year. This he believes plays a part in their newspaper sales. "Newspaper buying is part of the general day-to-day consumer habits and when things are down it will affect them. Our market, which is the working class, is especially sensitive to things like that. Some of our readers start their day without knowing where their next meal is coming from."

He remarks that to work at a paper such as the *Daily Sun* one needs a certain understanding of this market, who are the 'forgotten people.' "The pump jockey who appears at your side when you fill up at the fuel station, who you forget about afterwards; the woman who cleans your house who you forget about... One has to be extra careful with them."

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

The reason he got into newspapers to begin with, says Xaba, is because he loves SA. "I enjoy the chance of engaging and communicating with its people through newspapers and making a difference in their lives however small it may be. So if I can do that here, I'll be happy." This purpose underpins every decision he makes at *The Daily Sun* – whether it is what he should write in his column or which stories should get prominence above others. "I always first think about inspiring and educating, and yes sometimes I also think about entertaining our readers."



the Sunday edition, *Isolezwe ngeSonto*, when it launched in 2008 and finally became editor-in-chief of *Isolezwe* last year before moving to Johannesburg with his three children and wife Bongi.

"It had been very hard and demanding work to get *Isolezwe* off the ground, but it's nice to know we were part of history – because we did make history with our circulation rising when the rest's was dwindling." Yet even though it was hard, he would do it all over again, in spite of the sacrifice it required.

In terms of the product itself, the *Sunday Sun*'s circulation has stayed fairly consistent, the most recent being 207 294 (ABC's April – June 2012).

However, he nods at the mention of the *Daily Sun*'s dwindling circulation from 381 127 last year to 348 265 this year (ABC's April – June 2012), conceding that the bottom line for any editor is to up the circulation. "But we're not in a crisis. I strongly believe we'll turn the corner soon – although it's not easy to be the leader of the pack that had once reached a circulation of 500 000," he grins.

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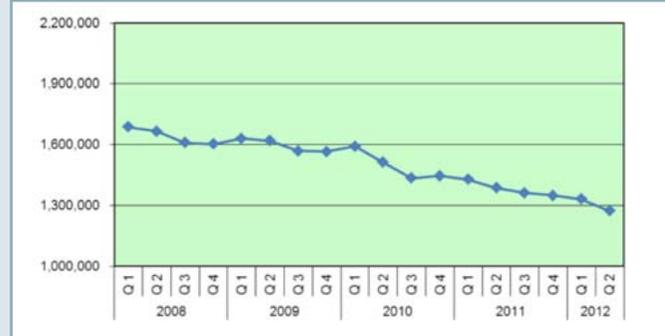
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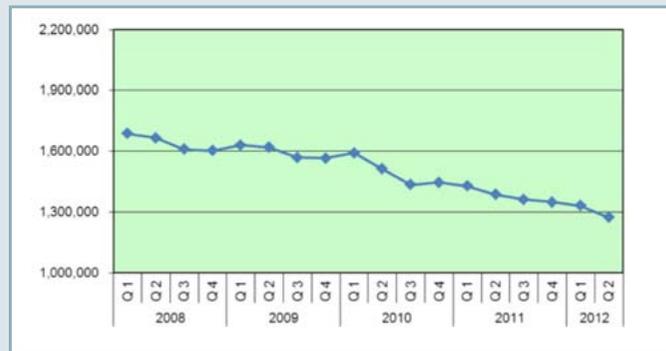
The release of the Audit Bureau of Circulations' (ABC) second quarter (April to June 2012) figures in August brought some good, and bad, news. But it all depends on where you stand

FIRST, THE LESS than great: the circulation of daily newspapers has declined annually by 5.5% since 2008, equivalent to 414 000 copies. Broken up into the various segments, it further reveals that the English titles specifically have declined by 6.4% annually (365 000 copies) over these last four years and Afrikaans titles by 4.4% (64 000 copies.) The good news though is that once again the vernacular titles

have come out on top, **DAILY** having increased by 3.3% annually (15 000 copies) over the period. Speaking of individual titles, compared to this time last year *Isolezwe* and *Volksblad* both grew by 5%, although they've dropped by almost 3% and 5% respectively since the last quarter. *Cape Argus'* circulation declined by 23% since last year, while *Sowetan*, *The Star* and *Pretoria News* all dropped by 18%.



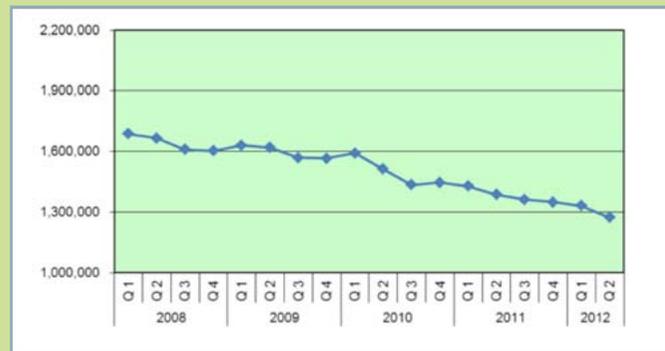
Four year trend analysis by language for daily newspapers



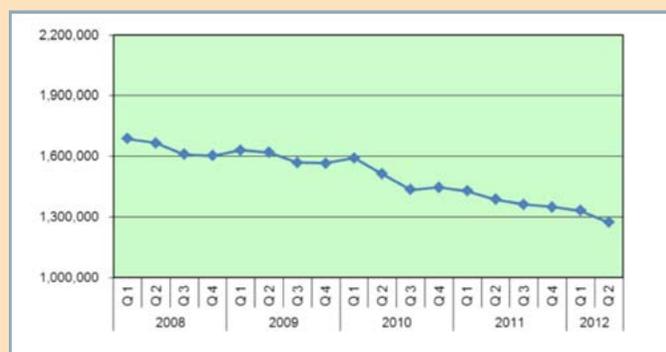
Four year category trend by quarter for daily newspapers

WEEKLY

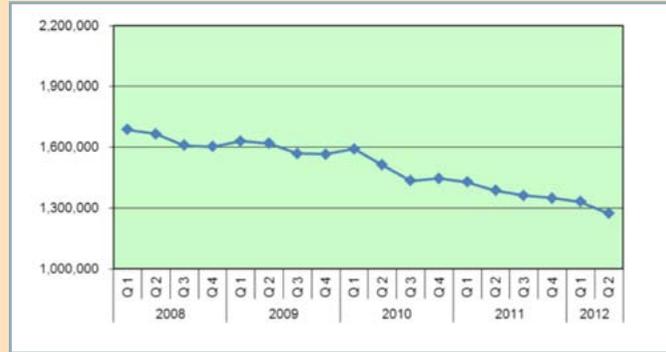
UPLIFTING NEWS for weekly newspapers though is that, having shown a decline during 2010, they've recovered to their 2008 levels. *UmAfrika* however has dropped the most (almost 30%) since the same period last year, which includes an 11% drop from just the first quarter this year.



Four year category trend by quarter for weekly newspapers



Four year category trend by quarter for weekend newspapers



Four year trend analysis by language for weekend newspapers

WEEKEND

IN TERMS OF weekend newspapers, the picture is more gloomy, with its total circulation having dropped annually by 2.6% (276 000 copies) in the last four years. The English titles in particular have dropped annually by 4.5%, (355 000 copies) over this period and Afrikaans titles by 2.9% (75 000 copies.) Yet saving the day again are the vernacular titles which have grown annually since 2008 by an impressive 38% (153 000 copies.)

Nonetheless not every title follows the same trend, as not only *Isolezwe ngeSonto* but also Afrikaans title *Volksblad Saturday's* circulation increased by 11% in the last year. They also showed a 5% and 1% increase in the last quarter. However *Sondag*, *Pretoria News Saturday* and *The Saturday Star* all recorded a 20% drop in circulation in the last year, with, of these, only *Sondag* showing an increase (2%) compared to the first quarter.

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New terrain beckons with talks of sale

Irish publishing group Independent News & Media has confirmed that it's considering a possible sale of its South African business Independent Newspapers, with a few local parties already rumoured to be potential buyers. What does this mean for the local media landscape?

BY MAGDEL LOUW

AT THE TIME OF GOING TO PRESS... it was reported that talks of selling Independent Newspapers came in light of Independent News & Media being faced with paying a corporate bond of R42 billion by 2014. The Dublin-based group said in July it had appointed Hawpoint and Investec as advisers to look at 'a range of options for its SA operations' which reportedly makes up a third of group revenue and half of its operating profit. Amongst the potential buyers who have been named are South African conglomerate Shanduka Investment Holdings, owned by businessman Cyril Ramaphosa, and Iqbal Survé's Sekunjalo Investment Holdings. Staff at Independent Newspapers were also reportedly establishing a workers' trust at the time in order to buy a stake in the local operations.

“A SALE COULD MEAN MORE REINVESTMENT OF THE PROFITS IN THE PEOPLE AND THE BUSINESS OF INL”

These aren't the first rumours of a sale to a Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) group, says Reg Rumney, director of the Centre for Economics Journalism in Africa at Rhodes University. "BEE is one favoured exit strategy for foreign investors, so if Independent Newspapers Limited (INL) is selling out of SA, it would probably be to a BEE group. The sale of the entire group to another foreign entity would probably be fiercely resisted by the ANC, unlike when Independent News & Media (INM) entered the market with the blessing of Nelson Mandela in the 1990s. The Gupta family is also rumoured to be interested in buying INM's South Africa

operation, and though that would also be foreign ownership, I don't know how favourably or not it would be seen."

Dr Pedro Diederichs, head of the department of journalism at the Tshwane University of Technology agrees that, with its 30 national and regional newspapers, including most of the South Africa's 'best-known titles', like *The Star*, *The Cape Times*, the growing *Isolezwe* and *Sunday Independent*, it will be good news for the local print industry if the new owners are local owners. "The international base of Independent Newspapers has always been a bone of contention among editorial teams and also in the SA political environment."

To his mind though it's not surprising that 'all concerned' would like to see a change in ownership towards a South African flavoured, and preferably 'a very strong Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment ('BBBEE') company or partnership'. "Diversity as in ownership, in the sense of not connected to the present monopolised scene, will also be welcomed."

In fact, Anton Harber, Caxton Professor of Journalism at the University of the Witwatersrand, calls the prospective sale of Independent Newspapers SA is the best news the newspaper industry has had for years, as it can be a moment to open up, rejuvenate and accelerate the transformation of the sector. Since he also believes one of the central problems SA deals with is the need for greater diversity in its media, the ideal outcome for him too would be to break up the group and enable a number of new owners to emerge. "I am not one of those who thinks the biggest issue would be an owner close to the ANC, as whoever buys it will have political affiliations. I am concerned we don't get a Murdoch or Berlusconi - someone who abuses ownership to pursue narrow personal and political agendas. We need a proprietor who recognises the role these papers should be playing in encouraging an active citizenship in this democracy, someone who understands the media and respects the independence and investment needed to create the space for the great journalism which makes for rich newspapers and vigorous democracies."



SMART INVESTMENTS

Rumney reckons that although the resultant effect on the media landscape depends on whether the market is allowed to become more, or less concentrated, as well as, like Harber said, who buys the assets of Independent Newspapers, it might very well just be business as usual, he remarks. Otherwise a sale could mean more

reinvestment of the profits in the people and the business of INL. "There is a perception that INM in Ireland was interested in 'sweating the assets' and wasn't really interested in growing the business, despite continuing with the *Sunday Independent* and launching *Isolezwe*. Then again, it is already dominant in two cities, Cape Town and Durban, and it is hard to see how it could grow without acquisition."

Pic: Denzil Maregele



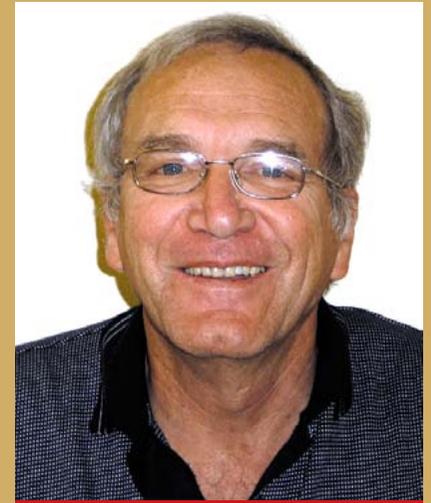
REG RUMNEY



LIZETTE RABE



ANTON HARBER



PEDRO DIEDERICHS

Diederichs remarks that because the editorial sections of all the Independent Newspaper titles have been so 'heavily cannibalised' by the mother company to save on ever-increasing costs, its newsrooms became just a shadow of what it were in years gone by as especially senior journalists just left or were retrenched. Title loyalty and identity amongst employees suffered because of this, he remarks.

"The upside of this, if any, was that new talents, especially in the equity formula, were hired and today titles such as *The Star* and the *Sunday Independent* have editors (Makhudu Sefara and Moshoeshe Monare respectively) that are culturally and socially in a strong position to explore a still untapped black newspaper readers' market."

The introduction of the new tabloid *StarAfrica* he finds to be an interesting development as it is 'unashamedly focusing on this market.' "*The Daily Sun's* success has been a watershed occurrence in the local newspaper industry, but with its market share dropping over the last few years, Independent is certainly ready to cash in."

Another serious development is the growth in the popularity of vernacular titles like Independent's *Isolezwe* that is becoming another success story. Tabloids like *The Daily Voice* in Cape Town are part of a community press environment that shows strong growth and potential. "Do not forget that in new media Independent Online (IOL) is more than holding its own in a developing field and will be a popular acquisition."

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

But whomever the new owners may be, Prof Lizette Rabe, convenor of programmes: MA

and PhD at the Department of Journalism of the University of Stellenbosch, believes strongly that it's essential that they don't get involved in the process of news delivery. It could be very detrimental if the new owners think the news media are simply marionettes that have to do as they say, she remarks.

"We have paid dearly for media freedom, thus it's in nobody's interest to commit advocacy journalism - we know what the results of that is. In the end it's nothing other than propaganda, and with regard to that we must learn from the past."

Rumney however wonders if it'll turn out as idealistic as that. Assuming that it is bought and not broken up, should the Guptas buy the group it will clearly become the mouthpiece of a particular faction in the ANC, he states - "and there are no prizes for guessing what faction that might be." It's harder though to say what will happen should Shanduka or Sekunjalo or some other BEE group buy it and continue to run it as a group.

"INM have been merciless in pursuing profit, but I don't know what would happen if the new owners tried to pursue a narrow political agenda instead," he muses. "Would it weaken the group? Could they carry off serving the readers as well as committing the newspapers to a strong political agenda? Rupert Murdoch moved the UK newspapers he bought sharply to the Right, and became a powerful force in UK politics. But I don't know how feasible that is here."

He points out that newspapers have become non-party political, though they arguably promote liberal values. Their reporting could be seen to be anti-government by a

"I AM CONCERNED WE DON'T GET A MURDOCH OR BERLUSCONI"

kind of reflex action, but they stop short of promoting the DA, for example. "Independent newspapers have shown some interest in investigative reporting recently, so even the prospect of a change of ownership seems to be beneficial." Perhaps new owners also might not be so slavish in ensuring a flow of cash to finance the parent company, and reinvest in quality journalism.

"Furthermore there is another possibility that workers might get shares, either through an ESOP or another structure. They are trying to put something together. It would be an interesting experiment, and a very welcome one, not only in giving the workers an interest in the business, but also in possibly giving them some influence."

However if worse comes to worst, SA might just end up with really bland or bad newspapers. "We could even end up with the collapse of a newspaper group, since running a newspaper business is not that easy, and learning lessons can be costly."

TRICKY BUSINESS

All that said though, Rumney makes the point that newspapers, because of their perceived importance in supporting democracy or not, because of their role in freedom of expression (there are no barriers to entry

in SA), and because of their political power, cannot be considered in crude business terms. "They are businesses and this is important for their independence and sustainability. But the interplay between business interests and political power is not straightforward."

Where there is diversity and no censorship, he points out, it's hard for newspapers to be made to play the role of propagandists. Readers will certainly vote with their cash for an alternative to sanitised news. "I suppose we all buy newspapers that bolster our prejudices, but there's a big difference between having a point of view and reporting real news."

On the other hand, commercial pressures can have the same effect as censorship in suppressing real news in favour of cheap sensation, in narrowing the working environment of journalists and encouraging 'churnalism' - "the churning out of rewritten press releases, wire copy and celebrity nonsense."

Thus there are no easy answers, he says. "However diversity is preferable to dominance by a few groups or by the government - yet this has to be balanced by the commercial push towards concentration for survival."

"There were Apartheid government attempts to buy out the liberal, English-speaking Press. None succeeded, but it would have been interesting to see what would have happened. The closure of the *Rand Daily Mail* was a victory for conservative forces at the time, but it led to the launch of the *Weekly Mail*, a paper that leaned even further to the Left. So there are unintended consequences to intended changes in the media."

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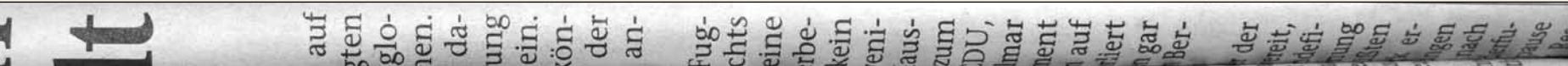
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A call for the return of journalism

As a former Independent Newspapers journalist, *Professor Pippa Green*, now head of the journalism programme at the University of Pretoria, offers her perspective on the possible sale of the company

"I THINK WE NEED to take a step back to the fact that the biggest English-language group of newspapers in the country has been entirely foreign-owned since 1993. For me, this has posed major problems. It restricted diversity, already lacking in newspaper ownership, it tended to make the newspaper owners align with a political elite rather than a broader SA public, but more importantly, it has diminished those newspapers and good journalism.

We did not think this was the case when the Irish-owned Independent Newspaper group bought up the Argus company (relatively cheaply) just before 1994. In fact, journalists such as myself, who had worked for *The Argus*, believed that new owners may invigorate those papers and that we would benefit from the international connection. Sadly, the opposite has turned out to be true. Independent Newspapers has consistently disinvested in both journalism and the country. Where there were once 5 000 people employed, there are now less than

2 000. Where circulations of some local dailies were hitting the 100 000 mark, they have dwindled to between 30 000 and 40 000. The company has sold assets, including the historic Cape Town Newspaper House, squeezed margins, and appointed editors who have had the unenviable task of helping them meet high profit margins to help their struggling UK titles.

So the news that local companies may buy the group, or parts of it, is good news. It will be quite a struggle to turn some of the titles around, but a South African group or groups I think will have a better connection with the SA public and will not asset strip with the same vengeance as has been done in the past 18 years.

I also hope that it will bring more diversity to the media landscape in SA, not only in terms of race and gender, but possible also in terms of content. It would not be a bad idea if the group was broken up and some titles sold individually. This will enhance content diversity. At the moment, at

Independent, there is one political team covering for the Group, one subs pool that copy-edits for the group, and, as far as I am aware, a national sports team too. Although these may provide an economy of scale, it lessens the array of content and reporting in the main dailies, and as for the subs-pool, it removes the 'feel' of a paper even further away from local readers. It is little wonder that most of their titles have suffered such significant readership losses.

So I think the important thing is to try to establish more diversity in the print media, and better quality journalism. I am aware that there is an effort by local Independent journalists to become a minority shareholder in a new ownership arrangement and if this happens it may have beneficial effects on the quality of journalism.

However the main concern would be ownership by a group that want to further disinvest in newspapers and journalism.

And yes, times of change always bring



PIPPA GREEN

insecurity to employees and this may be one effect of the possible ownership change. This is natural. But I also think that many good journalists have had experienced such professional disappointment there, that they may well welcome a change."

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Probing questions

BY PHYLICIA OPPELT, EDITOR OF THE TIMES

IT SEEMS AS IF AN inordinate amount of time has passed since the explosion of the Brett Murray artwork furore in SA media.

Surprisingly though, it is just over a three months since the ANC vociferously protested about Murray's rights to freedom of expression in his depiction of President Jacob Zuma with his penis sticking out in the artwork, *The Spear*.

And while the introspection into rights versus personal dignity has moved on, the Murray affair has been an instructive lesson for SA media.

This is particularly relevant since *City Press* and its editor Ferial Haffajee – after deciding to keep *The Spear* on its website after the publication of an article about it – became the targets of a somewhat vicious campaign by the ANC to browbeat the newspaper into submission.

This was made even more intense by ANC spokesman, Jackson Mthembu's rallying call to party supporters to boycott the newspaper.

More interestingly, the ANC's reaction came in the same year that it appears to have taken a step back in its rather hostile position on the print industry and the constant flow of criticism about its ownership, transformation, editorial direction and supposed arrogance in dealing with ordinary SA citizens.

Just a month before the Murray controversy, the ANC had been appeased to a large degree by the report of the Press Freedom Commission, which under the leadership of retired Chief Justice Pius Langa, had examined the various regulatory models which could oversee the print industry.

When secretary-general Gwede Mantashe, policy subcommittee chairwoman Jessie Duarte and Mthembu made their initial submission in February, they were insistent that print media could not be left to its own devices and needed harnessing under the watchful eye of Parliament.

As Mthembu said then: "We cannot have a press which is totally white, which doesn't recognise women in this country. Print



PHYLICIA OPPELT

media is gender- and racially-depressing." When the commission released its report, the ANC seemed willing to take a step back, embracing the notion of a changed regulatory mechanism that would have a significant representation of ordinary South Africans.

And in June, after the ruling party's policy conference in Midrand, Duarte said they were 'largely' satisfied with the work of the commission – a far cry from the resolutions of Polokwane in 2007 that demanded the establishment of a media appeals tribunal.

But while the very frightening spectre of a tribunal now appears to have receded, the Murray incident shows that the almost inevitable hostility between the media and government is not likely to disappear overnight – if at all.

Instead, the ANC's hysterical support of Zuma – particularly in the way the party dealt with *City Press* – illustrates what could almost be described as a natural tension that went hysterical.

We do not exist to please government and government does not exist to please us. This is understood.

But, quite often, it seems that instead of dealing with the issues that matter – delivery, job creation, and economic growth – we become the scapegoat for the failures of the ANC government.

We are not always correct, we are not always above reproach; that much is obvious.

But when, in antagonistic times, the ANC wishes to remind us of the freedom and independence that they bestowed upon us through the post-1994 Constitution; it seems as if there is an inherent threat that they might remove those freedoms. Then things become muddled and murky.

Whether we will find a middle ground between the ruling party and newspaper editors and owners remains to be seen.

What is certain though is that the recommendations of the

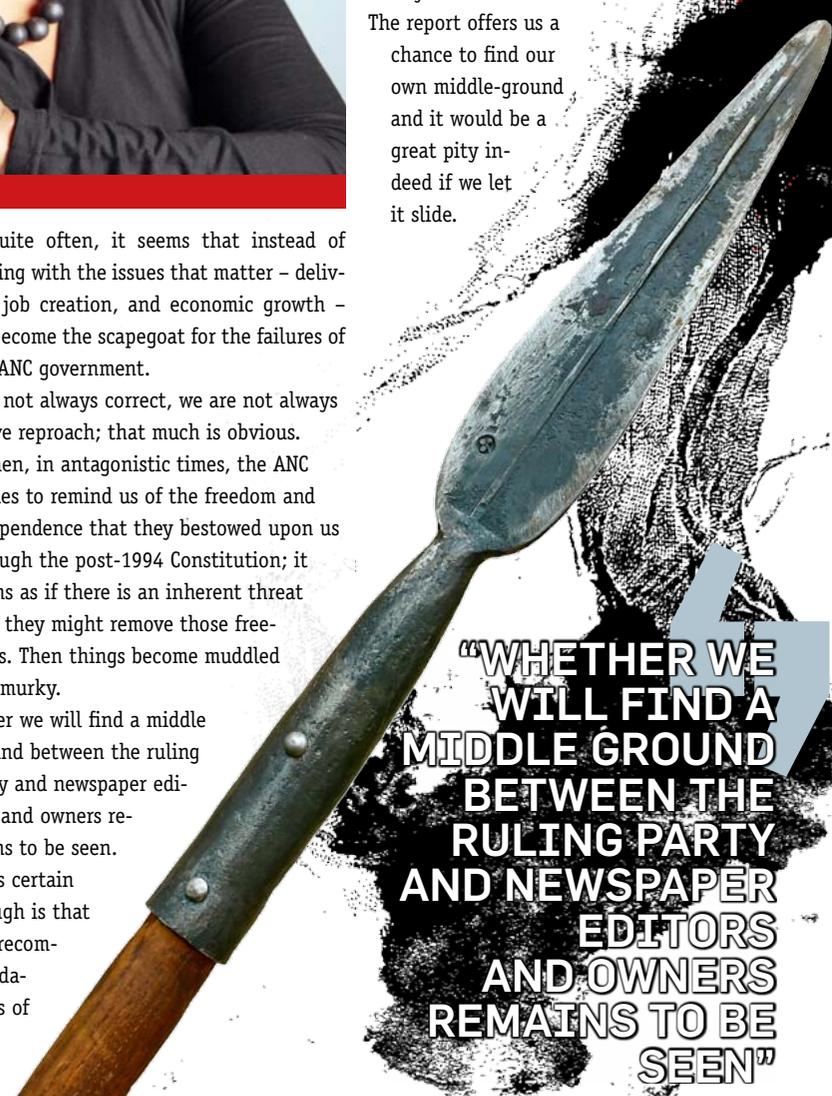
commission's report still needs robust engagement among those who work in the newspaper industry.

Once this has been done – along with the owners' input – we should find ourselves in a new space that we can mostly agree on.

Until then, we'll be leaving room open for the ANC to continuously return to a combative space where we will be accused of being stuck in paralysis.

The report offers us a chance to find our own middle-ground and it would be a great pity indeed if we let it slide.

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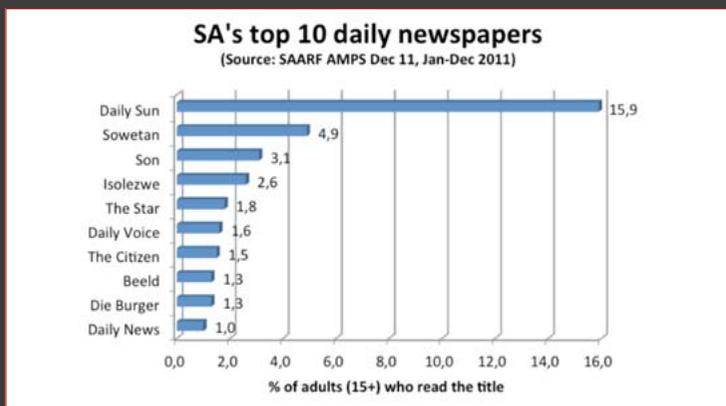
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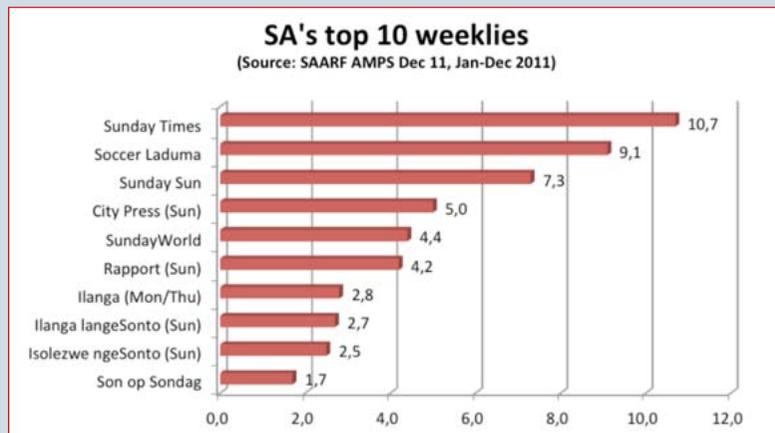
A PAPER A DAY...

- ➔ Only **three daily newspapers** have over a million readers per day: *Daily Sun*, *Sowetan*, and *Son*.
- ➔ SA's top daily newspaper is the **Daily Sun**, drawing **5.561 million readers** to its pages each day. With more than **3.8 million more readers** than the next ranking daily – *Sowetan* – the *Daily Sun* is proof of the drawing power of tabloid journalism.
- ➔ Second-ranked *Sowetan* has a readership of **1.722 million**, while *Son*, which ranks third, has **1.097 million readers**.
- ➔ Zulu-language title, *Isolezwe*, is nudging towards the million mark with **912 000** readers, placing it in fourth position. In fifth is *The Star*, with **640 000** readers.



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- ➔ The most-read weekly newspaper is the *Sunday Times*, with **3.733 million readers**. With a reach of 10.7%, it is the only weekly newspaper to deliver over 10% of the adult population aged 15+.
- ➔ South Africans' passion for the beautiful game places *Soccer Laduma* in second place. This weekly attracts **3.182 million readers**, 86% of whom are male.
- ➔ Third, fourth and fifth positions are once again Sunday titles: *Sunday Sun* (2.567 million readers), *City Press* (1.746 million readers), and *Sunday World* (1.547 million readers).



Saturday success!

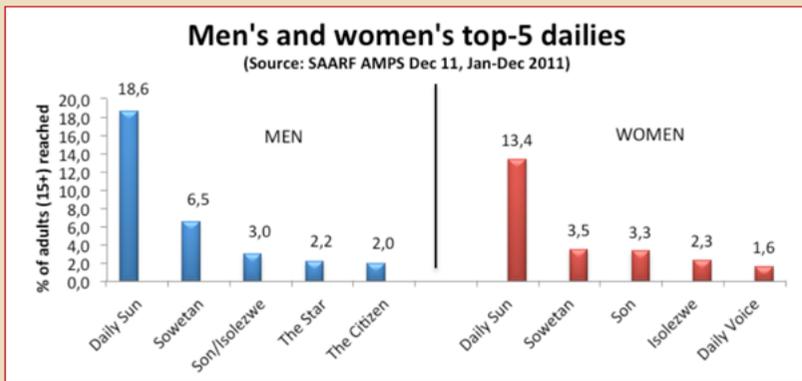
- ✓ **0 - 76 127 in just 9 months**
- ✓ **Now includes a 7-day pull-out TV guide (IsoMag)**

9.2% growth quarter-on-quarter
(ABC Apr-June '12)

Note Isolezwe ngoMgqibelo (Saturday) launched in August 2011.



DAILY READING FOR HIM AND HER



- *Daily Sun*, *Sowetan*, *Son* and *Isolezwe* appear on the top-5 lists of both men and women, with *Daily Sun* taking the lion's share of readers in both camps. Male readership outpaces female readership in all but one of these titles: *Son*.
- *The Star* and *Citizen* round off the male top-5 list, while *Daily Voice* features in fifth position on the female list.

Most-read daily: *Daily Sun*

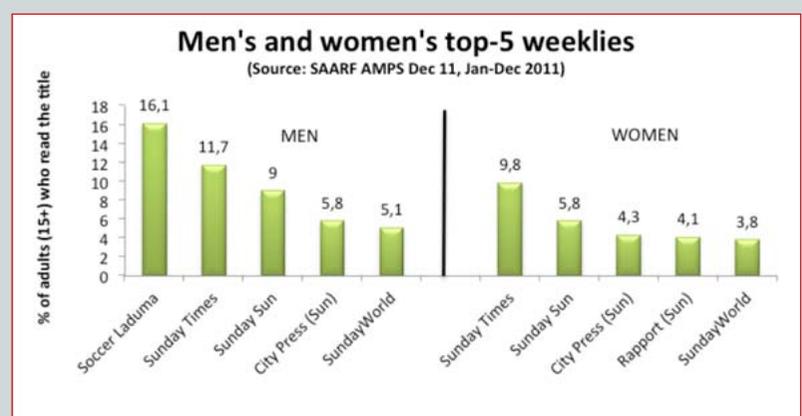


2.418 million female readers



3.143 million male readers

TOP WEEKLIES ACROSS THE GENDER LINE



- Men and women share similar tastes in weeklies, with *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Sun*, *City Press* and *Sunday World* appearing on both the male and female top-5.
- Where *Soccer Laduma* tops the list for men, it is only seventh for women.

Most-read weekly



***Sunday Times*
1.762 million female readers**



***Soccer Laduma*
2.721 million male readers**

Sunday showstopper!

- ✓ **The biggest isiZulu seller on Sundays** (90 092 ABC Q2 2012)
- ✓ **Readership 889 000** (AMPS 2011B)
- ✓ **New popular Ezezindlu property section**

11.8% growth year-on-year
(ABC Apr-June '12)



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Cape Town: 021 422 1094,
JHB: 011 639 7100.

Isolezwe
enkantolo umyeni
shiywe ingoduso enkemile
Kuthiwa isithanda oyithembise isikhundla

Ezezindlu
Kubalulekile ukubheka ezokuphepha

UCastor

Put your complaint **in writing**

If anyone is ever in any doubt about the power and influence of newspapers in SA, consumer columns are a good place to look

BY MEGAN POWER, SUNDAY TIMES CONSUMER JOURNALIST

Complaint Dept.

Take a Number



MEGAN POWER

WHETHER RUN IN small community papers or large daily and national publications, consumer journalism carries clout. Just how much depends on the platform.

As much as I'm loathe to admit it, it's not so much about who writes it – of course, the more skilled and credible the writer, the better – but where one writes it.

I'm very privileged that the platform for the weekly Power Report is the *Sunday Times*, one of the country's highest circulation weekly newspapers. The column reaches 3.7 million people each week across SA, most of whom have a long standing trusting relationship with the paper. Our readers span the country's cities and towns and include everyone from CEOs, politicians and tenderpreneurs, to parents, blue-collar workers and unionists. It's an enviable audience for any writer – and advertiser.

It's ironic that this varied audience that indeed attracts advertisers to the paper week in and week out, is the same audience that can turn into its biggest critics.

On the one hand business pays big money to ensure readers see their products and services in full colour, full page ads, but they're not necessarily as keen on those same readers seeing page two of *Money & Careers*.

“THERE IS NO DOUBT IT'S THE PRINT COLUMN THAT HAS THE MOST IMPACT ON BOTH READERS AND BUSINESS”

If and when business steps out of line, and it's exposed in my column, the damage is done. An unhappy customer speaking out in print can undo months of hard work and costly marketing campaigns. It's not the complainant that carries weight; it's the sheer numbers out there that get to read what he or she has to say. It's a complainant they identify with.

At the same time, when business does good (yes, my column gives weekly credit where credit is due) those accolades reach the same audience and the goodwill and positivity it creates is remarkable. It's the kind

of marketing money just can't buy.

How business is portrayed in print is up to it. The ball is firmly in its court. If it plays by the rules and treats consumers fairly and with respect, consumer columns can be extremely powerful. But it can just as easily backfire and dent reputations and brands. Again, it's up to business.

Consumer columns and the newspapers that run them keep business honest. I doubt many CEOs have a clue what's happening at grassroots level in their organisations and how poorly their call centre agents and so-called 'communication managers' often communicate. Perhaps a call to their own switchboards or call centres would be a surprise!

Communications specialists within an organisation can make or break it; they should be

chosen far more carefully. And they should be held accountable for what they say and do. If they're untrained, train them. If they haven't a clue of what the company does, educate them. Just like a business wouldn't appoint an inexperienced employee to head its operations, it shouldn't be done in communications.

What communications managers and their bosses seem not to grasp is that when they fail to answer consumer columnists queries adequately – or at all – it's not only a slap in the face to the journalist but to readers. And those readers are their customers.

When things go wrong, business needs to be upfront and honest. It needs to apologise, not make excuses. As I said in a recent column, leave excuses to cabinet ministers. In addition to my print columns, I tweet, blog

and participate in regular consumer radio shows. But there is no doubt it's the print column that has the most impact on both readers and business.

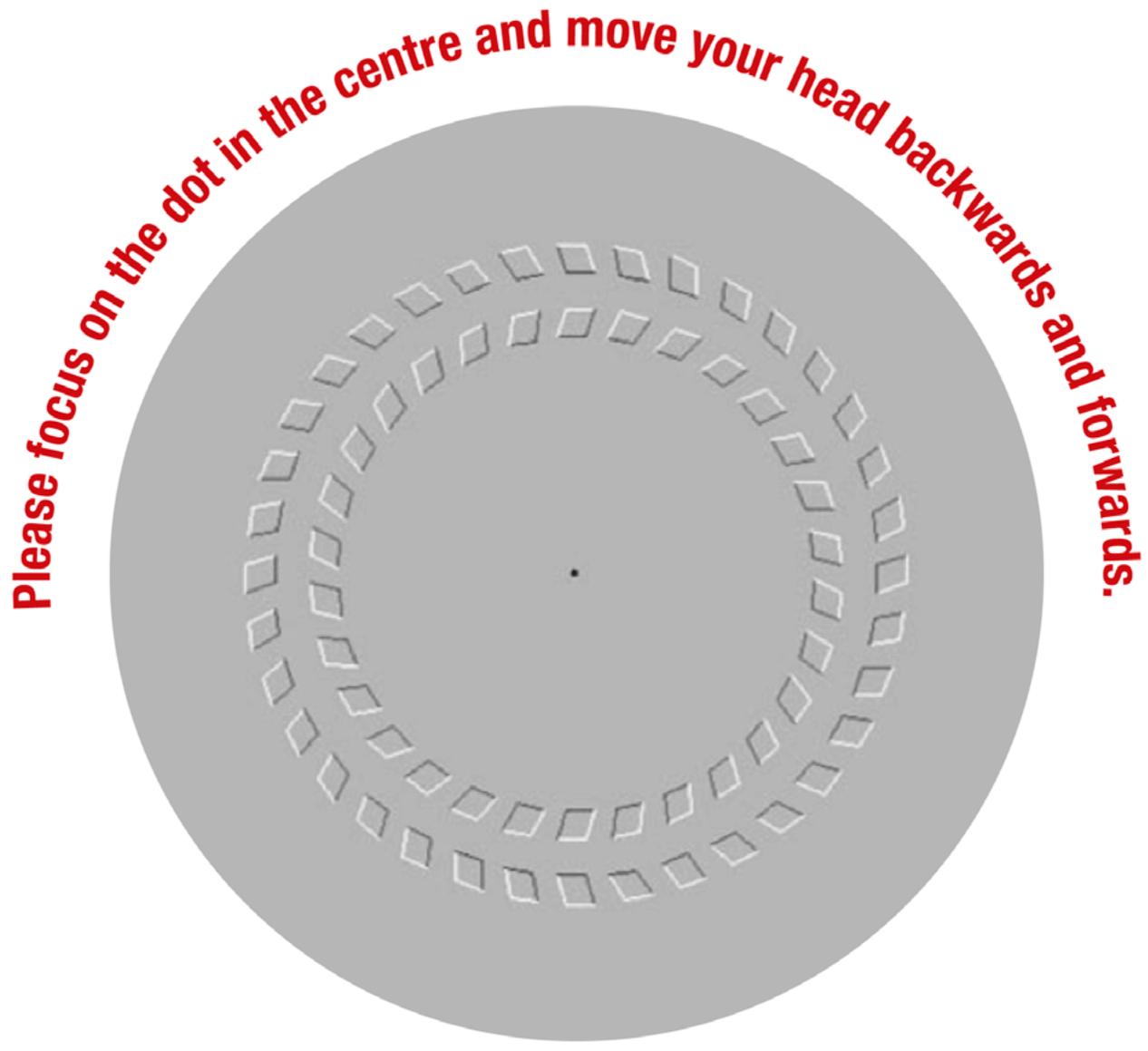
Although the power of social media is growing, the majority of consumer complaints (up to 20 a day) come through via email and many of these readers don't access social media at all. Some don't even have access to email: I still get regular faxes and at least two snail mail letters a week.

Of course consumer journalism functions on any platform, be it print, broadcast and online, and there's a growing overlap between all three which is encouraging.

But a newspaper's role is more than just informing and entertaining. It's about championing the underdog; engaging with readers and giving them a voice.

The usual polarising issues around race, gender, religion and class – which dominate so much of current debate – fall away in the consumer world. No matter how rich or poor we are, where we come from and what we do, we're all consumers and an injury to one is most definitely an injury to all. It's a great – and refreshing – leveller.

Our new consumer legislation has shifted the balance of power from business to ordinary people in an unprecedented way. And there's a community of consumers in SA who are becoming increasingly vocal and empowered. It's a new battleground. And I believe good newspapers, with their legions of loyal readers, are perfectly poised to lead the charge.



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Sunday Times

THE MASS MARKET JUST HOW BIG IS IT?

18 157 000

people in South Africa are in LSM 4-6
(52% of the total population)

5 313 000

Ads24 Mass Market
title readers agree
that advertising
informs them about
the benefits of
products and services

R 4 523

Average
household
income

Grocery shopping

ONE BULK SHOP PER MONTH **59%**

ASPIRATIONAL

74%

say their main goal
in life is to make
more money



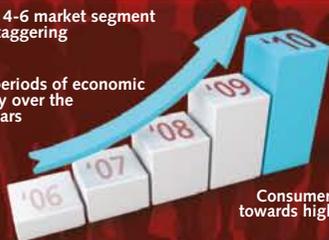
OPTIMISTIC

44%

say that their standard
of living is better than
their parents' at the
same age

The LSM 4-6 market segment
grew a staggering

28%
despite periods of economic
instability over the
past 5 years



Consumers are moving
towards higher standards
of living

10 374 000

People read Ads24
Mass Market titles,
of which **5 941 000**
are in LSM 4-6



Banking

48%

of people who opened a bank account in the
P12m are LSM 4-6

MASS MARKET - ACCORDING TO UCT UNILEVER RESEARCH

High growth levels are evident/Consumer debt dropping slowly/
Aspiration dampened, but not extinguished/HH income increased/
Spending increased on:



Clothes



Furniture



Home
Improvement



Cars



Groceries



Finance



Cellphones

Infographic by **ads24** Matching Brands
to Markets

Sources: AMPS 2011AB, TGI 2011C, FutureFact 2011/2012 & UCT Unilever Research

Pioneering research for advertiser added-value

"THE NEED FOR MEASURABILITY AND 'EMPIRICAL PROOF' THAT MEDIA DELIVERS POSITIVE RETURNS ON INVESTMENT IS CRITICAL TO THE MEDIA INVESTMENT DECISION"

BY LINDA GIBSON, CEO OF ADS 24

AS THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE continues to change, most notably with the increase in online channels, print media are putting up a strong fight. With the recent declines in print circulations advertisers are asking for more value for their rand.

Thus we've got to work harder and smarter to understand the consumer. If we can understand their media consumption patterns, decision-making cycles, and the means they have at their disposal, then we can offer a great level of value to the advertiser. In this regard Ads24 is pioneering two pieces of important research – a media-neutral planning tool, 'Path to Persuasion', and local newspaper research 'Compass24'.

PATH TO PERSUASION

At the end of March 2012 the 12-month measured advertising spend in SA totalled a staggering R62.4 billion. With the rapid fragmentation of channels available to consumers, the media investment decision is becoming more difficult to rationalise.

Media investors in SA have access to a wide variety of research tools including AMPS, TGI and Compass24. These guide their media buying decisions but there are no media-neutral tools to guide planners when it comes to consumer insights and the media mix. At the UCT Unilever Wake Up Shake Presentation in 2011, Professor John Simpson observed: "Data is king, but insights are God."

The need for measurability and 'empirical proof' that media deliver positive returns on investment is critical to the media investment decision. This need formed the basis for the decision to commission research, which tracked individual media against consumer decision-making needs.

At Ads24 our focus is on the qualities that newspapers and digital platforms bring to the media mix. This prompted us to look for more than just another media owner research project – a quest that resulted in our appointing Freshly Ground Insights (FGI) to generate something quite unique to take to marketers in SA. This is where Path to Persuasion was



LINDA GIBSON

first conceptualised.

Path to Persuasion is a qualitative research model giving insights into the South African urban consumer's perspective regarding the role of the different advertising media. It provides consumer guidance, which quantifies the incremental role of each media type in consumer campaigns.

More than 2 200 respondents were recruited and interviewed at a number of consumer convergence points throughout SA, giving us approximately 200 respondents per category. To date, the following categories have been researched:

- Banking
- Fast Food
- Cellular networks
- Washing powders
- Automotive (SUV)
- Gambling
- Retail (supermarkets)
- Learning institutions
- Pharmaceutical
- Furniture stores
- Skin care

Ten more categories are planned for the current financial year.

The challenges facing advertisers, agencies and media owners alike are daunting in this economic environment. Budgets are becoming tighter, and advertisers are looking for further value. If we can offer brands

precise and targeted insights into their consumers – then we're really adding value.

COMPASS24

In 2011 Ads24 commissioned the Compass24 research, designed to provide advertisers with much-needed readership information. An amazing 13 958 nationally representative interviews were conducted across 72 newspapers in eight provinces between August and December 2011, providing Ads24 with statistically representative data on 5 530 457 local newspaper readers. The research was generated by Ask Afrika.

The research findings offered insight into the editorial perceptions and preferences of the readers, giving newspapers some valuable direction in terms of content. It also gave advertisers critical insights into real-time demographics.

Key findings included:

- Local newspaper penetration per province
- Average issue readership and readership patterns per title
- Language, work life, gender, LSM information per title
- Consumer confidence against a background of an overall Compass24 community paper reading community of 4 670 156 people of 16 years and over, with R22 billion rand of monthly disposable income
- Product categories most used within specific newspapers (non-alcoholic drinks lead, followed closely by sweet and salty snacks)
- Advertising preferences (including a clear preference for loose inserts over knock-and-drop pamphlet distribution)
- How the newspapers are used for shopping, and where to shop
- The top five topics readers want to see in their local newspapers – illustrating how they engage with this channel compared to broader, regional or national titles
- The rise in 'community-centricity' in an increasingly anonymous, de-personalised age
- Digital consumption patterns

Changing tack

Dubbed Africa's first tablet-only daily news publication at the time of its launch last year, *iMaverick* recently changed its format from daily to weekly. *Magdel Louw* talks to Styli Charalambous, CEO of the *Daily Maverick* and *iMaverick*

PREVIOUSLY THE *Daily Maverick* and its 'smart' sibling *iMaverick* used to work alongside one another as daily publications. Which, Charalambous concedes, proved problematic as *iMaverick* is also mainly marketed to *Daily Maverick* readers, "who know and appreciate the high quality news and analysis."

Therefore changing *iMaverick* to a weekly made great sense, transforming their interrelationship into more of a complementary partnership.

Hence, he explains, the *Daily Maverick* remains their daily free web offering to people without smart devices, or those who want more immediate coverage of news events – its unique selling point being that 'it's one of the few websites in SA compromising a majority of original content, and analysis.'

While it now only appears on Wednesdays, *iMaverick* on the other hand is still a subscription-only custom-designed publication for smart devices such as tablets and large screen smartphones. Laid out in a magazine style format it's intended to be a lean-back reading experience, with the added benefit of multi-media elements. "But now as a weekly publication it is to be a wrap-up of the past week, a noise filter, and bring the most important coverage and analysis the reader needs to stay informed. It also has exclusive content not available on the *Daily Maverick*."

But would he say their timing for launching *iMaverick* last October was correct then? Is the market truly ready for a publication in this format? "The timing as a daily was maybe too early," he muses, "but there is definitely room for high quality digital publication for smart devices. As with any new publication, things take time, but the growth of tablets and smartphones, even in SA, has been phenomenal."



STYLI CHARALAMBOUS

DELVING DEEPER

Another point of contention is the fact that the *Daily Maverick* is known for its lengthy, in-depth articles on various subjects in the news at a time when people have increasingly shorter attention spans and are more becoming more inclined to read short snippets. "*iMaverick* has been revised to accommodate this," he comments. "Apart from changing to a weekly, we make use of briefs extensively in each edition. But we need to remember that the larger issues affecting this country cannot be explained in 140 characters. We also understand that our lengthy style isn't for everyone, but we're aiming our content at the influencers, and people in charge of commerce and government in this country. We tackle some heavy issues, and you need more words and space to explain those issues."

Which, even when taking into account today's hasty readers, doesn't seem to deter their target market. The *Daily Maverick* continues to grow organically as their word of mouth – 'i.e. small marketing budget' continues to bring new readers to the site, he points out. They peaked in May with 180 000 unique visitors,

When putting together content, what are their criteria for deciding what is newsworthy or relevant enough for *iMaverick* and *The Daily Maverick* to pursue further?

"We have an excellent editor in Branko (Brkic), who has a real handle on the issues that fit within our strategic vision for content. Our journos are also some of the brightest and smartest in the country. We follow some events and newsmakers closely, with some left field opinion contributors, but essentially it's all part of an editorial vision that's been pretty successful so far."

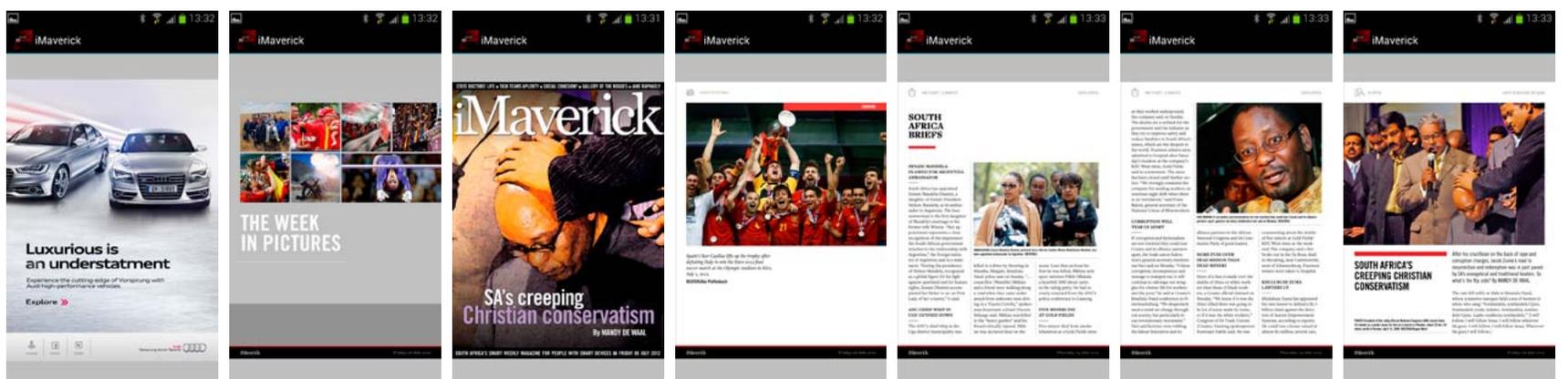
whilst maintaining amongst the highest LSM readership of news sites in SA. "Our click through rates on adverts remain consistently higher than industry average due to our unique ad methodology, so readers and advertisers are both extremely happy with the *Daily Maverick* offerings."

Yet convincing people to pay for digital news, as in the case of *iMaverick*, remains a mindset change. "But we've managed to convert around 5 000 subscribers to do so because of the high quality magazine-style lay out and the premium and original coverage we produce."

Are they happy with the performance of the respective titles though? "Given our small marketing budgets, we'd have to say yes. The industry recognition of our efforts and the kind of readers that look to us to provide insight into the matters that drive this country, are testament to our strategy of high quality and original journalism." Yes,

he concedes, sales and subscriptions could always be better. "But as a small independent publisher we operate in an environment where digital ad sales are being retarded by the big publishing houses who don't really have a clear strategy and an industry that is about five to 10 years behind major economies, in terms of the ad spend pie."

"We always have big plans at DM/IM, to keep improving, keep increasing the range of content, and become a benchmark to show that digital only can work in publishing and even in SA. Watch this space."



The long road to growth

In 2010 Media24's Sunday title *City Press* relaunched with a new look and vision, aiming to boost its circulation. We retraced the steps they took their aim to reach their goal

➔ **FERIAL HAFFAJEE**, former editor of the *Mail & Guardian*, became editor-in-chief of *City Press* in 2009 as the paper's first woman editor. Ever since, Haffajee's target has been to double the circulation sales of *City Press* to over 300 000 in five years. ABC figures show *City Press*' circulation has grown to 163 705 in Q1 this year – a 16% growth since Q1 2011. By Q2 this year it had dropped to 146 054.



➔ **SHORTLY AFTER** *City Press*' investigative team was strengthened by bringing in Adriaan Basson (former *M&G* investigative journalist) as assistant editor. Pairing this with Media24's earlier formation of an investigative unit that feeds all newspapers in the group, it has broken various big stories in the last months – adding to *City Press*' repositioning as 'an agenda setting title.'



➔ **IN OCTOBER 2011**, *i* magazine was launched as a cross-gender weekly supplement to the newspaper in an effort to lengthen the title's shelf life. A big format glossy aimed at the LSM 7 to 10 audience, it was outsourced to New Media Publishing. Initially it had a 115 000 print run and was only distributed in Gauteng and KZN – 'quickly becoming the country's highest circulation English Sunday glossy magazine.' After a successful seven-month pilot period, it was turned into a national supplement in June this year with an increased print run of 230 000 copies. Since the month before readers have been able to experience a digital version of the magazine through an interactive app updated weekly.



➔ **ON 2 MAY 2010** *City Press* unveiled its newly designed newspaper, shortly before the Soccer World Cup was hosted in South Africa. The fresh look was created by newspaper design guru Peter Ong – resulting in a more striking masthead and a new eight colour palette that more easily defines each news section. This new look also introduced its repositioning as 'a high quality Sunday read with strong editorial content.'

At its relaunch it contained 20 pages of news content, an eight page Business section, about 26 pages Career news and an eight page opinion section called Voices, along with a separate eight page pull-out Sports section and a 24 page Lifestyle section called '7'.

➔ A rebranding of the previous entertainment supplement *City Pulse*, 7 is in a bigger format, brighter and incorporates more content. It had been refined into a review section – covering reviews of film, fine art, theatre and music as



well as experiential travel pieces and restaurant reviews.



➔ **IN FEBRUARY** this year *City Press* launched its revamped *City Press Business* section under the editorship of Fikile Ntsikelelo Moya, formerly the deputy editor of *City Press*. Built on four editorial pillars – news, thought leadership, opportunity and advice – it carries national and international business and finance news, the political economy, black and emerging business and provincial economies.

➔ **IN MARCH** this year *City Press* celebrated its 30th birthday, marked by the publishing of a special 30th anniversary supplement on 15 April.

➔ **NO STRANGER TO** controversy ever since its relaunch, the debacle earlier this year around *City Press*' refusal to remove the highly controversial artwork, *The Spear*, by Brett Murray from its website attracted much attention and debate. On 28 May Haffajee finally removed it and issued a detailed statement (see excerpts below.)

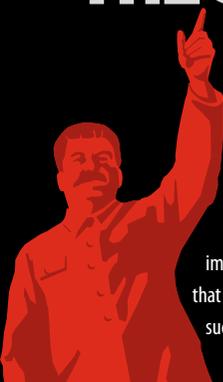
THE SPEAR IS DOWN – OUT OF CARE AND FEAR

"**THE SPEAR IS DOWN.** Out of care and as an olive branch to play a small role in helping turn around a tough moment, I have decided to take down the image. When we published an art review, which featured *The Spear* as one image, I could not have anticipated that it would snowball into a moment of such absolute rage and pain. Have I

been naïve in this? Perhaps. *City Press* is not and has never been an object of division; neither am I. I prefer to understand *City Press* as a bridge across divides, a forum for debate... That we are now a symbol of a nation's anger and rage is never the role of media in society. We are robust and independent, yes, but divisive and deaf, no... This week society began the path of setting its mores on how we treat presidents in art and journalism; what is acceptable and what is not. I hope we will reach these

conclusions decently in debates, colloquiums and plenaries rather than setting them in blood or angry red paint or in orange flames snaking up from burning pages. We take down the image in the spirit of peacemaking – it is an olive branch. But the debate must not end here and we should all turn this into a learning moment, in the interest of all our freedoms... It saddens me that not one of them nor a single representative of the governing alliance sought engagement with *City Press* before seeking a High

Court interdict. For any editor to respond to a threat to take down an article of journalism without putting up a fight is an unprincipled thing to do, so we've fought as much as we could. It doesn't serve *City Press* or South Africa to dig in our heels and put our fingers in our ears... I play tough tackle and expect to get intellectually whipped when I do. But this humiliation I can well live without. It's simply not worth it and I guess we have made our point and must move on."
– Ferial Haffajee





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A change in tides

In March this year the 155-year-old *Cape Argus* changed its broadsheet format to compact, and went from only two afternoon editions to one in the morning and one in the afternoon. *Magdel Louw* asked editor *Gasant Abarder*, how this is working out

REFLECTING ON the dramatic decision to change this historic title so dramatically, Abarder says it's no secret that afternoon newspapers around the world have been battling to keep pace, particularly with the advent of social media. And while the *Argus* was still bucking the global trend, they nonetheless felt it necessary for the newspaper's management to find a way to keep the publication on a sustainable path.

After much deliberation they eventually opted to keep the content, staff and editorial values largely the same – but to transform the presentation of the newspaper. “We came up with a range of options and after doing much research and homework we believe we have achieved that sustainable path,” he remarks.

This move he believes may very well in future be copied elsewhere around the country. He substantiates this by pointing out that ‘the compacts’ took off in the UK in the last decade, with quality newspapers like the *Independent* and the *Belfast Telegraph* having switched from the bigger broadsheet format to a compact size and design. “The word tabloid is used to describe the downmarket newspapers in the UK – *The Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Star*, etc. – so at the *Argus* we’ve been careful that we refer to our product as a compact. The UK has a very captive commuter market and it makes sense to have a smaller paper in your hand on the train or bus. Cape Town is gearing up to be SA’s foremost commuter city and I believe more newspapers will make the switch when this becomes a reality in the next five to 10 years.”

SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW

In spite of the transformation of its general appearance, the *Cape Argus*’ quest was to still retain their core readership, which is why the title has kept the same reporting staff to write about the same kind of news that has become ‘the backbone’ of the *Cape Argus* over its 155-year history. Yet at the same time they are looking to grow

their market, particularly female readers. “Almost all newspapers who have succeeded in increasing their circulation, have managed to grow their female readership.” To this end they’ve expanded their feature section with a heavy focus on content that relates to celebrity, TV, lifestyle, health, sexual health, diets, parenting, food and money. However, he believes it’s the smaller format that also has greater appeal for women. In addition they’re offering a greater graphic

treatment of news, a large sports section, and a full-page of weather. “We’ve retained all of the mainstays in the paper like the *Tonight* daily pull-out entertainment section, comics, and our award-winning columnists like Helen Walne.”

This move initially resulted in ‘massive sales spikes’ – up to 6 000 extra copy sales a day – on the first few days over their launch period. “Naturally, this settled down and we’re more or less on an even keel in terms of year-on-year sales (ABC’s



GASANT ABARDER

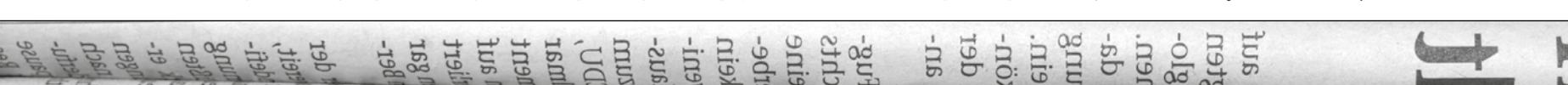
“OUR RESEARCH IS SHOWING THAT A YOUNGER READER IS STARTING TO PICK UP THE PAPER”

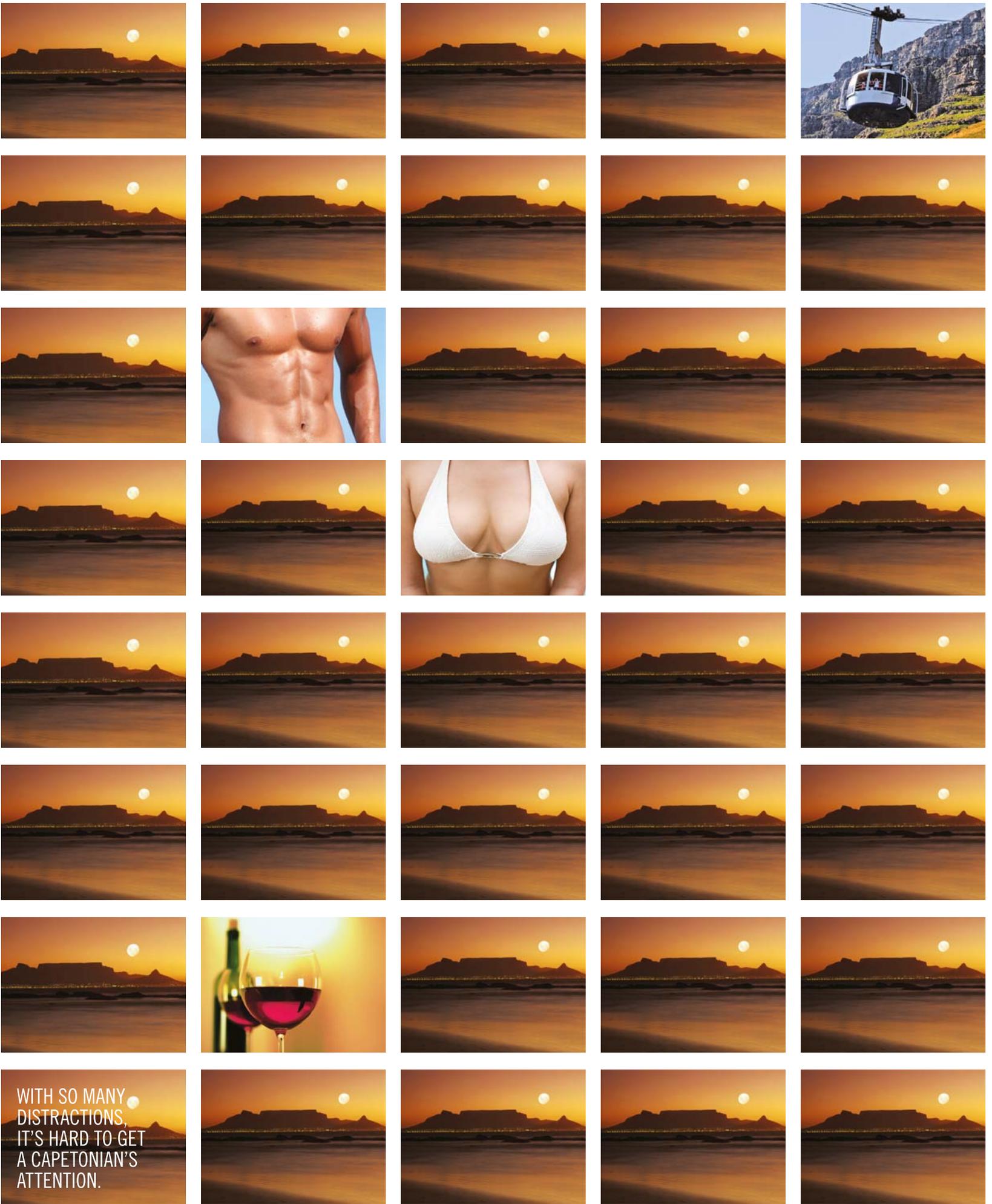
April - June 2012: 35 332). But I’m happy with that if it means we’re moving away from a downward trajectory,” he remarks. Some of their older readers are less enchanted with the compact *Cape Argus* though. “I suppose not everybody was going to like it. But what is very encouraging is that our research is showing that a younger reader (in their early and mid-20s) is starting to pick up the paper – something that hasn’t happened before.”

THE WAY TO GO

With the benefit of hindsight, his stance today remains that this is the way for the future. However, he concedes that if one should speak to his staff one will know that he’s never quite happy. “I’m satisfied,” he states, “but there is room for improvement and always space to do what we do better.”

There are also quite a number of exciting developments on the digital front. “But none that I can reveal at the moment as these are at a very sensitive stage. All I can say is, watch this space!”





Yet, we get the attention of 287 000* Capetonians every day. You see not only are we one of the biggest selling daily newspapers in Cape Town, we're also available in both a morning and afternoon edition daily, which means additional exposure for your clients. So, if you're looking to speak to Capetonians, look no further than the Cape Argus.

* AMPS2011B



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The newspaper renaissance

Sebastian Stent, head of digital at Media24 newspapers recently attended the INMA (International Newsmedia Marketing Association) conference in Los Angeles. He offers some good news...



SEBASTIAN STENT

THE RECENT INMA (International Newsmedia Marketing Association) conference in Los Angeles brought together the heads of newspaper groups from across the world to discuss the changing landscape in which print media finds itself.

The hot topic on everyone's lips was the disruptive role of digital media to the print landscape, and how traditional media companies could adapt to it. Perhaps the most telling sign of change in the air came from the faces of the delegates; where there had once been a look of resignation at the collapse of an industry, now there was a glimmer of hope in their eyes – and the beginning of a positivity that was both infectious and worrying.

It has been more than a decade since newspapers began to jump online and create digital platforms to distribute their content. But over the last 10 years their haste to get their content online has been to the detriment of their bottom line; and their decision to give content away for free has, until recently, had many in the industry believing that the end was nigh for newspapers and the printed word.

Of course the biggest problem for media companies was the format their digital products took. The web of the last decade was anything but beautiful, and there was no way to offer the same level of engagement, and same beautiful layout and design, the same richness of experience as the printed products they produced with such love and attention. The advent of smartphones, tablets and the app economy changed all this. Suddenly media companies realised that the content they had been distributing for free online; and which had substituted, for many readers, a

paid print product, was actually valued. Hence the look of positivity in the eyes of the jaded and battle-weary newspaper execs at the conference, with a vague understanding that the media landscape around them was not (as had been foretold) on its deathbed, but rather preparing for an unprecedented renaissance.

The presentations at the conference all carried this theme. Many related to the work that was being done on their digital products, and the platforms they were building to engage with their readers in a new way. However some of the presentations took a different tack, focusing instead on the way that digital tools could vastly improve the efficiency of their operations, effectively repurpose their content in exciting new ways, and find new angles to engage with their advertisers and draw back some of the advertising income that has for many years been a slow puncture to their bottom line.

SMART TOOLS

It was Axel Springer, the German media conglomerate, who offered one of the most exciting presentations of the conference – unpacking their new Vertical Content Engine – a tool which allows them to repurpose their archives across multiple online titles, and draw out new advertising revenue from their legacy content by pointing their readers towards stories that share similarities with their current areas of interest. This has meant that they have been able to multiply their advertising income by dramatically increasing the number of page views that their content receives – and in doing so opening up new avenues for their readers as they discover stories that would have otherwise gone unread and unloved.

Possibly the most interesting presentation of the conference came from the head of Google's news products, Richard Gingras. Traditional media companies have often viewed Google News with scepticism. After all, their aggregation of media content has done wonders for their traffic, while pulling that traffic away from the websites

of the content owners – leading to diminishing returns both in terms of readership, and advertising income.

However, Richard Gingras' presentation took an altogether different tone. As the ex editor of *Salon* magazine, Gingras has been on the other side of the fence, and took an altogether more conciliatory tone when approaching Google's role in the new news economy.

The heart of his presentation centered on the role that Google can play in the new news economy. His presentation looked at the key ingredients of the modern web that media companies need to embrace in order to thrive. From tools that are now available that make a journalists job infinitely easier,

readers would seek out a title online, hit the homepage and navigate their way deeper into the stories held there. Today's reader finds their stories through social channels like Twitter and Facebook, and most now enter websites through links posted by their friends. In order to accommodate this, the way that websites and digital products are built has to focus on the article level first, and then work your way back to the homepage – a wildly counter-intuitive approach for those used to building their print products from the front page backwards.

Throughout the conference, amazing presentations showed breathtaking innovation, with each media company showing off

"A LOOK OF POSITIVITY IN THE EYES OF THE JADED AND BATTLE-WEARY NEWSPAPER EXECS AT THE CONFERENCE"



to the amazing role that data journalism will play in the coming years as it develops into a more mainstream form of journalism, he focused on the development of new technologies that will radically change the news landscape in coming years.

NEW(S) ROADS

One idea – revolutionary to many of the gathered journalists and editors, was the way that social media has radically altered the route that audiences use to get to their news. Gone are the days when

their individual successes and bold steps towards a new digital future. While none appear to have got it all right, it was encouraging to see so many very traditional companies trying to embrace new techniques and technologies, and harnessing the brightest minds they could find in order to change the future of their content. And while some might claim that the newspaper industry is dying, what was abundantly clear was that whatever form it takes, there will always be a future for journalism and the written word.



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Sementing the future

Business Day launched BDLive last month with the intention of soon incorporating a form of paywall. Editor Peter Bruce, shared some of their thinking with *Magdel Louw*

AS A FIRST IN SA, *Business Day* will from hereon be a 'digital first' news brand, Bruce announced early in August. This, he explained, means they'll publish breaking news immediately on their newly designed website, and then only put together the print newspaper after that. In addition, although free to read for now, they will then later wrap a so-called 'mesh' around the website and iPhone and iPad apps, and sell the entire product as BDLive.

It bodes well that one of their shareholders is Pearson, publishers of the *Financial Times*, who operate a 'highly successful paywall' along the same principles *Business Day* plans to follow. "As journalists we have had to answer just one key question: What is our product? Is it a newspaper or is it journalism? Our answer was the latter and from there it is a short leap to deciding not to give your product away for free. So where ever people read our journalism, they need them to be paying for it. From then on the 'how' questions answer themselves and fortunately there are plenty of successful news paywalls in operation," he says.

BRICKS

So how will it work? He says when they get a story, particularly one that might already be in the public domain (such as an announcement or a press conference) they'll put it straight onto the website (and its associated apps) along with as much analysis and added value as they can muster. The newspaper that follows is then just going to have to be better and, somehow, different so that it's 'fresh and interesting' in the morning. "I'd



be lying if I said I knew exactly how to do that. But I want to do it and I assume that I will, in time. It doesn't mean to say nothing on the digital platform will appear in the newspaper. A lot might, but hopefully it will be improved and fleshed out."

He adds they are also talking about a big format change for the print version. However if that happens, it would be a future project, he remarks. "The broadsheet would start to look a little more thoughtful, I hope. We've just changed printers and the reproduction is much improved. So it encourages a bit of experimentation."

Coming back to the term 'mesh', he describes it as 'a paywall with a lot of holes in it.' "It would be pointless making it impossible to see a single story before paying a subscription. We want the paywall to 'leak', in order to keep potential subscribers at our table, as it were. So you'd get to read 10 or 15 stories a month for free (provided you first register with BDLive) before we asked you to subscribe. I don't have enough people to be deciding what sort of story would be in the free mix. I think we can afford to be liberal about this. The free stories and articles would have to be what the reader wanted."

STRONG FOUNDATIONS

There's still some debate going on about how long that totally free period should be. He expects it to be before the end of the year though. "As the editor, I'd like two or three months so that writers and subs and news-desks can get into the habit of feeding digital early. Management would probably like the paywall (the mesh) up earlier. This has not been a cheap exercise."

Whatever the specifics may be, he's very optimistic that it will work. "There are a million challenges all the time but only one that matters in journalism: Who do you trust? I think our readers trust us and my job is to keep it so."



PETER BRUCE

Other media follow suit

A CONTENT BLOCK has also been implemented on the website of Avusa's *Sunday Times*. Derek Abdinor, GM of Avusa Media LIVE, explains they simply took a decision to not give content away for free. "The content block is the best way to alert our *Sunday Times* readers to this by showing them the articles they can read in the online versions of the *Sunday Times* we are promoting, and naturally the print copy too."

Being in their view the best newspaper journalism in SA, it simply didn't add up to give it away for free online. "Good journalism should come with a price attached."

NO BAD NEWS

Response to the content block was better than expected, he says. They've already seen a large uptake in their *Sunday Times* apps (which he doesn't want to disclose just yet) – such as their new Editors Choice app that runs over twenty stories from the *Sunday Times* and its sister daily, *The Times*. "These stories are hand-picked by the editors and give a great snapshot in the platform that best runs it – the iPad."

And whilst traffic to the site did not drop dramatically as expected, they would only be able to tell the true pattern at the end of the quarter. "We may choose to take this starting point and turn it on its head even further. We think its unnatural not to pay for relevant local content, or have that paid for in some direct manner."

GET YOUR MONEY'S WORTH

Sebastian Stent, head of digital: Media24 newspapers, says the marked decline in local newspaper circulations and advertising revenue has led many media companies to jump on the paywall bandwagon, with sometimes ill conceived or executed strategies for putting payment mechanisms for digital content in place. From their side Media24, he explains, has tried to ensure that its digital properties act as complementary products to its print brands, with their main focus in terms of paid digital products up until now focused on digital replicas of their print titles for their readers across the globe. "With the recent paid digital strategies from the *Mail and Guardian*, Avusa, *Business Day*, and the Independent Group, the domestic paid-news landscape appears to be evolving, and we have been keeping a keen eye on the development of these strategies. We strongly believe that a paid digital

product needs to be something worth paying for – and we want to ensure that our readers get a great value product and a great reading experience."

Their most recent paid product has been *Die Burger's* iPad and Android Tablet application, which offers readers an interesting, highly personalised news-reading experience. "We believe that, far from replicating the print experience, this offers our readers new insight into the content they love – with enriched articles, multimedia, infographics, and other important areas of content alongside the traditional articles from the journalists they know and love. Going forward we will be evolving these paid digital products for some of our other titles, and we are developing new products all the time that will reach our readers, wherever, and however, they choose to reach us."



DIE BURGER APP

Don't blame the internet

Newspaper circulation has been declining since 1950s. If you look for an underlying reason that affects print – there are none. If you have a printed product and it declines, don't blame the internet. Felix Oberholzer-Gee from Harvard Business School visited SA recently. His take on newspapers, their decline and future is a very different one...

BY DANETTE BREITENBACH

IT IS NOT THE INTERNET that has caused the change in newspapers. Globally all newspapers are exposed to the internet, and in some parts of the world newspapers are declining, in others they are healthy, says Oberholzer-Gee.

He gives German newspapers as an example. "Newspaper revenue share as a percentage of the market in Germany has declined from 1990 to 2010. The number one reason for this is the shift of advertising spend to television. The next reason is direct marketing. Only then comes the internet."

He does acknowledge that today the internet is starting to eat away at revenue, "but it is not the cause of that declining review over the past 10 years".

Looking into the decline he found that some companies have been successful because they have:

- Grown revenue on digital, but limited print losses
- Sold print and digital to core clients
- Gone beyond banner ads
- Employed targeted advertising
- Ancillary business development

"We have difficulty in convincing our traditional advertisers to follow us into the digital realm. This is despite having long standing

relationships with these clients. We need to walk with these clients into digital. In the US companies interviewed have said they will go into digital if the media company walks them through the process so they understand it."

Many newspapers are in defence mode he says. "Twenty-five per cent of newspapers print less. Half of many newspapers' revenue comes from their Sunday editions. I don't know if these attempts will work. The results, however, do not look promising. In contrast newspapers can move to offensive mode. This means recognising changes in consumer behaviour, engineering viral lift, creating complementaries and expanding scope."

In contrast to this, there has been a lift of plus minus 30% in the consumption of news (Pew Mobile Devices 2012). "Consumers are consuming more news than ever before. They are just not doing it on one platform but on numerous platforms. Consumption on multiple devices adds an overall demand for news. News is also consumed more often and much more intensely.

"We underestimate this intense consumption that has been enabled by technology. The mistake we have made has been to give out little chunks of information. Newspapers (and magazines) do what television does, they slice up content and feed the consumer little by little



FELIX OBERHOLZER-GEE

and then ask them to stay with us." Oberholzer-Gee asks: "What about the serialisation in the context of newspapers? What if a consumer is interested in consuming lots of content – this is our opportunity. And if content is good, the consumer will pay."

His final word is know what your problem is. "Ask yourself what are you trying to solve? If you don't have a crystal clear vision then all you have is a list. Print today can be profitable if you go about it properly. It is an exciting time – there are so many opportunities that still have to be tapped into."

Media innovation case studies

• Atlantic Monthly

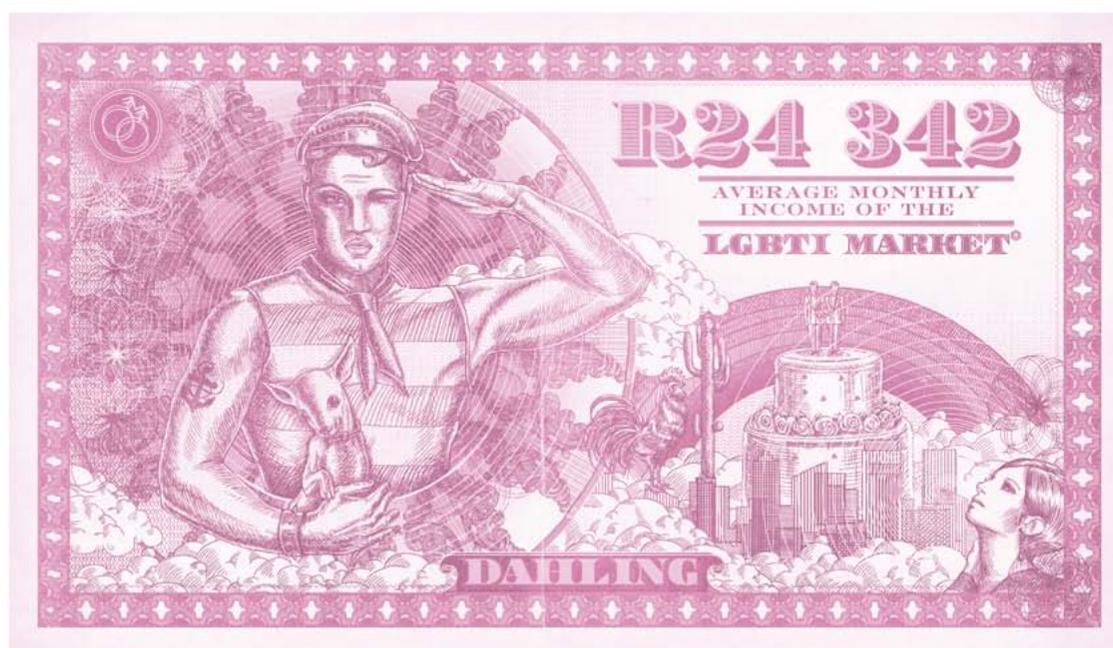
Digital revenue will surpass its print revenue in 2012. The business model is print and digital with events and their events business now makes up 14% of their revenue.

<http://www.theatlantic.com/>

• Axel Springer

In 2004, 2% of their revenue was from the internet. In the first quarter of 2012, 33% of their revenue came from digital. They are an integrated media company with newspapers, magazines, portals, and marketing that is rethinking the mapping between print and digital. For example, they have one website on female interest but it corresponds to nine of their print magazines.

<http://www.axelspringer.de/en/>



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* LGBTI = lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered and intersex people. Stats from research by Freshly Ground Insights, commissioned by Pink Advertising.

The Northern Ireland Secretary... was involved in recent paramilitary killings and beatings – particularly the murder of...

There's a **journalist** in all of us

To stay relevant in news reporting online, one cannot ignore user-generated content (UGC) any more, says Cathryn Reece, product manager at 24.com. She explained to *Magdel Louw* why she's such a strong advocate of 'the people's voice'

"THE FACT OF the matter is, people are creating news-related content all the time. When they witness a fire or a flood or a crime or a disaster or want to contribute opinion on a burning issue in the news, they turn to the internet to do it," says Reece.

Similarly, when big news happens – particularly during office hours – people turn to the internet to consume all they can on the subject, she adds. Thus an online news brand needs to position itself in that cycle.

"The next step though, is to become a brand your users think of when news happens to them. If they snap a photo or video on their phone of breaking news, you want them to think of you first over of YouTube or Twitter. If they know they can find news on these 'non-news' sites, and they know they can PUBLISH news on these 'non-news' sites, your news organisation starts looking more and more redundant when breaking news happens."

There's also a lot of pressure on online news brands to keep their costs low because news is so freely available. "It's difficult to



CATHRYN REECE

staff up an editorial team around the country, but when you start thinking of your users as possible reporters too, you can cover a lot more ground. If we can't get a reporter somewhere, we can put a call out to our users to see who might be there. It's so easy for them to snap a pic and send it to us, and so exciting to be involved in the news process, they're keen and happy to help."

QUALITY TIME

One of the greatest benefits of incorporating UGC in your online strategy, she says, is that more content and more commentary on a news event leads to longer time spent on site, more return visits and over-all better audience engagement. It helps keep costs down while at the same time establishing the brand as one sensitive to the evolution of a breaking news event. "I think it's also rewarding for editors working on these sites – it's exciting to source User-generated Content (UGC) content when breaking news happens. At News24, we also place a lot of significance on user-generated opinion. We run an invite-only blog called 'Voices,' where experts in their field (not necessarily journalism) can post about anything grabbing the headlines in their field. Our MyNews24 section is one of our biggest, and here anyone can write a piece and submit it to us. This really helps us continue the conversation around big news items long after the experts have sounded off."

It does come with its own pitfalls though. "Fact-checking is your biggest issue. If someone sends you a video of the Japan tsunami or you find it on YouTube, moments after it happened, is it really from Japan? Because you're aggregating from other sites, the onus is usually on that site to manage that issue, but you risk

WHAT OTHERS ARE DOING

→ **ALASTAIR OTTER, IOL EDITOR**, says they're not very active in user-generated content at the moment. Yet in his view news today is a two-way conversation, something that it never was in the past as historically, journalists produced articles on topics that they felt were important or worthy of coverage. "Today's reader is not only a consumer of news but potentially also a producer of news. Thanks to technology it is now possible for a reader at the scene of a fire to provide pictures long before newsrooms are able to dispatch a reporter to the scene."

As such they're looking at options for readers to engage with them through blogs and other interactive forums and to provide information and content for

their various sites. They're already using platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to encourage readers to post pictures and information but they're looking over the coming months at expanding those options further and will include options for readers to post their own content onto their site.

→ **DEREK ABDINOR, GM OF AVUSA MEDIA LIVE**, says Avusa has the iLive section on TimesLIVE (user's views and submissions) and many interventions with the SowetanLIVE audiences such as weddings, baby information and dedications. "We do see it as valuable, however we know that online news publishers provide the all-important curation that readers place value on."

pulling content or issuing apologies if you rush to publish UGC without first evaluating its authenticity." It gets even more difficult when working with written content – "how do you fact check an article written by a Citizen Journalist reporting news you aren't already covering? And what if you get 1 000 photos about the weather – as automating uploads for your users is very important. You can't spend days cropping photos manually in 2012!" If you get that wrong, or misunderstand how your users are going to use the system, you land up creating more work for yourself that is necessary. "You've also got to make absolutely sure your UGC is labelled as such. You have to make sure you've issued the necessary disclaimers and explained to your audience just what this content is about. Educating your readers is key."

GROWING NUMBERS

Looking at some of the big news events where UGC has played a role over the last few years, it's quite clear that the quantity and quality of UGC worldwide has grown exponentially. "When the Tsunami struck South East Asia in 2004, there were a few videos and photos that made their way online in the weeks that followed. It was powerful UGC, but didn't get much attention online in the first few days after the tragedy. Fast-forward eight years, to the Batman movie theatre shooting, and what we saw was an army of Citizen Journalists reporting information on social news site

Reddit, co-ordinating information on victims and witnesses. There was video from the scene online minutes later." And so major news outlets in the States came second in the reporting race. Technology has just made it so easy for people, she points out. Cellphone cameras capture good quality picture and sound and it's quick and easy to upload from a mobile phone, meaning you don't have to wait until you get to a computer to publish it online. "People have also gotten a lot more used to seeing this kind of content online, and realising in breaking news events, news outlets clamour for up-to-the-minute multimedia from the scene. So the Average Joe is well trained and well positioned to create this content when the need arises."

In fact these days most major TV news networks rely a lot on UGC, she states. "CNN's iReport is probably the most coherent example of a UGC platform – they issue assignments to almost a million Citizen Journalists and bubble up the content they receive on CNN.com and their 24-hour news networks." BBC also relies a lot on UGC – a report recently found 74% of their Arab Spring coverage on TV featured clips or stills taken by non-journalists on the ground. "Huffington Post is also doing a great job aggregating though-leaders to write for their brand – these are highly respected people in their fields of influence, but not necessarily journalists. We really like that model."

→ **ONE OF THE** most recent examples where UGC played a big role, is in the Aurora shootings. "Citizen Journalism really came of age that night. Social news site Reddit was full of reports of news as the tragedy unfolded and people around the world worked to co-ordinate the whereabouts of victims and witnesses at the scene." Also in Syria, as with much of the Arab spring movement, Citizen Journalists are doing the work of professional journalists barred from entering the country. Pretty much any big news event these days sees an almost immediate surge of UGC, she remarks. "Here at home, we get the most UGC about the weather, but whenever there are protests or fires or accidents we get a couple of great shots." Touching on their use of opinion content from their users, she points out that in the three days following Mandela Day they had over 75 000 page impressions across 22 pieces of user-generated content. "The one additional item of content we paid money for had a respectable 4 000. But you can see how the scale of user-generated-content allows us to increase the engagement of our audience at no cost. We even seen Floyd Shivambu sign up to MyNews24!"

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Simply the best

Greg Stewart, former publisher of the *Citizen* left the title last month after 11 years to pursue his own business venture in Port Elizabeth. Just before he closed the door behind him, he paid homage to the industry he's leaving behind

I HAVE WONDERED what the pioneers of newspapers would have thought if they had been confronted with the future. With all the hype around the digital space and every new app and social media that is supposed to be changing the world before us? Would they simply have packed up and given their product a miss? Certainly today's wisdom would be that investing in newspapers in this digital age would be considered a foolish venture. All the more wonder as to why there is suddenly so much interest as to who may be purchasing the two big newspaper groups currently on the for sale block in SA, and why such esteemed business people would think them worthy purchases.

The truth may just lie in the fact that as an industry we are still amazingly good at what we do. I often refer to the daily newspaper as a daily miracle where we produce a brand new product daily within the space of around five hours, have another five hours in which to print our new product, have five hours in which to distribute this product nationally, and then we have a window of around five hours in which to sell our product in the clutter of retail spaces before it reaches its expiry hour. Daily newspapers are in fact the fastest moving consumer product that I know of.

So why do we continue persevering with these products that according to conventional modern wisdom should have died 36 years ago when television launched, and



GREG STEWART

then again 22 years ago when the internet took off and again two years ago when tablets took the world by storm, and again two hours ago when some kid in China just launched the latest social media site that is going to take the world by storm? Well it is quite simply because none of these do what we can do in the daily press and few if any have the credibility or the clout or can provide the qualified advertising response that daily newspapers do.

To all the news hounds and wonderful characters who surround daily newspapers I bid a fond farewell as I am leaving, and want to simply say that as the oldest mass medium in the world, you are simply the best and there is a reason that after 600 odd years of existence, daily newspapers are still relevant and have a major role to play in the future.



THE AGE OF NEWSPAPERS

DO YOUNG PEOPLE READ NEWSPAPERS? You bet they do. The 15-24 age group makes up 27.6% of total newspaper readership. This age group is proportionally the second-biggest reader group by only 0.3%, after the 35-49 age group, which makes up 27.9% of newspaper readers.

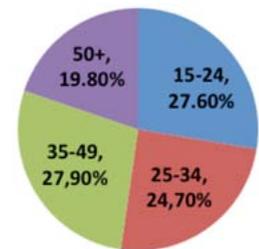
The younger end of the market (15-34) is slightly skewed towards weeklies, while the older end (35+) shows a preference for the dailies.

→ DAILIES

Daily Sun is the most-read daily across all age groups. It is read by 16% of 15-24s, 18.4% of 25-34s, 18.4% of 35-49s and 10.9% of those aged 50+.

All except the 50+ age group have *Daily Sun*, *Sowetan*, *Isolezwe*, *Son* and *The Star* in their top five. Instead, the 50+ age group, which has *Daily Sun*, *Sowetan* and *Son* in places one through three, includes *Beeld* and *Burger* (tie fourth) and the *Citizen* in its top-five line up of dailies.

Newspaper readership by age
(Source: SAARF AMPS Dec 11, Jan-Dec 2011)



→ WEEKLIES

It's *Soccer Laduma* for the younger crowd, and *Sunday Times* for the older. Reaching 12.2% and 12.5% of the 15-24 and 25-34 market respectively, *Soccer Laduma* is the top-read weekly in these markets. (Only 2.5% of the 50+ market reads this title.)

For the 35+ market, it's *Sunday Times* at the top of the pile. The publication reaches 12.8% of the 35-49 segment, and 8.7% of the 50+ market.

READERSHIP BY LSM

→ DAILIES

LSM 1-4: 9.5% of total daily readership

LSM 5-7: 58% of total daily readership

LSM 8-10: 32.5% of total daily readership

Across all sectors of the market, there is one daily newspaper that stands out head and shoulders above the rest: *Daily Sun*.

It is the only newspaper with a significant readership in **LSM 1-4**. Readership is **708 000**, a reach of **8% in this market**. In **LSM 5-7**, *Daily Sun* has 3.858-million readers and reaches **21.5%** of this market sector, while the title is even tops in the upper end of the market. It reaches **12.2%** of all **LSM 8-10s**, with **995 000** readers. The next closest titles in the top LSM group are *Sowetan* and *The Star*, which both reach **5.2%**.

→ WEEKLIES

LSM 1-4: 11.0% of total weekly readership

The top weekly newspaper for **LSM 1-4** is *Soccer Laduma*, with **614 000 LSM 1-4** readers (7% of this market).

LSM 5-7: 51.5% of total weekly readership

Soccer Laduma is also tops in the **LSM 5-7** market. It reaches **11.3%** of LSM 5-7, accounting for 2.025-million readers.

LSM 8-10: 37.5% of total weekly readership

In **LSM 8-10**, the *Sunday Times* rules. It reaches **23.8%** of the top end of the market, with **1.948-million LSM 8-10** readers.

(SOURCE: SAARF AMPS Dec 11, Jan-Dec 2011)