

Written journalism still a strong value proposition for advertisers

 By [Ingrid Louw](#)

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Much has been reported lately about the state of the print media in South Africa, with particular reference to a lack of innovation among newspapers and magazines.

As new forms of communication continue to grow - the internet in particular - there are fears that print media is stagnating and being left behind. Many also believe that as new media draws new and younger audiences, marketers are starting to look at it as an alternative to print when it comes to investing in advertising.

But ignoring the strength and effectiveness of newspapers and magazines, and now the written word online, in terms of audience reach in South Africa is short-sighted. Instead an inclusive approach to the written word is needed.

This is the motivation behind the recent rebranding of the print media's industry body from Print Media SA to Print & Digital Media SA (PDMSA), having embraced online media as an extension of the written media.

Continued investment needed in print, digital

This inclusive approach also allows us the opportunity to capitalise on the strengths of print and speak to new audiences. Newspapers and magazines in South Africa are bridging this gap with print and online versions of their products.

Growth will require continued investment in print and digital media. Internationally we are already seeing renewed investment in newspapers despite a trying global economic environment.

In South Africa the written media continues to have a large share of the South African audience. According to the July 2011-June 2012 All Media Products Study (AMPS) by [the South African Advertising Research Foundation](#) (SAARF), 50% of South African's adult population (over the age of 16) read newspapers, 30.9% read daily papers and 32.8% read weekly papers.

This significant audience, which is constant, coupled with credibility, penetration, reliability, flexibility and accessibility, means that the written and digital word, on both platforms, cannot be ignored.

The power of print

In 2005 marketer Dr Klaas Jonkheld identified 37 key strengths of the print media, in particular newspapers. They are

varied and comprehensive and ring true today. Of particular importance is the fact that newspapers and magazines provide a loyal and diverse audience which can easily be segmented.

Print media remains one of the most effective ways of targeting specific markets as print products reach consumers on a daily basis in the communities where they live.

An alliance with digital media means that now the written word reaches readers at work, in their homes, on their computers, tablets and on their mobile phones.

Trust

Trust is also a major positive for the printed word. Print products remain a credible source of information despite concerns over regulation of the media, and readers are more inclined to believe information they engage with actively. South African audiences are loyal to print products and continue to consume media in the written form.

However, it would be a mistake for the print media to rely on this loyalty and not look for new ways of attracting new readers. The PDMSA has embraced online media and believes that it will serve to strengthen written word in South Africa.

What is also encouraging is that five years ago newspapers and magazines were written off as inefficient news sources, but today they are rebounding worldwide. The written word remains an effective medium and its longevity is testament to the industry's on-going resilience.

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