

# Print remains significant in communications

According to the Canon South Africa's Market Insights Report, print is still essential in South Africa. Although there's a continuing and fervent move to digital communication platforms, print is set to remain an important and potentially more significant part of businesses' communications and marketing mix.

The report was released at the inaugural FESPA Print Africa Expo on 2 July 2014. Canon SA commissioned the independent study by RS Consulting earlier this year to gauge an understanding of what South Africans think about the future of print in the digital age. It also includes how companies are incorporating it into their communications mix and what the opportunities are.



The study was conducted in accordance with ISO 20252, the international standard for market and social research. The study included buyers of professional printing services of various sizes in the country's three main business centres, Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban. Industries surveyed were retail and wholesale, marketing and communications, education and health, manufacturing and primary, business services, IT and finance. The survey participants included specialist buyers in Marketing, Communications and Creative companies, as well as general end users.

"The results are decisive; print remains an inextricable part of companies' communications strategies, now and into the future. Print is everywhere around us, and will continue to be; on billboards, photobooks, building wraps, sign boards, posters, and flyers. Moreover, let us face it, there is nothing that says 'quality' quite like the smooth and silky pages of a printed annual report," says Jimmy de Waal, professional print business development manager at Canon South Africa.

"Certainly, we are moving into a new age of digital production, but with this comes a whole new world of capabilities and opportunities for print."

## Results

If you have ever wondered if local companies still consider printed communication as critical or how effective it is compared to other media channels, here is the answer:

- 92% of the study respondents, see professional printing as critical to their business
- 87% of South African print buyers believe that print materials will increase
- 68% of businesses believe that printed communication will remain as important over the next five years
- 20% believe it will become a lot more important

"It is critical to realise that there are in fact synergies between print and other communications mediums. Furthermore, while some consumers easily flit between online and print mediums, others religiously visit the newsagent to buy their morning paper or favourite magazine. Some executives simply will not read an annual report if it is not delivered to them in a quality printed format.

## Internet access lags

"We believe print remains relevant because the vast majority of the South Africa population is dependent on it in order to obtain or receive information. Internet access in South Africa also still lags behind developed countries and most people therefore rely only on print. For this reason, in order to reach diverse customers, companies have to utilise very specific mediums, including print," explains de Waal.

What is quite evident because of the study is that mostly print buyers in retail, wholesale, education and healthcare sectors in particular stated that print still plays a pivotal role in the communications with the wider population - especially those in rural areas. The findings also revealed that, in contrast to digital media, print is enduring and tangible and in is indeed a medium that can be carried around and referred to on multiple occasions.

The research also provided invaluable insight on the mindset of print buyers. Running tight ships, they are looking for strong partners that can support them in streamlining efficiencies and driving-down costs with innovative technologies and advice. They are not interested in simply purchasing the product and never seeing the reseller again. They want quality products and the back-up, support and expertise that comes with a trusted printer brand.

"The company has heard their wishes and is focused on providing quality, flexibility and relevant solutions to help them drive productivity and take their businesses to the next level. We've been working with customers in the print industry for many years. Through our innovative print solutions and close relationships with industry bodies, Canon is able to offer partnerships that reap real dividends," concludes van de Waal.



Jimmy de Waal

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