

isiZulu papers, *City Press* are the ABC circ winners



By Gill Moodie: @grubstreetSA

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We're getting used to seeing newspaper circulation figures taking a beating these days but the fact that a few can buck the trend also tells us that all is not lost. Among the [Audit Bureau of Circulations](#) (ABC) figures for the first quarter of 2012 that were released today, Thursday, 17 May 2012, the isiZulu newspapers are still on their incredible upwards trajectory.

Publishing phenomenon

[Independent Newspapers'](#) daily *Isolezwe* is now at 117 266 total circulation (with, take note, no bulking, Print Media in Education or sales below 50%!), compared with 112 273 a year ago. Its Sunday edition was at 85 575, compared with 77 999 a year earlier, while its Saturday edition has reached an excellent 69 695 after launching in August last year. Now that's what you call a publishing phenomenon.

Isolezwe has [just lost its editor, Mazwi Xaba](#), to [Media24's Daily Sun](#), so we'll have to see if this will derail its forward momentum but my guess is that it will be just fine, as it has a well-honed sense of its position in the market: rootsy content with lots of soccer and proud to be communicating in and developing isiZulu as a language. (Read a [a recent interview with Xaba](#).)

Meanwhile, the twice-weekly *Ilanga* - which is owned by the investment arm of the Inkatha Freedom Party - is also doing well with a similar positioning to *Isolezwe*. It netted 144 268 in the first quarter of this year, compared with 139 343 in the same period last year, while its Sunday edition was down from 87 744 a year ago to 83 174 this year.

The *Daily Sun* was at 375 185 total circulation (compared with 392 102 a year earlier), which means it is still looking to really turn the corner in the decline that set in when its distribution systems were disrupted with the introduction of parent company Media24's Cycad system. (Read the [interview with Daily Sun GM Minette Ferreira](#) from earlier this year.)

Media24 titles bouncing back

On the subject of Media24 titles (they were all negatively affected by the [disastrous Cycad system](#)), some are indeed bouncing back, most notably *City Press*. It is up for the first time in a long time, which seems to suggest that the thoughtful editorship of [Ferial Haffajee](#) (@ferialhaffajee) and a run of big exposés is finally paying off. It was at 163 705 total circulation, compared with 139 986 last year. (Read the [interview with Haffajee](#) from last year.)

Meanwhile, Media24's daily Afrikaans papers are a mixed bag: *Beeld* is down from 79 255 to 75 019 but *Die Burger* is up from 57 314 to 61 980, while *Volksblad* is marginally down from 24 500 to 23 375. Media24's *The Witness* - which has a

new lease on life with its new editor, [Angela Quintal](#) ([@angelaquintal](#)) - is holding steady. It was at 20 222 in the first quarter of this year, compared with 20 347 a year earlier.

Before we move on from the glamour boys of the industry - the Sunday papers - *City Press's* arch rival, the *Sunday Times*, is down to 455 129 total circulation from 463 034. The paper, which is owned by [Avusa](#), was one of the stars in terms of single-copy sales in the previous ABC quarters - Q4 2011 - so this just goes to show how fickle the market is.

Still showing declines

Media24's *Rapport* continues to show decline and was at 223 593 total circulation from 228 115 a year earlier.

Of the papers lurking in dangerous waters in the previous reporting period, Q4 2011:

1. Independent Newspapers' *Pretoria News* is still showing decline. It was down to 21 406 total circulation, compared with 25 435 a year earlier.
2. Avusa's *The Herald* was up from 22 922 a year ago to 23 568 and sister paper, the *Daily Dispatch*, was pretty much the same: at 30 304 from 30 741 a year earlier. The impact of Avusa moving the printing of the East London-based *Dispatch* to *The Herald's* press in Port Elizabeth will only start coming through in the second quarter figures of this year.
3. *UmAfrika* - which veers between being owned and part-owned by the Catholic Church - is clearly losing ground to the other isiZulu newspapers, *Isolezwe* and *Ilanga* - and was markedly down once again: from 18 434 a year ago to 13 597.

The [Mail & Guardian](#) for the first time in a long time did not put on sales. This time around it was at 47 922 total circulation, compared with 49 654 a year earlier.

Magazines

When it comes to magazines - which fared generally better than newspapers in the last ABC figures - we also see a mixed bag.

In the very competitive women's general-interest category, the two stars of the previous quarter are still on the up:

1. Media24's *Kuier* - which was started in 2009 and is aimed mostly at coloured women - was at 64 787 total circulation, compared with 32 287 a year earlier. (In the fourth quarter of 2011, this magazine was at 58 672 total from 29 360 in Q4 2010!)
2. *Destiny Magazine* - a joint venture comprising Khanyi Dhlomo and Media24 - came in at 30 321 in the first quarter of this year, compared with 26 024 a year earlier.

Of the big losers of the previous quarter, Media24's *Fair Lady* was down again - from 68 783 total circulation last year to 51 302 this year. (The iconic magazine was at 48 789 in the last quarter of 2011, compared with 72 819 total in 2010).

[Associated Magazine's](#) *Good Housekeeping* - which also has an Afrikaans edition - is showing healthy numbers. It was at 71 760 total circulation after launching in November last year. (Read the [interview with editor Sally Emery](#) before the launch.)

Big Media24 trio

In the family-interest category, the big Media24 trio of *You*, *Huisgenoot* and *Drum* posted varied results. Once again, *Drum* was on the up - from 131 107 in the first quarter of 2011 to 138 007 this year. *Huisgenoot* was down from 313 581 to 298 262, while *You* was marginally down from 182 909 to 181 071.

Of the other interesting movers and shakers:

[Ramsay Media's](#) *Popular Mechanics* continues to post consistent growth - from 47 834 a year ago to 50 787 this year. It's the same story with Avusa's *Stuff*: at 26 018 this year compared with 19 728 a year ago.

Media24's *TopGear* - which was launched in SA in October last year - netted 36 102 circulation in the first quarter of this year.

Martin Welz's [Noseweek](#) was at 18 429 total circulation, compared with 19 559 a year earlier, suggesting he may have sorted out his distribution problems (the magazine was at 18 159 total in Q4 2011, compared with 20 844 total circ in Q4 2010), while Avusa's *Financial Mail* and Media24's *Finweek* continue to dice it out. In this reporting period, *Finweek* was at 25 561 total circulation, compared with 26 729 a year earlier, while the FM was at 23 413 compared with 26 115 a year ago. (Read the [interview with Finweek editor Marc Ashton](#) from last year.)

For more:

- Bizcommunity: [Newspapers dire but not dead, say latest ABC circ numbers](#), February 2012
- Bizcommunity: [Magazine ABC circ holds promise but consumer loyalty declining](#), February 2012
- Politicsweb: [How SA newspaper can save themselves](#), October 2011

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