

The ABC of The New Age

 By [Chris Moerdyk](#)

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In the cutthroat world of newspaper and magazine publishing, it has been fairly predictable that pretty much all the competitors of The New Age have been vociferous about parastatals and other advertiser supporting the paper when it doesn't have Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) certification.

The argument put forward is that if you don't have an ABC certificate no-one should be placing advertising with you.

Well, it's not actually that simple.

Doing it the hard way

Certainly, it remains a mystery to me as to why the New Age doesn't want to go the ABC route and I cannot blame its detractors for leaping to the obvious conclusion that its sales actually suck. Any print publication that doesn't have that little ABC logo on its cover is actually going about its business the hard way.

I am one of those who advise my clients to tread carefully when dealing with publications that don't have regular ABC audits.

But, having said that, I certainly don't just base my decisions solely on an ABC certificate. Unfortunately, too many media buyers do just that and it's wrong.

It's not just about numbers

For a start, numbers really don't mean anything. As a very simple example, the Sunday Times ABC figures have always been impressive but if an advertiser only wants to reach readers in Sandton then it would be silly to place an ad in the Sunday Times but rather plumb for the Sandton Chronicle

The point is, it is vital that in any advertising in any medium, the number of potential customers for a product or service is critical to the decision. The days of shotgun tactics are gone because it is simply far too expensive and often just plain wasteful.

But, back to New Age. I have no idea how they conduct their advertising sales but I would imagine that like every newspaper it has documentary records of its sales. The only difference being that most other newspapers have those records audited by the ABC.

However, I am fairly certain that in its sales pitch to advertisers New Age probably makes all its sales data available for scrutiny. And whether their clients believe the figures or not will depend on the credibility and selling ability of the advertising rep. Advertising is also a question of quality not quantity when it comes to viewership, readership and listenership numbers.

It pays to look beyond the numbers

So, while I am at a loss to understand why the New Age does not go the ABC route, it would be wrong to suggest that those parastatals and private sector companies that are advertising in the newspaper are just doing so in complete ignorance of the New Age sales and reach. Look, I am quite sure that some are. But then, you get those advertisers in every medium. And I have yet to hear of a mass medium that actually turns down advertising because it feels that the client's money is not being spent efficiently.

Just look at some of those government ads that feature a massive photo of a minister and a lot of hot air? The bulk of those has no advertising value at all and is just pure egomania at work.

I am no apologist for New Age but it does get up my nose when it is suggested that ABC figures are the only measure by which one should choose an effective print advertising medium. Even the ABC will agree with that, I'm sure.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).
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