WAN-IFRA reveals annual world press trends survey

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) has released its annual World Press Trends survey, which reveals that print and digital combined are increasing audiences for newspapers globally, but digital revenues are not keeping pace, posing a risk for newspaper businesses and the societies they serve.

"Unless we crack the revenue issue and provide sufficient funds so that newspapers can fulfil their societal role, democracy will inevitably be weakened," said Larry Kilman, secretary general of WAN-IFRA. He presented the survey to 1000 publishers, chief editors and other senior newspaper executives at the 66th World Newspaper Congress, 21st World Editors Forum and 24th World Advertising Forum in Turin, Italy.

"The role that newspapers play in society cannot be underestimated and has never been more crucial. If newspaper companies cannot produce sufficient revenues from digital, if they cannot produce exciting, engaging offerings for both readers and advertisers, they are destined to offer mediocre products with nothing to differentiate them from the mass of faux news. Finding the sustainable business models for digital news media is not only important for your businesses, but for the future health of debate in democratic society."

Top findings

• Print circulation increased +2% globally in 2013 from a year earlier but declined by -2% over five years. Around 2.5 billion people around the world read newspapers in print and 800 million on digital platforms.

• Print circulation continues to rise in countries with a growing middle class and relatively low broadband penetration, but long-term structural declines in print circulation continue in mature markets, as audiences shift their focus from print to digital. Circulation rose +1.45% in Asia in 2013 from a year earlier and +2.56% in Latin America; it fell -5.29% in North America, -9.94% in Australia and Oceania, -5.20 percent in Europe and -1% in the Middle East and Africa.

• Over five years, newspaper circulation rose +6.67% in Asia, +6.26% in Latin America and +7.5% in the Middle East and Africa; it fell -10.25% in North America; -19.59% in Australia and Oceania; and -23.02% in Europe.

• Print advertising worldwide declined -6% in 2013 from a year earlier and declined -13% over five years. Digital advertising for newspapers increased +11% in 2013 and +47% over five years, but remains a relatively small part of overall internet advertising. Much of internet advertising revenue goes to only a handful of companies and most of it goes to Google.

• Print newspaper advertising increased +3.9% in Latin America in 2013 compared with a year earlier, but fell in all other regions: -3.2 percent in Asia and the Pacific, -8.7 percent in North America, -8.2% in Europe; and -1.8% in the Middle East and Africa.

• Over five years, print newspaper advertising increased +3.3% in Asia and the Pacific, +49.9% in Latin America. It declined -29.6% in North America, -17.9% in Europe, and -21.1 percent in the Middle East and Africa.

• While digital advertising continues to grow, it still represents a small part of overall newspaper revenue. Globally, 93% of all newspaper revenues continue to come from print.

• Global newspaper publishing revenues from print circulation and advertising were stable year-on-year at US $163 billion in 2013. However, that figure is down from US $187 billion in 2008.

• Paid digital circulation increased 60% last year and rose more than 2000% over the last five years, albeit from a very low starting point.

Public prepared to pay for good content

"There is growing understanding by the public that you get what you pay for and an increasing willingness to pay for newspaper content on digital platforms," continues Kilman. "With all the free offerings out there, people are still willing to pay for news that is professionally written and edited, that is independent, entertaining and engaging. In short - what newspapers have offered for 400 years and continue to offer, on emerging and existing platforms, no matter how it is delivered."

The World Press Trends survey includes data from more than 70 countries, accounting for more than 90% of the global industry's value. The data is compiled through an enormous undertaking by dozens of national newspaper and news media associations and generous support from global data suppliers Zenith Optimedia, IPSOS, ComScore, RAM and the ITU.

The data is compiled in an annual report supplied to all WAN-IFRA members, and is also available through annual subscription to the World Press Trends interactive database.

Increasing digital engagement

While newspapers attract a significant portion of the total internet audience, the biggest challenge for publishers continues to be how to increase the engagement of audiences on digital platforms. While 46% of the digital population visits newspaper websites, newspapers are a small part of total internet consumption, representing only 6% of total visits, 0.8% of pages viewed and 1.1% of total time spent on digital platforms.

Newspapers have begun working to increase these measures of engagement and are doing so in a variety of ways, the survey found:

- By increasing their social media presence to interact with audiences and building their brands;
- By promoting upcoming material and providing incentives through database marketing;
- By improving site navigation and restructuring pages based on audience interest, to encourage increasing page visits;

- By developing audience knowledge based on past visits to enhance their experience and increase the time they spend.

"While there is much to be done, the good news is, there is evidence that progress is being made. It is essential for our industry to continue to come together to exchange ideas, learn what others are doing, find inspiration about what can be done so, ultimately, we can continue to provide the accurate and credible news and information that citizens need, and have long come to expect from us, to make informed decisions in democratic society," adds Kilman.

"This is the ultimate goal and the challenge. Your successes - and your failures -- will not only have an impact on your businesses today, but are also likely to have a profound impact on your children, on the shape of society in the future."

Other findings

• Television continues to maintain the largest share of global advertising revenues, with 40.1%, followed by internet with 20.7%, newspapers with 16.9%, magazines with 7.9%, outdoor with 7%, radio with 6.9%, and cinema with 0.5%.

• The newspaper industry's value - US$ 163 billion annually from circulation sales and advertising - compares with US$ 102 billion book publishing revenues, US$ 87 billion film revenues and US$ 50 billion music revenues.

• Regionally, 36% of newspapers' market value is in Asia, 34% in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, 21% in North America and 9% in Latin America.

• While single copy newspaper sales have fallen 26% since 2008, subscription sales have fallen only 8%, indicating higher loyalty and stronger customer relationships with subscribers.

World Press Trends database

The World Press Trends database contains individual country reports and aggregated data and trends on circulation and readership, advertising revenues, digital publishing and more. It allows users to generate custom reports, choosing from a large number of criteria to produce reports that meet their own specific needs. These can be downloaded in Excel to enable in-depth analysis, benchmarks and historic trends.

Members of WAN-IFRA continue to receive a World Press Trends report without charge, which contains the data that is most often consulted.

For those who need access to additional data, WAN-IFRA is offering the database to both members and non-members by individual access, on an annual subscription basis, and IP access that allows companies, universities or libraries to provide access to any number of users. The database currently includes 2006 to 2013 data from 70 countries. The database is being expanded, as data prior to 2006 continues to be added.

It can tell you how many newspaper titles are published worldwide. Which daily newspaper has the largest circulation in the world? Which country has the biggest number of top 100 dailies by circulation? It can tell you the number of titles and circulation by countries, or aggregated world-wide; newspaper reach, readership and media consumption trends: online editions and online readership; top newspaper advertisers and advertising categories; cover prices; advertising expenditures and revenues; market share of newspapers and other media; and much more.

For more information, go to www.wan-ifra.org/wpt.

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