

Magazines holding up well, newspapers still struggling, says ABC

South African magazines are holding up well and growing consistently despite the economic uncertainty, the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC) said earlier today, Tuesday, 17 May 2011, upon releasing the 2011 first quarter circulation figures. Unfortunately, this cannot be said about newspapers, which are still struggling due to the availability of free content on several digital platforms.

 Bylssa Sikiti da Silva 17 May 2011



ABC VP Gordon Patterson revealed that 136 000 fewer copies of daily newspapers were sold in the first quarter of Q1 2011 than in Q1 2010, corresponding to a total decline of 8.6%, despite a slight improvement in the last quarter of 2010.

"Publications that are doing well will continue to do well, and those that are struggling will continue to struggle," Patterson pointed out, adding that the lessons for that success or failure are just waiting to be identified.

Daily Sun experienced significant decline

Daily Sun is still SA's largest newspaper by copy sales despite experiencing a significant decline of 17.30%, according to the ABC. Circulation of 15 titles in this category shrank, except for one, *Isolezwe*, which grew by 7.49%, while three titles remain static.

The circulation watchdog has also signalled a healthy growth in the weekly newspaper category, stating that its total circulation reflects a dramatic increase of 20.2% compared to the previous year - a trend reflected the previous quarter. *Soccer Laduma*, *Ilanga* and *Mail & Guardian* have emerged as the leaders of single copy sales in this category, growing year on year by 27.85%, 27.40% and 12.83%, respectively.

Hybrid newspapers such as *The Times* have also continued to demonstrate strong growth, both in subscription and copy sales, ABC figures show.

Weekend newspapers' sales are down, Patterson said, wondering what people are doing over the weekend when they are not reading. Four titles in this category reflected increases, four remained static, while 15 titles decreased.

However, despite this category's setback, ABC said *Sondag* grew a significant 28.5 %, while *Isolezwe NgeSonto* went up by 9.5%, *Sondag Son* experienced a growth of 8.1% and *Ilanga Langesonto* grew by

6.1% year on year.

Vernacular languages continue to do well

On the newspaper language front, the circulation watchdog said vernacular languages such as Afrikaans and Zulu titles continue to do well, while their English counterparts' doom continues to worsen.

Patterson, who described custom retail magazines as the 'power house' of growth and potential advertising opportunity for marketers, said total magazines' circulation increased by 12.5% and consumer magazines 2.9%, respectively, over the previous year.

In the business and news (consumer) category, *Succeed* was the only quarterly reporting magazine to reflect an increase (19.5%), while *Entrepreneur* (-33.9%) and *Noseweek* (-13%) reflected the largest declines.

In the family interest (consumer) category, *Lig* (5.6%) and *Drum* (4%) reflected the largest increases, while *Reader's Digest* (-12.6%) and *The Big Issue* (-9.8%) declined the most, Patterson said.

Kuier doubled copy sales

While the woman's general (consumer) category remained static (-1%), ABC said however, *Kuier* doubled its copy sales, growing by 106%, and *Sarie* and *Elle* grew by 17.5% and 13.6%, respectively year-on-year.

"So, there is growth despite some challenges, which shows that people are doing things right out there," Patterson said.

In conclusion, he said while considerable efforts have been made by many publishers in gaining greater efficiency, success remains underpinned by presence (being accessible), passion (which drives belief and innovation) and delivering real (measurable) value to all parties.

ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.
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