

Ad spend needs to increase up with readership

We are often asked whether there are not too many female titles in South Africa. The answer is that there are definitely more than the existing shelves can stand. If any other commodity had grown as fast and as well as magazines, retailers would have created extra space, but because this is the only commodity that they have on their shelves that they have not paid for, they don't do it.

By [Jane Raphaely](#) 12 May 2005

The reader response is completely different. The launches of Marie Claire, O, The Oprah Magazine, Elle, Shape, Glamour, Heat, Saltwater Girl, Seventeen, Top Billing and Wicked, have increased readership by an estimated 2.6 million readers.

The existing female titles, Cosmopolitan, Fairlady, FEMINA, Rooi Rose, Sarie and True Love have also boosted their combined readership figures by 2.4 million the overall picture is very pretty... nearly nine million (8,9298,7000) readers in all (compared to 4,106,000 in 1993).

What is not so pretty for magazine publishers is the fact that neither cover prices nor advertising spend has increased proportionately. Out of a total adspend of R14,362,780.344 (billion) magazines still get only 11.9% (against 12% in 2003) while TV got 38.8% (against 38% in 2003).

Why is this?

Women's magazines have diversified to reflect the way women are changing and evolving. Print advertising campaigns still broadcast a broad message to the market as a whole.

Magazine deadlines are deadly. But Associated Magazines will have some good news for advertisers in that respect.

Advertisers and agencies are still very pro-TV even though Ms Oprah Winfrey herself said that magazines have far more influence and longer lasting effect than TV programmes.

Magazine publishers compete against each other for the existing pie instead of working together to increase the pie.

Advertisers and agencies need to see perceptible change in magazines which reflects and anticipates the real change which is taking place on the market here. Associated Magazines is investing in research which will give editors better insight into the changes and future trends on this market.

Magazine publishers need to be more proactive about developing spin-offs and building new partnerships with other companies in the communications business. In the UK IPC's Wallpaper has teamed up with Nol to launch a new service offering readers and users the opportunity to view content from the magazine.

Associated Magazines is very positive about the future. Why?

The South African market is still very undeveloped and unsaturated. Potential for growth is there.

It is only a question of time before literacy figures improve. The difference between the illiterate here and illiterate in the US and UK is that the illiterate here want to be literate.

Associated Magazines has experienced very strong growth in subscriptions, which is ongoing.

Retailers who get it right, ie. Spar, are experiencing increased magazine sales and increased sales in general.

Distributors are showing signs of taking magazines to where the market is.

We are seeing the rise of magazine clubs instead of book clubs. New readers are forming magazine clubs and sharing their precious copies.

I feel just as passionate about magazines as a media as I ever did:

Why?

As Ms Oprah Winfrey said at our industry breakfast in December: the reason that she went for a magazine as well as having possibly the most life-changing (for the better) show in the world is:

- That magazines have the potential, more than any other media, to change people's lives, for the better.
- A magazine purchase is a deliberate choice, made as carefully as the choice of perfume, toothpaste or car.
- A reader identifies with the magazine she reads.
- The relationship is more like a friendship, a trusted friend.
- Magazines are accountable.
- Used as reference material.
- Kept. Actually, treasured. No one ever lights a fire with a magazine. They are perceived as having so much value that they are sold and resold.
- Engenders a pleasant feeling in the readers mind: creates receptiveness, action, hope.

Can you say any one of these things about any other media?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This is an edited version of the speech delivered by Jane Raphaely, CEO of Associated Magazines at AMASA Cape Town, 4 May 2005. As co-founder and CEO, Jane Raphaely still heads up the family-run Associated Magazines, which boasts a 140-strong staff that includes some of the leading editors in South Africa. For more information on Associated Magazines, visit: www.assocmags.co.za.

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