

Retail therapy



The shopping magazine phenomenon which was huge in Japan in the 1990s and in the United States at the start of the millennium, is again being attempted in South Africa by Media24 this time and with veteran editor, Heather Parker at the helm. SHOP! hit the shelves in Jo'burg, Cape Town and Durban last week with an initial print run of 35 000.



By Louise Marsland 7 Aug 2005



SHOP! was initially launched in 2003 by New Media as a handbag size listings title. It was then sold to Media24 and put on ice. Parker says the time is now right to capitalise on the fastest growing trend in publishing right now, that of celebrity and shopping magazines.

Globally, shopping magazines are taking off, 'Lucky' being launched by Conde Naste in 2000. This has been followed by 'Cargo', a male shopping title and 'Domino' a home shopping version. There is now also, 'Budget Living' in the States. Last month the UK's first shopping magazine was also launched.

Parker says SHOP! will be a new publishing experience.

"It's profoundly different to everything that is out there. It is a woman's mag, but one which takes everything else out of the mix: no emotional advice, no how to, no celeb news. This is cover-to-cover merchandising. We've hooked everything onto the 'makeover' trend in the context of educating the reader on fashion and trends.

"We are breaking every rule there is in publishing, using gimmicks... this is an opportunity to try new things. The contract I have with my reader is: boots are in, and you choose what you want at the price that suits..."



In SHOP!, Parker says the twin axis of the publication are the merchandising pages and beauty pages.

The magazine is divided into four separate sections: fashion, beauty, décor and lifestyle; and provides inspiration and information in an easy-to-read, entertaining style. It offers advertisers innovative opportunities for above or below-the-line advertising, and for product placement. Each of the sections will feature the best-of-the-best products, ideas, trends, and information that will make shopping easier and faster. There is buying info on every item featured.

Various marketing strategies, including shopping mall and retail promotions will support the launch of the title. An interactive website, www.sashop.co.za, will include online shopping guides, sales and special deals, lifestyle advice and will be updated regularly.

Marí Lategan, publisher of Media24 Women's Magazines and SHOP!, is optimistic about the title, "The time is perfect for SHOP! From a consumer point of view, South African women are decision-makers, savvy shoppers and keen spenders and will welcome the magazine's unique blend of style and service. For advertisers, SHOP! offers endless creative opportunities and will be a welcome addition to the magazine market."

Is it more than a catalogue? Parker says yes.

"It's a friendly, informative, engaging, independent, and cheeky shopping magazine, with a lot of value. It saves you time and saves you money. Everything gets filtered through the editors, even if it is an advertise slot. There is a DPS on giveaways and freebies every issue, with R100 000 worth of freebies in the first issue.

So why will it work for South Africa this time round?

"Nothing exists like this yet, it will address the time famine we all have as shoppers as it is a reference guide that pre-filters and engages in a way that no other magazine does," Parker explains. "This is a new business model for readers and advertisers. We've seen some creative ideas from the ad agencies already."

SHOP! is quarterly, A4, with 144 pages for the launch issue and will only be sold in Jo'burg, Durban, Cape Town and at major airports, at a cost of R22.95. The publishers are looking for an 80% sell through on the first print run of 35 000.

Although a first issue was not available to preview before the publication hit the shelves, Parker says the look and feel is "upmarket, glossy, friendly, conspiratorial, your personal shopper, your best friend".

The talented team that have been pulled together for this project, include:

Heather Parker, Editor (previously-launch editor of Shape magazine)

Fashion Editor: Amaria Carstens

Beauty Editor: Rose Bruins

Home & Lifestyle Editor: Retha Erichsen

Art director: Zahnre Pentz

Publisher: Mari Lategan

Online Editor: Fuzlin Janson

Dubbed 'a mall for creative advertising solutions', SHOP! went on sale 3 August 2005 and the market will be waiting to see what Parker, one of the nicest and most experienced consumer magazine editors out there, does with the title.

ABOUT LOUISE MARS LAND

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