

## SA readers are sure of their titles

Despite the vast proliferation of print titles, many of which are similarly named, there is little title confusion amongst SA readers. This has been the finding since the SAARF Print Council decided to expand the up-front 6-month filter question in SAARF AMPS 2001A, introducing a "Not sure" category into the six month publication sort.

This measure was taken to ensure that title confusion was not impacting on readership results obtained from the AMPS surveys.

SAARF determines readership by giving AMPS respondents a stack of shufflecard prompts, bearing the mastheads of all titles which qualify to be researched by AMPS. Originally, they sorted these shufflecards into two piles - "Yes, I have read these during the past six months", and "No, I have not read them". From AMPS 2001A, respondents were given a third option - "I'm not sure if I have read this in the past six months".

Publications categorised as "Not sure" were then re-examined by respondents, who re-sorted them if they were more certain.

Unlike the British National Readership survey, which categorises "Not sure" responses together with "Yes" responses, the SAARF Print Council decided to adopt a conservative line and regard the remaining "Not sures" as "No" answers.

After 12 months of fieldwork using this method, it has become clear that most South Africans are quite certain about their reading habits.

AMPS respondents used the "Not sure" category in very few cases, and where they did, isolated publications were affected.

Only 9% of the 29 000 respondents interviewed for the AMPS survey used the "Not sure" category for any publications. Three percent subsequently classified their "Not sure" publications into a "Yes" or "No".

The majority of respondents with "Not sures" in the first sort, converted their responses to "Yes" in the second sort.

Titles sorted into the "Not sure" pile included both magazine and newspaper, with dailies having a higher proportion of "Not sures" than weeklies. Contrary to what one might think, it was often the market leaders, and not the lesser-known titles or similarly titled publications, which were most likely to find their way into the unsure pile.

Amongst newspaper titles, those with a higher incidence of "Not sure" claims were large, distinctly titled papers such as The Sunday Times, Sowetan, City Press, Citizen and The Star.

In the magazine department, it was titles like Bona, Drum, You, True Love and Soccer Laduma, as well as more niche publications such as Golf Digest, which tended to have a higher proportion of "Not sures". Similarly-titled publications, such as those found in the home/gardening and motoring sectors, were not prevalent.

in the "Not sure" piles, there does not seem to be a title confusion problem within the magazine sector.

"It is possible that well-known print brands have the ability to confuse readers since their brands are so pervasive, that people are not always sure whether they've actually read the title, or just heard a lot about it the past six months," surmises SAARF MD, Dr Paul Haupt.

Following these findings, the SAARF Print Council has elected to retain the three-category sort, but respondents will not be asked to go through the "Not sure" pile to reclassify titles. The "Not sures" emerging from this first sort will be grouped with the "No" responses and will not be put through the full battery of readership questions.

This adapted methodology will be used in SAARF AMPS 2002B, which is currently in field.

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