

Finding proof that print advertising is powerful

 By [Chris Mberdyk](#)

12 Jan 2018

Print isn't dead. It's not even sick. And I aim to prove it this year.

I hate it when I hear people saying "print is dead" because it is a generalisation of the very worst and misleading kind.

The only print that is dying are those newspapers and magazines managed and edited by people who live in the past, stoically resisting change, hating everything digital and hoping like hell that the glory days of mass media print titles will come back. Which they won't.

Advertising in those newspapers and mags enters the wishful thinking world of lotteries because the cost of advertising goes up while sales and readership declines. It makes no sense. And it isn't measurable.

In about the same way that obsolete 30-sec TV commercials make absolutely no sense whatsoever. Except in the case of the lower income group consumers who still believe absolutely everything they see on TV and who can't seem to distinguish between advertising and programming. Which is great only if you are a retailer aiming at that market.

I am going to kick off 2018 by doing some serious research into areas where TV advertising does and doesn't work. But most important of all, I want to explore some case histories of where print advertising is still performing well.

Most particularly with regard to those retail inserts in national daily, weekend and, especially, commercial community freesheet newspapers.

Over the past few years my experience in working with big retail clients has shown that in spite of a lot of consumers saying they hate those inserts, the bottom line seems to be that a huge number of consumers actually read them and act on them.

Right now these inserts are becoming a lot more sophisticated and I'm told they can even be adapted to hundreds of smaller market segments without stopping a print run. Which is very exciting news. And something I want to research in depth.

Those inserts sell products, of that I have no doubt. But, what I need to find out is just how many products they sell. I want to research real numbers and not just hearsay.

The result of all this research, I hope, will be credible data that will give big retail chains, and even smaller mom-and-pop stores, a very clear idea of where to invest their advertising budgets for maximum results.

I am also hoping that it might persuade buyers in big chain stores from blindly insisting that their suppliers produce TV commercials without actually realising that TV for mid and upmarket retail just doesn't work.

Banks also seem to be wasting a lot of money advertising in completely the wrong places.

What I do know for sure is that 20 percent of all advertising in South Africa not only doesn't work but actually damages the brands involved.

I also estimated a while back that the average amount of marketing money wasted by big brands ranges from 25 percent to almost 40 percent.

Hopefully, within the next few months I will be able to report back on my research into those parts of print advertising that remain powerful.

So, if anyone has credible case history data, I would be happy to chat. And I will share the results of my research with you free of charge.

Meanwhile I shall start digging.

ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on moerdykc@gmail.com and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](https://twitter.com/chrismoerdyk).

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