

# Weekly newspapers shine, media inflation worsens - ABC

 By Issa Sikiti da Silva: @sikitimedia

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Despite the total newspaper circulation in South Africa falling by 14 000 copies in the second quarter of 2011, weeklies have outcompeted and outgunned their counterparts (daily and weekend) by far, increasing their circulation by 15% - all in copy sales, according to figures released today, Wednesday, 17 August 2011, by the Audit Bureau of Circulations (ABC), amid a worsening media inflation that is set to worry industry watchers.



The figures also show that *Kuier* magazine grew by 108% (all in copy sales), the highest growth of all!

"Copy sales mean democracy in sales and this is fantastic. And whatever these guys are doing for their titles to perform so well is not a fluke, but printed in black and white and it should be celebrated," ABC VP Gordon Patterson told journalists late last week at the organisation's headquarters in Parktown, Johannesburg.

## Weekly newspaper kings

Zulu publication *Ilanga* scored 34.3%, *Soccer Laduma* 20% and *Mail & Guardian* 8.6%, emerging as the kings of the weekly newspapers and possibly of all newspapers, in an industry that continues to bite the dust as transportation costs soar by 40%.

Daily newspapers sold 126 000 fewer copies in Q2 2011, compared to 70 000 less in Q1 2011, the circulation watchdog said, adding that digital growth increased significantly, albeit off a small base.

Among the top six dailies listed by ABC in terms of year-on-year copy sales - *Daily Sun*, *Isolezwe*, *Son* (Afrikaans), *Sowetan*, *The Star*, *The Citizen* - only Zulu title *Isolezwe* showed a creditable growth of 9.5%. Ten titles declined and eight remain static.

## Praise for *The Times*

Patterson also said praised *The Times* for experiencing a significant growth in paid circulation, both in copy sales (38 237) and subscriptions (76 258), despite the latter being only obtained as part of a twin offering with the *Sunday Times*.

The weekend newspaper struggle continues and who knows when victory will be in sight, as total circulation fell by 4.4% year-on-year? Fourteen titles declined and five remained static, while only four grew.

Zulu titles *Isolezwe ngeSonto* (9.5%) and *Ilanga Langesonto* (11%) performed well, while Afrikaans newspapers *Volksblad* (-19%) and *Rapport* (-12%) reflected the largest declines.

## 'Not sure if it is linked to credibility'

"I am concerned about the decline in copy sales of weekend newspapers," a visibly worried Patterson said. "I'm not sure if it is linked to the credibility of some of these newspapers, but this is democracy in sales, whereby people are choosing not to buy."

Commenting on Afrikaans newspapers, whose circulation declined for the first time in as many quarters, Patterson said: "If Afrikaans-speaking readers are not reading their own language, I wonder what they are reading."

"The rise in copy sales could be a groundswell of curiosity from the people feeling good to read newspapers printed in their own languages, which is fantastic."

## Media inflation

Media inflation, which Patterson described as a very critical factor in the advertising point of view, miserably dropped further (13.4%), meaning the return on investment being derived from print has worsened.

In the magazine division, Afrikaans title *Kuier* (consumer, women's general) scored a truly amazing score (108%) in a highly inconsistent and unstable environment, where once again circulation declined dramatically.

Other Q2 2011 winners in the magazine division include *Club X* (72%), *Reality* (60%), *Mamas & Papas* (38.6%), *Foschini Sport* (38%), *Commercial Trader* (35%), *Stuff* (29%), *Fitness* (20%), *Amakhosi* (19%), *Elle* (17%), *Drum* (14%), *Baba & Kleuter* (14%), *Succeed* (12.2%) and *Move!* (11%).

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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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