

Community newspapers have potential to change trends

Research, commissioned in 2011 to understand better the shifts in readership, demographics and spend patterns of community newspapers, was released yesterday, Thursday, 2 February 2012, by Ads24, the national advertising sales division of [Media24 newspapers](#) and digital properties. Compass 2012 is the first update since the release of Compass24 2008.

[Linda Gibson](#), Ads24's CEO, says the initiative was prompted by a widespread advertising industry perception that alternative long-term growth mediums need to be identified in order to develop effective marketing strategies for the years ahead.

"Given that societies are becoming more community focused, community newspapers are also becoming a differently relevant medium to consider for advertising, as community centricity implies a different attraction to community newspaper titles."

"Committed to delivering updates"

However, in order to optimise that opportunity, Gibson maintains that media planning for community papers needs to be carefully structured and supported by tools similar to those employed for mainstream papers.

Ideally, she maintains, research such as Compass24 and Roots should be available in AMPS, so that the data is capable of being updated with the same frequency as mainstream newspapers. However, the resultant cost implications could create difficulties. "Be that as it may, we are committed to delivering updates as often as we can afford."

"It has been proven repeatedly that return on investment for papers impact sales directly. For community papers, the data is out-dated and did not include digital usage. This release will give clients and planners current information on reader demographics and media usage. It builds on the foundations we laid with the data released in 2008."

"Informed planning for advertisers"

She is confident that this survey will provide reliable and current reach figures for community papers; statistics embedded in a broader consumption context. "It's a context that will enable more informed planning for advertisers, making it less of an intuitive process than is the case at present. The ultimate aim is to create a sophisticated, scientific tool to support and justify community newspaper advertising investment.

Having established the basics, Gibson emphasises that any planning tool is only as valuable as the integrity of its content. "This implies the correct methodology - the scientific and correct approach to sample design and immaculate data

collection embedded in a stringent quality control process."

A unique space

For the task of meeting such criteria, Ads24 awarded the contract to AskAfrika after a thorough pitch process. The research house conducted 14 409 nationally representative community interviews from August to November 2011, covering 70 community newspaper titles. The readership of the researched titles comes in at 4 763 195 for all regions.

A principal finding is that community papers have a unique space in the lives of their readers, being 'perfectly positioned' for changing South African trends (both brands and service). Community papers are the 'perfect platform' for brands to showcase their commitment to their customers

Compass24 will launch to the trade in February 2012 and be available on Telmar.

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