

City Press' new magazine is the talk of the town

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Hot off the back of a strategy lead by editor Ferial Haffajee, City Press is investing heavily in ensuring it becomes the most noticeable and noted Sunday media brand. The latest accent in that drive to own the Sunday newspaper market is a magazine that Media24's publication has simply called '*i magazine*'.

While Haffajee's intent has slowly unfolded in the past two years in which she left Mail & Guardian to become editor of City Press, *i magazine* is the most bold and noticeable move yet. Since July 2009 when the editor was brought in to revive City Press, she has worked on upping the game considerably in both the look and read department.

A big make over saw City Press get a fresh new look and style, with new supplements, sections and a fresh, modern design. The other part of Haffajee's strategy has been ground breaking stories and leading news. It is an aggressive and intelligent approach to news in a world where so many other titles have taken a more tabloid approach to appeal to a mass market.

Haffajee's been smart because her market isn't a mass media market, rather she's focussing on aspirant, emerging, middle to upper income consumers which is a boon for advertisers. And it is exactly the kind of market cool brands, relevant brands and proudly South African companies are appealing to right now.

What's given City Press a massive share of voice is the papers approach to investigative reporting and we see that the newspaper's ability to break big stories almost every week has not only made it a talking point around water coolers on Mondays, it has also set social media on fire.

City Press' consumers are currently Gauteng and KZN movers and shakers. They are upwardly mobile, aspirant and are filling out SA's middle class very rapidly. These people are au fait with social networks, use Facebook, and want to be in the know. They are also very vocal when it comes to speaking about political and social issues.

What the Sunday newspaper has done with its investigative work and with the big news stories that it breaks is to lead the discussion about what is happening in South Africa. This creates a larger than life voice for City Press on Twitter and on other social networks. Not only is other media giving City Press' brand love by quoting breaking stories, but social networks are abuzz with debate on these big issues as they break.

Launching a glossy magazine is a smart next logical step for City Press. While investigative reporting, reportage and punchy columns give the paper a hard, newsy edge, it is the big sized full colour magazine that will reach out to new markets.

The first thing you notice about the magazine is its size. Close to A2 the larger format makes Sunday Times' magazine look a lot more like a badly printed pamphlet. The type fonts are modern, the photographs are world-class and the layout experience is very clean and spacious. Reading through it was a luxurious experience because of the paper, the writing and the visual appeal.

The advertising inside *i magazine* is a brand dream. Full colour double page spreads on glossy print paper or massive full pages that make a huge statement about the advertisers. The premier issue of the City Press magazine included luxury brands like TAGHeuer, Le Creuset, Mercedes-Benz and other luxury brands.

A big beef for luxury brands who have advertised in newspapers has been the print quality of the press. *i magazine* solves that problem really smartly with advertising that borders on being 'high definition'.

The content inside the magazine is wide enough to appeal to both men and women, and is defined by aspiration rather than any particular demography. This certainly makes it an appealing read for urban sophisticates who want to know about top brands and be seen wearing top brands.

The writing style in the magazine is short, punchy and isn't laboured so even though there's more than enough to keep people happy way past Sundays, in a world where time has become increasingly precious and there's just so much content, the read is definitely enjoyable.

Internationally, well-crafted newspaper magazines like those found in The Guardian, Mail On Sunday and the UK Sunday Times have done a brilliant job for broadening market share, growing newspaper brands and making the Sunday press last well beyond Monday morning. The surprising insight about these magazines is that they also make money for the media brands they represent.

Although City Press has yet to show growth in the ABCs after Haffajee's arrival the media brand is very much still consolidating and looks like it is taking a very smart, long term approach to growth by offering readers more and more value for their money.

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