

Transcending cultural barriers with food

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Fresh Living is a multi-award-winning food magazine with proven ROI. Deputy Editor Robyn MacLarty discusses how food and solutions-based content transcends cultural barriers to successfully market a brand.



Few South Africans speak all 11 official languages – but every South African loves to eat. Food is a universal language that is loaded with personal meaning, intimate associations and a direct connection to the heart that transcends cultural barriers and demographics.

What could be more intimate and connecting than something you take into your body, that makes up the very fibre of your being – literally – and that you share with loved ones on a daily basis?

A mag that speaks fluent ‘South African’

With this in mind, quality food-related content marketing for supermarket brands is, to use the parlance of our times, a no-brainer. As marketing legend Seth Godin says: content marketing is the only marketing left.

The average grocery shopper is more overwhelmed by above-the-line marketing than ever before, and so much more sceptical of it as well, that the only viable long-term strategy for a brand hoping to imprint itself on the hearts and minds of consumers is meaningful content marketing that speaks to them in their own language. Food is a language that celebrates family, friends, connection and vitality. Food represents a pause to savour life, a reprieve from daily responsibilities and nourishment on all levels.

If food is a language, then Pick n Pay’s [Fresh Living](#) magazine, more than any other local food publication, speaks fluent South African. The food styling is luscious but accessible; ingredients are easily sourced from your local Pick n Pay (the average working mom doesn’t have the time or mental real estate to plan more than one store visit for groceries per shop); and a sharp eye is kept on affordability.

The tone of the magazine also hits the sweet spot: warm, direct, encouraging and a tad cheeky yet authoritative and generous with information, tips, hacks and know-how that appeals to South Africans who like to eat good food – rather than those who identify as ‘foodies’.

Print media becoming more targeted

Contrary to the accepted wisdom that print media is 'dying', it is instead transforming into a far more purposeful and targeted tool to reach consumers.

In the retail sector, US company [Naked Cashmere](#) made a bold move in 2017 from the digital space back to print, choosing to [mail catalogues](#) to its customers, resulting in a payoff that was seven times the initial investment.

The brand credits this success to the fact that – through a sublimely designed print catalogue that could be touched and paged through – they were able to stand out in the minds of consumers instead of competing in the cacophonous online marketplace (at huge expense).

Not only does a beautiful, well-crafted printed product provide a tangible sensory experience digital never can, it also represents a step away from the clamour and relentless bids for our attention online.

A printed product fits in perfectly with the trend towards mindfulness and 'digital detox', the 'slow' movement associated with good, wholesome food, what really matters in life, and our increasing awareness of the need to claim islands of calm and quiet in our busy lives.

The South African market loves something tactile, something tangible, and *Fresh Living* is inherently democratic in that anyone with a Pick n Pay Smart Shopper card (free) can claim their copy of the magazine (also free) while stocks last.

Internationally, [John Brown Media](#) has been at the leading edge of award-winning (and, more importantly, effective) food-related content marketing for over a decade, with print magazines for Hannafords, Waitrose, Spinneys and, of course, Pick n Pay.

These sit comfortably within an omni-channel ecosystem where food videos, Instagram stories, recipes mailers and online shopping converge to feed the hearts and minds of the vast supermarket demographic.

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