

Print Media Report: South Africans' consumption patterns shift

The South African media industry has experienced significant changes over the past year. The global economic crisis, and the rise of AI, have all contributed to changing how people consume news and information. This is according to media monitoring company Novus Group's newly released *State of Print Media report 2023*.



Source: www.unsplash.com

Daily newspapers

Traditional print publications have been facing continuous declines in circulation over the past few years, leading to major changes in the industry. In May, Independent Media implemented various adjustments, incorporating some publications into others while discontinuing lesser-performing titles.

One of the notable changes includes the incorporation of *Pretoria News*, one of South Africa's oldest newspapers established in 1898, into *The Star*. *Pretoria News* experienced a significant decline in circulation, dropping from a once high of more than 14,300 readers in Q1 2016 to less than 2,500 readers in Q2 2022. As a result, they have officially resigned from ABC audits and are now focusing on online coverage.

Among the daily newspapers, *Daily Sun* (-33.25%), *Son Wes* (-22.74%), and *The Sowetan* (-15.37%) experienced the most significant losses in circulation over the past year. *Die Burger* (27,456 readers), *The Star* (25,596), *The Sowetan* (24,766), and *Isolezwe* (24,949) are the top four publications in the country based on readership.

In another development, Media24 has changed *Son Wes* from a daily newspaper to a weekly publication, with effect from June this year.

Weekend newspapers

Despite a 20.87% fall in readers, *The Sunday Times* remains the largest-selling weekend newspaper, with a total circulation of 92,021. *Isolezwe* and *Weekend Argus* have merged their weekend editions, combining them into a single Saturday edition. Similarly, the *Sunday Independent* has become part of the *Sunday Tribune*, with both publications continuing to provide online coverage.



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Danette Breitenbach 23 May 2023



While several publications experienced declines in circulation, the independently published *Daily Maverick 168* saw a rapid growth rate of 18.99% for its Saturday newspaper.

Community newspapers

In the community papers segment, *Representative* suffered a major loss of 27.06%, while *Die Pos* experienced the largest growth with a gain of 37.44%. Overall, most community publications remained stable throughout the year with several showing good growth, including *Merebank & Chatsworth Tabloid* (23.82% growth), *Witbank News* (17.82%), and *Helderberg Gazette & District Mail* (16.26%).

Magazines

The magazine industry also underwent changes, bidding farewell to *TV Plus* magazine after 23 years of publication. *Huisgenoot*, despite experiencing a 19.76% decline in circulation, continues to be the top-selling weekly magazine with a circulation of 101,635. Unfortunately, *The Dairy Mail* and *The Specialist Forum Journal* suffered the largest losses, with declines of 45.35% and 41.84% respectively.

On a positive note, the retail group TFG and its media division, TFG Media, saw growth across all their retail magazines. Magazines such as *Man*, *Club X*, and *Sports Club* experienced significant increases in circulation.

“These changes reflect the evolving media landscape, where readers' preferences are shifting towards online and on-demand news consumption. Print publications are adapting to these changes by incorporating online coverage and making strategic adjustments to their publication schedules,” says Novus Group director Joe Hamman.

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