

Q3 Audit Bureau of Circulations Analysis (ABC/VFD)

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Statistics show that when it comes to reaching consumers across South Africa, the local media segment outshines daily, weekly and weekend newspapers.



The year-on-year growth in the print sector continues to be driven by local papers.

This is according to Jacqui Hansen, head of marketing at Spark Media, Caxton Local Media's national print sales division, who was responding to the recently released Audit Bureau of Circulations South Africa's (ABC) figures for Q3 2022.

Caxton Local Media publishes 116 titles, with a print order of 2.9 million copies, and has 61 news websites and 67 Facebook platforms across all nine provinces of South Africa.

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The ABC figures for Q3 2022 show that the total combined circulation of print media in South Africa increased from 5,740,383 copies in Q3 of 2021 to 6,472,474 copies in Q3 of 2022.

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Daily, weekly and weekend newspapers

The sales of daily, weekly and weekend newspapers combined have declined by 107,499 copies. *The Star* and *Daily Dispatch* are the only newspapers in these sectors showing any growth. Their circulations grew slightly, by 1,794 and 706 copies, respectively.

“The largest declines are once again from *Daily Sun* and *Son*. The circulations of both papers dropped by over 20% (11,893 copies and 4,970 copies respectively),” says Hansen.

A closer look at local papers

The good news, she says, is that in Q3 of 2022, local newspapers circulated almost seven times as many copies as daily, weekly and weekend newspapers combined (5,661,932 vs 810,542 copies in Q3 2022).

“Free local newspaper circulations have grown year-on-year by 18.3% (847,372 copies).

This growth is predominantly due to the addition of a new member, *Vuk’uzenzele*. But, 46 other titles have reported increases in their circulations. Coastal titles seem to be showing the largest increases.

“We continue to see innovation in this sector as publishers adapt their offerings to maximise coverage and meet the growing demand from readers and advertisers alike. Key among this innovation are papers which offer a hybrid distribution, such as *Lowvelder Friday/Lowvelder Express*, which has grown by 2,500 copies since Q1 2022 (from 33,519 copies in Q1 2021 to 36,025 copies in Q3 2022),” she says.

Hansen explains that while sold local papers remain under pressure, there is resilience in areas such as KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga. “Here we see papers such as the *Witbank News*, *Middelburg Observer*, *Mpumalanga News* and *Zululand Observer* showing double-digit growth.

“*Witbank News* grew by 42.3%. *Middelburg Observer* grew by 32.03%. *Mpumalanga News* grew by 10.15%. Both editions of the *Zululand Observer* reported year-on-year increases in Q3. *Zululand Observer Weekend* grew by 10.93% and *Zululand Observer Monday* by 1.7%.”

Future outlook

“As we head into the festive period, local papers continue to provide better coverage than daily, weekly and weekend newspapers,” says Chris Halstead, Spark Media’s Head of Sales.

“A press schedule that includes every audited daily, weekly and weekend title provides 810,542 copies, countrywide. In contrast, local newspapers continue to show their resilience, currently circulating 5.6 million copies a week,” he says.

Servaas de Kock, group executive digital of Caxton/CTP says one must remember that the Audit Bureau of Circulations’ figures tell only part of the story. He says that data from Google Analytics for July–September 2022, show that online editions of local papers continue to gain traction. “The online editions of the Caxton local papers reached over 10 million users online and delivered over 25 million page views.”

“Local newspapers continue to provide an effective route to market for small businesses operating in local markets and national brands and retailers who are fighting for their share, store by store and area by area, in local markets across

South Africa,” says Hansen.

For any media-related queries and business offerings, contact the Corporate Affairs Manager: Kamogelo Aphane [010 971 3736; ka@sparkmedia.co.za].

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Spark Media



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