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The feel for paper: there is still a core loyalty to print

Despite falling newspaper and magazine circulation, there remains a core of loyal readers, and the average read frequencies of magazines are benefiting advertisers

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Picture: ISTOCK

South Africans who earn more than R25,000/month are still reading printed newspapers, with one person in four enjoying the ritual and more than 20% appreciating the touch and feel of real paper between their fingers.

That's according to new research commissioned by the Publisher Research Council (PRC) and conducted by WhyFive Insights.

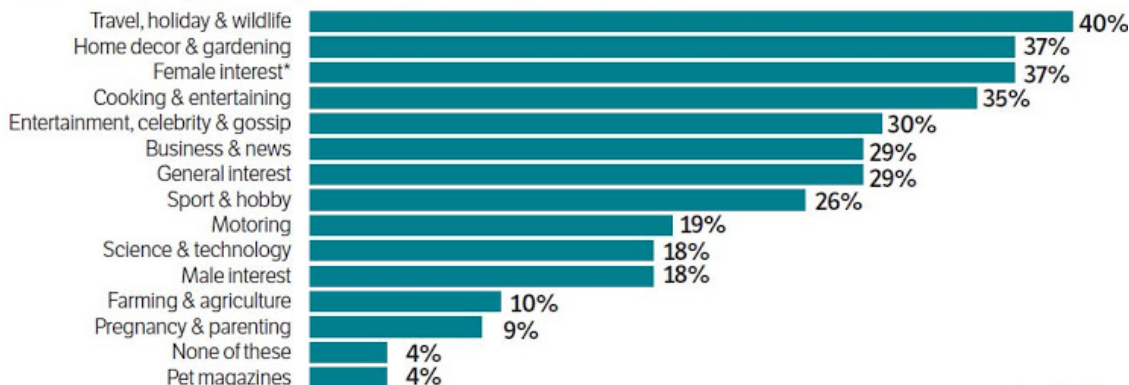
About 25,000 economically active adults who live in households with an income above that figure were polled. More than 70% still pick up a daily or weekly newspaper.

The results come as the newspaper market is under increasing circulation pressure. In the second quarter of this year, total daily newspaper circulation fell to 1,163,265, from 1,278,157 during the previous corresponding reporting period.

Weekend newspapers have declined to 1,397,409 from 1,580,602. The Sunday Times is down to 262,715 from 291,770.

LIFESTYLE MATTERS

Magazine categories as percentage of magazine readers



* fashion, beauty & health

Source: WhyFive

The Star (daily) is down to 80,345 from 86,643; the Sowetan to 73,610 from 88,741; Business Day is at 20,056 from 24 508; The Citizen is at 44,147 from 47,373; the Daily Sun is at 164,923 from 194 506; The Times is at 48,096 from 63,954; and City Press is at 68,645 from 92,193.

But the PRC survey suggests that in spite of the pressure there is still a core loyalty to print, with 58% of respondents ranking it third, above popular activities such as travelling, gardening, eating out and socialising.

Of more encouragement to the print industry is the durability of the magazine market. The percentage of South Africans who buy and read magazines has not changed noticeably over the past three years. More than 65% of respondents still sample and buy the titles and 76% of magazine readers find adverts a direct trigger to purchase.

Brandon de Kock, director of storytelling at WhyFive Insights, says advertisers are benefiting from average read frequencies of magazines — the number of times a reader picks up and reads or pages through a single copy. Read frequencies range from 3.2 to 1.9, showing that advertisers get an average two additional "opportunities to see", or OTSs.

There are marked OTS differences among magazine categories. "At the bottom end of the scale are those magazines you'd expect to have the lowest multiple pick-up rates, such as entertainment and celebrity, business and news, and pet titles, that have an average of 1.9 to 2.2," says De Kock. "But at the other end, some cooking and entertaining titles go to over four."

The bottom line, De Kock says, is that in a category where cost per 1,000 is an oft-used argument, magazine publishers should be dividing that cost by a factor of at least two, if not more.

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