

The future of business publications in SA

By  Greg Stewart

16 Aug 2018

The newly released Q2 ABC circulation figures show a depressing continuation of the ongoing circulation decline in most business and general news publications in South Africa.



© rawpixel via [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

There are few exceptions with some declining over 20% and this is on the back of several years of dwindling circulation figures. Going back to the early 90's some of these publications had more than double the circulation they currently manage to achieve and simultaneously the advertising rates have grown while their printing costs are effectively halved.



Newspapers ABC Q2 2018: Static, with some highlights

Danette Breitenbach 14 Aug 2018



Magazines ABC Q2 2018: Decline continues

Danette Breitenbach 14 Aug 2018



One can easily point fingers, but it is more educational to see what the exceptions are doing to save and, in some instances, grow their audiences.

Most publications rely on advertising revenue to survive, but some are doing well to embrace and or traverse the digital world and are growing their subscriber and advertising base, while also developing new digital platforms to gain new audiences. And there is good business sense in doing so.

Business Brief is the stand out exception to the trend of declining circulation with a 49.4% growth year on year. Most of their sales are subscription-based digital PDF versions of the magazine, saving both printing and distribution costs with only a small number of printed versions being distributed. One wonders when other publishers will start embracing digital

versions as a viable publishing format. In today's digitally enabled world you don't need your publication sitting on some coffee table to reach readers, it goes with the readers wherever they are and whenever they have the time available to do so they can read it.

Print publications

Business and News publications ABC Q2 2018		
Publication Name	Circulation	% change year
Business Brief.	49,470	49.4%
Entrepreneur	14,883	1.3%
Financial Mail	13,080	-1.3%
Finweek	17,188	-4.5%
Forbes Africa	14,915	-22.1%
Noseweek	11,940	-0.3%
Personal Finance	Changed Publisher	
SA Real Estate Investor Magazine	14,554	-5.7%
Your Business Magazine	7,572	-19.2%
Publication Name	Circulation	% change year
Star, The	72,375	-9.9%
Sowetan	70,061	-4.8%
Burger, Die Daily	46,983	-1.4%
Citizen, The (Daily)	42,595	-3.5%
Burger, Die Daily	39,685	-1.5%
Beeld, Daily	36,210	-9.4%
Cape Times	29,611	-4.4%
Cape Argus	27,346	-5.8%
Mercury, The	25,043	-5.0%
Business Day	20,145	0.4%
Daily Dispatch	16,546	-11.9%
Herald, The	16,210	-14.0%
Volksblad - Daily	14,306	-2.7%
Pretoria News	12,686	-7.9%
Sunday Times	250,575	-4.6%
Sunday Nation	117,695	-17.3%
Rapport	112,332	-9.6%
Burger, Die Saturday	51,111	-2.9%
Weekend Argus	51,106	-2.6%
Sunday Tribune	50,386	-4.4%
City Press	50,200	-26.9%
Sunday World	45,211	-17.0%
Saturday Star, The	40,409	-16.4%
Beeld, Saturday	36,624	-4.6%
Independent on Saturday	36,211	-2.9%
Weekend Argus	32,883	-5.0%
Citizen, The (Saturday)	31,446	-6.9%

Digital growth continues

In contrast to the printed medium, digital business publications continue to show significant growth in their subscriber base. It would, of course, be argued that these are free subscriptions, but the fact remains that their numbers are hard to argue with.

Many traditional print publications are now also offering paid for premium digital newsletters with premium web content. However, with consumer behaviour as it is today, it can be argued that any person who subscribes and remains a subscriber to a free email newsletter is a committed reader. With all the email spam today, people only accept what they wish to read or see.

Monetising this audience has historically been a huge issue for publishers, however, with more and more advertising revenue moving into digital platforms, due to response factors and lower cost, these newsletters should become hot advertising property offering great value and good engagement opportunities for advertisers.

Digital business publication newsletter subscriber growth

	Jan-18	Feb-18	Mar-18	Apr-18	May-18	Jun-18	Jul-18
Ince-Connect	59 306	58 350	63 289	71 700	101 163	114 281	118 207
BizNews	66 162	76 143	84 091	105 288	223 815	244 915	234 237
Business Brief	11 872	16 282	15 783	15 107	26 514	25 507	24 818



ABOUT GREG STEWART

Greg Stewart has been in various media and advertising roles over the last 30 years. He started at The Star in the late 80's and has been in senior management positions at various media and advertising companies including The Independent Group, Prime Media digital, The Citizen as well as running his own media and advertising consultancy for a number of years. He currently runs his own media consultancy - TFC Media

» Turn your media spend into a meaningful contribution to society - 21 Apr 2021

» The future of business publications in SA - 16 Aug 2018

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>