

# ABC: Members up but print down

By  Danette Breitenbach

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The ABC 4th Quarter 2016 results, released via webinar for the first time, show that the total number of products and titles reported on for the ABC 4th quarter 2016 has increased to 982 from 854 in 2015.

This rise in members is due to the introduction of a new category, digital products, early in 2016, so despite this good news, the decline in print product circulation continues, with this quarter also showing a decline in free newspapers – the first time this category dipped.

2016 was a volatile year for the ABC, with magazine and newspaper products declining from 507 to 478 and 347 to 336 respectively. The organisation gained 20 new newspaper members but lost 31, while losing 52 magazine titles and gaining 23. However, again the new digital section played a role here with a combined number of 168, of which 49 are newsletters and 119 websites.



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However, the print product losses incurred continued across the board. The press overview reflects a decline close on three percent (2.9%) compared to the 3rd quarter 2016 (Q3) results and by 4.6% over the prior year, while the magazine overview shows a 4.3% decline over Q3, and a decline of 3% over the prior year.

## Newspapers

All press – dailies, weeklies, weekend and local, including free, as mentioned previously – showed a decline in Q3 and over the prior year.

The daily press all reflect a decline of 2.7% in Q3 and a 12.6% decline over the prior year. *The Sowetan*, *Business Day* and *Herald* all showed declines.

The weekly press also shows a 6.4% decline over Q3 as well as the prior year. *Soccer Laduma* loses almost 10% while the *M&G* increases in Q3 (11.3%) but declines year-on-year (3.5%).

As with the dailies press, the weekend press reflects a decline, with a 2.8% decline over Q3, and 11.6% over the prior year. The positive here is the *Saturday Dispatch*, which increased by 4.7% over Q3. Decreasing in circulation are the *Sunday Tribune*, *ilanga Langesonto*, *Weekend Argus*, *Isolezwe ngoMgqibelo*, and *Sunday World*.

The local press sees a 2.8% decline over Q3, and 7.1% over the prior year. In the local press the declines were as high as 31% while the *Mid South Coast Mail* bucked the trend by increasing by 5%, and the *Paarl Post* also up by 4.4% over the prior year

The free press reflects a 2.6% decline over Q3 and 11.6% over the prior year.

## Magazines

As with newspapers, free magazines also declined, decreasing by 20% over Q3, and by 3.2% over the prior year. It must be noted that three publications resigned during this period. In this category, single copy sales show a slight increase, which is quite positive.

While increasing on Q3 by 2.5%, consumer magazines decrease by 2.5% over Q3 and 12.5% year-on-year. Despite showing a decline of 5.2% over Q3, custom magazines now show an increase of 2.6% over the prior year.

The best performers in magazines are from the B2B category. Apart from the B2B magazines and *Landrover Africa*, the other movers include *True Love*, *The Big Issue*, *SA Rugby*, *Car Magazine*, *Popular Mechanics* and *Leisure Wheels*, all of which see increased circulation figures.

Declining figures are reported for *Real Estate*, *Sarie Kos* and *House and Leisure* in consumer magazines – home, which also declines by 1% over Q3 and 15.8% over the prior year. This is mainly the result of discontinued titles.

Overall the consumer magazines – motoring declined (with *Autotrader Exclusive*, *Bike SA* and *SA 4X4* showing declines), as did the consumer travel category.

The consumer magazines – sports and hobbies category had an increase of 6.7% over Q3 and 2.5% over the prior year, mainly the result of new members.

While consumer magazines – women's general increased on Q3 (1%), they decreased year-on-year (17.9%). This is again the result of discontinued titles. *Women & House*, while increasing on Q3, showed a decline over the prior year. *Essentials* declined in both, as did *Essays of Africa*.

The big change in custom magazines – entertainment, saw the category increase by 2.7% over Q3, but decrease by 4.5% over the prior year. Custom magazines – leisure change considerably as a result of *Fresh Living* changing to a free model, which represents 56% of the category. *Slow* magazine declines by 36.3% over Q3 and 2.3% over the prior year (PDF Replica). *Good Taste* is up 13% on Q2 (this is a six-monthly submission). As a result of a discontinued title the custom magazine – retail declined by 10.2% (Q3) and 11.8% year-on-year. Some titles in this category showed a very good performance.

In the B2B category, one title resigned. *SA Roofing* and *Timber* both decrease. The management category saw *SA News* increase by over 30%.

The new category digital has no comparative numbers. For website, there are 119 members with 690,459 unique browsers and 65,496,359 page impressions. For email newsletters, there are 49 members with 1,212,118 total net delivery.

The ABCs for the 4th quarter 2016 were presented by Charles Beiles, general manager of the ABC via a webinar.

## New dynamic reports

This is the first time the results have been presented via a webinar. Andre van Tonder, president of the ABC, explains that the initiative was chosen in order to broaden the reach of the ABC to include everyone and not only the major cities of Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg. "This medium not only allows everyone to participate, but it also modernises and improves the service we offer our member."

A new initiative, dynamic reports, has also been introduced. This allows for the retrieval of data in different formats, including:

- Publisher reports, including: circulation by publisher, sector, category for any period; circulation by publisher, sector, class for any period; trend analysis by publisher; and publisher market share analysis.
- Title reports include: circulation by title, sector, category, class for any period and trend analysis by title.
- Global reports include: trend analysis by sector, category, class.

These are only available to members and the ABC will create additional reports depending on members' requirements.

## ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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