

# Digital natives still read print

Generation Y and Z are much more tech-savvy overall than their predecessors are and have been described as digital natives, yet recent research shows that they read their local newspapers in print, often from cover to cover.



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In a [recent article](#) on The MediaOnline about newspapers, George Brock stated, “In five European countries and the US, online had clearly outstripped television as the news medium of choice for people under 35. Devil and deep blue sea dilemmas (by publishers) over whether or not to partner with the new sovereigns of cyberspace, Facebook, Google and Apple, now dominate online news distribution. The tech giants have the software and the speed, which newsrooms need to reach millennials and digital natives. Newsrooms produce the content the social networks want. But it is not a negotiation between equals.”

These tech giants may aggregate content, but newspapers and their online properties are still some of the most credible content sources. Newspapers are holding their ground with the youth internationally, according to the [Newspaper Association of America website](#), millennials still want their newspapers and they trust their newspapers more than they trust other sources of information. The portion of youth who react to advertisements in their local newspapers, 68% between 18 to 24 and 75% between 25 to 34. Newspapers are still popular and 71% of millennials online in the US access digital newspaper content in an average month.

The website states, “Despite the perception that the under-30 crowd is leaving newspapers and their websites behind for other digital news outlets, studies are finding that the newspaper is still a vital source of information for the millennials. Some 56% of those aged 18-34 read newspapers, in print or online, during the course of an average week.” The website answers some questions about the relevance of local titles for American youth, 60% of those aged 18-34 who read their local title either in print or online believe it to be trustworthy and 55% think that local newspapers act in an ethical manner and have the public’s best interest at heart. This compares favourably with the 43% of these readers who believe that social media sites are trustworthy.”

## Local trends

In the face of instant accessibility to global news, there is an equal and opposite pull towards local news. Compass24 Wave 3 research, conducted by Ask Afrika for Ads24, revealed interesting trends, “Local newspapers managed to successfully attract younger readers between 15-19, despite their techno-savvy, online consumption patterns. This capability to address younger readers is because the content is also about them, their lives, their schools and therefore more accessible and connects with the reader’s identity as an individual. Local newspapers present news that is still news, but is not perceived as such a ‘serious’ read and for youth this is important,” says Sarina de Beer, MD of Ask Afrika.

Compass24 measures 77 of Media24 local newspaper titles and Wave 3 revealed that the 15-19 year old segment who read an Ads24 title is on par with the AMPS national average at 11% of the market.

Taking advantage of the youth's appetite for both online and local newspapers, mobile and telecommunications advertisers can use local titles as a mean to promote their offerings. Gen Y and Z use mobiles to 'maximise every moment'. Mobiles (particularly smartphones) are no longer a nice-to-have or a simple communications tool, they are an integral part of a lifestyle and businesses without a mobile component run the risk of irrelevancy or redundancy as this market segment matures.

## **Mobile phones an extension of youth**

Local newspapers are the perfect place to advertise mobile phones, the telecommunications and cellular industry is a very competitive market, very undifferentiated. Advertising is more focused on a call to action, with low loyalty and visible promotional strategies and take-up.

According to an article on the [Youth Dynamix website](#) most youth own smartphones and they use them more for browsing the internet or for chat sites, playing games and taking photos than for phoning, "Today's teens practically grew up with a cellphone in their hands. Youth Dynamix's (YDx) latest research report, conducted in partnership with loveLife, on South Africa's township youth, shows that 99% of the youth between the ages of 16-24 own their own cellphone." The article goes on to reveal that youth suffer from FOMO (fear of missing out) and FOBI (fear of being irrelevant) when they don't have their mobiles with them, making them emotionally attached to their phones. A study by Facebook recently showed that, "73% of 13-24 year olds say they wouldn't think of leaving home without their phones." Another Internet poll showed that, "46% of young people feel anxious when they're away from their phones." (YDx)

## **Looking good**

The youth are also more pre-occupied with brands that improve their image, especially when it comes to health and beauty. There is an opportunity for this industry to reach this target group through local titles. Consumers are actively buying health and beauty products on a monthly basis, with a strong focus on basic hygiene aspects such as toiletries, dental products and hair care products.

Another key area that has relevance for the youth market is recruitment. With 50% of young adults in townships being unemployed, there is a definite need for recruitment. It is often a struggle even for educated youth to find their way into the job market. Recruiters would benefit by providing guidance on how to do this in local newspapers.

## **Leisure interests**

For employed and affluent youth, travel, leisure and sport are high on their priority list. Travel, sport and leisure is a sector where only a few brands dominate since they understand how crucial it is to compliment a good, affordable product offering with excellent customer service. Overseas travel is the ultimate, but with economic pressure and the poor foreign exchange rate of the Rand, short local breaks are a good alternative. The youth want to get out and about and experience

what their city or town has to offer, from art, to outdoor activities, to parties, to sport, local newspapers are the ideal place to let the youth know what is hot and happening and locally accessible.

“The localised flavour of entertainment remains a popular choice, and brands/organisations operating in this space can utilise local newspapers as a successful vehicle to connect to readers. One of the pull factors towards any media channel is its ability to build a bridge between advertisers and consumers. Local newspaper to do just that, more so than internet and radio,” says de Beer.

According to Marise van der Lith, creative project manager at Ads24, “This presents an opportunity to advertisers that tend to act on a call to action but are missing out on potential to access the youth market in a meaningful way by not reinventing their advertising strategies and the execution thereof. There is the mind-set that once you have included digital you are current. Being current is not only about platforms, it is also about the messages, knowing what consumers want to know about you, effectively responding to that and thus implying different thinking about advertising. Compass24 enables marketers to optimise their call to action, to move beyond it and capitalise on the relevance of the platform.”

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