

The secrets of local success

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Karen Geurtse, who is head of Caxton Local Media explores the secrets of local success. Readers rely on the locally relevant content as a reflection of their communities and enjoy reading "news they can use" in their everyday lives.



As humanity becomes more globally connected, so every person also feels the need to be a citizen of somewhere: to feel solidarity with the person down the road who might share the bonds of language, culture, common experience and place.

Unique relevant hyper-local content

Local newspapers deliver relevant hyper-local content that cannot be found anywhere else; they provide news that people in each community want to read. As Irma Green, national group editor: Caxton Local Newspapers, puts it: "Caxton local newspapers focus on their core vision to inform and entertain their local readership and to play a watchdog role.

If you live and work in a community you understand the challenges, what makes them tick and you have an opportunity to build trusted relationships. We publish unique content, relevant to only that community and we teach our editors that people love to see people they know, and themselves in their local newspaper."

Whilst Green makes the point that local newspapers often break stories which are then picked up by national news outlets, she also illustrates how

The Newspaper Market 2021

Locals are the biggest sector of the newspaper market



79%

Local Newspapers



21%

Daily/Weekend/
Weekly Newspapers

Total Circulation: 6,216,106
(Source: ABC Jan-Mar 2021)

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they embrace the sense of community they create.” To illustrate this, she says: “parents ... love school news and sport coverage of their children. I have been with Caxton for 30 years and I have seen different generations of families receiving publicity and they remain proud of it.”

The key to remaining relevant is about focus: target too broad an audience and it is easy to end up not being relevant to anybody, as the dailies and weeklies have found to their cost.

Renewed relevance during lockdown

During lockdown level 5, Green recounts how the Caxton Local Newspapers delivered on their pledge to be each communities’ number one source for ethical and unbiased reporting: they monitored what readers were most worried about and turned their questions into informative stories and unpacked all the published regulations and wrote understandable “news-you-can-use” articles. They provided even further support: editors in the network of offices connected families, who were left destitute and without food, to service organisations and aid schemes.

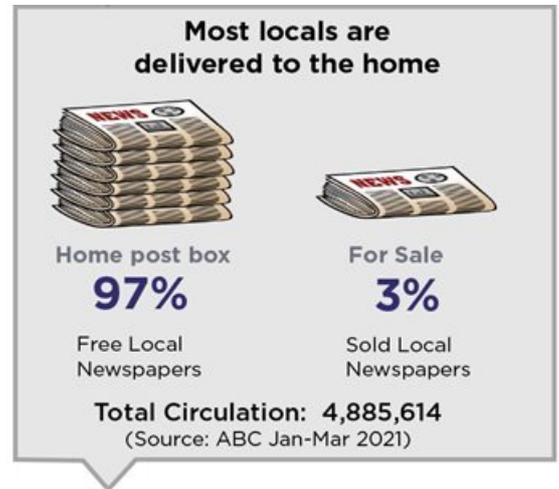
A different business model: "free subscription"

Nearly all local newspapers (97%) are based on the “free subscription model”: they are delivered for free directly to the reader’s home and contain editorial and advertising content that is geographically relevant. The distribution method is convenient for readers who anticipate their weekly delivery.

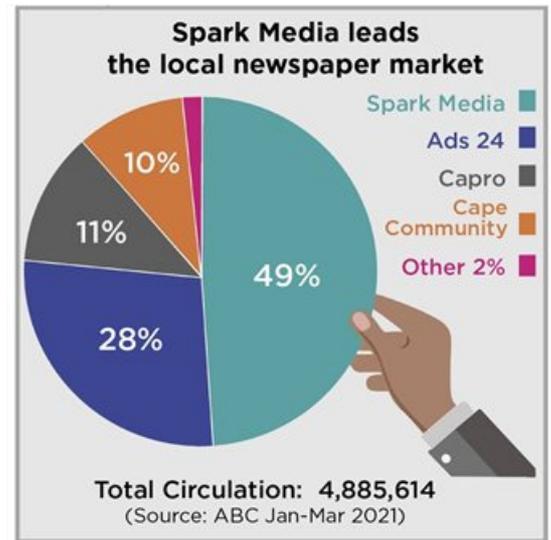
Extensive research into consumer behaviour

Some media decision-makers regard free distribution with caution. The major industry players have sought to address this concern through Audit Bureau of Circulation verification of distribution and research into consumer behaviour. Caxton has a long history of funding credible research to prove the readership of local print titles amongst purchase decision-makers and provide consumer insights to advertisers. The ROOTS 2019 study is the latest release of the survey conducted by Kantar amongst 27,553 purchase decision- makers in urban areas, showing 65% of local papers are read every week.

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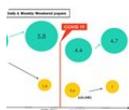


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Why are they called Local Newspapers?

Whilst the term community newspapers unquestionably defines their role most accurately, the Media Development and Diversity Agency Act 2002, required that such publications, owned and distributed by corporate media owners such as Caxton not use the term. It was reserved for not-for-profit community owned and controlled media.

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