

Local paper manufacturing industry to unlock value in Africa

According to Novus Holdings, formerly known as the Paarl Media Group, Africa forms part of its growth strategy as the company seeks to unlock value in Sub-Saharan Africa. This is planned predominately through security printing (such as ballot papers and examination papers), as well as literacy and education products.



Keith Vroon

"The Sub-Saharan region offers great opportunity for us to extend our product offering and grow organically. As the African continent develops, together with its growing retail industry, we see an increase in the demand for paper and tissue products," says Keith Vroon, chief operating officer at Novus Holdings.

The impact of manufacturing on literacy

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 182 million adults are unable to read and write. In 1990 the adult literacy rate in all of Africa was 53%; it is estimated to be 63% in 2015 according to UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Adult and Youth Literacy: National, Regional and Global Trends, 1985-2015.

Education is a critical element in developing Africa and a fundamental human right; however, the biggest barrier to increasing literacy is the lack of books, especially in rural areas. Vroon believes that the physical production and distribution of educational materials is instrumental in the development and success of the continent. "Access to information, through written materials including text books, newspapers, reading books, posters, brochures and leaflets encourages literacy, and they help promote a reading culture."

He adds; "Learning materials are often limited throughout Africa but we have been able to work on improving this. In South Africa we have had huge support from government to help supply 26,000 schools across South Africa with more than 50 million workbooks annually." Novus Holdings has also printed and delivered more than 2.8 million school-books to Angola, as well as printed and delivered school-books to Botswana, Zambia, Malawi, Namibia, Rwanda, DRC, Zimbabwe, Guinea and Mozambique.



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"Given the demand for literacy, print manufacturing plays an important part in the development of Africa. We have a dedicated African team and approach business in African countries with partnerships in mind, specifically with funders and operators in the market. We offer experience, diversified product offerings and scale, whereas local operators have a better understanding of the market dynamics and distribution options," says Vroon.

Global print trends are playing out differently in emerging markets such as South Africa and parts of Africa, compared to Europe and the USA where digital and television are the dominant communication channels. In the emerging African markets, development challenges such as literacy, education and democracy contribute to a strong demand for printed products.

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