

Caxton delivers in-home

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According to Tracy Schloesser, business unit head at Spark Media, there aren't many things that can get into a South African home anymore. A look at the sophisticated systems, distribution networks and the necessary checks & balances required for the physical delivery of local newspapers in 2021.



2020 was the year that in-home media really came into its own. This is not surprising, as data published by vehicle tracking company, Tracker, and data analytics company, Lightstone showed that vehicle activity plummeted by 75% nationally immediately after the implementation of hard lockdown.

The often overlooked in-home medium

Contrary to popular belief, in-home media is not restricted to digital, radio and TV channels. Caxton local newspapers have been successfully getting into homes for decades. They are often overlooked by media planners and buyers, because they are not asked about in the broad currency surveys e.g. AMPS, the Establishment Survey or, more currently, the Publishers Audience Measurement Survey, which has become a de facto replacement for the previous studies. There is a good reason for that: the nature of their distribution requires a different sampling approach from that used for broader media.

Caxton's highly specialised distribution model differentiates them from their competitors

It starts with technology: a state-of-the-art AfriGIS mapping solution, specially developed to accurately determine the number of homes, gated communities, institutions and businesses in a specified area. This determines the number of copies to be delivered in each area and where they need to be delivered, as well as providing an accurate measure of bulk vs door-to-door delivery requirements. Delivery routes are pre-determined for each local newspaper title. In JHB alone, a team of over 400 people are dedicated to distributing local newspapers; the teams are truly entrenched in the areas they service and in touch with changes taking place. Supervisors report changes and developments on a continuous basis to senior staff, who investigate whether changes need to be made to the distribution patterns.

Because local newspapers are usually distributed freely, the costs of publishing, printing and distributing papers must be funded by advertising. Caxton selects communities to service on the basis of economic viability and accessible infrastructure. Currently over 120 local newspaper titles with a print order of three million are published weekly.

The secrets of local success

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Checks and balances

A distribution system is only as good as its checks and balances. Caxton has a number of measures in place to ensure efficient delivery:

- Signatures from staff at the bulk drop locations are required as proof of delivery.
- Newspapers are usually either handed out to residents as they enter gated communities or placed on stands where they are collected by residents. In some cases, newspapers are delivered by security to individual homes within a gated community.
- Seamless access to gated communities and complexes is facilitated through strong relationships with gate keepers, security companies and body corporates.
- Random telephonic back-checks are regularly done, and a complaints system is in place to investigate and rectify any distribution issues that arise.

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Spark Media, a division of Caxton & CTP Publishers and Printers Ltd, is South Africa's largest print and digital media solutions sales company. It represents Caxton's 115 local newspapers and 58 local websites, providing location-targeted content for brands and ad agencies at scale in 120 economically-active communities. It also produces ROOTS, SA's leading urban, community-level quantitative survey that provides unequalled demographic and behavioural information on local consumers.

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