

UAE NEWSPAPERS UNAWARE OF INTERNET

Dubai: The Middle East's print media is not learning from the failure of European and US newspapers to confront the challenge of the internet, according to an industry specialist.

Print media readership in mature markets such as Europe and the US is expected to plummet by 25 per cent in the next 20 years, linked directly to growing internet penetration and disinterest in newspapers among younger generations.

The trend has forced newspapers in the western world to prioritize their web content in a desperate bid to halt the loss of advertising revenue (especially classified ads) to online sources.

But many experts say they reacted too late to limit the readership slide.

According to Duri Al Ajrami, managing director at Dubai-based interactive media solutions company Igency, regional newspapers are currently making the same mistakes.

He highlighted some exceptions, such as online versions of the Gulf News, Al Ittihad and Al Bayan, which he praised for content, traffic levels and level of technology. But he reported "no overwhelming market movement" towards investing in digital media, despite expectations that the UAE's current 36 per cent internet penetration rate is set to surge.

"Most of the papers are only moving (towards an online edition) because of peer pressure. They feel that they should make the move, not that they must," he said.

"Another growing threat to newspapers is the use of online bloggers as a news source, according to Marcus Wright, a regional senior editor at Dow Jones Newswires.

"As journalists we don't have a monopoly on opinions on what goes on in the world," he said.

Although readership figures in the UAE will inevitably fall, the rate will not be as severe as mature markets, where the decline is between 0.5 per cent and three per cent per year on average, said Reiner Mittelbach, CEO of Ifra, an association for newspaper and media publishing which boasts more than 3,000 members.

Source: Dubai Times

SURVEY FINDS NEWSPAPER EXECUTIVES WANT MORE AD. COLLABORATION ONLINE

A survey of top newspaper companies found that nearly three out of four senior executives think newspapers are missing major opportunities online because of a relative lack of cooperation among publishers.



The survey, which was released Wednesday by the American Press Institute, a newspaper industry training organization based in Reston, Va., also found only modest hopes that the industry would succeed in making such collaboration happen.

Seventy-two percent of those participating in the survey said newspapers were missing out on key opportunities online, particularly in working together to sell and deliver ads. But only 49 percent strongly agreed that newspapers are capable of successfully organizing and maintaining joint online initiatives.

Just over half, or 54 percent, believed that newspapers should form partnerships with non-newspaper companies such as Google Inc. or Yahoo Inc. to pursue opportunities online.

Advertisers have long complained of the difficulty of buying advertising across groups of newspapers, since

many have different ways of selling, delivering and billing for advertising, and similar problems exist online.

Television networks and online advertising giants like Google and Yahoo, by contrast, offer readily available national platforms for reaching customers as well as more simplified ways of buying ads. In the case of online ads, it's also easier to track how many people actually view the ads by counting the number of clicks they get.

John Kimball, the head of marketing at the Newspaper Association of America, said a NAA group formed about nine months ago is not yet ready to propose ways to standardize newspaper advertising, both online and in print.

“We're just beginning to understand what those standards should be,” Kimball said. “One of the things advertisers mention when they talk about newspaper advertising is they accept the value of it, but they say it's complicated to buy. There are 1,500 newspapers and lots of things aren't standardized.”

In print, newspapers have widely varying shapes, prices and sizes for advertising, making them more difficult to buy in large groups, Kimball said, but on the Internet there are also significant hurdles to enabling mass purchases due to the varying technologies and ad types used by various publishers.

The study presented by the American Press Institute targeted the CEO, division head or publisher as well as the top interactive executive at all of the top 25 newspaper publishers in the country. Thirty-nine of the pool of 95 people responded.

Most of the online opportunities highlighted by the executives related to advertising, including ways to jointly sell and deliver advertising. Standardizing advertising types, serving platforms, inventory monitoring and search were other potential areas of collaboration they suggested.

Source: Associated Press



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