

Regional Media - UK - February 2011

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What is this report about?

This report examines the market for regional media, including newspapers, websites, radio and TV. This is an industry which has been more affected than most by the economic downturn, since it relies heavily (or in the case of freesheets, exclusively) on revenue from advertising, which has slumped as advertisers have reined in their spending.

What have we found out?

- The regional media industry has been badly affected by the economic downturn because it is so reliant on advertising, which can account for 75% of more of revenues. Between 2005 and 2010 UK adspend fell by 9.7% but spend through regional press fell by 45.7% and through local radio by 16%.
- Higher-than-average declines in adspend in local media have been driven by weakness in the core areas where classified advertising is generated – jobs, property and motors – as well as intense competition from specialist websites in those areas.
- A structural shift in media consumption habits, from print to digital, has meant that circulations of regional papers have been declining steadily in the past five years, down by 23% between 2005 and 2010.
- Local commercial radio has been more insulated from recessionary pressures but has still suffered from competition from digital media. After having seen listening hours drop by 10% between 2005 and 2009, saw recovery in 2010, with 6.7% growth.
- Around half of all adults (51%) do not engage with any form of local media, indicating both a lack of interest on the part of consumers in what is going on in their area and a lack of appeal in terms of the content that they are currently being offered. Despite its much-publicised decline, the local or regional newspaper is still the dominant platform for finding local news and information, with around a fifth using a paid-for title and a similar number using a freesheet.
- Just 28% of adults agree that it is important for them to keep up with what is happening in their local area, underlining the extent of the apathy towards local content. Among those who do use local or regional media, the most popular reason for doing so is to read general news and features, followed by sport.

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