

Men's Magazines - UK - February 2010

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What is this report about?

The market for men's lifestyle magazines has faced a very difficult trading environment in the past four years. Paid-for titles have had to contend with the rise of free titles, which have challenged their advertising revenue base. In addition, changing consumer demographics and interests seem to be taking away the market for lads' mags, which did so much to invigorate the market in the 1990s. The recession has compounded these trends and made them more evident.

However, against these negative trends are some bright spots for the industry, notably the success of freemium (free and premium) titles and the growing popularity of health and fitness titles. At the same time, the premium and more specialised monthly titles are among the better performing segments of the market, which is a trend that should endure post-recession.

What have we found out?

- Consumer spending on men's magazines fell by 6% in 2008, and again by 23% in 2009 to an estimated total value of just under £75 million. The recession has compounded a trend of declining market values since 2006.
- Circulation rose strongly between 2006 and 2008 because of the introduction of major new 'freemium' publications – ShortList in late 2007 and Sport in late 2006. In 2009 the impact of these launches was over and circulation plunged by 14% to 65.2 million copies.
- It's increasingly difficult to get younger men – the key lads' mags buyers – to purchase magazines in an environment where free information and content is available on the web or via their smart phones. Over a third of men's magazine readers say they're less likely to buy men's magazines now because of the amount of content available online.
- In 2009, two paid-for titles, Arena (ceased publication) and Maxim (now online only), were no longer published in printed format and Sport also stopped publishing for two months following a change of ownership.
- Over half of male readers read more than one type of men's magazine, while almost a quarter reading a combination of monthlies, weeklies and free magazines.
- Although 26% of readers claim that they have stopped buying or spend less on men's magazines because of the recession, subscription sales have held up better than single-copy sales, with consumers' recognising the benefit of long-term cost savings. There is potential for further growth in this area, with 11% of men saying they'd consider buying a magazine subscription to save money.

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