

Where have all the papers gone?

 By [Chris Brewer](#)

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One thing about newspapers during the holidays is, why are they so thin - with fewer editions?

Of course I understand the reason... fewer advertisers means less space for news = thinner papers. But why so few advertisers?

I understand that circulations drop at certain times of the year and, although those figures produce empirical evidence, it does not necessarily imply that readership declines in parallel with that.

I think of all the holiday makers desperately looking for news and end up checking their Facebook and Twitter pages instead. An easy victory for the mortal enemies of the press. (And, by the way, I didn't notice any reduction in online advertising or editorial content).

Just about every newspaper I saw over the holidays I read from cover to cover – sometimes twice. Friends and neighbours borrowed copies. I'm quite certain that, across the country, readers-per-copy shot up.

MPU (multiple pick ups) undoubtedly rose – giving more people more time to read the paper (and the advertisements).

APX (average page exposure) would have also risen sharply too. Again, making it much more likely that advertisements were read.

For way too long, advertisers have been advised to measure their advertising schedules based on the number of 'impacts' they deliver. Nothing wrong with that at all.

The problem comes when the calculation is based on simple arithmetic, together with some kind of spurious calculation about readership (inevitably wrong). This is often based on research (no longer available, by the way) about the readership of a publication based on what respondents say in an interview (there's your problem – right there).

This is often then compounded by applying the same claim across all readers.

Let's say a newspaper has 1,000 primary readers (i.e. those who actually bought the paper – or 'own' it by virtue of a free copy). If the magical number of readers-per-copy is sucked out of thin air, (let's say it's five per copy) then the media schedule will tell you that you had the following number of readers:

1,000 primary
5,000 secondary

Making 6,000 readers in total.

That, in itself is not so bad, but then some clown says: "There you are Mr Client, 6,000 'exposures' to your advertisement."

Well, of course that's nonsense, or at best, it's totally under- or over-stating the situation.

When I said I read some newspapers from cover to cover – twice, what does that tell you? It means that I have been 'exposed' to an advertisement more than once. And as anyone with brains in the ad industry will tell you, the more times you target market reads a publication, the more likely it is that advertisers will sell more products.



Gnomes, playing us the sad song of their people. Gina Sanders © – 123RF.com

There's another thing. When your consumer is on holiday, perhaps that's the very best time to tell him about your lifelike gnomes. He's relaxed, he's reading all about you and, maybe after a martini or two, he might turn to his wife and say: "Betty, we definitely need one of these in our garden at home." Sold!

Finally, I would imagine that publishers are extremely open to the idea of negotiating a lower advertising rate over a period where income is plummeting.

In a nutshell then, the holidays could be a great time to advertise – and probably very economical to do so.

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