

Reading the multicultural market

People from more than 200 countries live in Australia and roughly 40 per cent of this country's total population are migrants or their children. A recent survey sets out what media exist in each community and how they are used by advertisers to reach ethnic groups

There are roughly 65 daily, weekly, fortnightly and monthly ethnic newspapers in Australia, a raft of magazines, 32 commercial ethnic radio stations and ethnic television on the community service Channel 31, pay television operators Optus Vision and Foxtel, and the free-to-air public broadcaster SBS.

Research into ethnic groups has concentrated largely on consumption habits among particular groups - media representative I&G has carried out surveys among Chinese and Arabic communities; multicultural marketing consultancy GBA/Emigre did syndicated research on the spending habits and characteristics of Chinese ethnic groups in 1997; Sydney-based Cultural Perspectives runs a constant Media Monitoring Service to track growth in advertising in ethnic communities; and the Ethnic Affairs Commission of NSW has a research publication *The People of New South Wales: Statistics from the 1996 Census*, a compilation of statistics on birth-place, language and religion.

But a research study solely of ethnic press in Australia has just been released by HJT Chinese Promotions, an ethnic languages marketing and communications specialist with offices in Melbourne and Sydney.

The survey covers 79 ethnic publications, newspapers and magazines, from 38 ethnic communities. Together these media have a circulation of roughly 1.07 million and a potential reach of 2.4 million of the total Australian population. The research found that 2.2 people share one ethnic newspaper or magazine, whatever frequency it is. Most of the titles surveyed were weekly, they averaged 28 pages per issue and were concentrated in two states: NSW and Victoria.

"The amount of advertising in local ethnic language press has increased in the past 12 months," says Harry Tan, director, client services at HJT Chinese Promotions. "Some 25 per cent of Australia's population is from non-English speaking backgrounds...the ethnic press offers Australian corporations a good opportunity to extend their business into local ethnic markets because it is the main communications channel into ethnic communities."

Unfortunately, few use the ethnic press for what Tan and others in multicultural marketing see as its benefit in reaching into ethnic communities in a language other than English. With the exception of larger corporations such as banks, airlines, telecommunications companies and car manufacturers, much of the advertising is from local community stores, butchers, lawyers, ethnic supermarkets and local insurance brokers. Multicultural marketing is seen neither as a viable alternative to mainstream marketing nor as a way of getting a return on an investment in a communications strategy which is perceived by some as too unconventional.

The more established Italian, Chinese and Greek press are used on a regular basis by clients such as Telstra, Optus, ANZ Bank, National Australia Bank, Citibank, Qantas, Toyota, Mitsubishi, AMP and Foxtel.

But for the Arabic, Vietnamese, Jewish Spanish, Dutch, Filipino, Croatian, Macedonian, Turkish and Polish press, the national corporations' advertising dollars remain - as yet - largely elusive.

According to the 1996 census, there are five (non-English-speaking background) ethnic groups in Australia with a population of more than 100,000. They are Italian (375,000), Chinese (350,319), Greek (275,000), Arabic (178,000) and Vietnamese (146,000). Then there are several groups with smaller populations - Jewish (100,000), German (98,820), Spanish (91,250), Dutch (86,898), Macedonian (71,350), Filipino (70,450), Croatian (69,150) and Polish (62,770) - and a further 35 ethnic groups with populations of up to 50,000. (The largest number of overseas Australians hail from the UK followed by New Zealand).

HJT's research found three trends in Australia's ethnic press:

- they are becoming more mature and competition between them is tougher than ever before;
- they are becoming more regional; and
- free titles are becoming more influential.

The research identified 16 newspapers among the Chinese-Australian community - the major ones include the *Australian Chinese Daily*, *Sing Tao*, *Independence Daily* and the *Chinese Herald* in Sydney, and the *Australian Chinese Age*, *The Tide* and *Melbourne Chinese Post* in Melbourne; 10 among the Greek community (six in Melbourne where the Greek population numbers a quarter of a million); two major Italian newspapers, *Il Globo* and *La Fiama*; and seven serving the Vietnamese community. As you might expect, those overseas communities with a history of high newspaper readership - Hong Kong, for example, where citizens devour daily newspapers at a rate of almost three each a day - also experience high newspaper readership in Australia. The research discovered that Chinese, Greek and Vietnamese people in Australia read

HJT Chinese Promotions' survey of ethnic press in Australia

(includes daily, weekly, fortnightly and monthly titles)

Language	Population (1996 census)	Number of titles	Total circulation
Italian	375,754	2	36,550
Chinese	350,319	16	238,000
Greek	269,775	10	198,800
Arabic	177,606	4	99,000
Vietnamese	146,267	7	99,200
Jewish	100,000	1	90,000
German	98,821	2	11,500
Spanish	91,253	3	59,000
Dutch	86,890	2	19,000
Indian	77,551	1	7,000
Macedonian	71,347	2	29,500
Filipino	70,445	1	6,000
Croatian	69,152	3	26,400
Polish	62,771	3	11,700
Turkish	46,734	2	12,760
Maltese	45,243	1	11,000
French	39,471	1	7,000
Serbian	37,237	2	24,000
Bosnian	35,000	1	3,500
Russian	31,029	2	9,000
Korean	29,910	3	36,000
Indonesian	27,201	2	25,000
Japanese	25,667	2	59,000
Portuguese	24,594	2	13,600
Thai	13,487	1	7,000
Ukrainian	11,275	1	3,800
Estonian	10,000	1	1,200
Finnish	6,658	1	1,100
TOTAL	2,431,000	79	1,145,610

more than two publications in their own language (not necessarily per day). The readers of ethnic publications are males and females aged 16-65 years but more than 62 per cent of them are aged 25-55 years.

In the more established communities, the competition for readers and advertising dollars among the ethnic press is tougher than it is in newer communities such as the Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian ethnic groups. So many of the titles focus on a smaller geographic area or region in order to survive.

Regionalisation or rationalisation is, therefore, a growing trend. According to HJT, three years ago, some of the ethnic Chinese, Greek, Italian and Arabic publications were distributed nationally but as the number

of state titles has grown - for example Melbourne and Sydney now have their own Chinese newspapers - national distribution across states has all but dwindled out, the existing titles maintaining strength in their local markets and statewide.

Similarly, titles competing in the same state have sought to differentiate themselves on the grounds of religion, political adherence or area of origin in order to prosper among their own targeted communities.

At the same time, some newspaper proprietors have taken the step of setting up free titles - those without a nominal cover charge - in order to increase circulation. "People in ethnic communities do not like to pay a dollar or more to buy a newspaper or magazine,"

says Tan. "Free publications offer them advice on how to settle into their new life in Australia but immigrants don't see why they should pay for information. With free papers getting more circulation, the advertising inside them is reaching more people and more clients are being attracted to them as a means of reaching an ethnic community.

"The interesting thing is that when one or two ethnic media in a community are free of charge, the others cannot resist it and often follow suit. Unfortunately, it doesn't always succeed. Likewise, some free ethnic press, in the Chinese community for example, tried to charge but lost circulation as a result and had to go back to being free."

Tan says that most mainstream advertising agencies lacking knowledge of local ethnic press used to select those that were categorised as national or daily newspapers in which to advertise. "But this isn't a good idea any more because the bigger circulation titles are now likely to be free papers against which the paid titles can't compete in terms of circulation," he says.

"Selecting ethnic press in which to advertise is not an easy task. You can't account for only circulation, you also have to consider target group, distribution area and reach in the relevant community. In many cases, you really need to make a close comparison on several different elements between the older, more established titles and the smaller newer ones. And bear in mind that just like the English-speaking press, the ethnic press don't only cover one viewpoint in the community just because they speak the same language."

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