

## Daily Maverick shines in 2020

Covid-19 was a catalyst for change - or closure for publishers - as newsrooms around the globe were forced to accelerate digital transformation. Some adopted subscription models, others launched e-commerce divisions.



Source: [www.dailymaverick.co.za](http://www.dailymaverick.co.za)

Having built a diverse digital revenue mix over a decade – including digital advertising, a membership programme, a book division and an online events platform – *Daily Maverick* was looking at how to digitally transform a long-forgotten symbol of trust in the news industry: the newspaper.

Pursuing a path of continuous innovation doesn't preclude traditional publishing channels, and the results of the first quarter of publishing hold promise for the newest entrant to a South African weekly newspaper market ravaged by closures, political hijacking and the juniorisation of newsrooms.



**BREAKING: *Daily Maverick* launches weekly print newspaper, exclusive interview with Styli Charalambous**

Jessica Tennant 6 Aug 2020



*Daily Maverick 168* (DM168) was piloted on 26 September after an extensive campaign during which 23,000 interested readers voted for their nearest Pick n Pay store to stock the newspaper. After testing the procedures and processes, and the assumption that readers would still engage with quality editorial in printed form, the venture officially launched on 29 October 2020.

Now, 14 editions into the journey and DM168 is available in 130 Pick n Pay stores in the major centres of Johannesburg, Cape Town, Pretoria, Durban, Pietermaritzburg, Boland and the Garden Route, with expansion to other stores and provinces planned in 2021. The newspaper is free to Pick n Pay Smart Shopper customers who swipe their loyalty card at the tills.

With average weekly sales of 23,929 copies over the first 13 editions and a 92% sell-through rate on the print order, the proof of concept has been tested and well received by readers. The holiday edition totalled 37,321 copies and DM168 has become a weekend ritual for many readers – 70% of those surveyed changed their grocery store because of the newspaper's availability.



### *Daily Maverick 168* pilot edition well-received

7 Sep 2020



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When the initiative was first announced, Styli Charalambous, Daily Maverick CEO, and DM168 editor Heather Robertson promised readers that the paper would offer something different.

“We’re not going to pretend we’re going to do breaking news. No weekly or daily paper can do that. The way we consume news has changed. Our role is to connect the dots. It’s about the deeper understanding of the real issues. Our role is trying to make sense of what’s happening,” said Robertson.



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Staying true to this editorial mandate has earned readers' trust – eight out of 10 say they are likely to recommend DM168 to friends and family.

This level of product loyalty and consumer trust has meant that despite the downturn in the economy and market scepticism, the advertising support has been better than expected. Two editions hit break-even target – something only expected after six months of publishing – and the overall trend is up. The sales team saw an increase in client interest towards the end of 2020, with new advertisers coming on board, indicating that we're well positioned for good growth in the first half of 2021. The team is aiming to expand the national reach of DM168 while improving their weekly offering.



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“It’s our philosophy that our journalism should be accessible to as many South Africans as possible. And we believe we have a model that can make that reality, even in the printed realm,” said Charalambous. “With DM168 we’ve gone back to the future and proven that digital innovation can aid in the launch of print products. Our weekly print product is a great complement to the website, newsletters, videos, books and podcasts that we produce and publish. We use data from our digital publishing to inform our decisions for print publishing and distribution.”

Despite the challenges of news publishing in 2020, *Daily Maverick* achieved massive growth – more than doubling website traffic and paying members while achieving record podcast listenership in addition to working on a second feature-length documentary.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>