

AWN MAKING NEWS

"It's been roughly 40 years since alternative newspapers spread beyond New York City with publications that were not as screamingly political as the "underground" papers, but that successfully built a lasting audience with edgy reporting and writing, and tons of listings from concerts to apartments for rent. At a time when it was heresy to suggest that anything besides paid circulation was valuable to advertisers and readers, free-distribution alternatives coined money without collecting coins."

Editor & Publisher, August 2007

Increasingly, alt weeklies are seeming a lot more attractive to advertisers who would have shunned them five years ago, and the reasons are many... perhaps the biggest selling point for the alt weeklies is their young readership, a readership so many advertisers want to reach and that dailies deliver fewer and fewer of as their readerships continue to age.

AWN Sales Director John Morrison and others in the field say that national advertisers over recent year have become more comfortable with the idea of alternative weeklies.

"Over the course of the past several years, we've seen more diversification of our revenue, as opposed to five or 10 years ago, when it was mostly alcohol, tobacco and music," he says, and he says the leading growth categories include financial services, automotive, telecoms, packaged goods, broadcast and internet.

"We're starting to share a lot of the same accounts," he says, referring to the dailies. "It's a clear recognition on the part of advertisers that local print media is still a great advertising vehicle, but daily newspapers are only reaching a segment of the market. And we're reaching another segment, and what from their point of view may be a more desirable segment."

Medialifemagazine.com, June 12, 2006

Despite the new competition in advertising, the content of alternative newsweeklies is still distinct. Their mission, to provide pugnacious counterpoint in news and arts coverage, is not matched by their competitors, which are chasing the revenue model more than the content model.

Journalism.org March 2005

The report (State of the News Media 2004), which is being released today by the Project for Excellence in Journalism, holds out hope for the future of journalism—it documents, for example, a surge in the popularity of Spanish-language newspapers, alternative weeklies and news Web sites. The study also reports that the combined circulation of alternative weeklies has more than doubled to 7.5 million in 2002 since 1990 according to the Association of Alternative Newsweeklies.

— New York Times, March 15, 2004

"Alternatives, as an industry, have matured... As resources have grown and their founders have aged, the papers have become more professional, on both the sales and editorial sides.

Alternatives have ridden their young-reader appeal to financial success. Between 1997 and last year, AAN members' advertising revenue grew at a compound annual rate of 7.8%, to more than half a billion dollars -- a fraction of ad spending in newspapers, but a partial opportunity lost by dailies nonetheless. Distribution of alt-weeklies over the past five years has grown, too, by 8%, to 7.4 million. An older readership could help alternatives attract more upscale national advertisers who traditionally buy only dailies, as readers in their 40s and 50s share the active, buying lifestyle that advertisers covet in younger adults -- and have more money to spend."

— Editor & Publisher, December 5, 2002

"The weeklies, like the dailies, have, in recent years, pitched their favorable demographics and strong penetration to win more business from the likes of packaged goods makers and pharmaceutical companies. The result: triple-digit national ad growth for the weeklies."

— Mediaweek, September 18, 2000



ALTERNATIVE WEEKLY NETWORK