

The Australian



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MagNation to set up shop in Sydney

- Sally Jackson
- From: **The Australian**
- August 17, 2009 12:00AM

AS the big-selling mainstream magazines struggle under continued sales pressure, the industry's long tail of niche publications is wagging as vigorously as ever.

That's good news for niche magazine mecca MagNation, where the typical customer prefers cult skate and design annual Wooden Toy to mass weekly Woman's Day and fashion glossy Collezioni outsells Vogue on a per-issue basis, despite the fact it costs up to \$150.

MagNation co-founders Sahil Merchant and Ravi Pathare are banking on the resilience of specialist titles, with plans to open a second Australian outlet, in Sydney's Newtown, in October.

Like the existing MagNations in Melbourne and Auckland, the Sydney store will carry about 4000 titles over the course of a year, as well as designer stationery and T-shirts.

"I'm not worried about the economic climate at all and I'm definitely not worried about ... magazine circulations dropping," says Merchant, who with Pathare (his uncle) shares the title of MagNation's managing director and "chief magazineologist".

"Circulation figures talk about the mainstream. We specialise in architecture and design and fashion and culture (magazines) -- the thousands of niche topics that people get passionate about.

"Advertisers don't care about them but these magazines, the long tail of the market, make up quite a large percentage. And that's where the really explosive growth is."

Its specialist focus means MagNation does not directly compete with traditional newsagents, which, with their more limited shelf space, prefer to concentrate on the top-selling titles. However, Merchant says the chain has an even tougher rival: sex. "When you're having sex you're not engaging with the MagNation brand and I'm in the market for your marginal minute," he says.

"I'm not a supermarket people walk into because they have to. People come to MagNation because they enjoy it and I have to be a better option for them than the other things they could be doing with their time.

"So my main competitors are Facebook and Sunday afternoon picnics and romantic candle-lit dinners." To get

customers in and tempt them to stay, the stores offer couches, coffee, free wireless and unlimited reading time.

Its motto says: "Everything at MagNation can be touched, felt and browsed ... except for our staff."

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