

The latest print industry numbers support suggestions of an economic recovery

 By [Chris de Beer](#)

22 Oct 2021

It's refreshing to see economic recovery reflected in first-quarter unit sales of multifunction printers, copiers and scanners in Southern Africa.



Chris de Beer, Africa regional manager at Infosource

The industry refers to this category as copier/MFP. First-quarter unit sales for the office segment are up compared with the equivalent periods over the past four years. What's significant is that we base this on actual unit sales at the point of sale, rather than estimated data, or data based on units in warehouses, so these are units working at customers right now.

It shows actual spend and these are good signs considering we are routinely told that budgets are pressured because it demonstrates that people are reinvigorating operational activities.

The actual numbers for both black and white and colour for the category, across all output speeds, were 18,944 in 2018, 19,561 in 2019, unsurprisingly dipping to 8,987 in 2020, but swinging back up to 20,756 for the first quarter this year.

However, while this reflects a generally positive trend, there has been some pandemic-related shakeout in the industry. Some vendors, distributors and channel operations are already refocusing their efforts to differentiate as they position to enhance individual market traction.

General trends such as laser bias, with A3 colour in the office, and inkjet bias, with A4 mono in the home office, continue. But driving continued use, and refresh, of print, scan and copy technologies for document creation and capture, is the increasing rate of digitalisation of workflows and processes.

The impact of digital transformation

But the digital transformation of some industries in sub-Saharan Africa outpaces others. For example, the financial services, consulting, retail, healthcare and legal sectors are generally farther along in their digital transformation than others. But that is not necessarily true of every organisation within those sectors or those from others.

Digital transformation is a strong indicator of an organisation's ability to operate remote or hybrid workplaces, both of which encourage greater volume of A4 mono and capture device sales and the consequent appetite for paper document creation and data capture from them.

We see continuing evidence that digital transformation does not necessarily equate to reduced paper usage. The legal profession, for example, although vigorously digitalising, continues to rely heavily on paper documents to feed the largely manual legal processes.

Our field research also shows, for example, that many financial services back-office workers have returned to workplaces and they continue to produce large volumes of printed documents. We also see the correlation of high volumes of paper documents and capture requirements within those and other environments.

While many organisations run stricter budget processes and budgets generally are accepted to be under strain, spend on office print and capture devices remains firm and is, in some cases, growing, particularly in the legal, financial services, and healthcare sectors.

Allied to these trends is the effect on cybersecurity risk, particularly in the home office environment. The key challenges are securing organisational networks, systems and sensitive company and customer data without restricting accessibility or productivity.

Undoubtedly, the dynamics of the markets are affected by the global pandemic, but the numbers and industry sentiment suggest this will shake out along lines of traditional vendor strengths, and support speculation as well as other evidence of economic recovery.

ABOUT CHRIS DE BEER

Africa Regional Manager at InfoSource.

- The latest print industry numbers support suggestions of an economic recovery - 22 Oct 2021
- Recovery of the print, imaging and document industry is complex and long but encouraging - 14 Oct 2020
- The printer market will suffer for two years but will recover - 2 Apr 2020
- SA's economic slide tugs at print sales too but there's cause for optimism - 23 Aug 2019

[View my profile and articles...](#)

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