

Unica magazine prepares for national launch

BY PRISCILLA O' REGAN

Unica, the latest magazine to be launched in this country, is intent on becoming the Romanian woman's best friend and making her feel comfortable with herself, according to the magazine's chief editor, Nora Ionita.

"Whilst our main target group are ladies in the 18-45 age bracket, we also want older readers who feel young at heart. We want readers with a positive outlook on life, women who not only work but want more out of life or women who try to combine having a job and a family. We want to be their friend and give them the advice to make positive changes in their lives," she said.

Unica is the latest venture for the Swiss publishing company Ringier, who already own a series of publications throughout the region such as the weekly newspaper Capital, the daily Libertatea and the popular monthly magazine Lumea Femelior. In conjunction with Capital's fifth anniversary, Unica will celebrate its launch on December 12 and then appear on the national market on December 17.

The new publication will be a 132-page monthly consisting of fashion, features, health and beauty tips as well some international news stories. Revenue will come from advertising and sales. Ionita believes that until now most Romanian magazines used a large percentage of stories from Western magazines and simply translated them into Romanian for their publications.

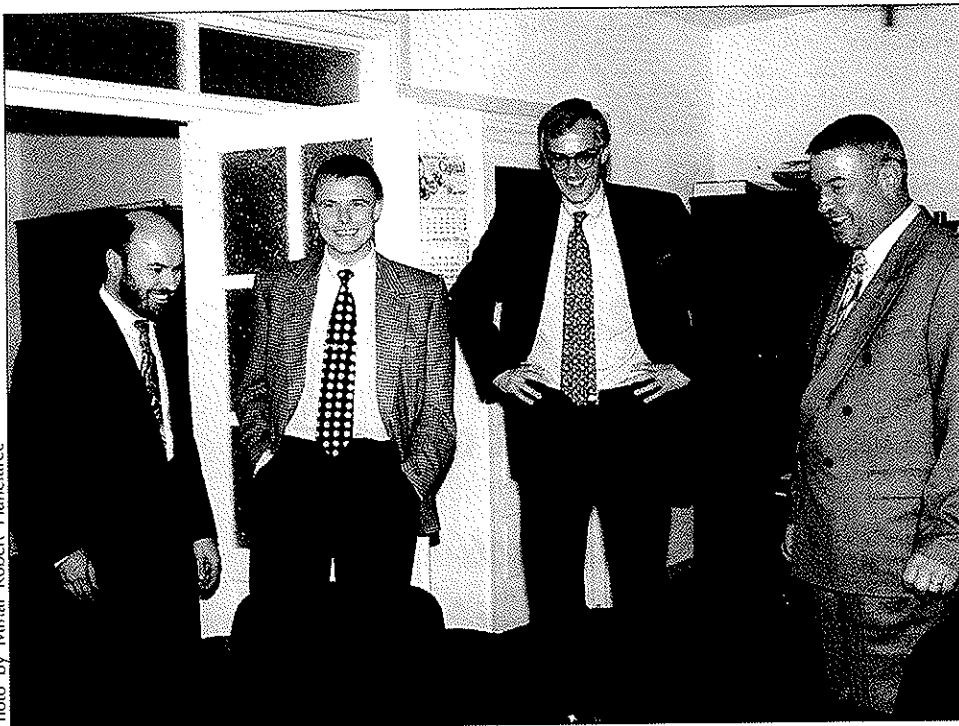


Photo by Mihai Robert Hancianec
Michael Ringier, owner of Zurich-based Ringier group, hopes Unica will take a large slice of the Romanian women's magazine market. His rival is Tony Gray at Elle.

"We hope that Unica will be different to other Romanian magazines in the sense that journalistically it will be very strong and will provide good information. We have all Romanian journalists on staff and in every level of the magazine - circulation, distribution and content - we will concentrate on Romanian women."

However, Ionita also concedes that there were certain hitches to contend with when starting such a venture in Romania. "The deadline is never kept in this country. People here are not punctual, it is their style so although we set the rules, they rarely abide by them. That is why I am very proud of the fact that the magazine is ready to be

launched so soon."

"Another issue we tried to tackle was that Romanian women find it difficult to buy clothes by international designers. For different reasons these clothes are unavailable to them. So our publication shows what the international fashion trends are and what the Romanian possibilities can be," she added.

With Elle magazine launched on the market recently by the Romanian Publishing Group, and a host of other magazines already published locally, Unica faces strong competition in the field. According to Albert Schwarzenbach, director of the Ringier Group in Romania, "there is enough room for everyone on the market - the more magazines, the better. Elle is an international brand and a clear concept. If a person reads Elle, they will look for it in whatever country they go to. But Unica is a national branch and we take a different approach. We concentrate on Romania."

It is difficult to predict what the future will decide for the array of magazines now available on the Romanian market. Although reform is slowly inching its way into the economy, the success of these publications rests on the question of whether or not Romanian women can ever reach a standard of living that allows them to buy their favorite magazine as anything other than a treat. Magazines may want to be a girl's best friend but unfortunately their advice and companionship come at a price that many cannot afford.