

# Are TV audiences declining?

 By [Chris Brewer](#)

18 Sep 2017

At first it's hard, if not impossible, to get a grip on TV audiences. It will remain difficult until the industry has some real and solid research to confirm whether it's one way or the other.

But I get the impression that overall they're falling. I have no evidence for this other than my own observations (and it would be interesting to see if you agree with me or not).



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First of all let's consider the SABC – you know, that asylum we all pay an annual fee to. I cannot remember the last time I ever watched an SABC programme. Maybe when *Dallas* was on?

Of course, I'm not in their target market group (TMG) so there are no surprises there and I have no complaint with it. But I wouldn't be surprised if the people that do watch it are a little less than satisfied.

E.tv seems to be a pretty good station – I tend to watch it at the gym or if I'm desperate for local news (which they're really quite good at).

I'm not even going to mention ANN7 (dammit I just did) which is like an unfunny comic interlude.

I suspect that the DStv audiences are dwindling. I don't know by how much and the only people who have any clue at all is the organisation itself through the number of its subscribers (not the same thing by the way as I'm sure you know).

The good thing about DStv is that it's a gateway to some really good channels (not least are the sports, geographic and historical).

But hardly a day goes by without one of my friends/peers announcing they've "dropped" the network and changed to other solutions. Some examples might be Showmax, Netflix, etc.



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As an aside, when M-Net first started broadcasting it was wonderful. It was run by an energetic and professional team from a small office and they were an absolute joy to do business with. I could have bought shares at R1.00 each but my broker at the time (a man of obviously deluded vision and/or common sense) advised me to avoid them. Pfft. Their only competition was the SABC and I had some good information about their future plans.

If I'd bought a thousand or two shares at the time I'd be living next door to Christo Weise now (mind you, he's only just up the street from me – whenever he's in this area of the world).

I can't blame people for resigning their DStv subscriptions though. Apart from some of the good stuff I've already mentioned, their daily scheduling is absolutely appalling.

I like watching a little entertainment early in the evening and, no matter how hard I look, I can only find *QI* and *Pointless* (and I like both of them). The only problem is that there appears to be no order in their scheduling – one day you're watching episode 73 and the very next evening 65 and the following day episode 107. Where's the logic? It's the same with both programmes.

Recently they stopped running *Eastenders* between the two programmes and replaced it with *Absolutely Fabulous* – a repeat of episode 1 (first broadcast in 1992 – only 25 years old then – hardly what you'd call 'up to date' though).

They'll soon start running *Friends* from episode one again – mark my words.

And why, oh why, do they keep changing the scheduling times? Whenever I record a series (which is becoming much less frequent these days) I often get a message which tells me to 're-schedule' everything. I really can't be arsed to do that.

One bright piece of news recently was you can now, apparently, get Showmax. Now, I've heard a lot of good things about this and DStv says I can access it free of charge provided I have the latest decoder (I do) and the 'premium package' (I have that too).

So I set about downloading the app to my phone – then I can begin to binge-watch all the series I want.

Half an hour later I gave up. I did try phoning a helpline which turned out to be of little help at all.

Really, I'm back to square one again. I'm a TV addict but with no supplier. Rather like being an alcoholic living in Libya I suppose.

ABOUT CHRIS BREWER

Having joined the ad industry in London, Chris Brewer spent most of his career in media analysis and planning - but has performed just about every advertising task from Creative to Research. He's an honorary lifetime member of the Advertising Media Association and regularly advises agencies and clients regarding their media plan costs and strategies. He is also often asked to talk at industry functions. Email: [chris@brewers.co.za](mailto:chris@brewers.co.za). Twitter: [@brewersapps](https://twitter.com/brewersapps). Read his blog: [www.brewersdroop.co.za](http://www.brewersdroop.co.za)

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