

Investing in hot local content makes business sense

 By [Leslie Adams](#)

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Although Barbie might be the moment globally, on a local level, our focus is on the smash hit *Shaka iLembe*.



Leslie Adams says investing in local content makes business sense. Source: Mzansi Magic.

The success of MultiChoice's *Shaka iLembe* – its best-performing drama series to date, once again demonstrates South Africa's appetite for local content.

Top shows

The debut episode was seen by 4.3 million viewers – the highest viewership MultiChoice has recorded for a single episode of scripted content. The show, which tells the tale of the Zulu king, is not only a locally resonant story, but it also features a local cast and is produced by local production company, Bomb Productions.

Then there's SABC's *Uzalo*, available on Viu. *Uzalo* was the number one most-watched show in April, racking up over five million viewers, while *Skeem Saam*, also available on SABC and Viu, was hot on its heels. Set in Turfloop just outside Polokwane, the show follows the trials and tribulations of several teenagers as they journey into adulthood. And judging by the fact that the show hit 4,3 million viewers in April, South Africans are invested in this journey.



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Look to linear TV. The top ten shows currently are all local. Now look to subscription TV; again, all local. What is this telling advertisers? Local content just makes business sense.

Resonates

Urban Brew Studios Keletso Rakuemakoe summed up the 'why' well: "This trend is driven by...a desire for content that reflects the diverse experiences and identities of South Africans, a growing sense of national pride, and an increased

investment in the local entertainment industry by broadcasters and production companies.”

And what’s even more interesting to note is how great local content is growing South African streaming audiences. Viu, the country’s largest video on demand (VOD) service which airs the best of SABC (along with international material and original content) recently hit 4,5 million users. eVOD, eMedia’s streaming service which also boasts a strong local content focus, announced in June that it had reached a milestone, acquiring 800,000 registrations within two short years following its launch.

Even Showmax, which has a strong international content offering, has highlighted that its most-watched titles in 2022 were overwhelmingly African productions.

South Africa has a youthful population with a median age of 27 years, and younger people are generally very comfortable with streaming services and accessing content via multiple devices. This, combined with the fact that the public and private sectors are on an aggressive drive to bring low-cost internet to more people, means rapid growth and new opportunities – even in a market with historically patchy internet penetration.

ABOUT LESLIE ADAMS

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