

The appetite for local content continues to grow

 By [Keletso Rakumakoe](#), issued by [Urban Brew Studios](#)

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The local television industry is truly in its golden age, the variety of platforms producing proudly local content and subsequently the number of jobs this growth creates is one to be celebrated.



There are several reasons why it is important for South African audiences to see local content on their television screens

Local content provides a platform for South Africans to see their rich cultural heritage, and own experiences reflected on screen. The content can promote a sense of national identity and pride, which is important for building a cohesive and inclusive society.

Local content can help to promote local languages and cultures. The year of 2018 saw the first isiNdebele TV drama *iKani* on SABC 1, and this encourages producers to be more intentional about pitching shows that represents SA's 11 official languages and in 2023 Mzansi Magic would follow with its first isiNdebele drama *Komkhulu*. By featuring shows in different languages, local content can help to preserve and promote the use of indigenous languages in South Africa, which is important for preserving the country's cultural heritage.

Local content can provide a more nuanced and accurate portrayal of South African society than international content. While international shows and movies can be entertaining, they may not always accurately represent the experiences and perspectives of South Africans. Local content, on the other hand, can provide a more authentic and relatable representation of South African life.



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The importance of South African audiences seeing local content on their television screens cannot be overstated, accessibility to paid TV and streaming platform is growing in leaps, with unpaid TV channels still at the helm of having more viewers consuming their content. Local content is important for promoting national identity and supporting the local creative industry, promoting local languages and cultures, and providing an accurate representation of South African society.

The table below displays average monthly viewership data of South Africa's most watched TV shows, the most common trend is that these top five shows are all strong contenders for the number one spot, one would argue that storylines are the

ones that keep audiences consistently glued and advocating for the various shows.

Rank	Programme	Channel	Level 1 Variable	(r) AMR
1	UZALO	SABC 1	Drama	4 629 418
2	SCANDAL	e.tv	Soap opera	4 138 040
3	SKEEM SAAM	SABC 1	Drama	4 098 220
4	GENERATIONS THE LEGACY	SABC 1	Soap opera	3 691 665
5	HOUSE OF ZWIDE	e.tv	Drama	3 582 465

Source: Television Audience Measurement System (TAMS), June 2023, Adults 15+

South Africa's appetite for local programming

There is a growing appetite for more local programming in South Africa. In recent years, there has been a noticeable shift in viewership patterns, with more South Africans showing a preference for locally produced content over imported shows. This trend is driven by several factors, including 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.

The success of locally produced shows such as *Uzalo*, *Isibaya*, *Skeem Saam*, *Scandal* and *The River* is a testament to the growing appetite for local programming in South Africa. These shows have attracted large audiences and have helped to establish South Africa as a key player in the global television industry. Furthermore, the South African government has recognised the importance of the local entertainment industry and has made efforts to support its growth through initiatives such as the South African Film and Television Awards (SAFTAs) and the establishment of a local content quota system.



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The future of local television viewing in South Africa is likely to be shaped by several trends and developments

There is likely to be a continued growth in digital streaming platforms, which have already disrupted the traditional television industry. As more South Africans gain access to high-speed internet and smartphones, they are increasingly turning to digital platforms to watch their favourite shows. This is likely to create new opportunities for local producers and content creators to reach audiences in new and innovative ways.

There is likely to be a growing demand for more diverse and inclusive local content. This is likely to create opportunities for new voices and perspectives to emerge in the local entertainment industry.

There is likely to be a continued focus on the use of technology to enhance the viewing experience. This could include the use of virtual reality, augmented reality, and other interactive technologies to create more immersive and engaging shows.

There is likely to be continued growth in the use of local languages in television programming. South Africa has 11 official languages, and audiences are increasingly looking for shows in their preferred language. This is likely to create opportunities for local producers to create shows that cater to the diverse linguistic needs of South African audiences.

The future of local television viewing in South Africa is likely to be shaped by a range of trends and developments, including the growth of digital platforms. The local entertainment industry will need to adapt to these changes to remain relevant and meet the changing needs of South African audiences.

The demand for more local programming in South Africa is likely to continue to grow in the coming years, driven by

changing viewer preference and increased investment in the local entertainment industry.

ABOUT KELETSO RAKUMAKOE

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