

Why Netflix believes Africa is a good investment

By  Danette Breitenbach

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Netflix's recent success in producing local content has led to the announcement that it is currently producing the third season of *Blood & Water*.



Cast members of the locally produced Netflix series *Blood & Water*

"*Blood and Water 1 and 2* was so popular, not only locally, but across the world, that we are currently in production for *Blood & Water 3* in Cape Town," says Dorothy Ghattuba, director Series for Africa, Netflix.

"Our brand is to say that African stories are great, they can be made here and can be watched across the world, That's what we are determined to do," she adds.

Since 2016 Netflix has invested over R2bn in term of content into the local market. In the last two years alone its investment, from 2020 to 2022, has grown by 35%. Recently it announced a further investment of R924m over the next two years.

Ben Amadasun, director of content for Africa at Netflix, adds that the company is not limited to this amount. "There are other projects that we are working on in the market. We have begun to invest in more diversity of content in what we bring to the market and foresee our investment increasing even more over the next five years."

He says South Africa, and Africa, is an important market for Netflix and is complimentary of the South African business

environment. “Not only does the country boast incredible creatives, but the business environment is also conducive to us having some of the best content in this market and to show around the world,” he says.



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Stories that travel

Their investment has produced some good successes, not only in South Africa but across the continent.

One such example is *Cook Off* from Zimbabwe. Despite its small budget, it generated interest in Africa and across the world.

“It was a beautiful romantic comedy story, with universal themes that appealed to people all over the world, so it travelled well,” explains Amadasun.

“This is what we try to do when we go into the markets; look how we can be inclusive of stories that relate to a country,” he adds.

Ghettuba believes series from the continent are resonating with audiences across the world because they are local. “We are finding that the more local stories are, the more people are enjoying it as they want to know what is happening in these countries.”

The variety of shows from Africa is surprising. “If you go to search and look for African shows you will be impressed by what you find. Shows from South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Senegal... the list is endless,” Ghettuba says.

Invited to join the party

Netflix’s goal is to steadily build its offering across the continent by adding value. “When it comes to content producing, I always say that in Nigeria the party has been going on, we have just been invited to join.

“They are really committed to their local stories, and they are exceptionally good at it, and they have been doing it for a long time.

“We are all about investing in the talent. We look at where the gaps are and how we can help,” Ghettuba explains.

She is clear that they don’t think they know better but are here to learn and work together with the market.

“South Africa is quite advanced in its content producing skills, infrastructure and talent so we cross partner and work with storytellers to build capacity so we can more good stories,” she adds.

Tendeka Matatu, director for film for Africa, Netflix echoes this. “It is about how we collaborate with that talent and how we bring our knowledge and our resources and what we have learnt around the world, whether India or the US, to the local industry,” he elaborates.

“Our role is to help the filmmakers and storytellers realise the best version of what they want to tell and by doing this we can introduce the local industry to our best resource – an audience of 250 million people around the world,” he adds.

Learning by doing

While Netflix has invested over R45m to date in training and scholarships Ghattuba says the best way to learn is on the job. "By simply producing content we are creating opportunities, not only for technical people, but everyone - even actors, the more you are on screen the better you become at your craft."



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Matatu concurs. "We have great productions and will continue to grow our local slate and that means more productions and that means more people working on set and gaining valuable experience."

Making you laugh, cry and love

For Matatu, a great film is primarily about the audience. "Is this going to make our audience happy, entertain them, make them smile, laugh, cry, love.

"Then it is about the format because there are lots of great stories out there, but it is about filmmakers, do they have something to say and do they have a great creative vision and a strong intent.

"Our purpose is to ask how we can help them amplify that and bring that to life. We are here to make Netflix the home for South African film. There are fantastic filmmakers here and a wealth of stories to be told," he says.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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