

# Digital on-demand entertainment set to grow in South Africa

Taryn Uhlmann, executive head of operations at Discover Digital, a digital entertainment and video on demand services company, predicts 10 key trends to shape on-demand services in the short term.

1. The small screen will become the TV of the masses and the TV of the youth. With a sharp uptake in smartphone penetration and a market hugely receptive to multimedia on mobile, mobile video on demand will be a natural progression for South African and pan-African audiences.



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2. Innovation will take place in billing models and payment options to enable on-demand access for audiences who do not have credit cards, are reluctant to use credit cards, or who do not want to commit to a subscription for any length of time. Pre-paid, short duration access models and the option to pay using vouchers, loyalty points or mobile airtime will come to the fore.

3. On-demand digital entertainment services will start differentiating by making an effort to understand their audiences better and curate content around the interests of those audiences. There will be an increasing focus on content for individual viewers and interest groups, instead of content for generalised audience demographics.

4. On-demand services will also step up their investment in producing new content for their own audiences, rather than simply buying the rights to the same mainstream content all competitors are offering.

5. Services will seek to offer a better user experience, looking to enhanced web design and more intuitive user interfaces. More will be invested in emotional design, omni-channel functionality and improved quality of service with lower latency.

6. Instant messaging, social media and big data analytics will become increasingly important in helping on-demand entertainment services understand viewer preferences and viewing patterns especially as the more engaged, interactive multi-screen experience comes to replace or supplement the more passive, disconnected experience provided by traditional television viewing.

7. Short form on-demand content will become increasingly popular. Growing out of YouTube culture, customised short programmes and content packaged in 30-second snippets up to 8-minute segments will be seen the ideal way to grab entertainment on the go, or catch up on summaries of important news or sports events.

8. A growing Generation Z audience is beginning to inform more focus on sustainable business that gives back to communities and the video on demand industry is no different. This will drive the introduction of add-on services, bundled data and other differentiators to enable lower income audiences to have access to a mix of more premium content as well as local content and community-specific and culturally rich content.

9. Growth of the digital on demand entertainment market will be increasingly dependent on partnerships between stakeholders across content development, technology providers, data services and consumer brands. The lines between telecoms and broadcasting will continue to blur and new alliances will be forced across disparate sectors.

10. Lower cost on-demand services and the elimination of tie-in to contracts will likely result in viewers subscribing to multiple services simultaneously, or switching between services for short periods in order to access their programming of choice.

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