

Mzansi Magic continues to delight viewers with prime local content... making its debut as Pendoring sponsor

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By providing a wide range of prime, local-content programmes in six South African languages, TV channel Mzansi Magic (161) has earned itself the sought-after position of 'most viewed' on the DStv bouquet in a relatively short span of seven years.



“In terms of content, Mzansi Magic is nothing less than a phenomenon. The way viewers have received the channel has been ground-breaking. Its ongoing investment in and screening of local productions are a strategic advantage,” says Nondumiso Mabece, Head of Publicity and Social Media at Mzansi Magic.

When Mzansi Magic was introduced seven years ago as a start-up, the channel faced stiff competition in establishing itself in the market and getting viewers to understand what the new offering was all about, she points out.

“Fast forward to 2017 and Mzansi Magic has not only managed to establish itself as a key developer of local content and talent, working with producers who were previously not producing any work; it continues to grow and expand its offering to the delight of its viewers.”

Pendoring

Moreover, Mzansi Magic recently joined the Pendoring sponsorship ranks as a silver sponsor. “Like the Pendoring Advertising Awards which aim to encourage and showcase advertising in all of South Africa’s indigenous languages, Mzansi Magic’s main focus is on the development of local content and home-grown talent, therefore the channel’s co-sponsorship of the awards is a natural fit. The opportunity for Mzansi Magic to support Pendoring has been very exciting because it opens up the space for other languages to participate. It almost forces us to consider more and more advertising in our indigenous languages,” Mabece argues.

“While there are realities like budget constraints in terms of producing advertising in different languages, where the opportunity arises, especially in terms of advertising that speaks to our vernacular content, it is such an important opportunity for us to explore. We believe participating in Pendoring will help us to move in that direction,” she points out.

Content, languages

From a content perspective, the Mzansi Magic brand continues to grow. “For example, we’ve just launched season two of the smash hit drama, *Ring of Lies*. Likewise, the telenovelas *Greed and Desire* and *The Queen*, which is now aired five days a week, continue to generate strong audiences.

“In April we added a new daily, *Isithembiso* to our line-up - a telenovela that delves into what it means to be a generation Y black person in an era of instant gratification, social media and peer pressure.”

In addition, the channel’s flagship soap, *Isibaya*, and popular reality show, *Our Perfect Wedding*, are still its top-rated shows, and stellar performances continue from *Date My Family* and *Utatakho*.

Three new reality formats have also strengthened channel viewing: *Living The Dream with Somizi*, giving audiences a

glimpse of the highs and lows that make the talented entertainer and businessman tick; *The Ranakas*, which is a spin-off of the highly successful VUZU AMP reality show *Dineo's Diary* starring Dineo Ranakas; and *Papa Penny Ahee!* which follows the colourful life of legendary Tsonga disco king Penny Penny as he navigates life as a musician, polygamist, father of 17, community leader and son to his 90-year-old mother.

This variety of entertainment ensures that Mzansi Magic is a channel for the entire family, Mabece adds. "There is no age barrier to our content. Yes, some of the content, dramas and stories may have an appeal for an older audience, but our programming is open for everyone and appeals to a very wide audience base."

In terms of the languages, "we certainly don't go out looking for content in specific languages, but we obviously look at the South African languages that are widely spoken and understood by our audiences and which resonate with them. We do find that we have bigger Nguni audiences and that's why our content tends to skew that way, but our other indigenous languages do just as well on Mzansi Magic, all contributing to the colour and flavour of our content. In fact, any initiative honouring the languages we use, is most important as it keeps our indigenous languages alive, well and vibrant," she stresses.

Brand extensions

Innovative and popular brand extensions are also on the increase.

Mzansi Bioskop, M-Net's movie channel showcasing locally produced South African movies, continues to lure significant audience numbers. In the 2016-2017 financial year, no fewer than 56 titles were produced by both new and more established companies.

"To cater for viewers on other tiers of the DStv bouquet (with entry-level packages), there is Mzansi Wethu where Mzansi Magic content is windowed within twelve months. And right now, the focus is on building up the channel Vuzu Amp to service more of the available black audience on the premium subscription, and to complement Mzansi Magic with more quality shows, more telenovelas, more dramas in indigenous South African languages that our audiences so enjoy and that resonate with them.

"We firmly believe that the growth of Mzansi Magic is only in its infancy. There is so much more for the brand to achieve. There is also an opportunity for us to do more around interacting with our viewers on the ground and building our relationship with viewers in various ways."

Advertising

Mabece says although times are very tough and "advertisers do not have the kind of budgets that they used to, in terms of buying power our audience is resilient enough that we still manage to attract advertisers to the channel. Within our prime-time offering, we battle to find empty spaces."

Besides continued advertising support, it is also interesting that advertisers are increasingly moving to English advertising, Mabece points out. "It appears that tight budgets are forcing advertisers to limit the number of languages they use for marketing communication. Over and above that, our audiences are so varied and with 11 official languages it's very difficult to try and speak to all South Africans in one language.

"Because of the content mix on the channel and the diversity of our viewers, we are able to accept advertising in English as well as advertising in indigenous languages. While our languages are important to us insofar as they're key in growing and developing our society, certain languages become uniters, allowing audiences of various language groups to come together and enjoy the same content," she explains.

On the other hand, vernacular advertising messages speak to the heart of the people and may well prompt consumers to more readily open their minds and wallets to products and services offered in their home-language, Mabece believes.

“However, while vernacular advertising would certainly open up greater avenues, it would not be beneficial for the channel to be restrictive precisely because of the diversity of its viewers.”

Highlights, milestones

“A show like *Idols*, which Mzansi Magic has exclusively undertaken for the past two years, has tripled its audience numbers. Social media statistics, website traffic, absolutely every measure has gone up substantially with a show like *Idols*. This in itself, is a really great milestone for the channel,” Mabece stresses.

The most recent milestone for the channel was the introduction of the DStv Mzansi Magic Viewers Choice Awards at the Sandton Convention Centre. “Ultimately, the purpose of the awards was to give recognition to the entertainers, actors and actresses across the industry and in various categories – from drama to music – who make our content and programming possible and highlight their contribution to the development of the industry.

“Many of our producers have never worked with us before or owned their own production companies. They do not have big budgets, yet the work they manage to produce, is truly amazing. Working on Mzansi Bioskop, they are able to grow and develop and become producers of other shows that could sit on any platform for that matter.

“Similarly, from participating in Mzansi Bioskop movies, the talented entertainers, actors and actresses have gone on to become leads in telenovelas and soaps. There’s ample room for growth and development in our industry – to which we believe our brands have contributed.

“Sure, there will always be competition but that only pushes us to work harder and better. At the same time, the industry is consistently changing: people are watching content on their phones, over the internet. It is really just about understanding our unique selling proposition: delivering content that resonates with South Africans. This is what has drawn people to Mzansi Magic and which will continue to excite our viewers for a long, long time to come,” Mabece concludes.

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