

#LoeriesRankings, Zulu Pendorings and other local success for the BBC

 By Leigh Andrews

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Joel Churcher, BBC Worldwide Africa's vice-president and general manager explains the BBC global brand's current footprint in South Africa, impact of their recent local award wins and plans to expand across the continent in the coming months.

The BBC may be a British brand at heart, but its programming – and even advertising – has made a mark with local viewers. So much so that its hilarious and highly localised 'Wholenut Fish' for the *Great South African Bake Off* on BBC Lifestyle took home a Gold Loerie, while 'Umsebenzi' for BBC Brit's *Top Gear* was awarded a Bronze Loerie, both in the 'SA non-English radio commercials' category. As a result of this work by agency The Odd Number, the [BBC brand](#) was awarded with a spot on the Loeries' Ranking table of the top 20 brands of 2016.



Churcher.

So clearly there's resonance and a fit of the programming as well as the way it's advertised. Churcher says this formal recognition is the result of a heightened marketing campaign to broaden awareness and affiliation with five channels. It's nothing new though, as Churcher explains that BBC Worldwide has had a presence in the local market for well over 10 years, and that they officially opened an African office in Johannesburg in January 2015. In addition, South Africa was the very first country in the world to have the full portfolio of channels – BBC Brit, BBC Earth, BBC First, BBC Lifestyle, CBeebies and World News.

Since launching their global brands, he's pleased to say the full channel portfolio has gone from strength to strength with all channels hosting premium and award-winning content and showing a good balance of both local and international content.

In addition, he says, "Over the past two years, BBC Brit's weekly reach has doubled since the channel's launch... BBC Earth leads its competitor set when it comes to content with industry standard-setting shows such as *Planet Earth*. BBC Lifestyle also continues to be South Africa's number one lifestyle channel and BBC First... now ranks as the number one channel for international drama on DStv when it comes to average time spent watching."

British recipe, African spice

Delving deeper into what makes BBC content, typically seen as a British brand, resonate with the SA TV-viewing public, Churcher speaks of the BBC's loyal South African audience base that has watched and loved its programmes and formats for years. That's partly because the content is world-class, but also because they're recognised by local audiences as enlightening, humorous and engaging. Take the record-ratings success of series 23 of *Top Gear*. Shown earlier last year, which had an episode filmed in Durban and Lesotho – Churcher says this: "...attracted widespread appreciation from our audience by showcasing several beautiful African landscapes."

BBC First's drama series *Call the Midwife* also filmed its Christmas episode just outside of Cape Town and with the exception of the original cast who came over to film, all actors used were local to South Africa.

He adds that BBC Worldwide's investment in and partnership with Johannesburg-based production company Rapid Blue shows their desire to expand in the region and means they strike a good balance between international and local content, with some of their best known formats already being brought to South Africa, like *The Great South African Bake Off*, [Come Dine with Me](#) and *Strictly Come Dancing*.



Churcher with The Odd Number, celebrating their Loeries wins.

Churcher adds that they started working with The Odd Number about a year ago, calling it "a creative agency with great understanding and intuition for our local market." This was imperative for an international brand such as the BBC to really be able to speak with the South African audience. They're especially proud of the partnership with The Odd Number as it saw their first Zulu radio campaign for BBC Brit also go on to win gold at the 2016 Pendering Awards, with the team also collecting the most highly sought-after award of the evening, The Umpetha, for the best advert in a local language other than Afrikaans. Churcher says this reflects BBC Worldwide's concerted efforts to localise content and communications in Africa, in order to reach one of the fastest growing audiences worldwide.

The power of cross-platform local voice for Africa

On the importance of tailoring communications to different languages of your target audience like this, Churcher says BBC Worldwide's entertainment channels – namely BBC Brit and BBC Lifestyle – are growing their audience base in South Africa, and aiming to attract a bigger compact audience. The best way they've found to do this is by using a "local voice alongside home-grown distinctions, tones and nuances that resonate with South Africans but stay true to the BBC brand and content".

In addition, their campaigns have expanded across different media, utilising print, out of home, digital, social media and on the ground activations. Interestingly, Churcher says radio has become an integral platform to open up the audience pool and successfully capture the attention of both DStv premium and Compact viewers. Following the success of their first vernacular radio spots in three different local languages last year, they now hope to broaden their appeal both in South Africa and also across the wider continent, and aim to produce more campaigns and content that will capture the hearts and enthusiasm of our audiences on the African continent. *Umsebenzi* is embedded below, followed by an English version of The Odd Number's BBC Brit Top Gear work:

Elaborating on their commitment to the African market and the importance of what matters most to the local African audiences, Churcher says their recent award wins at the Loeries, Pendorings and their golds for best reality promo and best drama promo at the [Promax BDA Africa](#) Award reflect this. He adds, "The African continent has become one of the fastest growing economies in the world. To ensure that BBC Worldwide taps into its growing audience base, it is important that our channels host a well-executed balance of international and local content."

Taking things forward, Churcher says in 2016 alone, BBC Worldwide sold more than 600 hours of premium content to broadcasters operating on the African continent with a key partnership forged between BBC Worldwide and Zuku TV in November 2016. As East Africa's leading home entertainment operator, this means that CBeebies has launched as a 24-hour channel, with more partnerships like these a key focus in 2017, as a way to get their content out further across the African continent.

Churcher concludes, "It's always a good feeling to win awards, but I think it is important to note that what BBC Worldwide is doing currently has never been done in South Africa before. We are always striving to offer South African audiences exceptional, world-class entertainment which caters to the market. The recognition of being amongst the top 20 brands in the country solidifies our efforts. It also demonstrates that the BBC Worldwide brand has become a household favourite, which offers audiences of all ages and backgrounds, excellent quality programming.

Here's to more local BBC success in the coming months.

[Click here](#) to listen to Bake Off judges Fudge Wholenut, [here](#) to listen to BBC Top Gear Umsebenzi, [here](#) to see the 'Custards and Sweets' subtitles, and [here](#) to see the Umsebenzi subtitles. You can also [click here](#) for a reminder of my LoeriesRanking interview with the agency responsible for the BBC's winning work —, The Odd Number on these, the agency's first ever awards and be sure to follow [Churcher](#) and [BBC Worldwide South Africa](#) on Twitter.

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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