

Anytime, anywhere, any device - TV of the future

 By Leigh Andrews

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There's no doubt the emergence streaming platforms is set to drastically alter the way traditional media broadcasters do business. Here's how Viacom International Media Networks offer a mobile content experience to complement their traditional TV offering.

Viacom International Media Networks or VIMN Africa is home to entertainment channels such as MTV, MTV Base, Comedy Central, BET and Nickelodeon. While they have an established business footprint, they're also well aware of the fact that the trusted traditional broadcast methods isn't enough - today it's innovation that generates awareness and interest, especially as more consumers demand real-time local information, forcing broadcasters to create content at a faster pace.

The recent launch of the Viacom Play Plex mobile suite app is just one example of this. It's an innovative way to expand their reach, and well-timed as Africa has the fastest-growing mobile phone market, expected to reach half a billion subscribers by 2020. That's proof that Viacom's ahead of the curve by pioneering with this product offering. And, while multiplatform programming is off to a slow start, more marketers are sure to embrace the phenomenon with the fast changing landscape of content sharing.



TV on your phone - it's a reality © MaksimKabakou – 123RF.com

I spoke to Alex Okosi, Vice President and Managing Director at Viacom International Media Networks, on how they use this and other innovative ways to attract advertisers and increase their revenue from consumers...

■ 1. What's the true impact of online streaming platforms for broadcasters?

Okosi: With the emergence of online streaming, digital channels and the internet being more accessible than ever, consumers live and breathe real-time information. With content available at our fingertips through the convenience of our mobile phones, it means the broadcast industry has to find innovative ways to keep ahead of the times ensuring a solid proposition to consumers and advertisers

■ 2. Tell us specifically about the impact of mobile, especially on the African consumer.

Okosi: South Africa, together with Nigeria, accounts for half of sub-Saharan Africa's GDP; major drivers of growth for the region as a whole. Mobile phone penetration keeps growing: today there are more than 754 million connections in sub-

Saharan Africa and over 35 mobile network operators in Africa. We have more than 300 million mobile subscribers, which is more than the population of the USA, and Africa's mobile subscription rate is now over 50% and rapidly growing.

■ **3. Explain the importance of local programming as part of today's content mix.**



■ Alex Okosi, Senior Vice President & Managing Director, VIMN Africa

Okosi: Local content is playing an ever-increasing role in the content mix of our key brands, which is why this fiscal year (2015/2016), we will be growing our investment in local production, Africa-wide.

With a long history of quality TV production and high educational standards in TV production and the electronic arts, South Africa provides VIMN Africa with a rich talent pool of experienced production personnel for our in-house productions, plus access to a large number of long-established independent producers such as The Bomb and Urban Brew. South Africa is the core of our expanding business in Africa. It is the centre of pay-TV on the continent, and with its expanding economy is the key to sustaining growth for VIMN Africa. Locally produced content and events made in South Africa get broadcast to the wider continent and to the rest of the world. This gives us a growing local market to invest in and a solid base from which to expand our distribution across the African continent.

4. Seems to be working well. Share some tips on how other broadcasters can expand their portfolio and footprint in the terrestrial and pay-TV space by optimising content beyond linear TV.

Okosi: The key to expanding a portfolio in Pay-TV and terrestrial TV will come from how a broadcaster innovates local content and creates opportunities to engage with audiences in as many ways as possible. This means tapping into other avenues besides linear TV, such as social media and video-on-demand.

Through a solid investment in local content, broadcasters also have the opportunity to drive a deeper connection with consumers and deliver initiatives that provide advertisers with unique marketing solutions thereby creating an opportunity to expand. For VIMN Africa, we amplify consumer reach through integrated brand solutions like The Comedy Central Roast of Kenny Kunene with Nando's, the MAMAs 2015 with Absolut Vodka and *The Tonight Show* with Trevor Noah and McDonald's.

Some exciting plans in the pipeline for 2015/6 include the creation of brand new themed events for VIMN Africa's comedy, kids and general entertainment channels, including an International Comedy Festival (Comedy Central), and a Nigerian version of family friendly festival NickFest (Nickelodeon).

Don't be afraid of competing with today's multiple distractions. The way to ensure that viewers stayed tuned in is to simply produce entertaining, engaging content and to create a multiplatform experience inclusive of what is considered 'distractions' rather than competing against it. All our key campaigns are designed to exist with a 360 degree focus that includes linear TV, as well as mobile, online, and social media, reaching our consumers through several touch points.

■ **5. Sharpening the focus on mobile, how is the Viacom Play Plex mobile suite app in particular expanding your traditional reach?**

Okosi: Viacom Play Plex offers maximum flexibility in distributing our content as the way viewers consume their favourite TV shows continues to evolve. These apps are designed to complement our linear pay-TV channels and to allow our existing distribution partners to deepen and improve the entertainment experience they offer their subscribers.

The mobile suite of apps opens up new distribution opportunities for VIMN Africa in the fast-growing mobile TV sector, and, ultimately, positions us to succeed in a world of more personalized entertainment services and greater consumer choice.

Mobile TV viewers everywhere will enjoy an intuitive, video-focused user interface and enhanced video player, which reduces loading and buffering times, as well as an algorithmic menu that adapts to their tastes. Apps will include social and sharing components, and will be available in both iOS and Android to download from the Apple App store and Google Play store respectively. Viacom Play Plex allows viewers across the globe to watch the TV shows they love from their favourite Viacom brands anytime and anywhere. We believe no other international entertainment company is offering this type of innovation at this scale, serving every major demographic in every major TV market.

For more information, visit the [Viacom website](#) or follow them [on Twitter](#).

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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