

Taking TV into the real world in 2018 with commercial partnerships

 By Leigh Andrews

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In this era of multi-channel marketing, success is no longer measured by the advert, but rather the full viewer package. Debbie Brady, commercial director for Discovery Networks Africa, lets us in on the importance of commercial partnerships to generate revenue and increase brand awareness.



Valeriya Kuznetsova © – 123RF.com

There's no denying the current TV advertising space is a competitive one. That's where commercial partnerships come in, with the likes of on-the-ground activations seen as a way to tick two of the main goals for any marketing activity – making money and making consumers aware of both your channel and advertisers' products and services.

Even more so for Discovery Networks, the top non-fiction media company in the world, which has been broadcasting in SA since 1997.

Just because its programming is based on real-life doesn't mean it's not entertaining – all the more so, as the tales that unfold onscreen aren't just the wild imaginings from a caffeine-buzzed scriptwriter – it's real people experiencing real life in the big, wild world out there. And with the rise of commercial partnerships, they're bringing that to life for advertisers through a range on commercial partnerships

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Here, Brady shares what her daily role as commercial director for Discovery Networks is all about, as well as the importance of finding commercial partners that fit naturally with your brands and content in the current competitive, ever-changing media landscape as the advertising industry has paid close attention to the changes in consumer viewing habits and has adapted accordingly...

■ ***What does your role as commercial director for Discovery Networks entail on a day-to-day basis?***

With the media landscape changing all the time, so does my role as Discovery's commercial director. On a day-to-day level, my core role entails working alongside our close local partners, including the DSTv Media Sales and Cinevation teams, ensuring they are working towards our commercial priorities and offering innovative solutions to potential advertisers.



Debbie Brady, commercial director for Discovery Networks Africa.

At the same time, I also spend a lot of time meeting with potential clients and building new relationships that will help us expand our business – whether from an advertising or distribution perspective.

At Discovery, our mission is to bring our content to more people across more screens than ever before, and as Discovery's sole representative on the ground, I work closely with the team in London to develop a commercial strategy that'll help us meet this goal and reach even more audiences across the continent.

■ ***That's all the more important as we head towards 2018, with the TV industry more competitive than ever, especially when it comes to advertising...***

Yes, the launch of new, disruptive digital platforms like VOD and OTT has led to a fragmented marketplace where content is readily accessible and traditional TV is not the only platform available to advertisers. This makes it more challenging for brands to share their advertising messaging to their direct target market, as they need to be strategic in selecting the right channels and align to the content.

“ It is no longer about just the advert, but rather the full viewer package. ”

The advertising industry has also paid close attention to the changes in consumer viewing habits and has adapted accordingly.

TV has historically taken a stable share of the advertising market worldwide – according to the Ampere Analysis report of October 2016 that's 40%), but change is on the horizon as video becomes a larger proportion of the online ad market.

The PwC global entertainment and media outlook 2017-2021 proves that in South Africa, despite a historic period of weak economic growth, online ad spending rose by 22.4% in 2016 alone. And while as a medium, TV continues to take the biggest share of ad spend in the region – at 56.1% vs. 1.5% for internet, according to some reports such as the Zenith Advertising Expenditure Forecasts of March 2017 (although this figure is believed to be a lot higher, at between 10% and 15%) – the landscape is continually changing and brands that aren't willing, or don't adapt to change, could lose the opportunity to speak to their desired audience.

■ ***Talk us through the power and possibilities of commercial partnerships.***

Due to a shift in advertising trends, brands now want to create bespoke consumer experiences, with the ultimate aim of delivering the right message to the right audience, at the right time and place. For this reason, commercial partnerships are key in identifying projects that generate added revenue and increase awareness for brands, through amplified activities across multiple platforms – including on-air brand integration and brand partnerships, media partnerships and on-the-ground activations.

At Discovery, we recognised this change and saw the opportunity to partner with an innovative company like Cinevation to leverage their expertise and the power of our global content to provide greater synergies with third-party brands who demand more intuitive, 360 media solutions.



Cinevation to expand commercial brand opportunities for Discovery channels

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Tasked with the responsibility of identifying projects that will generate revenue and increase the brand awareness of our flagship channels Discovery Channel and TLC, our agreement with Cinevation has already seen several brand partnerships secured for the year ahead, including for the TLC series *One Step at a Time*. This one-off special, which premiered on 30 October, followed the heroic mission of five breast cancer survivors who trekked Everest and saw Discovery partnering with Postnet to deliver both on-air brand integration and point-of-sale in their stores, which promoted the series and Postnet's contribution to breast cancer awareness.

In November, we partnered with Volkswagen for the Discovery Channel series with South African adventurer Riaan Manser, *How to Adventure*, which features, among other elements, in-show brand integration plus branded vignettes on both Discovery Channel and TLC.



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On top of this, we also have two brand partnerships currently running on TLC involving consumer competitions, for *Say Yes to the Dress* with LG and *Cake Boss* with the culinary school, Capsicum.



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Because commercial partnerships are so important to us, we were also proud to sponsor the Best Sponsorship category at this year's Amasa awards ceremony, celebrating the creativity of some of South Africa's biggest and best agencies and media owners.

For us, it's about finding commercial partners that fit naturally with our brands and content, while also allowing us to reach new audiences. We look forward to working closely with Cinevation and other partners over the year ahead to identify further brand partnership opportunities that will take our flagship channels to the next level.

■ **Elaborate on the rise of multi-channel marketing, for example advertising a TV show on a digital platform.**

With consumers more open to digital platforms than ever before, multi-channel marketing has become an established promotional trend and a more effective way to reach out to audiences in a direct and engaging manner. From an advertising perspective, this also provides brands with an opportunity to expand their reach across platforms, targeting audiences in a more precise way and building a narrative from the TV to the digital screen.

Last year, we ran the second edition of our popular pan-African presenter search, TLC's *Next Great Presenter* and saw some fantastic results, both on and off air. A truly 360 campaign, the initiative was primarily driven by social media – right from the audition phase, through to when the actual winner was announced.



Over 14 million fans were reached on social media across the duration of the campaign; we generated 101,676 engagements on Facebook; the campaign's hashtags #NextGreatPresenter and #TLCNextGreatPresenter were used in nearly 1,600 tweets; and the official website received nearly 400,000 hits over the course of the campaign. On air, *Next Great Presenter* reached a record 11.5 million viewers in 2016 – 1.2million (+11%) more than the same period in 2015 – and the week of the winner reveal smashed records to become TLC's best week ever, reaching almost 6 million viewers according to DSTvi Techedge.



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