

# Going where the eyes are: Invest in audience-led advertising

 By [Setshwano Setshogo](#)

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Most South Africans have been homebound for nearly three months because of the lockdown put in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. And for many of us, this has meant more screen time: as a form of entertainment, as escapism from the stress and boredom, and as a time for us to catch up and binge on our favourite shows, all in the comfort of our own homes.



Photo by Phillip Goldsberry on [Unsplash](#).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, there has been steep growth in TV viewing during this time. The average amount of TV content viewed went from nearly 6 hours in March to over 7 hours in April – particularly centred around daytime viewing, which increased by 75%, a sustained spike never seen before by the industry.

South Africans were spending an average of 4 hours and 12 minutes a day in front of the TV, which was a 70% increase in daily viewing minutes compared to before the pandemic.

There has also been a sharp uptick in share of audiences. In May alone, for example, Discovery saw an overall 42% increase in share of audience for our own group of channels in South Africa, including TLC, Discovery Channel, Discovery Family, Real Time, Investigation Discovery (ID), HGTV, Travel Channel and Food Network. Certain channels enjoyed particularly strong growth in share of audience; notably, TLC grew by 41%, Food Network 24%, ID 17%, Discovery Family 11%, and Real Time by 10%.



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Discovery Networks' global research has backed this up, showing that one out of five people will use TV to help them stay engaged with their passion during this time. You can see this in South African audiences, where a focus on the home and family has made them turn to the comfort of home cooking and, as the economy opens again slowly, home improvement will be on the rise.

The trend illustrates that there are pockets of growth that offer opportunities for brands to use advertising to connect with audiences where they are spending their time, and through content that they have shown that they have an appetite for. As Discovery's chief US advertising sales officer, Jon Steinlauf, said: "People look for things that they are familiar with, comforted by and trust during times of crisis – and concentrate their viewing accordingly."

## Connecting with audiences through content that comforts, inspires and offers solutions

So as our audiences turn to their televisions to seek comfort, solutions and inspiration, as well as ways to fill the time they spend at home, the country's best-known and loved brands have a unique opportunity to position themselves as a trusted friend and connect with their audiences in an authentic, engaged and relevant way.

This shows there is no better time to invest in advertising that is meaningful, pertinent, positive, purposeful and inspiring – and that places audiences at its centre. It is becoming ever more critical for brands to understand shifts in consumer attitudes and behaviour during challenging and uncertain times and adopt an audience-first approach.

This is why it's vital for brands to partner with media companies and TV networks that understand and are able to adapt to the rapidly changing landscape. At Discovery, we leverage the right balance of local and global expertise to offer advertisers and partners the dual benefit of simultaneously scaling up national reach via our television networks, and drilling down to audience passion points with precision via our advanced advertising products, direct-to-consumer and streaming offerings, and social and digital platforms.



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Being able to achieve both scale and precision relies on brands being responsive, willing to take a different approach and exploring new ways of interacting with audiences. This could mean using a broadcaster's expertise and heritage in particular passion points – such as food or home improvement – and building an audience in a new area by collaborating with a partner and using their platform to bring content to life and package it in new and creative ways.

It could also mean using emerging techniques like endemic advertising to find new ways to interact with audiences meaningfully and relevantly in a time when advertising needs to be targeted and measurable to reach the audience actually consuming the product or service.

There can be no doubt that the pandemic and subsequent lockdown has impacted on people's lives and viewing habits – making them seek out content that is trusted, provides comfort, inspiration and purpose to fill their time at home.

Brands need to be cognisant of this trend, and find opportunities to invest in advertising that is audience-led and connects

with them where they are spending their time, and through content that they have shown that they have an appetite for. This is what will help brands and audiences alike navigate a challenging time and allow them to engage with each other meaningfully.

## ABOUT SETSHWANO SETSHOGO

Setshwano is the insights and marketing services manager at Discovery Inc.  
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