

Make storytelling part of your DNA

By [Markus Davies](#)

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There is a major shift underway in how content is being disseminated to viewers. As a 'small box content creator', my audience is changing their behaviour with regards to how they like to consume their content and in 2016 I'll be watching closely to see how the multitude of platforms explode.



Video on demand

Video on demand services, through the likes of ShowMax and Netflix, are on the increase. Even Multichoice has made moves to weed out competition from VOD rivals. It's my view that in South Africa, more of these platforms will develop as the data costs decrease and the footprint of reach increases.

So what is driving the shift away from traditional viewing habits? Not only is it the mobility that comes with cellphones, laptops or tablets but these devices are so intertwined with our daily lives.

The lifestyle that we lead has also greatly influenced the shift in behaviour. The faster pace of life means people are demanding to be fed content at their leisure, at their down time. One only has to look at the success of the blog '*Diary of Zulu Girl*' as an example. It is read by 16 million people, many of whom consume it while on a taxi on route to work.

The big fear that it's the end of television is not true, in my view. To the contrary, what excites me is that the explosion of multiplatform content consumption is really going to put storytellers to the test.

Creative storytelling is the key

The challenge that's confronting content producers or film makers is to up their game, to make sure they know who they're telling their stories to and to understand their audience. If they don't, with the explosion of platforms, their stories might just disappear in the mist.

While there will be far more content competition, it's also an exciting time filled with opportunity for content creators. In my mind there is a period coming up which is the 'stand up' period. You're going to have to stand up with your creativity. Rise and really work hard to be seen with all the new technologies and new ways of telling stories.

Game changer: relevance

The game changer that will set film makers apart is whether they are telling stories that are relevant to the time or producing content that finds the current appetite. Staying up to date with global trends helps producers to know what discussion or

beat points resonate and is key to timing.

A current trend that Urban Brew Studios has picked up, across all genres from kids programmes to adult drama, is that viewers are after more escapism. They're looking to be 'entertained away' with content that makes them feel good and that celebrates rather than depresses.

My other advice in the tougher economic climate is that content producers need to acknowledge that there is a market for their content beyond South African borders. We're too overly reliant on the commissioning model to enable us to showcase our content and there is danger in this one-dimensional model.

I'm surrounded by creatives who live for what they do; storytelling is inherently part of their DNA.

My hope for 2016 is that our local content creation community starts to believe that they can tell stories that can be consumed globally.

ABOUT MARKUS DAVIES

Markus Davies is chief content officer at Urban Brew Studios. He has been involved in the film and television industry since 1996. As producer he has extensive experience in film making across all genres. He has produced/directed television comedy, reality, drama, lifestyle, commercials and music videos across the globe and has more than a 1000 broadcast hours to his resume.

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