

Newly launched HGTV's ability to resonate with a global TV audience



By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

22 Jul 2019

Last week, Discovery marked its 24th anniversary in South Africa with the launch of HGTV (Home and Garden Television) - the number one lifestyle and entertainment channel in the US.



Kathleen Finch who is the chief lifestyle brands officer at Discovery. Image supplied.

According to a press release, the new channel will focus on “home improvements that are within reach of the average viewer with shows featuring on-screen experts, fascinating families, compelling renovations and stunning transformations.

The channel will include inspirational programming geared towards viewers who enjoy seeing dilapidated dumps transform into stylish and enviable homes, tiny homes become miniature paradises and are interested in learning how to bargain hunt for dream homes.”

Described by Amanda Turnbull, vice president and general manager of Discovery Middle East & Africa, as a “juggernaut”, HGTV is the number one non-news network on cable television in the US.



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We sat down with Kathleen Finch who is the chief lifestyle brands officer at Discovery; she oversees the management oversight of HGTV, Food Network, TLC, ID, Travel Channel, DIY Network, Cooking Channel, Discovery Life, American Heroes Channel, Destination America, Great American Country and the company’s Digital Studios Group in the US.

Here, Finch tells us more about why the channel will be able to resonate with South African audiences. She also gives insight into female audiences and their love for the channel and shares why this was the right time to break into the SA market.

 **HGTV is well-known in American households and has even overtaken CNN as the third most-watched cable**

channel in the US. Why do you think it will resonate with SA audiences?

HGTV is a television network that celebrates everyone's favourite place - their home. Home is where we come to relax after a long day at work, it's where we raise our families and entertain our friends. It's something we invest our time and money in and take great pride in making it as comfortable as it can be.

HGTV is hugely popular in the US because it reflects our love of home - which is universal love and something the South African audience will enjoy as well. To date, HGTV has launched in Poland, Singapore, Germany, and will soon launch in the UK, and every new market has responded with enthusiasm. I'm sure our future fans in South Africa will quickly come to love HGTV just as our other new international fans have.

■ In the past few years, HGTV has been the top network on television in the US among upscale women, aged 25 to 54. Can you give us some insight into female audiences and their love for the channel?

HGTV is the number one network for upscale women in America and has been for almost 13 years straight. Our target viewer is a high-income employed mom who owns a home. We have lots of men watching as well, but our main target is to upscale women. One who takes great pride in making her home beautiful for her family and friends and finds the inspiration to do that on HGTV. One who trusts HGTV's expert talent, designers, home renovators, real estate experts and thinks of them almost as friends that she invites into her home via the television.

That bond of trust has been built over the years and has created an incredibly loyal audience among women, an audience that's typically hard to reach and also highly coveted by advertisers. We super-serve our fans with the programming they love and we keep them coming back by offering premieres every single night of the week, 365 days a year.

That's forged long-term loyalty and passion for the HGTV brand and has competitors in the media industry very envious. It's also made HGTV very desirable to advertisers, especially endemics like furnishings and home improvement stores since our upscale viewers are inclined to buy and have the money to do it.

■ What about the youth market? Do you have any insights you can share with us regarding millennials and their viewing patterns and does the content on the HGTV channel cater for them as well?

Millennial viewing habits are clearly different than the 25 to 54 audience. Instead of turning first to the TV, many younger viewers turn to digital. Luckily for us, HGTV content translates perfectly to digital platforms and digital content has been a top priority for the HGTV brand for many years.



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HGTV has always had a platform-agnostic approach and we go way beyond just streaming linear TV content on digital platforms.

HGTV publishes daily content around design and home renovation on our multiple digital platforms - everything from how-to instructions, inspirational photo galleries, Q&As with our designers and short-form series to enhance linear programming. That digital content provides great added value for our traditional TV viewers who want more information to help with their home improvement projects, but it's also a great way to introduce the HGTV brand to younger viewers who find us first on social media platforms.



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We even discover some of our talents on digital platforms like Instagram and Pinterest. That's where we found Ben and Erin Napier, hosts of the hit show *Hometown*, which is very popular with younger viewers. So, thinking both digitally as well as linearly about the brand and content is how HGTV is focusing on the next generation of passionate fans.

■ ***Why do you think it's the right time to break into the South African market?***

The South African market is vibrant, growing exponentially and already has great experience with the Discovery brands. We've been excited to expand HGTV's footprint around the world since it joined the Discovery family of networks last year and we can't wait to see how the local audience reacts to the HGTV content.

So far, content on the HGTV channel has been well received in all the markets that we have launched in and this is simply because it resonates with viewers and the audience. It's a lifestyle - renovating and beautifying your home is not just an American dream but that of people all around the world.

■ ***As the channel launches here in SA, what is there to look forward to and what are you most excited about?***

HGTV prides itself on developing talent into huge stars. People like Tarek El Moussa, David Bromstad and Ben and Erin Napier amongst others are household names in the US. I'm incredibly excited to introduce these great experts to the South African audience and see if we can develop them into international stars.

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Attended the #HGTV launch (on channel 177) today on behalf of #Bizcommunity. As part of the launch, we had to take part in a room decorating challenge and with the help of my team which included Minnie Dlamini (@minniedlamini) and @twwiththinus, we were named the team with the best spirit! 💎💎💎 Was so much fun! Coverage of the new channel on the site soon!

A post shared by [Juanita Pienaar](#) (@nitapita777) on Jul 17, 2019 at 12:24pm PDT

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I'm also excited about the prospect of developing international content for HGTV. One of HGTV's biggest hits in the US is *House Hunters International*, which follows couples as they leave their native country and relocate in a new one. We produce almost 200 episodes a year of *House Hunters International* - viewers can't get enough of voyeuristically experiencing moving from one country to another.

The more we expand the HGTV brand around the world, the more opportunities there are to develop co-produced content and talent to take around the world and I find that incredibly exciting!

📺 **Looking ahead, what future plans do you have in store for the channel?**

We have a great roster of new talent and series coming to HGTV in the next few months. They all fit within the tight brand lens of home design, home renovation and real estate, but with some extra fun thrown in. For example, we bought the home used in an iconic US television series - *The Brady Bunch* - and we're renovating it in a star-studded special, then launching a contest to choose a lucky winner to live in it. We're bringing back the incredibly successful *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* franchise, this time starring Jesse Tyler Ferguson from *Modern Family*.

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[HGTV is going extreme! All-new episodes of Extreme Makeover: Home Edition are coming to HGTV in 2020. #HGTVEXTREME](#)

A post shared by [HGTV](#) (@hgtv) on Jan 15, 2019 at 8:18am PST

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we're taking four of our top female design talents and pitting them against one another in a build-off in *Rock the Block*.

Plus, we've got new home renovation experts premiering, new shows about crazy swimming pools and remote mountain homes, fantasy series about buying private islands and homes on the beach and more. We produce almost 800 hours a year of new content so there's always something exciting in the works at HGTV!

HGTV may be watched on DStv channel 177 and will be available in South Africa exclusively to DStv Premium, DStv Compact Plus and DStv Compact subscribers. You can also follow HGTV on the following social media platforms:
[Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Pinterest](#).

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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