

Daily Sun GM Minette Ferreira on new TV show



By Gill Moodie: @grubstreetSA

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South Africa's biggest and most boisterous tabloid is launching *Daily Sun TV* tonight - which is a first for a newspaper in our country. Bizcommunity speaks to Minette Ferreira, GM of the *Daily Sun* and *City Press*, about the thinking behind the move and where the paper, with more than 5.5-million readers, is going with its other brand extensions.



■ **So tell me all about *Daily Sun TV* ([starting tonight on DStv channel Mzansi Magic at 7pm](#)). Where does this come from?**

Minette Ferreira: It's something that's been coming for some time, actually. In the past few years, Deon (du Plessis, the paper's late founder and publisher) had a number of talks with the TV guys about doing a fun TV show and maybe something that could develop into a channel. We just never got to the point (of launching the project). Then in June this year, the guys from [Mzansi Magic](#) (which is owned by parent company Naspers that also owns [Media24](#), the publisher of the *Daily Sun*) came and said they had time slots available. So they've had a film crew here (at *Daily Sun*) for about two months working in our archives on all sorts of stuff. We've got twice-weekly broadcasts - on Tuesdays nights and Friday nights at 7pm - and basically the premise of the show is, if I had to sum it up, bringing the *Daily Sun* stories to life. So it's literally taking stories that we publish in the newspaper and giving the people and the issues movement and life.

■ **OK, so are you going back to old stories and finding the people in them and interviewing them again for TV?**

Ferreira: Well, that's a component.. The pilot that's showing on Tuesday night is obviously stuff that we've been doing over some time but, going forward, it will actually be news as it happens - and also a push for some stories in the paper next day. So on the Tuesday night, it will be for Wednesday's paper. On the Friday night's show (there is no print edition on Saturday), as I understand, there we will have a component of going back to the archive. It's obviously quite difficult to fill and package for the night's show. It's a balance between reliving some of the famous stories and actually reporting on stories as they happen. It's quite exciting, I must say. The pilot looks amazing.

■ **Sjoe, this IS exciting. I can't think of any other newspapers in South Africa that have done this.**

Ferreira: No, this is the first ever... It really is a test to see if the paper can translate into TV, which we've always thought it could do fantastically well because they really are stories that make you say: 'Wow! Can this be true?'

■ **Will there be a reality TV aspect - will the camera be with the paper's journalists as they report stories?**

Ferreira: Yes.

■ **But most Daily Sun readers watch free-to-air channels rather than satellite.**

Ferreira: Ja, obviously free-to-air would be ideal but what's working in our favour is the growth that DStv has seen in its (cheaper) Compact bouquet (of which Mzansi Magic is a part) and particularly black viewership on Mzansi Magic. Now is really the right time for it to launch there. Mzansi targets very much LSM 4-7, which is where *Daily Sun's* readership falls...

■ **How does the TV show fit into the bigger scheme of things? Is this part of having 360-degree branding? I just had a look at Daily Sun's [Facebook page](#) and it's big. It's got more than 65 000 members now. (There are 9 300 [Daily Sun Twitter](#) followers.)**

Ferreira: Look, to a certain extent I guess it's an experiment but I've always believed that the *Daily Sun* content could translate into many different mediums - that it can really reach out from print and touch people on other platforms, whether it's your mobile phone or your TV screen or, for that matter, the way we connect with our readers on social platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. And the *Daily Sun's* readers have evolved over the past 10 years so that we can communicate on these platforms. I think it would be short-sighted for us to ring fence ourselves around print.

■ **What's so interesting about this is that many people say that print is dying in the developed world but it has lots of legs in the developing world. And, in SA, we point to Daily Sun and [Issolezwe as proof of this](#). But here you are, leaping onto all these other platforms anyway.**

Ferreira: Ja, but that's the point. The heart and soul of the *Daily Sun* will always be the newspaper and its printed form but, ultimately, I think it's about your brand - and you must leverage it across different platforms to talk to the readers or the community that you want to reach.

■ **So why do you think your mobisite hasn't really taken off?**

Ferreira: You know, we've struggled on our mobisite. We launched it in (June) 2010 at the same time as the World Cup and it was basically around the soccer coverage. Because our deadlines are so stringent, we used it to publish results and logs and so forth that we couldn't get into the paper and we promoted it heavily in the paper as well... That was very successful. In those six weeks (of the World Cup), we got almost 600 000 page impressions on our site - and that gave us the motivation to say (in September 2010): 'Now's the time to build a proper mobisite'. So we did some news and some sport (on mobi) but we are hesitant, I must admit, to put all our content on there because we don't want to detract from the newspaper. I think, ultimately, this is not motivation enough for people to go there (to the mobisite)... And then in May 2011, we launched our Facebook site and, really, we've seen the success we thought we'd see on our mobisite on our Facebook page. Which is really interesting. What works for us on Facebook is that we can engage on such a frequent basis with our readers whereas on the mobisite you put the content up but the two-way communication is not really there. Over the past few weeks we've started some live chat environments on our Facebook page (such as with "Sun Defender", the paper's regular columnist who gives legal advice) which has proven to be quite successful... I think we just haven't been able to find that silver bullet on the mobisite. One of the successes, to my mind on mobi, is [Soccer Laduma](#). What counts in their favour is that they're so focused and targeted in terms of content plus, because they are a weekly, it gives them the opportunity to talk to their readers the other six days of the week and they don't have the problem of giving away (print) content.

■ **Did you ever consider having a subscription for the mobisite?**

Ferreira: We have thought of that and that's something we're currently working on with our digital agency. We were thinking of doing a package so if you subscribe to the mobisite, there are other benefits in it for you. It could be a funeral-plan option or an air-time component - that type of thing. We've seen that our engagement with our readers on SMS is massive. We have huge response if we drive competitions or ask people questions via SMS. For the year - from April till now - I can tell you we're sitting on close to one million SMS-es that we've received from our readers. So it shows

they're not scared to engage on the mobile platform if there's something in it for them - if I can win something or I can get my message across...

■ **So what does all this action on Facebook do for the Daily Sun?**

Ferreira: We see it as a promotion and marketing tool for the *Daily Sun* brand. Of course, the question for everybody is can you monetise Facebook sites but, for us, it's really a brand extension and another platform to talk to our readers. Having said that, we have done a few campaigns (such as with Nando's) where we brought the Facebook component on board, which has been quite successful... I think that, as we grow our numbers, we could have more potential there - we can get advertisers who run print campaigns to activate on our Facebook page too. I just never want it to be forced so that people (on our Facebook page) feel that someone's pushing advertising down their throats. It has to be fun for the public because people come there of their own free will to talk to and engage with the *Daily Sun* and not to be told: 'Go buy this' or 'There's a special offer here'.

■ **I suppose what works for the Daily Sun is that you've never had a website for the newspaper's content. The Sowetan, by contrast, has invested a lot of money in [its website](#) and also has a lively [Facebook page](#) (more than 20 000 members) so they have the conversation going on in two places. Your Facebook page is your online presence so the conversation is in one place.**

Ferreira: That's right. I agree with that because, you know, we also get a lot of news tips through Facebook, which makes it's such a tentative entity to manage because we can reverse that quite quickly. And that's why we've invested in having staff fulltime on the Facebook page, engaging and answering peoples' queries. When we launched initially someone would post: 'There's just been a robbery in my street. *Daily Sun*, please come' and then there was no reaction. And that's death in the social-media world... We realised that if you want to encourage people to come to you and talk to you as a friend and a companion and a news source, you have to be available 24 hours a day. And that's actually great as investing money and resources in running our Facebook site is actually much less than investing in running a 24-hour news site.

■ **I've been looking at City Press's social-network figures too and it's almost diametrically opposite to those of Daily Sun in terms of Facebook versus Twitter. (City Press has more than [46 000 Twitter followers](#) and [5,800 Facebook members](#)). Do you think that Twitter is so much bigger than Facebook for City Press because it is a high-LSM product?**

Ferreira: I had exactly this conversation with someone else the other day and, ja, I do think it's that distinction in terms of LSM... Last year this time *City Press*'s Twitter feed was sitting at about 16 000 and to increase to almost 50 000 in less than a year is really impressive... But I also think we didn't manage *Daily Sun*'s Twitter feed correctly. I believe that people who follow a news publication on Twitter are really looking for news and they want the stuff that's literally happening as we speak. *Daily Sun* is not really in that realm - of live reporting as it unfolds. There is an element in people who follow us (*Daily Sun* on Twitter) out of curiosity - about the strange, the magical and the odd - so we try in terms of the headlines and the type of stories we Tweet to do the stuff that tickles peoples' curiosity. I think what has been successful for *City Press* is that because they are a Sunday paper, it keeps the brand alive to such a large extent in the rest of the week. So it's not just an entity that lives on a Sunday - it's the news agenda that unfolds through the week.

■ **You've also got journalists such as [Carien du Plessis](#) and [Adriaan Basson](#) at City Press who are very active tweeters and with big followings: Du Plessis has more than 12 000 and Basson more than 10 000. And then [Ferial \(Haffajee, the editor\)](#) has a huge following for a print editor - more than 36 000 - which puts her third in SA (after 702 radio hosts John Robbie and Redi Tlhabi) on the [Hacks List](#).**

Ferreira: Which just shows the power of that medium to engage. In the old-media world Ferial would have had an opportunity once a week to talk to readers and South African newspaper consumers. Now she competes with talk-show radio hosts who are on air every day. That's phenomenal. That is significant, which is why the strategy for *City Press* on Twitter as well as on their website is that the digital environment allows *City Press* to be a seven-day-a-week brand - and not just a Sunday brand. If you had to spend marketing money to keep a Sunday brand alive through radio or TV or print advertising every day of the week, you couldn't. Never ever have I seen a newspaper budget that could afford that and, here, you have a marketing tool that is actually for free and if you use it correctly, can be really powerful.

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