

Ad-free TV viewing is here!

By Leigh Andrews

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One of the best features from the recent Samsung-ShowMax partnership is that the subscription video-on demand format means you only pay for what you want to see.

Samsung and ShowMax recently [announced a partnership](#) set to boost SA's Video on Demand usage by offering a way to stream TV series and movies via the internet locally.



So if you were planning on buying a new TV set this festive season, best you do so before the New Year, as all 2015 Samsung Smart TVs purchased at participating retailers will come with a voucher for three months' complimentary access to ShowMax. As the TVs are equipped with full connectivity, smart functionality and complete control over the entertainment experience, you simply connect to Naspers' new ShowMax service via a dedicated app. It's a fitting partnership as Samsung is the leader in Smart TVs in South Africa, while Naspers' ShowMax is the newly-launched subscription video on demand service with the largest online video catalogue in Africa. But just how popular is video-on-demand locally? Isn't that something mainly for the Western world couch potatoes?

Apparently not. I spoke to Matthew Thackrah, deputy managing director and head of consumer electronics at Samsung Electronics SA, as well as Richard Boorman, ShowMax's head of communications, to find out more about smart TVs and the rise of video-on-demand (VOD) locally.

The rise of subscription VOD in SA

Boorman confirms that subscription video on demand is booming globally, with around 100 million people now using the service. But why so popular, when there are already a plethora of 'cable' options over and above the standard terrestrial option?

Most of the growth is being sparked by developments such as a rise in affordable high-speed internet connectivity, particularly fibre to the home. There's also been a definite move away from so-called 'linear TV' to the convenience of watching shows as and when you want.

Boorman credits the rise of 'binge watching' as a major factor here. The phrase was even named word of the year by the [Collins Dictionary](#). That's where we watch entire seasons of shows back-to-back. Now it's easier than ever to do, as services like ShowMax have the complete history of series starting with season 1, episode 1 - so you can binge on the entire box set of a show in extended viewing bouts.

Boorman also points out that people watch TV in both 'lean forward' and 'lean back' mode - leaning forward is where we watch shows on tablets and mobile phones, while leaning back is the traditional method of watching on TV sets. Services like ShowMax mean you can actually do both, effectively watching wherever you are, so you can start watching a series on your tablet, then move over the TV to finish watching there... especially if it's a Smart TV.

What makes a smart TV 'smart'?

Thackrah explains it as: "a connected TV, which turns it into more than just a basic television set by allowing users to stream movies and music, browse the web through the built in web browser and download applications such as Facebook and Twitter." Some Smart TVs can also stream movies, pictures and music directly from your phone or tablet.

So it's basically internet capabilities layered over the existing TV model we've loved since the infamous SABC test pattern that accompanied SA's TV addiction in the 1970s. If you weren't around back then, you can get a good sense of the 'TV test pattern excitement' below:

Aren't you glad we now have more TV-viewing options than ever before?

Partnership unpacked

Thackrah calls the partnership a 'natural fit for both companies' as VOD services are the most popular applications on

Smart TVs. Before the launch of ShowMax in South Africa, consumers had limited access to a quality VOD offering. Boorman adds that ShowMax found smart TVs are one of the most popular ways to use its service. The partnership obviously helps raise awareness of the ShowMax and Smart TV combination, and helps potential buyers understand the benefit of not needing to plug in a computer or use any other hardware. The partnership's intended outcome is thus increased take-up of subscription video-on-demand.

The consumer bit...

To get on the VOD-viewing bandwagon, all you'll need is a Samsung Smart TV and a reasonable internet connection - anything faster than 2Mbps is perfect. ShowMax uses roughly 250MB for a 20-minute episode, such as *Big Bang Theory* and 500MB for a 40- to 45-minute episode, like *Ray Donovan*. In addition, a full-length movie would consume around 1.5GB. That's why uncapped service or one with a high data allocation works best. Luckily, with the purchase of any Samsung Smart TV, you'll also get 100GB of data through Vox Telecom.

But it's not limited to the top-end - while ADSL, home fibre or fixed LTE are preferable, the service also works using a normal mobile internet connection.

Then, all you need to do is create a ShowMax account [online](#), download the app to your TV, and log-in. Once installed, the app remembers your username and password so you simply select the app with your remote, select the show or movie you want to watch and start watching. Even better? It's an ad-free service, so there are no breaks in viewing. Boorman confirms they have also just added downloads to the ShowMax Android app, meaning you can get your TV shows and movies while connected to Wi-Fi, then watch them whenever you like. The functionality will be coming to iOS coming soon.

It's an excellent example of how technology is changing consumer behaviour, and how smart companies are taking that in and capitalising.

For more on the Samsung-ShowMax partnership, [click here](#) or follow [Samsung](#) and [ShowMax](#) on Twitter.

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