

# Programme praised, Patta panned



By [lssa Sikiti da Silva](#)

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There has been a set of mixed fortunes in the past week for e.tv and its popular programme *3rd Degree*. While *3rd Degree*'s Anna-Maria Lombard scooped the CNN MultiChoice Award for HIV/Aids reporting over the weekend, the show presenter and editor-in-chief Debora Patta continues to be criticised by 'sensitive' viewers who believe that they have had enough of her 'unobjective', 'immature' and 'aggressive' techniques that they believe are destroying the show.



A couple of viewers have used *The Citizen* newspaper's letters section to take out their frustration and have a go at Patta. In addition, many people who spoke to Bizcommunity.com expressed their concern about what they called 'falling standards' of the show and Patta's arrogant attitude towards her interviewees.

A reader and self-proclaimed media guru named Jessica Clarkson wrote in the 13 July 2009 issue of *The Citizen* ("Debora Patta's *3rd Degree* no longer burns"): "Debora Patta has ceased to be objective eons ago. Perhaps the limelight has gone to her head".

Clarkson accused Patta of trying to force her point of view by not giving other people, who are either part of her story or her work, a chance.

Clarkson also said Patta "hijacked" the story of RDP houses, a fine piece of investigative journalism aired on 7 July and done by e.news reporter Tumaole Mohlaoli in collaboration with *Sowetan*.

## "Flogging a dead horse"

Another reader wrote in *The Citizen* issue of 14 July ("Patta's cakes"): "Patta, in my view, does not understand in-your-face, aggressive journalism. She has instead resorted to insulting, abusive and nasty journalism practised without poise and maturity."

The debate went on in the same newspaper on Monday 20 July, with Farouk Laher of Mayfair, Johannesburg, writing under the headline “Ms Patta flogs a dead horse” that the reason why many people cannot stand Patta's interviewing persona is that she usually transgresses the bounds of professionalism and dignified broadcasting by flogging the proverbial “dead horse.”

Bizcommunity.com spoke telephonically to Patta on Saturday from Durban, where she was attending the CNN MultiChoice African Journalist of the Year Awards, asking her to defend herself against the criticism currently levelled against her by a range of viewers.

Later the same day, however, e.tv head of publicity Vasili Vass sent an email to Bizcommunity.com, stating that Patta would not comment.

## **Don't like the programme? Change the channel**

William Bird, head of Media Monitoring Africa (MMA), told Bizcommunity.com: “Some people certainly may find Debora Patta's approach offensive and antagonistic. I am not sure that her approach has changed since she started, but certainly a number of her guests on her programmes have said so during interviews.

“For what she does, given that she represents a commercial as opposed to public service channel, I think she does it well. Does she take the limelight? She probably does, but that is an issue that should have been discussed between e.tv and *Sowetan* when they did the story.

“As MMA we welcome diversity and encourage people and interviewers to take positions, and provide information that serves to inform, educate and entertain. Where an interviewer fails to do so, or does so merely to humiliate and belittle the person being interviewed then it may be entertaining for some but ultimately viewers have the power to decide if they like that approach, and can vote by simply changing channel.”

## **ABOUT ISSA SIKITI DA SILVA**

Issa Sikiti da Silva is a winner of the 2010 SADC Media Awards (print category). He freelances for various media outlets, local and foreign, and has travelled extensively across Africa. His work has been published both in French and English. He used to contribute to Bizcommunity.com as a senior news writer.

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