

Making waves



By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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The Times Media Group (TMG) has been expanding its broadcast footprint locally and across the continent, adding to its other content mediums. More recently, it invested in a state-of-the-art broadcast-ready studio at the Group's offices in Rosebank.

Tony Mallam, TMG, Head of Radio, explains that this is part of the group's strategy to showcase its radio assets and offerings. "Since the end of July we have used the studio to broadcast two shows remotely; Grant Shakaone's The V-Connection and the Kwasu Breakfast Show, with presenter, Linda Sibiya."

Both shows are on TMG's newest acquisition in the broadcast space, the KwaZulu-Natal-based (KZN) radio station, Vuma103FM. Its competition is the world's second biggest radio station and the largest in Africa, Ukhozi Fm. "We are not competing with them," says Mallam, "The market is big enough for both of us."

He says Vuma103FM hopes to capture an audience of between half a million to a million in time, which the Group considers to be a reasonable size.

Offering an alternative... and gospel

To achieve this they are offering an alternative to the other radio stations. "We are offering a different format by tailoring our offering to the market. For example, our research has shown that gospel is a favourite genre in the province, making this a big focus on this at the station," he explains.

As a content creator, the Group will also create synergies across its various media to add value to each other. He explains that through their new Johannesburg studio they will be able to package content into audio and move it across radio stations. "Our products are complementary to each other and we view them as such - radio as part of a broad mix of print and digital - and not as separate entities. We talk about an audio brand, not a radio station because it is about content and delivering that content."

Broad media interests

Apart from Vuma103FM, the TMG stable includes the *Sowetan*, *Sunday Times*, *Business Day*, *Ignition* and The Home Channel television stations. Its other local audio channel is Nelspruit-based RISEfm (previously MPower FM). In Africa TMG owns a 32.26% stake in Ghanaian broadcaster, Multimedia (six radio stations and free-to-air satellite TV), and 49% of Radio Africa Group (RAG) in Kenya, with five radio stations and a DTT TV license.

They would like to expand even more locally in the broadcasting sector he says. "It's not often you get the opportunity for a license, so when one comes up you must act quickly."

He calls their expanding footprint on the continent as both "a conservative and a bold move at the same time".

"In Africa you do not play without local partners, and too often South Africans are not welcome. The stations we have shares in were all existing stations in which we bought a minority share. We do not interfere in the day-to-day running of these stations, but leave these businesses to run themselves. We are supportive with content, business, and finance."

He points out that these stations are all market leaders and profitable.

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

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