

Why smart TVs are the new front door for brands

For decades, television reigned supreme in the living room. It brought families together for the 8pm Sunday night movie, had them rushing home for afternoon soaps, and clearing their Saturdays for the big game. It was the gold standard for brand-building – broad reach, big impact and a guaranteed seat in front of millions of viewers.

 By [Leslie Adams](#) 14 May 2025



Source: www.unsplash.com

Then came digital, with its promise of precision and measurability. For years, the two coexisted: TV drove awareness, digital drove action. But as streaming took over, that balance started to shift. Today, the most valuable screen isn't the prime-time one just before the Muvhango opening theme – it's the first one you see when you turn on your smart TV.

In this changing media landscape, Connected TV (CTV) has emerged as more than just another format. It brings together the commanding presence of TV with the data-driven precision of digital. And for brands looking to stay visible and relevant, it's becoming the most powerful screen in the house.

When streaming took over, advertisers were left out

As South Africans flocked to subscription platforms such as Netflix, Showmax and Disney+, one thing quickly vanished: advertising. Suddenly, a massive, engaged audience was watching more TV than ever, but without seeing a single ad. For media planners, it felt like the lights had gone out, with streaming acting as a kind of 'ad blocker'.

Where TV had once delivered guaranteed reach, the rise of ad-free streaming left a gap. The "Netflix-type viewer" became the new holy grail – highly engaged and with spending power, but increasingly out of reach.

For a while, CTV didn't help much. It mirrored digital behaviour but with fewer ad opportunities. Brands were stuck between where audiences were going and where they could actually show up.

Advertising is back – smarter and stronger

That's now changing. As ad-supported platforms grow and CTV matures, advertising is making a powerful comeback. But this time, it's smarter. Brands can now target based on real behaviours, track performance and prove ROI – all in a high-attention environment. It's the kind of shift advertisers have been waiting for: the reach of TV, the intelligence of digital and the ability to measure both brand lift and business impact.

And the pool of streaming viewers is growing – and fast. According to the latest MAPS data (January - December 2023), eight million South Africans now have access to streaming services – representing 19% of the adult population. These users are most concentrated in metro areas (51%) and are largely made up Gen Z (42%) and Millennials (41%) – a highly desirable audience segment for advertisers.



TV

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To put this in perspective, the streaming audience is comparable in size to the weekly viewership of e.tv's top programmes. For instance, in October 2023, Scandal on e.tv attracted approximately 5.6 million viewers while House of Zwide drew around 5.1 million viewers.

If TV used to start with a time slot, today it starts with a screen. Before anyone watches anything, they land on the smart TV home screen – a clean, uncluttered space where attention is at its peak. That's where solutions such as Reach CTV's Hero Billboard come in. It's a full-screen placement that appears the moment the Smart TV is switched on, alongside Netflix, YouTube and other streaming apps. It's bold, impossible to miss and gets 100% share of voice in a moment of maximum focus.

What makes the hero billboard more than just a branding play is its built-in QR code functionality, turning passive views into real action. In a recent Hero Billboard campaign for a major consumer goods company in the US, 70% of viewers who scanned the QR code took further action – showing how early attention can drive meaningful engagement.

Start with the screen, not the channel

Too often, media planning begins with “who” and “where.” But in a screen-first world, the “when” and “how” matter just as much. That's why placements like the Hero Billboard are more than just inventory – they're the new front door. And if that's where the viewer journey begins, it's where your brand should be too.

Of course, the Hero Billboard is just one of many CTV advertising formats available that are enabling planners to reach streaming viewers; from advertising video on demand (AVOD) commercials to pause screens and content sponsorships. What unites them all is the opportunity to meet audiences in a high-quality environment with trackable outcomes.

From scattered screens to strategic reach

Audiences are everywhere. Hopping between platforms, skipping ads, bingeing series, watching in bursts – But that doesn't mean advertisers have to chase them. With CTV, we can meet them at a natural pause point – when they're leaning in, not tuning out.

At Reach Africa, we've embraced this shift. Moving beyond AVOD, we've invested fully in CTV because it reflects how people actually consume content now. Our focus is simple: show up where it matters, when it

matters, and make the most of that moment.

CTV is the evolution of television. And with solutions like the Hero Billboard, we're helping brands turn visibility into real, measurable results – from the very first screen.

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