

https://dspace.org/

Regulation of local content on the digital platform

Mokhele, Botlenyana Charity

2015
http://hdl.handle.net/10539/18511

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Abstract

This study examines options for regulating local content in the digital environment, focusing on the DTT platform. Based on qualitative interviews and documentary analysis, it reflects on the impact of local content regulations in South Africa, as well as that of technology and market changes resulting from digital broadcasting.

The findings confirm that while demand for local programming has increased, its quality and diversity has not improved. Independent production companies derived limited benefit from the regulations. The Independent Communications Authority (ICASA) lacks capacity to enforce and to assess their impact. The regulations were found to be inadequate to regulate local content in a digital environment.

The study suggests interventions for addressing the above short comings and ensuring continued relevance of local content regulations. It also suggests ways of protecting broadcasters' revenues, required to sustain production local content for the digital multichannel environment.

From a practical perspective, it recommends that production funding be strengthened and better coordinated to ensure that the production sector meets the increased demand for local productions. Further, that African and regional content be considered as local content in order to achieve economies of scale required to sustain these productions.

Regulatory wise, the study recommends stringent regulation of competition to achieve regulatory parity with broadcast-like services and to protect incumbent free to air broadcasters' advertising revenues. It is proposes that local content quotas be reviewed and aggregated across channel bouquets, but also to accommodate niche and specialist channels. However, quotas are only effective as part of a broader well-coordinated system of regulating both the supply and demand of local content, supported by a strong monitoring and enforcement system. Likewise, traditional broadcasting business models, content acquisition strategies and the intellectual rights rules must be reviewed to suit the changed audience and media consumption patterns.

Finally, it recommends an overhaul of the broadcasting policy in order to accommodate regulation of content in a converged environment, and by default the application of local content regulation on the DTT platform.