

Oracle launches Interactive TV to South Africa



By [Louise Marsland](#)

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Oracle yesterday launched DSTV's new interactive television offering to the industry, iTV, promising advertisers a unique new way to reach consumers, and putting control into the hands of viewers with full 'interaction'.

Oracle MD, Peter McKenzie, said interactive TV was a tool to cut through the clutter, allowing advertisers to do things differently and beyond the normal 30 to 60 second TV commercial.

And with the growth of 1.2 million subscribers across Africa, and 800 000 in South Africa, DSTV is certainly poised to revolutionise television advertising in Africa with its new interactivity.



BSkyB's Robert Leach

Keynote speaker at the launch, Robert Leach, head of Interactive Services at BSkyB, Sky Media, spoke about how interactive television viewing had completely turned the television market on its head, and Sky into the world's leading iTV service. In the UK alone, 53% of homes have digital TV - that's 7.4 million subscribers and 15 million adult viewers! Their penetration into the US market is at 47%, Japan 25% and Europe 21%.

Sky in fact took a tremendous leap of faith in 1999 when it launched iTV, giving away digital boxes for free, to ensure the immediate brand penetration of iTV. Now revenue from iTV advertising equals that of normal, linear television advertising. Much of that also comes from online gambling and game playing.

According to Leach, the benefits of interactive TV are massive for the broadcaster:

- iTV sets the broadcaster apart from competitors.
- Creates new revenue streams from advertising.
- Makes programmes 'stickier'.
- Cuts down on channel surfing.
- iTV builds on the power of TV advertising.
- It adds accountability for TV advertising, as responses can be measured.

- Television's cost-efficiency is increased.

In 2000, just after iTV's launch in the UK, Sky Media ran 17 interactive TV campaigns. By this year, that figure has grown to 505! The benefits for advertisers are significant, says Leach:

- Return on investment is significant.
- Responses to television advertising are increased - and more measurable.
- Building databases.
- Sharing more in-depth information on the brand.
- Better creative and branding as iTV focuses more on entertaining and rewarding the viewer.

Oracle's iTV sales team, Chris Hitchings and Sean Fairless, assured the advertisers and media planners present that iTV was not complicated and that Oracle offered a seamless turnkey service - from campaign production to the DAL (Dedicated Advertiser Location, a channel dedicated to an advertiser for a specific time period), and campaign implementation, with or without interactive video.

Pricing will range from R100K for a 2 week campaign to R750K for one month.

South Africa will also be doing things a bit differently to the UK, as the consumer response return path will be via IVR or SMS.

DSTV's Richard Fyffe stressed that interactive TV advertising was a major differentiator for the broadcaster, and the advertisers that came on board with fully interactive campaigns.

Trends observed in interactive TV are that viewers are interacting more with television. The viewer is in control and enjoys the broader bouquet of multi-media options, giveaways, entertainment and competitions that interactive TV offers.

Leach warned advertisers to take the following into account:

1. Interactive campaigns should be planned, not just bolted onto linear TV campaigns.
2. Research and measurement is crucial.
3. Don't mislead the viewer - deliver what is promised, even if it is sending a sample or coupon in response to their SMS / contact.
4. There should be a clear call to action, to proceed into the interactive element - verbal works.
5. Don't disappoint the viewer with your creative implementation.

Interactive TV adds a completely new dynamic to the advertising media mix and will provide for interesting and entertaining viewing as South African advertisers come on board.

ABOUT LOUISE MARSLAND

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