

# NETFLIX

## BLOOD & WATER SEASON 1 LAUNCH

**SOCIAL MEDIA AS THE PRIMARY METHOD OF COMMUNICATION**  
(BEST USE OF SOCIAL TO LEAD A CAMPAIGN)

### OPENING STATEMENT

The launch of Netflix's second African original series, Blood & Water, in May 2020 was a significant milestone for the brand, cementing its commitment to and investment in Africa. The entertainment giant wanted to launch the flagship show with a bang; however, during lockdown, a 'normal', star-studded affair was out of the question.

Our objectives? Get everyone talking about the young talent and create enough buzz that the series trends online. The team got to work organising Netflix's official Blood & Water YouTube premiere – a first-of-its-kind unveiling of the initial episode for global audiences to enjoy for free.

### STATEMENT OF OPPORTUNITY/PROBLEM

Netflix needed us to create hype around Blood & Water, meeting the deadline and achieving the same goals as a physical premiere, despite the pandemic. With lockdown regulations in place, traditional campaign strategies were no longer relevant, and we needed to reassess our approach. The challenge was to get South Africans talking about the up-and-coming cast, make sure the series trends online and elicit the same emotional connection to Blood & Water that would have been achieved with a face-to-face campaign.

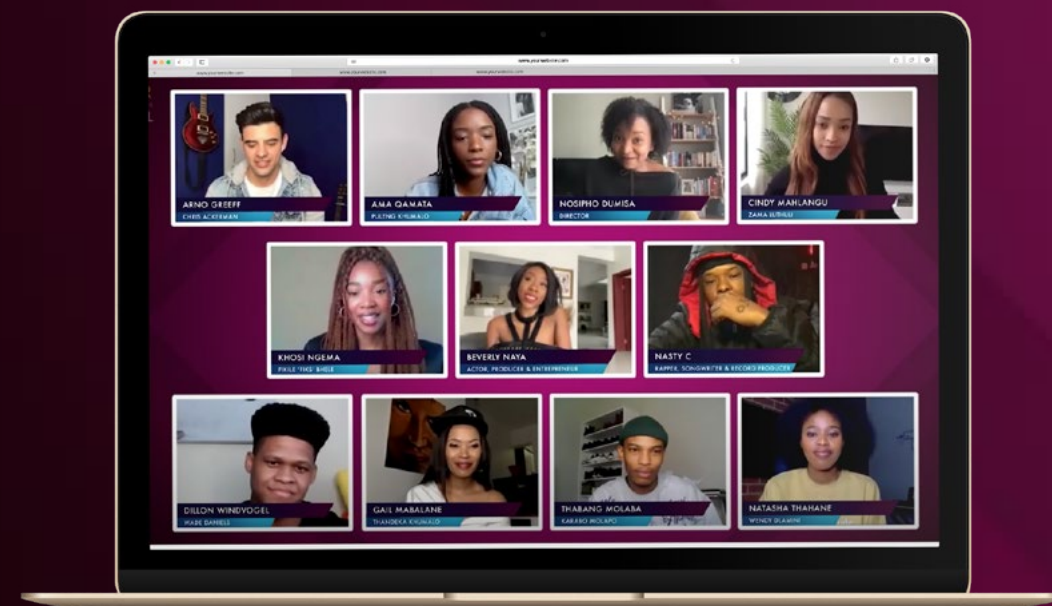
### RESEARCH CONDUCTED

At the time of the launch, social distancing was in full force. Audiences were embracing online streaming, but the volume of content and the number of conversations around entertainment were also increasing. Our core target audience of young adults has 'seen it all' on digital. We needed to cut through the clutter of digital conversations in a fresh and unique way to make Blood & Water stand out.

Our research found that entertainment launches often piggyback on the cast or talent's social media followings to grab the attention of audiences, but the cast of Blood & Water were new to the scene and without large existing followings that we could leverage. So, we needed to introduce them in a way that broke down barriers and created a direct connection between them and the target audience.

Based on their behaviour online, Netflix South Africa has a loyal online following that already connects with the brand. People with established brand connections are more likely to start conversations about that brand, so seeding the content and stirring up interest among these fans would be a smart way to rally Netflix's followers around the show and draw other people into the conversation. Influencer marketing has also proven to be a useful tactic in leveraging new audiences for disseminating content.

In South Africa, 84% of internet users access YouTube, making it the perfect platform for reaching people who are already comfortable watching content online, and may be more likely to sign up to streaming services.



AFTERSCHOOL SPECIAL (363K YOUTUBE)



OVERVIEW VIDEO





## PLANNING THE CAMPAIGN

Our objective was to get people talking about the show, highlight the cast, and, most importantly, make sure the target audience of young South Africans watched the first episode.

Our strategy team devised a plan to achieve this through rich, authentic experiences on channels familiar to the audience, including Instagram Live and YouTube.

We planned to introduce the cast by sharing relatable content on accessible platforms in ways that the audience would find intimate and inviting, making the cast likeable and approachable.

To reach these goals, we set our sights on creating an ambitious cross-channel digital campaign that was designed to engage a digital-first audience and hold their interest before, during and after the launch.

We would start by rallying the support of local media houses, influencers, broadcast channels and social media to create a first for Netflix – a fully digital launch and red carpet event. The strategic execution of the campaign would also include the following elements:

- A short pre-launch marketing window with a steady stream of content would rally Netflix's existing audience, getting them excited about the show and starting conversations.
- The success of the launch would rely on reimagining the premiere experience and transporting the audience to the red carpet. Rather than having the talent, media and celebs appearing on a red carpet and watching the first episode in a venue, they would show up on Instagram Live, and encourage everyone to watch the first episode on YouTube. With its visual focus and live function, Instagram Live is the perfect platform for amplifying reach while creating an intimate experience for an audience. We would exploit influencer marketing by pairing the cast with top influencers to host Instagram Lives.
- Our reach-maximising strategy required convincing Netflix to air the first episode of the show free of charge on YouTube so more people could access it. This would create organic conversations and drive sign-ups to Netflix.
- After the launch, we would feed the fandom and keep the momentum going with an entertaining, variety-style show with musical performances by local musos, fun challenges and Q&A sessions with the cast.

## EXECUTION

The campaign required innovative and bold tactics to create the kind of content required to bring a virtual launch to life. From custom GIFs and personal Instagram videos to influencer interactions and a mini magazine, a rich and varied body of content was created for and published on multiple channels. To round off the campaign, an entertaining, variety-style afterschool special included performances by local musicians, exciting challenges and Q&A sessions with the cast. Each piece of content was adapted for the unique requirements of the platforms and their audiences.

Netflix had never launched a title without a physical premiere. Pivoting to a Zoom and Instagram Live format was not only innovative, it pushed us to be more creative and adaptive. The volume, variety and type of content that was created to support the campaign required us to be inventive and resourceful, especially because we had to operate within lockdown regulations.

The show's talented cast were our creative and content anchors. Recording multiple segments (both live and pre-recorded) was done remotely, without physical interaction. This meant sending the talent lighting and audio rigs, talking them through setting them up,

and remote direction. For the afterschool special, some of these segments were cut together so that the whole show appeared to be live. The interactive cast and influencer games hosted on Zoom needed careful planning and logistics to make them look effortless. It was a steep learning curve, but one that our teams dealt with admirably.

The virtual nature of the premiere made it more inclusive; hosting live cast and influencer meets online on open platforms created an intimacy we haven't seen at physical premieres. For the first time, fans could witness and be part of the actors' whole journeys, from anonymous cast member to hot young celeb.

Netflix South Africa had never broadcast any content on YouTube, never mind an entire episode of a flagship series. Convincing them to do so was integral to our success. It meant we could extend the campaign to South Africans who weren't Netflix subscribers (yet).

### IG LIVE ANNOUNCEMENTS

### PREMIERE PROMO POST INVITE

### AFTERSCHOOL SPECIAL INVITE

# NETFLIX BLOOD & WATER | SEASON 1 LAUNCH



## EVALUATION/MEASUREMENT

Audiences showed up for it all: the premiere on YouTube, the series on Netflix and the cast on social media.

The campaign's digital content received over 5 million media views on social platforms and media outlets.

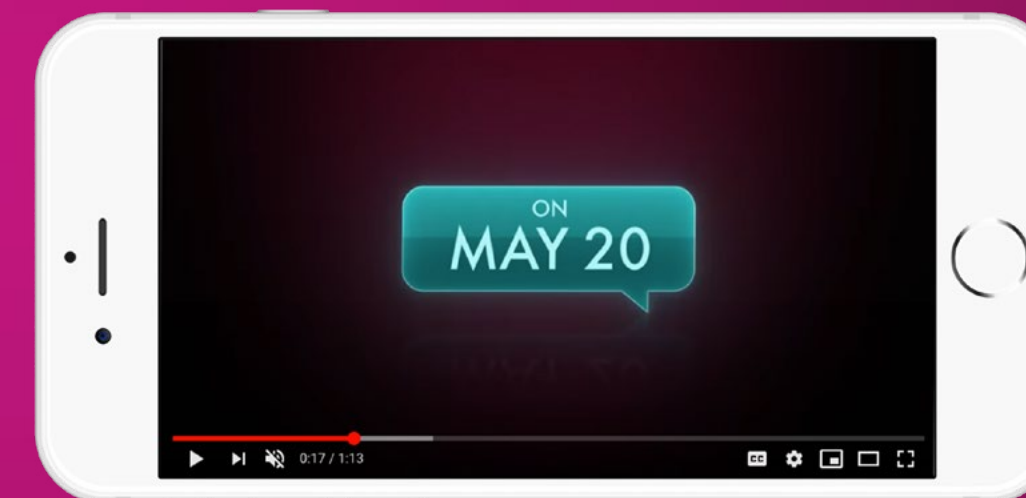
This was supported by extensive media coverage, with 24 broadcast interviews and 18 print profiles in top outlets. We landed more broadcast coverage for this campaign than for any previous titles.

The virtual press junket saw 30 key media completing 88 interviews, and the trailer releases generated 152 pieces of coverage.

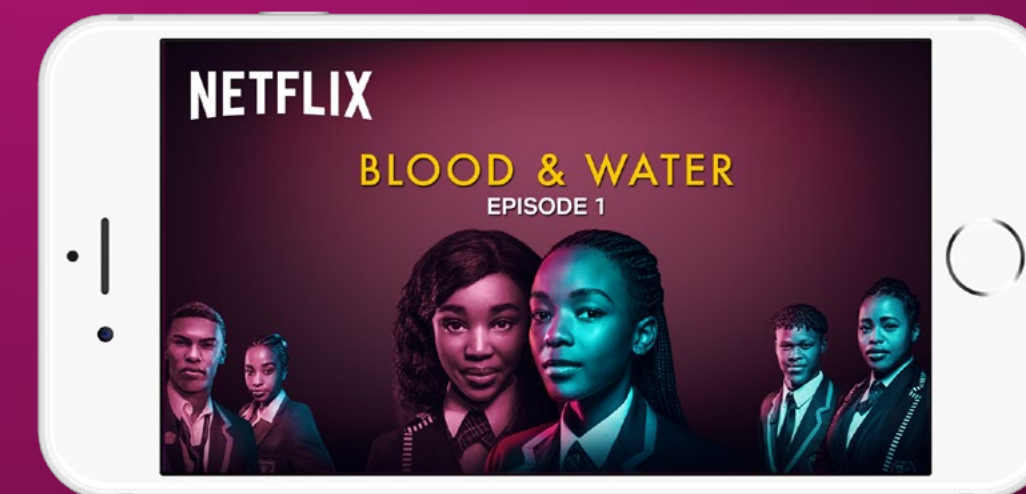
- The virtual premiere hit **2.2 million views** on YouTube and reached the **number one spot on YouTube trends**.
- It was ranked **number one on Netflix** in South Africa and several other key markets.
- *Blood & Water* **trended at number one on Twitter**; key characters made the trending list on Twitter.
- Our afterschool special received **363,000 views**.
- On Instagram, the cast more than **more than doubled their original following**.



EPISODE 1 PREMIERE (2.2M YOUTUBE)



SEASON 1 TEASER (1.9M TWITTER)



GIPHY (STICKERS AND GIFS)

