

Women and Lifestyle TV Driving a DIY Revolution

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There's an industry joke that you can gauge when a person installed D-STV by how long it takes them to buy a drill, then a tool-kit, stylish screwdrivers, a glue gun!

Lifestyle television is driving a Do-It-Yourself revolution around the world and South Africa is no different. While men are increasingly big buyers of cookbooks, their handier half is likely to be in the hardware section stocking up on a pink drill, lovely apple green screwdrivers and floral wellies.

In Britain the DIY market nearly doubled in the ten years from 1993 to 2003, from Â£8.7 billion to Â£16 billion. It is the fourth largest retail market after food and grocery, clothing and footwear and electricals. Forecasts are higher than in any other retail market, with spending expected to reach Â£21.2 billion this year.

There are no similar statistics for South Africa. Banks say there has been no research into this market, however, retailers say growth has been massive in the last decade with a strong economy, buoyant house prices, women who are significantly more empowered than their mothers and increasing numbers of DIY programmes on TV from Top Billing to DSTV's Home Channel showing fast transformations for minimal outlay.

Claus Jakobsen, marketing manager of Danfoss Underfloor Heating* says that the underfloor heating market in South Africa is the second fastest growing in the world and DIY is rapidly inching up. "Globally 40% of underfloor heating installations are DIY, we sell underfloor heating mats in DIY kits through CTM in South Africa and have found that as the market is learning how easy these installations are, more are being sold."

For R2 000 it is possible to buy a DIY underfloor heating kit that will warm the average size bedroom, dining room, big bathroom or study "and if the whole house is done and an intelligent thermostat used the homeowner will see cost savings of up to 40% off their winter heating bill.

"As a Dane, used to women regarding DIY as something they can do as well as men, it is interesting to see, in the six years I have been in South Africa, how many more women are embracing DIY. They are by the fastest growing area of the market and often spend more," Jakobsen said. "If you look at the proliferation of stores like CTM, Builder's Warehouse, Mr Price Home, @ Home and Mica it gives a pretty good idea of how much money people are spending on improving their homes."

In England, Sainsbury's Bank, which has researched the market, says some 6.28 million women have DIY projects scheduled for between now and July compared with just 5m men. British women will spend Â£29.29bn on home improvements whereas men have budgeted for Â£27.53bn, the bank says. For many chains in South Africa too, women have accounted for around a third of the growth in the DIY market over the last five years and manufacturers and retailers alike are doing everything they can to catch their eye.

The average DIY project in Britain will cost about Â£5,000 "that is around R75 000 and is higher than average SA DIY spend. "A person using DIY in South Africa is either doing it because they love craft and the sense of personal achievement they get from DIY or they are looking to save money and will spend anything from R5 000 to R15 000 a project," Jakobsen says.

International research shows that most people plan to do painting and decorating, while the second most popular task is fitting a new kitchen followed by replacing a bathroom. "Painting is entry-level DIY," Jakobsen says, "once they have done that and found how easy and relaxing it is, they tend to move on to other projects: making bookshelves, digging a fishpond, installing underfloor heating or heated towel rails, which Danfoss also make and which form a significant market in South Africa."

In England this year, research shows that some 792 000 homeowners will build home extensions "calling in professionals to help with items such as bricklaying, plumbing or electricals, while 310 000 are looking to convert lofts.

What is driving DIY?

- There are more single person households.
- People have more leisure time and discretionary income.
- Gender no longer dictates role

- Consumers are more design-conscious.
- Houses have become the new pension as stock markets wobble.
- The 'grey' and 'pink' Rand have grown in importance as the affluence of gay couples and older consumers has been recognised.
- Decoration and refurbishment cycles have accelerated as a result of 'makeover' TV programmes and magazine articles and fashion-linked DIY accessories.
- Separate dining and lounge areas are less common as the kitchen becomes a site of entertaining.
- There is a growing trend towards outdoor living " and here Danfoss offers heating possibilities for greenhouses, paths and even vineyards to stop the negative impact of frost.

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Danfoss Underfloor Heating will be featured on an upcoming DSTV programme looking at energy saving and environmentally friendly home products.

More informative and interesting articles by Claus.