

Guidelines on the use of commentators, experts and analysts by SABC News

Use of guests, analysts and specialist commentators: The SABC's principle of providing the full spectrum of opinions, perspectives and comment also applies to selection and use of guests, analysts and specialist commentators. This requires editorial staff to choose, as participants, people who have a wide range of views, opinions and perspectives, and are drawn from all over the country. Such people should be required to declare any vested interest they may have in the matter to be discussed."

SABC Editorial Policies

The SABC should offer information that is substantial, and analysis that is authentic and meaningful to ordinary, enquiring South Africans so that they can form their own opinions. Also, since our services are for everyone's use, they should take account of representation and identity, and reflect life as it is. This means accounts and interviews, and other forms of presentation, should reflect and draw on South Africa's diversity of people, languages, cultures, genders, abilities and classes, and the full spectrum of opinions, perspectives and comment.

SABC Editorial Policies

Interviews are an important tool of journalism. In order to achieve the objective of an interview to break new ground and get new information, it is important for the interviewing to be purposeful and well researched.

SABC Editorial Policies

Ensure compelling, professional and authoritative news and current affairs programming that tells the SA story accurately, fairly and in a balanced way while reflecting the world, in particular Africa, to all South Africans in line with SABC's Editorial policies.

SABC Corporate Goals

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines for SABC's editorial staff on the use of commentators, experts and analysts (hereafter referred to as commentators) in news programming, in a way that facilitates the fulfilling of our public service broadcasting mandate.

Commentators are used in News programming in order to fulfil two main functions, namely:

- To offer analysis of developments within a story
- To offer an alternative view of developments within a story

In order for a commentator to be in a position to deliver on this they need to fulfil certain criteria, including being an expert in the field, having a good understanding of the issue under discussion and in certain instances having direct experience of the issue under discussion. Commentators should also be used to add meaning to a story and not as a replacement of a newsmaker.

Diversity

As per the editorial policy, News should strive to offer the full spectrum of views and perspectives on the issues of the day; in practical terms this means that editorial staff, when selecting commentators, should not rely on the same voices (and faces, in the case of television) to comment on particular issues. There are very few areas in South African life where there is only one competent commentator that is able to provide a view; over time, these selections should aim to include as many different individuals as possible.

Furthermore, the commentators used, should, as outlined in the editorial policy, be as demographically and geographically representative of the South African population as possible. This, in practice, means that a conscious effort must be made by the individuals responsible for these editorial decisions to ensure that issues of race and gender are addressed when making the selection.

Competency

Commentators must have a demonstrable level of competency in which ever field they are selected to speak about. Preferably, this will mean that they are attached to some sort of academic institution, research organisation, indigenous knowledge system, Non-governmental organisation, Community Based Organisation or body that is actively involved in the area that is under discussion. But the rationale is to contextualise, rather than disqualify, individuals – even if they are private (unaffiliated) consultants – who may feature as experts on particular programmes. This approach should be flexible and always

contextualized by the need to ensure the greatest diversity of viewpoints possible.

Additionally, beyond competency within the specific field, the commentators should be comfortable in front of a microphone or camera. Do not underestimate the importance of a commentator's ability to deliver a pithy sound-bite.

Identification

The commentators must always be clearly identified. This includes clearly indicating which organisation, institution or company the individual represents, so the audience can contextualise where the remarks are coming from.

The media

In programming about the media, or topics where media analysis is required or in any other programmes where views from the media will be featured, the same criteria regarding diversity and competency will apply. Editors and specialist reporters from the SABC should be given first consideration for participation and only when the SABC lacks expertise in certain areas, experts from other media organisations could be used to enhance the SABC's coverage of specialist or technical topics.

Monitoring

Suitable monitoring systems shall be implemented so as to ensure the goals of ensuring diversity and competency on the part of commentators are met.

Exercise of editorial control

The guidelines on the use of commentators should be read in the context of the editorial code and policy of the SABC and its implementation must be guided by this document.