

Magic Box reaches Zimbabwe

Digital satellite television company MultiChoice could be losing revenue running into hundreds of thousands of dollars a year as Magic Box - a free-to-air satellite receiver that can pirate DStv signals - is becoming popular in Zimbabwe.



Magic Box broadcasts MultiChoice's DStv channels through intercepting satellite signals provided to genuine Multichoice subscribers. But MultiChoice Zimbabwe is not aware of the new craze.

"I am not aware of this development. I will consult with our technical team and find out what is happening," said Elizabeth Dziva, MultiChoice Zimbabwe public relations manager. Satellite decoder dealers say the Magic Box has been around since early last year, selling for an average of 120, and one can access the full bouquet without any interruption. The DStv full bouquet costs \$73 a month.

"We buy the decoders from Dubai and China, but there are some cheaper ones coming from Botswana," said a satellite installer. Those that are coming from Botswana are a result of a massive campaign by Botswana's MultiChoice to block Magic Box from pirating the signal early this year.

Billy Sekgororoane, general manager for MultiChoice Botswana, was quoted in the Botswana press as saying MultiChoice was aware of Magic Box's existence and they are working on a way to deal with it.

"We are very much aware of these new decoders; we have actually been following it for some time now," Sekgororoane said. Dealers say for the decoders to intercept the signal they use two satellite dishes facing each other. The biggest loser in this new craze could be the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, which is also accessed through DStv. Locals are refusing to pay their television licences, leaving the state broadcaster with revenue from DStv. But with DStv accessed by many for free, there will be less revenue.