



# Pay-TV company tries to subdue Zimbabwe storm over English Premiership

MultiChoice Zimbabwe is battling to contain a storm that has erupted in Zimbabwe over MultiChoice Africa's reduced coverage of the English Premier League (EPL) this season, which has prompted angry reaction from subscribers and staunch followers of the EPL in the crisis-sapped nation.

By [Dumisani Ndlela](#) 27 Aug 2007

Harare - "We urge the government to act and do away with MultiChoice," a furious subscriber, who signed "Very Angry Viewer" in a letter to a weekly business newspaper, wrote after accusing the company of "insulting viewers who have stood by MultiChoice all these years".

Zimbabweans are loyal followers of the English Premiership and have often used the English games to lighten up and forget their grief over an eight-year economic recession that has crippled the country's once prosperous economy.

MultiChoice Zimbabwe, which had marketed its premier DStv bouquet around the EPL games for the 2007/2008 season, says it has "noted the concerns of the subscribers" and media reports on the issue, but insists it "would never intentionally mislead or upset" subscribers.

"We appreciate the frustration of loyal EPL fans at not being able to see all the EPL games," says Kirsty Brien, the company's marketing and public relations manager.

She said the loss of the EPL "A" package was a result of the EPL's decision to change the way in which it sold rights in Africa and the entry of new competitors in the African market.

DStv's Supersport channel failed to secure the rights for the whole of Africa for exclusive coverage of this season's English Premiership matches despite a strong bid that was 400% higher than its offer the previous year.

The rights for the 80% package was awarded to GTV, a new pay television broadcaster currently operating in only three African countries.

Supersport was only able to secure the rights to broadcast 20% and a third package containing 10%. The 20% package was secured for Africa outside South Africa and this includes Zimbabwe.

Brien says it was regrettable that some subscribers believed it to be MultiChoice's fault to have reduced broadcast of the EPL games and were therefore calling for "the cancellation of our licence to broadcast in Zimbabwe".

"We have done all that is possible to ensure that we continue to screen the best football in the world and have ensured that DStv subscribers will get widest football coverage of any subscribers in this market," she says, indicating that the English Premiership "has full responsibility for any and all decisions made regarding international screening rights and contracts to broadcast across the world".

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