

HiTV forms consortium to bid for EPL Rights in Africa

HiTV, an African digital satellite operator, on 12 May 2009, announced its intention to acquire the broadcast rights to the English Premier League for the African continent alongside 11 other pay-TV operators in Africa.



The bid forms part of a proposal presented to the FA today by HiTV, which will also offer every country in Africa its own DTH platform.

HiTV is working with eleven other African broadcasters for the acquisition, which will spearhead the development of a new continent-wide broadcast platform. The continent-wide technology and content backbone being created aims to allow individual countries in Africa to develop their own independent broadcasting market and tailor their solution (e.g. cost, content, language) to meet the demands of regional viewers.

The English Premier League broadcast rights are currently divided between three pay-TV operators within the four African territories - with North Africa going to ShowTime Arabia, Nigeria going to HiTV, South Africa and the rest of Africa going to Multichoice's DSTV. HiTV proposes that the rules be relaxed to allow a remodeling of the current African broadcasting landscape. By removing current regulations, either a pay-TV or free-to-air operator could own the broadcast rights for their country.

HiTV plans to lead the acquisition of the rights, backed by broadcasters and industry figures including from Yes TV, Star TV, Total Acces, Skyy Media, Kiss FM, Zuku TV, VOX Africa, Next Generation Broadcasting, Imanle Africa, and several former GTV representatives.

HiTV's model has already been applied in Nigeria, where it broadcasts a mixture of entertainment, Nollywood, music and popular culture, as well as European football including UEFA Champions League and English Carling Cup football matches. HiTV has built a base of 200,000 subscribers in the two years since its launch in Nigeria, which the company largely attributes to the acquisition of English premier League broadcast rights.

Toyin Subair, managing director and chief executive officer of HiTV, says: "The English Premier League draws more African viewers than any other genre of programming. We want to streamline the model to allow broadcasters and viewers to have greater control over this content. Africa is an emerging market for the global broadcasting industry and there is

huge potential for international content owners and advertisers. Our proposal will open up the market to individual countries to build and develop their own broadcast markets and drive investment. As football has such a global appeal, it only seems fitting that it is set to unite African broadcasting.”

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