

Survey finds 23 pct of Malaysian use illicit streaming devices

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A new study of the content viewing behavior of Malaysian consumers, revealed that 23 per cent of consumers use a TV box which can be used to stream pirated television and video content. — Reuters photo

KUALA LUMPUR: A new study of the content viewing behavior of Malaysian consumers, revealed that 23 per cent of consumers use a TV box which can be used to stream pirated television and video content. These TV boxes, also known as Illicit Streaming Devices (ISDs), allow users to access hundreds of pirated television channels and video-on-demand content, usually with a low annual subscription fee.

TV boxes often come pre-loaded with illegal applications allowing 'plug-and-play' access to pirated content. The survey, commissioned by the Asia Video Industry Association's Coalition Against Piracy (CAP) and conducted by YouGov, highlights the detrimental effects of streaming piracy on legitimate subscription video services.

This latest research showed a slight decrease in ISD usage when compared to a similar YouGov study undertaken in January, which found that 25 per cent of Malaysian online consumers used TV boxes to stream pirated television and video content.

The research also found that 50 per cent of Malaysian online consumers have accessed streaming piracy websites or torrent sites to access premium content without paying any subscription fees.

Of the 23 per cent of consumers who purchased a TV box for free streaming, nearly two thirds (64 per cent) stated that they had cancelled all or some of their subscription to legal pay TV services. Specifically, 34 per cent asserted that they cancelled their local pay television subscriptions as a direct consequence of owning an ISD.

International subscription services, which includes pan-Asia-only offerings, were impacted as well – 20 per cent of Malaysian users have abandoned subscriptions in favor of ISD purchases.

In addition to the short-term problem of cancelled subscriptions is a longer term problem – namely, many of the people using ISDs are young. The survey found that ISDs are particularly favored among 18-24 year-olds, with 76 per cent cancelling legitimate subscription services as a result of owning ISDs.

AVIA's Coalition Against Piracy (CAP) general manager Neil Gane commented: "The piracy ecosystem is highly fragmented and so what we are developing and refining is a holistic solution to include enhanced legislation to allow for effective enforcement; meaningful cooperation with e-platforms and other intermediaries, disabling access to pirated content through efficient and effective site blocking and consumer outreach".

In February, it was reported that the Malaysian Communications and Multi-Media Commission (MCMC) and the Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs (KPDNHEP) were conducting an in-depth study on a potential TV box ban.

Currently the sale of TV boxes require SIRIM approvals and the sale of 'unlicensed' TV boxes can result in a hefty fine. In June four Malaysian businessmen were charged for possessing and selling unlicensed Android TV boxes and audio-video sender equipment and fined RM70,000 (USD\$16,500).

