

e.sat announces pay-TV plans

Issued by [eMedia](#)

13 Dec 2007

e.sat, the sister business to free-to-air television channel e.tv, has announced that it will initiate its multi-channel strategy in 2008 with the launch of South Africa's first independent 24-hour television news service on Multichoice's DSTV platform.

During ICASA's hearings on pay-TV, e.sat argued that the South African market could only sustain two pay-TV operators. When four pay-TV licences were issued in addition to the Multichoice licence, e.sat decided to explore alternative opportunities as a content aggregator and channel supplier.

e.tv's Chief Executive Officer, Marcel Golding says, "e.news is our strongest brand. When we decided to become a channel supplier instead of a platform operator, our biggest priority was to secure as wide a reach as possible for South Africa's first independent 24-hour news channel. We are very pleased to have reached an agreement with Multichoice to distribute a 24-hour e.news service on the DSTV platform, giving us immediate access to more than 1.2 million South African homes." e.news is currently the most-watched English-medium television news service in South Africa and has shown spectacular growth over the past two years.

Multichoice Chief Executive Officer, Nolo Letele says, "We are delighted to carry on our DSTV platform a 24-hour homegrown news channel produced by e.sat. We believe the market is ready for such a channel and e.tv has a proven track record in this field. This channel will be an ideal complement to our suite of news channels including CNN, Al Jazeera, BBC World, SABC Africa and Sky News."

In addition to the 24-hour news channel, e.sat will produce a number of channels for the DSTV platform over the next few years. e.sat's sister company e.tv will also focus on producing and distributing channels on the new digital terrestrial television (DTT) platform which is due to roll out in November 2008.

Golding says, "It has become evident that DTT will become a major free-to-air multi-channel platform in South Africa. Our content production and channel distribution strategy will allow us to leverage e.tv's success in building a multi-channel DTT business and in driving the rollout of DTT in South Africa." Since its launch nine years ago, e.tv has become the number one English-medium channel in the country.

e.tv and e.sat also plan to distribute programming and channels worldwide with a particular focus on emerging markets in Africa and the Far East. In Africa, e.tv has already entered into strategic partnerships with other free-to-air broadcasters in order to develop a pan-African television business.

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