India Future Foundation

India Future Foundation Analysis on Kodi Box and Digital Piracy

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What is Kodi?

On PCs, set-top boxes, smartphones, and tablets, Kodi (previously known as "XBMC" and "Xbox Media Center") is an open-source media player software that allows users to browse local media and stream distant media such as videos, music, and photos.While local file playback was Kodi's (XBMC) first use, remote streaming has become a more popular function as internet video sources have become more widespread over the last decade.

Small "Add-on" modules that a Kodi user may add to their Kodi installation via a menu within the programme allow for remote streaming. The courts will have to decide whether remote streaming complies with applicable laws. However, for this report, we'll assume that the extensive catalogue of official Add-ons that stream content from their sources (e.g., YouTube and BBC iPlayer) is licenced content and complies with applicable laws. That streaming content via unofficial Add-ons does not.

The XBMC Foundation, on the other hand, is surprisingly open about Kodi. The developers collaborate with the Software Freedom Law Center, which gives pieces of advice on problems like copyright and trademark, and the source code for all supported systems is available on GitHub.

Kodi is a legal open-source media player that is used on a variety of devices. However, the addons loaded jeopardise its security. Because Kodi's built-in addons don't operate, users are forced to instal third-party addons. Some of them violate copyrighted content, putting your device and data in danger. On the other hand, Kodi collaborates with primary streaming services such as Hulu, HBO, Netflix, and others. This prevents piracy by allowing consumers to enjoy internet streaming material via Kodi applications.The problem with Kodi is that, while it has many great features and is easy to use, it can also be used for unauthorised streaming. Subscription sports and movie packages, for example, are only a few clicks and a quick download away - and all without cost. The arrests were made not because people were selling Kodi devices but because they dealt with them with these illegal programmes and services pre-loaded. Kodi and Kodi-enabled devices, according to the statement, are entirely lawful.What if you pre-install that illegal streaming software on a streaming box and then advertise them as a free all-in-one international streaming source? That's when you're going to run into a lot of legal issues.

Kodi is Just Software

The assumption or inference that Kodi provides unauthorised content is one of the most common misunderstandings about the software. The image below, obtained from the Kodi download website, clearly shows that the programme comes with no preloaded material; it is up to the individual user to configure the application to play local or remote files.
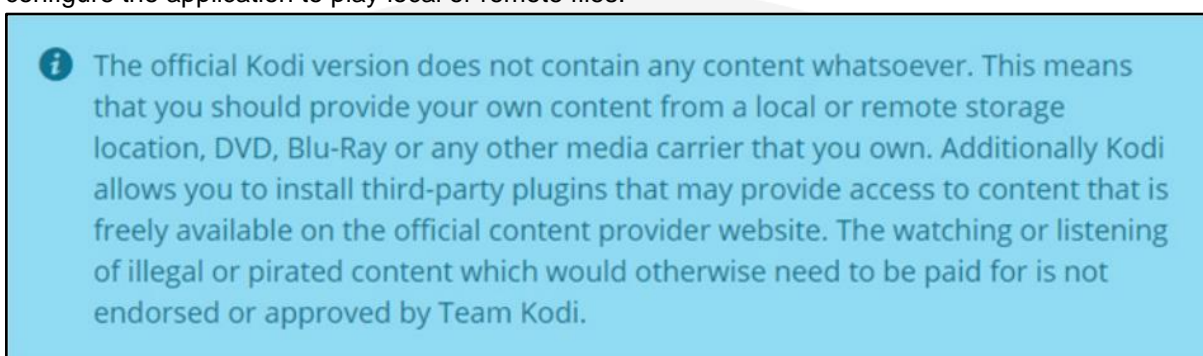

The official Kodi version does not contain any content whatsoever. This means that you should provide your own content from a local or remote storage location, DVD, Blu-Ray or any other media carrier that you own. Additionally Kodi allows you to install third-party plugins that may provide access to content that is freely available on the official content provider website. The watching or listening of illegal or pirated content which would otherwise need to be paid for is not endorsed or approved by Team Kodi.

Figure 1 - Content disclaimer from Kodi's download page

With this knowledge, we can conceive of Kodi as a piece of software similar to how we think of web browsers and other media players. Many different software applications - Kodi, Chrome, Firefox, VLC, and so on - may easily be set to access both legal and unlicensed material with the proper technical know-how. It is up to the user to decide what content they access.

The term Kodi has recently been linked to unauthorised streaming. One crucial cause is the widespread availability of "completely loaded" Kodi boxes on online marketplaces such as Facebook, Craigslist, and Kijiji (see Figure 2), as well as on roadside billboards.
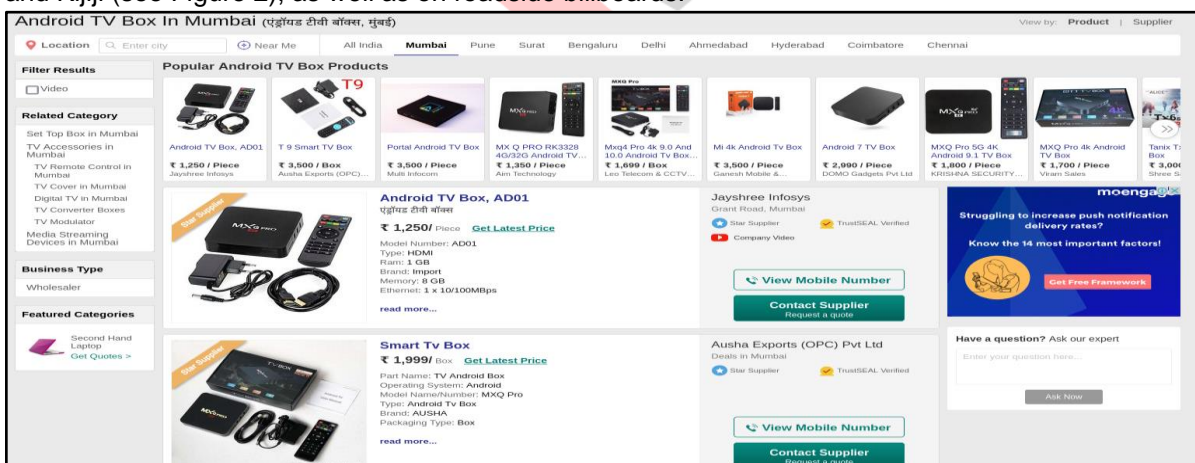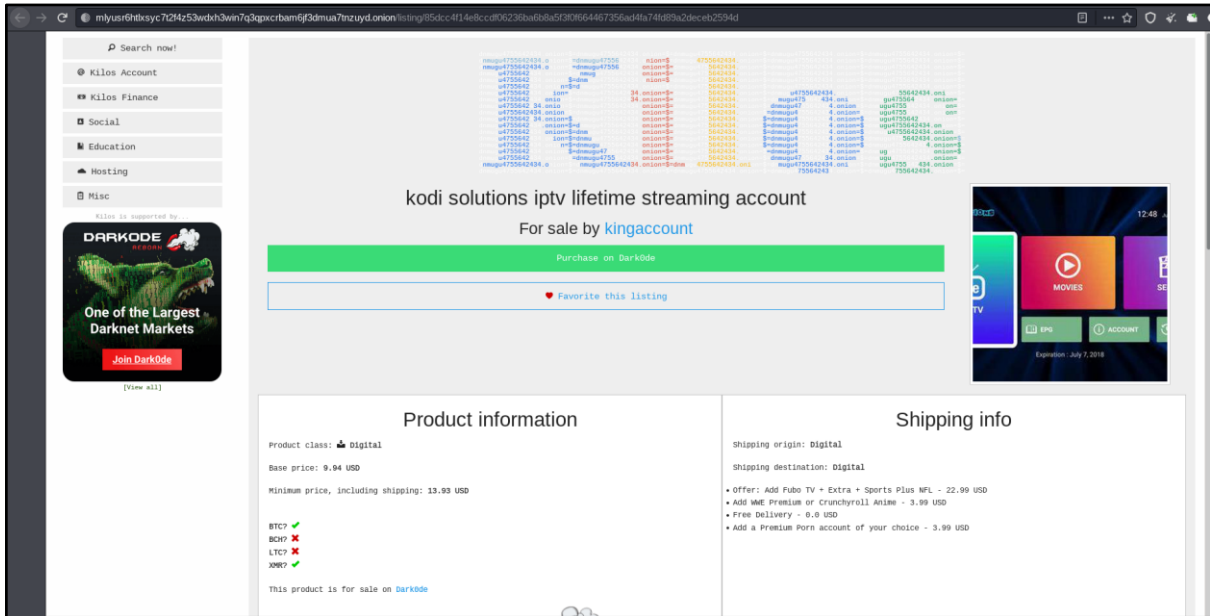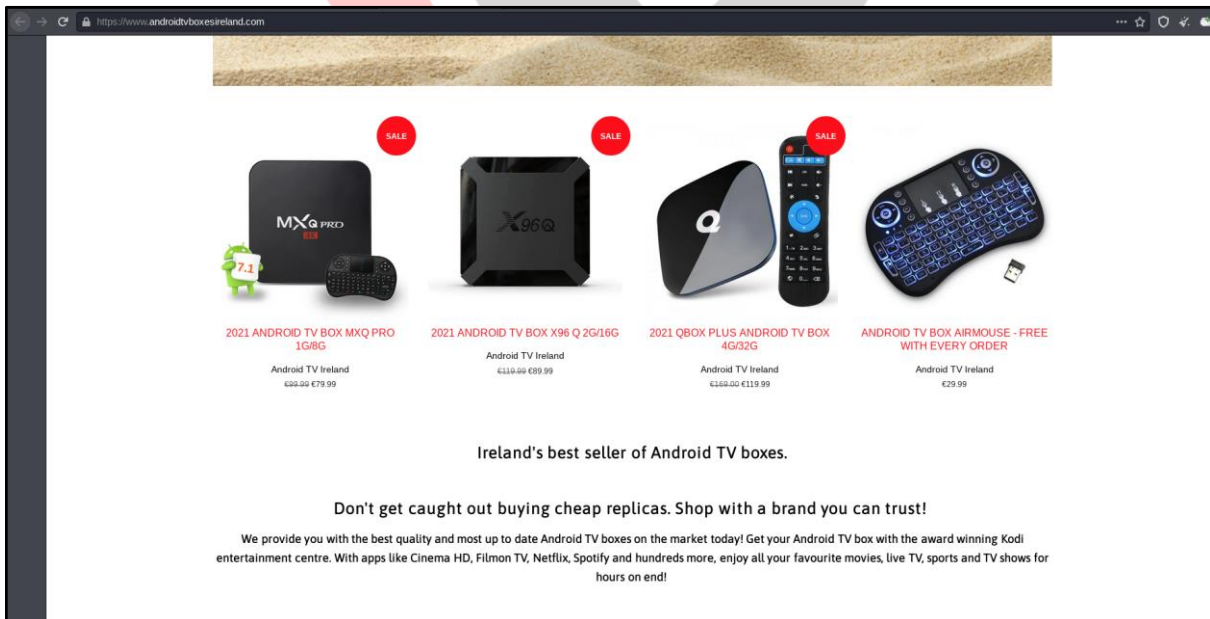

Figure 2 - kodi box on indiamart[1]

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[1] https://dir.indiamart.com/

Figure 3 - kodi box on Dark Web[2]

2

http://mlyusr6htlxsyc7t2f4z53wdxh3win7q3qpxcrbam6jf3dmua7tnzuyd.onion/listing/85dcc4f14e8ccdf0
6236ba6b8a5f3f0f664467356ad4fa74fd89a2deceb2594d
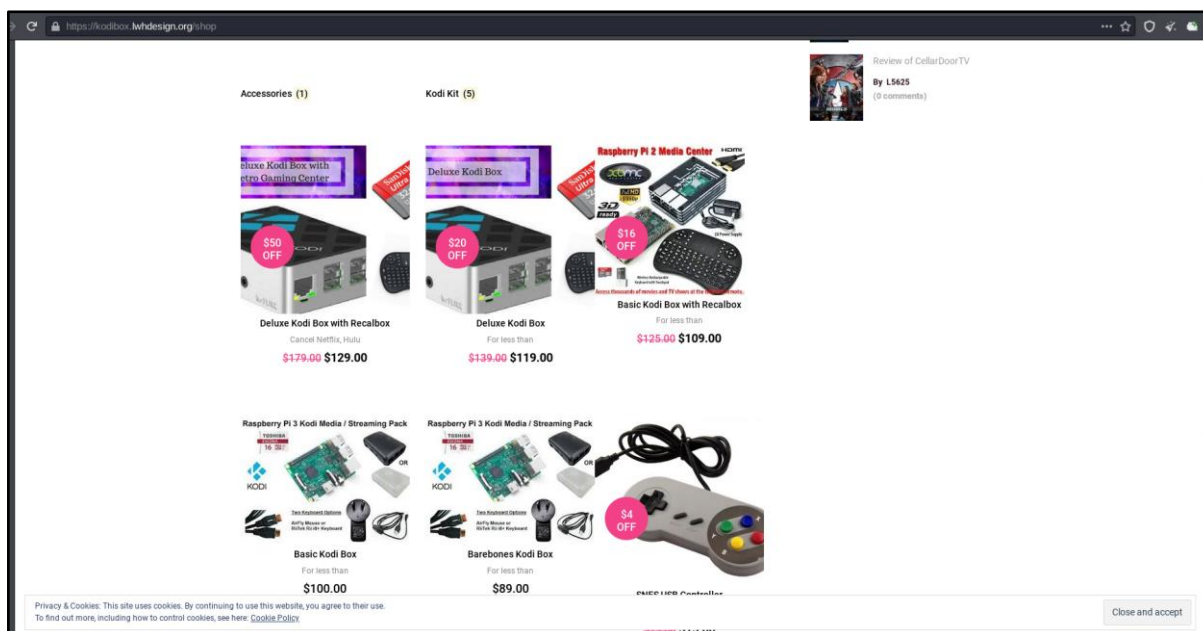
Figure 4 - kodi box on indiamart[3]

Figure 5 - kodi box on lwhdesign[4]

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[3] https://www.androidtvboxesireland.com/
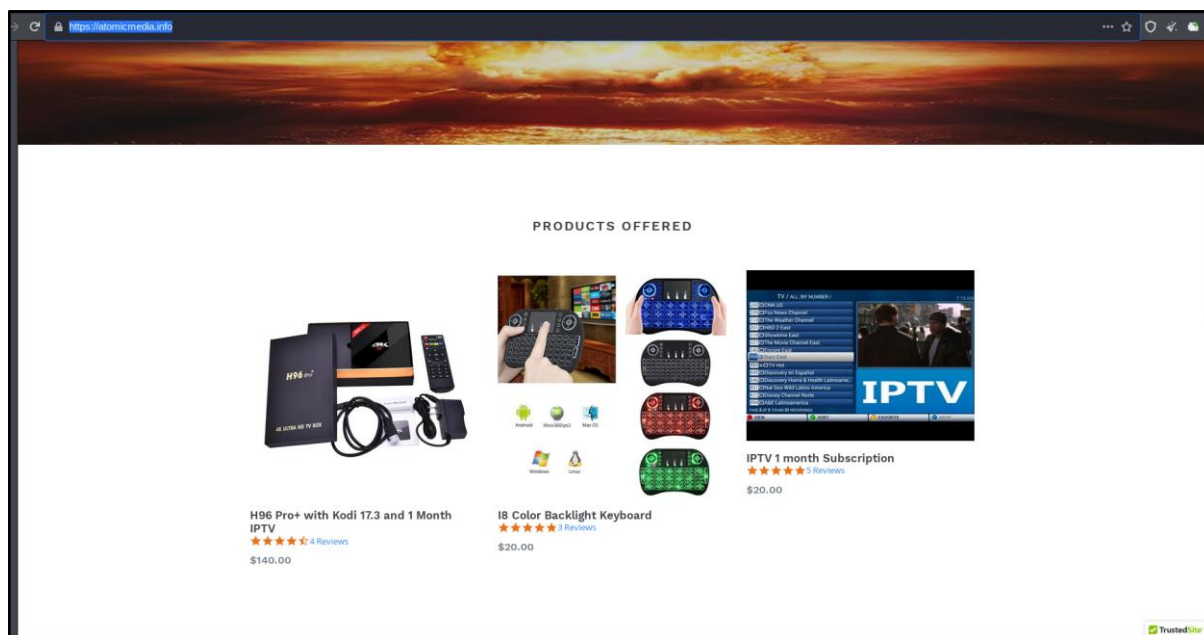[4] https://kodibox.lwhdesign.org/shop

Figure 6 - kodi box on atomicmedia[5]

A "fully-loaded" Kodi box is a tiny set-top box with the processing power to play HD video; more significantly, it comes pre-loaded with unofficial Add-ons and Kodi software configured to access illegal content. Even the most technically challenged person may access a vast collection of unauthorised content by simply putting such a box into television and connecting it to the Internet.

How Unofficial Kodi Add-ons Work

Often, the "fully-loaded" Kodi devices that access unofficial and unauthorised material are essentially aggregators of content from numerous sources; they function as a user interface for an address book that knows where to get information spread over a variety of Internet storage providers.

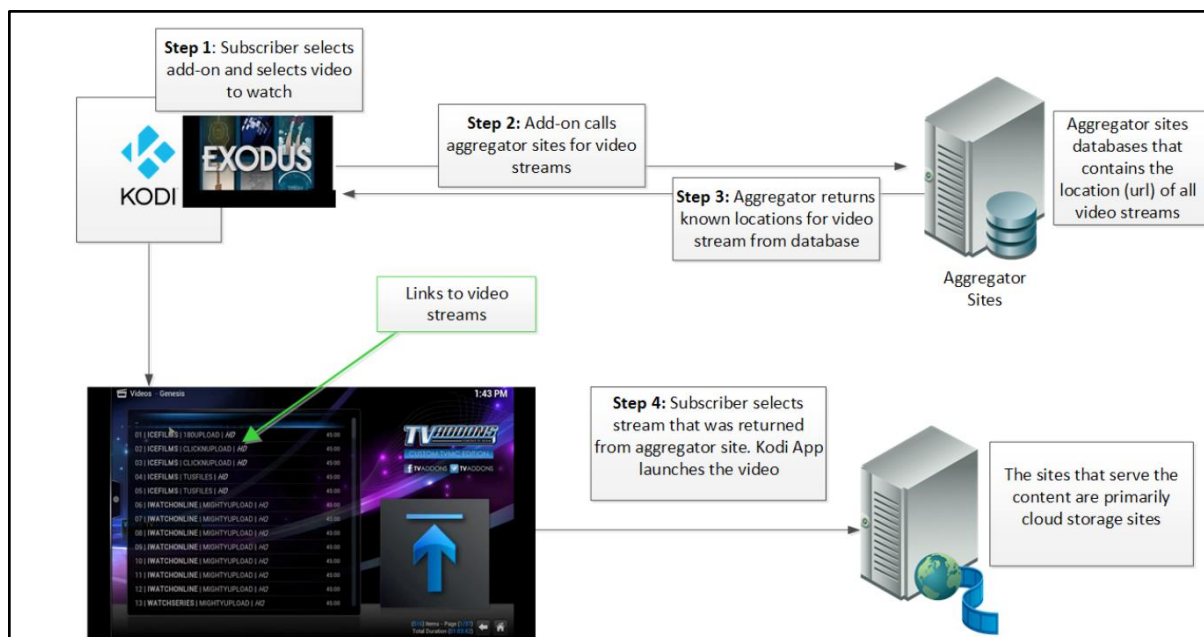**The diagram below shows the workflow for Exodus, one of the more popular unofficial Add-ons.**

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[5] https://atomicmedia.info/

Figure 7 - Workflow Diagram demonstrating how the Unofficial Add-on "Exodus" works

The user chooses a movie to view in Exodus, and the Exodus Add-on then connects to an aggregator site that keeps track of where multiple versions of the desired film are supported. The aggregator site then sends a list of accessible files to the Kodi user interface, where the user may choose which version of the video they want to watch. After that, the user picks the video, which then begins to play. Unofficial Kodi Add-ons can be configured to access unlicensed live and on-demand content.

The Economics of the "Fully-Loaded" Kodi Ecosystem

Kodi is free to download and install on your smartphone, PC, or set-top box since it is open-source software. The Kodi creators, the XBMC Foundation, build and maintain the software mainly as a hobby to give high-quality media player software to home theatre lovers.While the Kodi software is free, numerous companies may benefit from the "fully-loaded" box ecosystem. The names of a few of these participants are included below.

The Seller of a "Fully Loaded" Kodi Box:

The seller of a "fully loaded" Kodi machine generates money by selling hardware to end customers. They generally promote themselves through online ads and, occasionally, in physical shops, as seen in Figure 2. The vendors of Kodi boxes profit typically on the hardware box's markup/margin.
These "fully-loaded" Kodi boxes are sometimes offered without a warranty, allowing the Kodi box vendor to profit from fixing and reinstalling "fully-loaded" Kodi variations when specific Add-ons stop working.

The "Fully-loaded" Kodi Service Providers:

The Kodi software is, as previously said, free. However, several unauthorised Add-ons and modifications to the Kodi software are entirely independent of the XBMC Foundation and allow it to access unlicensed material. These add-ons are sometimes offered for free and are hosted on lower-quality servers with quality and stability concerns. There are, however, premium programmes that allow you to view live and on-demand videos for a monthly fee. The cost of these services varies, but on average, they cost approximately USD 10 each month.

The File Hosts:

A hosting business or content delivery network (CDN) receives some remuneration throughout the value chain, whether the files are hosted for video-on-demand or re-streamed for live video. According to Sandvine's study, free services frequently make use of free cloud services from businesses such as Google, Dropbox, Amazon, and Microsoft, where uploaders make use of the enormous amounts of free storage available.

Because of the storage and bandwidth expenses associated with providing video, the premium services are likely to employ higher-quality providers. So the hosting and CDN providers storing the files are likely to get hefty fees.

The File Uploaders:

The users make just a minor portion of the economic chain. Some unauthorised video service companies reward users with credits to upload files and make the unlicensed content publicly available. This approach is similar to that of private torrent sites, which require users to share specific files in return for the right to download more.
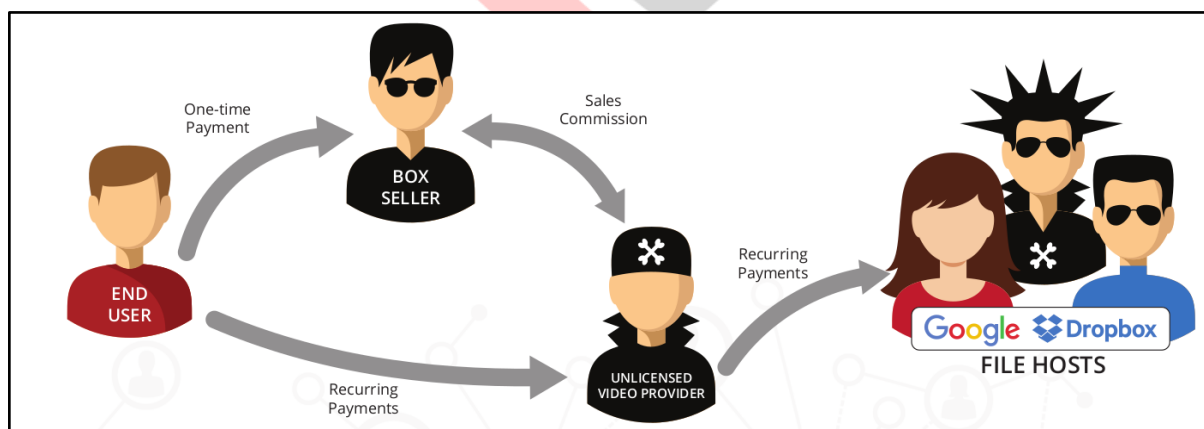

Figure 4 - The economics of the "fully-loaded" Kodi Ecosystem

Is Kodi legal?

Kodi is categorically not illegal — it's just a piece of software provided under the GNU General Public License. However, much as a torrent client may be used to distribute data lawfully or share illegally submitted material, Kodi can be used for less respectable purposes. The XBMC Foundation, on the other hand, is surprisingly open about what Kodi is. The developers collaborate with the Software Freedom Law Center, which gives pieces of advice on problems like copyright and trademark. The source code for all supported systems is available on GitHub.

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Why should you avoid purchasing these devices?

Parental controls are frequently absent on these gadgets. They may expose children or young people to graphic or age-inappropriate content if they are used.Unfortunately, if your children watch unlawful content online (also known as digital piracy), they and you may be exposed to cyber dangers, annoying pop-ups, and unexpectedly dangerous information. The risks of digital piracy may be found on shady websites and preinstalled streaming devices, such as Kodi boxes. However, they can also be found on various unauthorised apps on mobile phones, tablets, and smart TVs.

Another primary reason customers avoid acquiring these streaming gadgets is that they are dangerous to their electrical systems. When devices and their power cords have been examined, some have violated EU safety requirements, posing a serious public safety risk and the potential to cause a fire in your house or business.

Reference

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