



## Blurring the lines

In the past, we had specific devices for specific roles. Phones were for making phone calls, cameras were for taking photos, TVs were for watching TV, and games consoles were for playing games. All that has changed today, marking a new era in technology. Phones are rarely used to make phone calls, but now enable us to browse the Internet, take photos, watch TVs, and play games. Today's TVs have many of the same capabilities. Our devices have become largely interchangeable, all capable of a wide variety of functions that we could not have foreseen even 15 years ago.

The lines are blurring for service providers too. Gone are the times of choosing between traditional free to air and paid-for TV channels; today, we have over the top (OTT) services that provide us with content, where we want it, and on the device, we want it on. And that's only including the legal options; a great deal of the population, especially at the younger end of the scale, are streaming content through massive servers that avoid copyright laws.

While the growth in content variety is great for the consumer, providing a whole host of new options with the flexibility we've come to value so highly, for broadcasters, it makes the market much more complex to navigate. Traditional direct to home (DTH) broadcasters are increasingly launching their own OTT services to compete with the likes of Netflix and Amazon Prime, which offer vast libraries of on-demand and proprietary content.

Sky is a great example of a company moving with the times. The media giant has evolved its market offerings, breaking beyond subscription-based TV packages to providing Internet and mobile phone services, as well as its own streaming service, Now TV, which offers a small selection of TV channels and a library of programmes over the Internet. The company is facing major competition from a variety of rivals, and recently reported a nine percent fall in operating profit after paying more for exclusive broadcast rights for Premier League football matches.

The company is now planning to offer a complete subscription TV package without the need for a satellite dish from 2018, the first of its kind. The package is designed to provide Sky TV packages to consumers who are unable to install a satellite dish at their property, although details of which channels will be included and whether 4K content will be incorporated are yet to be announced. Sky estimates that this will help it reach an additional six million customers across Europe. In the UK alone, some two million homes are unable to install satellite dishes. Sky's new service will be delivered over the Internet. Analysts

have pointed out that this requires fast broadband speeds, which many consumers in the UK and Europe still do not have access to. However, for Sky, it's a great step in a new direction that will enable it to continue to diversify and gain new customers.

As time goes by, we're seeing more and more tech companies diversify their offerings in line with consumer preferences. This is increasingly important in an era where consumers have little loyalty to providers, coupled with the freedom to switch services on a whim. Flexibility has become key in today's market, and there's no sign of this changing any time soon.



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