

TELECOM

AIS offers VOD to keep pace in TV

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Advanced Info Service (AIS) yesterday became the first mobile operator to commercially launch pay video-on-demand (VOD), a service that will heat up the subscription-based home entertainment TV sector's battle with over-the-top (OTT) providers.

The video-on-demand service will be delivered via over-the-top on both mobile and fixed-line broadband networks, with monthly fees ranging from 299-599 baht.

The move by the country's largest mobile operator is aimed at increasing the average revenue per fixed broadband user from 550 baht to 600 baht per month this year.

It will also boost data usage through AIS's mobile services. In 2016, the average monthly revenue per AIS postpaid user was 600 baht, while per prepaid user was 186 baht.

"We want to become a digital entertainment service provider on both mobile and TV platforms," said Prattana Leelapanang, AIS's acting chief marketing officer.

Under the packages, customers can sign up for the AIS Play app for 299 baht to watch 14 entertainment channels on their smartphones. Six channels feature hit series from HBO, HBO Go, and Warner TV, while three channels feature Fox Sports, Fox Fight Sports and HLN News.

Customers who want to watch AIS's



Prattana Leelapanang (centre), acting chief marketing officer of AIS, at the commercial launch of AIS video-on-demand service.

video-on-demand on a TV screen are required to sign up with AIS Playbox, a set-top box with a built-in WiFi connection that converts a conventional TV to a smart TV via the AIS broadband-fibre network. AIS charges customers 299 baht a month for 13 channels and 599 baht a month for a 30-channel package.

Last month AIS signed agreements with HBO, Fox and the NBA, giving the company the broadcasting rights to movies, sports and programmes from the three providers, following TrueVisions's failure to renew a content distribution agreement with HBO.

AIS has 41 million subscribers, 3 million of which downloaded the AIS Play app to access Hollywood movies and sporting events from its partners via their smartphones.

However, Mr Prattana said only 1.5 million subscribers are active users on AIS Play, with the other half accessing free services.

The company has 280,000 customers using AIS Playbox.

"AIS targets 500,000 customers, both postpaid and prepaid, signing up with AIS Play this year, and another 100,000 customers for AIS Playbox during the period," he said.

Mr Prattana said data usage on the mobile network in Thailand is skyrocketing thanks to the shift in consumer behaviour and a flood of new content being offered from streaming services.

The average monthly data usage per AIS mobile data customer in February was 3.6 gigabytes per month, twice the amount from a year earlier.