

SpongeBob online? Nickelodeon to offer Internet subscription

January 29 2015, by Anick Jesdanun



This undated file image released by Nickelodeon shows a scene from the animated show "SpongeBob SquarePants." Nickelodeon plans to offer a stand-alone Internet offering. Viacom announced the service during a conference call to discuss the company's quarterly earnings report. CEO Philippe Dauman says the new service "will target the fast-growing mobile market (and) will be very attractive for parents and children." (AP Photo/Nickelodeon, File)

SpongeBob fans rejoice: Nickelodeon is the latest cable channel to plan

a stand-alone Internet offering.

What's not yet known is whether this offering will be the same channel as what cable and satellite TV subscribers now get. It's possible the service will have just supplemental content or archives of past shows when it launches in March. That would make it similar to a \$4-a-month online offering for "Sesame Street."

Nickelodeon owner Viacom Inc. will announce details, including the price and the name of the service, next month.

Viacom CEO Philippe Dauman said the new service "will target the fast-growing mobile market (and) will be very attractive for parents and children."

The company announced the service Thursday during a conference call to discuss the company's quarterly earnings report.

HBO and Showtime are among the other channels planning stand-alone Internet offerings as more people ditch their cable or satellite TV service. CBS already has a \$6-a-month service that includes live television for those who live in 14 markets with CBS-owned stations. Major sports leagues also offer live games online, though often with blackouts of hometown teams.

Meanwhile, Dish Network Corp. and Sony Corp. will soon launch Internet-only packages of television channels that used to require a cable or satellite subscription.

The Dish offering, called Sling TV, will start at \$20 a month and have channels from The Walt Disney Co., Scripps Networks Interactive Inc. and Time Warner Inc.'s Turner. The channels include ESPN and CNN.

Sony's PlayStation Vue will have unspecified channels from Viacom, Scripps, Discovery Communications Inc., CBS Corp., 21st Century Fox Inc. and Comcast Corp.'s NBCUniversal. Sony hasn't announced the price for its service, which will initially be limited to owners of PlayStation game consoles.

These offerings make it easier for households to drop their traditional pay-TV service and piece together their own package of video services.

Households that do this won't necessarily save money, though: The price for Internet access will likely go up when separated from a bundle, and these subscriptions add up in cost.

But it's a good option for those who watch few channels live and don't mind waiting for shows to appear on Netflix and other streaming services. It also allows households to downgrade to a cheaper cable or satellite TV package and supplement that with specific channels they want.

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