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TV in Your Hands

Qtelmedia sets up base in Malaysia to gear up for mobile TV

By Cecilia Kok

Fancy the idea of watching your favorite TV program while you're on the move? Not while you are driving of course! Mobile phones are more than just a tool for communications; they are also entertainment devices. With the advent of mobile TV, you can watch your favorite channels on phone wherever you are.

Mobile TV is still at a nascent stage but has been touted as the next big thing in the cellular world. In Malaysia it has started making waves, namely DiGi and Maxis, are actively promoting this new service to their subscribers.

Mobile TV is being offered in affordable packages. Subscribers pay a monthly fixed fee and get unlimited access to different channels based on their selected package.

"The public has been absolutely receptive to mobile TV thus far," said Qtelmedia Group Ltd. Chief executive officer Sinead O'Sullivan. "The take-up rate of this new service has been encouraging. We expect to see strong growth of demand for mobile TV as mobile phone penetration continues to increase this year."

Based in Ireland, Qtelmedia is a content network company that offers a secure and dedicated distribution platform for the delivery of Live TV, video clips, alerts, downloads and value-add services to mobile operators. Through Qtelmedia's technology and content, mobile operators can offer their subscribers live TV and on-demand content not only on 3G but also 2.5G handsets with general packet radio services (GPRS) or enhanced data rate for GSM evolution (EDGE) capability.

"The average revenue per user (ARPU) is consistently coming down for mobile operators and the hardest hit is voice traffic. So, mobile operators are diversifying into content to increase their ARPU," O'Sullivan explained.

"The beauty of content is that it holds value, especially if it is exclusive content that cannot be found elsewhere. This will definitely promote customer loyalty," she added.

MALAYSIAN HUB

According to O'Sullivan, Qtelmedia's market focus is very much on the Asian region due to the potential demand for mobile TV here. It has chosen Malaysia as the core hub of its operations and set up Qtelmedia (M) Sdn Bhd in March last year.

Qtelmedia Malaysia operates out of Cyberjaya, where it receives live TV and events content from content providers worldwide via its satellite and fibre receiver networks. It edits and configures these content for delivery to its clients in the Asia-Pacific region such as Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

"Every single mobile operator that we deal with in this region connects to Malaysia. There are three reasons why we chose Malaysia as our core hub and Asian headquarters. First, it is the support from the Malaysian government, which is very tech-friendly and very supportive of new technology companies. In fact, we were recently granted the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) status.

"Second, it is the people and their enthusiasm. Even on a social basis, when I talk to individuals about mobile TV, I could tell straightaway there was an eagerness for this offering here.

"The third reason is that it is more cost-effective to operate in Malaysia compared to the other two countries that we were considering, namely Singapore and Hong Kong," O'Sullivan explained.

AS GOOD AS IT GETS

Since Qtelmedia Malaysia's official launch last October, it experienced a monthly revenue growth of between 25% and 30%.