

Streamer Tubi says the future is free as it moves into Europe

October 14 2019, by Fiachra Gibbons



They call it 'the free Netflix'

US streaming giant Tubi—which has been dubbed "the free Netflix"—is to launch a children's network next week and expand its main service into Europe next year, it announced Monday.

Tubi Kids will begin showing 1,200 hours of children's television series and films next Monday, with the the world's biggest advert-supported free streaming platform set to move into the UK early in the New Year.

CEO Farhad Massoudi told AFP that he was convinced that eventually "more than than half of all TV will be ad-supported video on demand."

The Tubi founder said their model was based on a "very low ad level of four to five minutes per hour—even lower in Australia—which is about a quarter of the ad load of US cable networks.

"If you are interrupted every two minutes with a commercial break you are not going to be happy," he added.

"We have no intention of making the entertainment experience miserable. It needs to be seamless and easy. Our big appeal other than it is free, is that Tubi is personalised and easy. You just click and it works."

'TV will be personalised'

Massoudi said that he believes "all TV is going to become personalised" and Tubi uses machine learning to give viewers what they want, allowing them to "deep dive" into its documentary and film archive.

But "unlike the social networks, Tubi does not have data that will be highly personal," he added.

"The key data we collect is what you like to watch which allows us to programme better. So if (South American) telenovelas do well in the UK, and nobody up to now has discovered it, we will" show them there, he joked.

Massoudi said they would have gone into Europe earlier "but we really wanted to respect EU laws on user privacy, and do it right, so we put it on hold."

The San Francisco-based company said that its library of children's movies include "How to Train Your Dragon", "Norm of the North", and "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out of the Shadows".

Tubi said they would be shown alongside series like "Strawberry Shortcake", "Paddington Bear" and "The Wiggles", and many more.

"We're ramping up our international expansion with the UK launch being the first of several forthcoming territories and look forward to announcing them soon," Massoudi said at MIPCOM in Cannes, France, the world's biggest television content market.

He said Tubi Kids would create "an age-appropriate viewing environment", a dig at rivals YouTube, which is watched by millions of children.

Tubi's expansion comes as a wave of streaming services launch across the world in what has become known as the "streaming wars" to take on Netflix and Amazon.

Ad-supported Pluto TV is already available in the US, Canada, the UK, Germany and Switzerland.

And next month Disney and Apple are going head-to-head with the launch of their subscription video-on-demand services Disney+ and AppleTV+.

They will be followed by the British platform Britbox, which has been put together by the country's traditional broadcasters the BBC and ITV.

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