

Flipboard adding monthly subscription to watch ad-free video news clips from smartphones

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Flipboard, the social media platform that's best known as a place for catching up on daily news on smartphones and tablets, is adding curated, ad-free video news clips, and hoping people will pay \$2.99 monthly to watch.

"Flipboard TV," launches Friday with a host of partners, including Bloomberg, Dow Jones, the Associated Press and the 30 newsrooms of McClatchy.

To clear up any confusion, Flipboard TV isn't a [video service](#) to watch via streaming services like Roku and Amazon Fire TV Stick, but instead [video](#) on smartphones.

And the launch is complicated. "TV," which has a free three-month trial, will originally only be available on the new Samsung Galaxy S20 phones, which go on sale Friday. It will then expand to other Samsung phones in June. Flipboard expects the service to come to Apple's iOS devices later in the year.

Mike McCue, the co-founder and CEO of Flipboard, which will celebrate its 10th anniversary in July, admits that much of the [video content](#) is available elsewhere, most notably on YouTube and publisher websites, but that having it in one place, ad-free, "costs less than a cup of coffee" and will find a ready audience.

"This is high-quality video that most people don't realize exists," he says. Videos that speak to specific interests, say, backpacking or photography, would be buried on YouTube and surrounded by user-generated video, he adds. "This is a cleaner way to see it," and without ads, the videos load way faster.

As for bringing the Flipboard TV to TV sets, "it's a great idea...but nothing yet."

Why Flipboard TV starts with Android

Flipboard began in 2010, the year the iPad launched, as the first cool tablet app and has transitioned into a smartphone first stop for people to

check their morning news feeds based on their interests and presented in a highly visual format resembling traditional magazines.

Over the last few years, the Android smartphone platform turned into Flipboard's most popular audience, generating 60% of its usage.

Along the way, the Redwood City, California-based company has quietly built into a major force, with 145 million active monthly users. And it's turned into a huge vehicle to refer traffic to publishers, following Facebook (937 million) Google (935 million) Twitter (49 million) and Flipboard at 35 million for February, according to measurement firm Parse.ly.

Andrew Montalenti, the chief product officer for Parse.ly, notes that Flipboard is the only private firm in the top four, and ranks above other top sites like Microsoft's Bing, the Drudge Report, Yahoo, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Reddit. "Flipboard is driving almost as many content views to publishers as Twitter, even though Twitter has a larger daily active user base," he says.

How Flipboard works

Flipboard was initially built on the Twitter platform, transforming tweets into a visual magazine-like format based on the personal interests of the user. But in the ensuing years, the company worried about whether Twitter's platform would remain in place to third parties like Flipboard, and so switched to a user-generated concept it calls "magazines."

Users grab content from all over the web, like a social media feed, and place them in their personal magazine, either devoted to their posts, or whatever they find on the web, and share them on the Web. "This gave us a way to allow users to curate themselves," says McCue.

Flipboard users now "flip" news stories, tweets, photos and the like into either "magazines" they curate, or add to others, and comment freely, thus adding another way to communicate in the social media age.

Example: This reporter's "magazine" of photos, tweets, U.S. TODAY articles, podcasts, guitar playing and more, McCue's kayaking, a Vox publication devoted to articles about the smartphone app TikTok or a fan magazine about jazz guitarist Pat Metheny.

As for profits, McCue has been saying for several years that the company would eventually be profitable, and now he has a date. "The fourth quarter," he says. "The rest of the year will be really close."PS FROM SMARTPHONES U.S.

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