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French telco Bouygues Telecom breaks free from set-top boxes and launches first ever triple play offer with smart TV app



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French telco Bouygues Telecom has launched its first ever triple play offer for the French market that does not include a set-top box for TV access. Access to TV will be through the newly launched B.tv+ app, which is for now available on Samsung smart TVs from 2019 and 2020. In line with the launch of the B.tv+ app and the Bbox Smart TV package, Bouygues is also offering customers the ability to buy Samsung smart TVs 4K UHD at a discounted price.

This new offer sets a precedent in a market that is traditionally dominated by set-top boxes, with low penetration and usage of smart TVs.

Our analysis

Bouygues Telecom's Bbox Smart TV package sets a precedent as no other French pay TV operator has offered a triple play package with a TV app as opposed to a traditional pay TV set-top box before. According to the April 2020 survey results of Omdia's [Consumer Research - Devices, Media & Usage Intelligence](#), the majority of French households (55%) have a set-top box connected to their primary TV. Comparatively, only 39% did so in the UK and 17% in Germany. Set-top box functionality is often the differentiating point between operators, in the context of constant price war between operators offering similar packages.

According to this same Omdia Consumer Survey, only 37% of French households were equipped with a smart TV. By comparison, 67% of UK households and 64% of German households were equipped with a smart TV. This comparatively low presence of smart TVs in French households is a direct consequence of the high proportion of French households accessing TV via a set-top box. As a result, only 9% of French households considered smart TV apps as the main device on their primary television, compared to 29% in Germany and 27% in the UK.

In tandem with the launch of the B.tv+ app, Bouygues is also offering three different Samsung smart TV models at heavily discounted prices to subscribers of the new Bbox Smart TV package, starting at €49 for a 43" display. Bouygues and Samsung have signed an exclusivity deal, with Samsung initially being the only smart TV brand on which the B.tv+ app will be available. The Bbox Smart TV package is only available to fibre customers, with plans to open this to DSL customers in the future.

Bouygues' Bbox Smart TV package should lead the way for other French operators to launch similar offers, which will contribute to raising the smart TV penetration in French households. This will subsequently also see a change in the way TVs are bought. Bouygues' new offer follows SFR's newly launched offer to buy a smart TV and pay it off monthly through a customer's SFR bill.

A decline in set-top box usage is to be expected, owing to both the increase in smart TV usage as well as to the growing popularity of "naked" broadband subscriptions, which most major French telcos have launched. Those offers target consumers that want to spend less on their subscriptions but also those who are turning to OTT as their main source of video content. France is one of the most dynamic markets for online video in Western Europe and whilst it may not see any cord cutting in the next five years, the number of online video subscribers is to surpass traditional pay

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TV's by 2023. Until now, OTT TV apps from French telcos were launched as complementary multiscreen services for pay TV packages. Bouygues' B.tv+ app thus also sets a precedent in that way for France, following a more global trend of substituting operator virtual pay TV for traditional pay TV subscriptions.

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