

Google launches music streaming service in Japan

TOKYO, JAPAN: Google has launched a music streaming service in Japan, becoming the latest tech giant to push into the world's number two music market, despite mixed results among earlier arrivals...



The US company said that its Japanese edition of Google Play Music features more than 35 million tunes available at a cost of 980 yen (\$8) a month.

The launch, announced Thursday, came after similar services debuted in Japan this year by Apple, popular messaging app Line, and a joint venture by IT firm CyberAgent and Japanese music giant Avex Group.

Japan is the world's second largest music market, estimated to be worth \$2.6bn in 2014, after the \$4.8bn US market, according to the Recording Industry Association of Japan.

But packaged media such as CDs account for about 80 percent of Japanese music sales, contrasting sharply with the US market where digital downloads are soaring.

Many Japanese production companies have focused on established retail channels for CDs, while issues over licencing have also hampered growth in the streaming business. Sony and Japanese games giant DeNA have terminated their music streaming services in recent years.

Some industry experts have also put the blame on free online services such as YouTube for discouraging consumers from paying for digital music. Global streaming titan Spotify has yet to make its foray into the Japanese market, partly due to protracted talks with record labels.

E-books are also making slow progress among Japan's book-loving population, while online video streaming firm Netflix, which boasts 65 million users in about 50 countries, came to Japan only this month.

Source: AFP

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