

Telly just like back home

AS EXPATS, we all have things that we miss about our home countries. For me, I have to say what I miss the most is American television. I miss having hundreds of channels (all in English) that I can watch whenever I want. There's nothing quite like ESPN, HBO, Showtime, Starz (NASDAQ:STRZA) and AMC Networks (NASDAQ:AMCX) with their hit programs like *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men*.

The first thing I did when I knew that I was moving to Thailand was sign up for Netflix (NASDAQ:NFLX) thinking I could watch shows online. After all, Netflix is one of my favorite stocks and has been a huge winner for me. The stock is up about 375% in the past year! Unfortunately, when I got to Thailand I discovered that Netflix doesn't work here. I assumed that Netflix worked everywhere. Boy was I wrong!

Then I decided to get Apple (NASDAQ:AAPL) TV. It works, but I have had to purchase each show individually through iTunes and, as I soon discovered, that can get expensive... fast! I then went the route many of us go and surfed the web looking for clips on Youtube. It's still not what I wanted though because I want to watch complete shows.

I was explaining my situation to a regular attendee of my seminars for the Chiang Mai



Finance

By Don Freeman

Money Club and he told me that he has a Slingbox. He explained that a Slingbox is hooked up to your cable box so you can then watch your cable TV subscription wherever you have an Internet connection. The problem I have is with this possibility, is that I have canceled my cable service back home, since I'm gone for so long at a time.

I started thinking that one of the cable or satellite providers *must* offer the type of service I'm looking for. As a shareholder in Sprint (NYSE:S), I soon realized that the CEO of DISH Network (NASDAQ:DISH) has the same vision as I do. DISH CEO Charlie Ergen believes in cutting the cord and that TV should be viewed on mobile devices anywhere at anytime. Checking out DISH's website, I soon discovered that they offer what I'm looking for with "DISH Anywhere".

This is the future of television. That's why DISH wanted to buy Sprint. DISH wants to bundle its satellite television service with your mobile plan and connect all facets of your life. Even though DISH lost the bidding war over Sprint, the firm has been buying wireless spectrum to fulfill Ergen's vision. Even here in Thailand, the government has been selling

spectrum licenses worth billions of dollars. Spectrum is extremely valuable.

While I have not signed up for the "DISH Anywhere" package yet, I have purchased shares in DISH. DISH Network has a market cap of US\$ 20 billion and is the second largest satellite cable provider in the US after DIRECTV (NASDAQ:DTV). There is some speculation that the two satellite providers could merge, but that remains to be seen because the FCC blocked a potential merger between the two over 10 years ago. A merger would be great for both companies and reduce their overheads by billions of dollars. I like Direct TV stock too, as its price has moved up 200% since March 2009. It has emerged as a strong leadership stock out of the banking financial crisis.

Shares of DISH Network have risen 44% in the past year. The company is sitting on almost \$ 10 billion in cash for acquisitions and the forward price to earnings ratio (P/E) is a reasonable 22. But what I like most about DISH Network is the vision of CEO and founder Charlie Ergen. He knows the business and has amassed a fortune of over US\$ 10 billion for himself in building the company. It's safe to say he has a vested interest in this new model of TV distribution and has the most to gain going forward.



TV should be viewed on mobile devices anywhere, any time. Photo: redjar

Shares of Netflix are getting a little pricey. The company's P/E is an astronomical 353. However, the company's growth potential is enormous just by looking at the map of countries where Netflix is unavailable. As we know here in Thailand, the demand for all things American is huge, and there's a growing middle class that is becoming more sophisticated with computers and mobile devices. Just take a look at how many Thais are using Facebook (NASDAQ:FB), Google and Skype these days.

I just returned from the US and am considering signing up for the "DISH Anywhere" package. I'm looking forward to being able to access my

favorite shows and watch what I want, when I want. As I'm able to do more things here that I was able to do in the US, I find the desire to go back less and less and I'm able to make my home in Thailand the ultimate paradise!

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How and why to get a Thai credit card

By David Mayes

I AM so often asked about the issue of how to obtain credit cards as foreigners living in Phuket that I thought it might be helpful to explain the how and why of the situation. While some may be able to qualify for the traditional unsecured revolving card that we normally think of as a credit card, the normal situation is that Thai banks will have you deposit an amount slightly in excess of the credit limit into an account and freeze

it as a guarantee on the credit. For example, if you deposit 100,000 baht they are likely to give you a limit of 90,000 baht.

Obviously, this sure doesn't seem like a credit card arrangement, but more like a debit card, since it is in fact secured by your deposit. What's the point then? Well, if you travel a lot like I do, you will find that a Thai debit card is rarely accepted when making online reservations at hotels and for booking flights in other countries. It is also tough to shop online with a Thai debit card, whereas the credit

card makes it very simple.

The other benefit of a credit card is that there is a higher level of identity theft protection and information which could be possibly used to drain your bank account won't be floating through cyberspace.

While I am on the subject, a good practice in today's world of ATM skimmer gangs is to set up two Thai bank accounts, and they can be with the same institution. One account should be used to hold your significant baht holdings and you should never access an ATM with this account. Sign up for online banking and every few weeks transfer a bit of spending cash to your second account. Use this account when you go to the ATM and if you ever get skimmed, it won't be so painful.

Back to the credit card situation, if you look at it from a bank's perspective, it is far too risky to give unsecured credit to non-citizens or non-permanent residents who can easily vanish to another country and leave the bank in the lurch. To be frank, if your financial situation is such that a revolving line of credit at extortionate levels of interest is really needed, you are in big trouble. The only difference between a credit card loan and one received from a loan shark is that



Convenience and safety is what a Thai credit card can give you. Photo: redjar

the bank won't break your legs. It doesn't mean it is any better of an idea.

Credit cards were originally charge cards, which were settled at the end of month. The purpose was to make business easier and avoid the risk of carrying around large amounts of cash. Of course, financial intuitions were quick to realize how profitable it was to let people run up a balance they couldn't pay and then charge ridiculously high interest on that debt. If you are ever that short of cash, find some family or friends to give you a short term loan at a reasonable rate of interest. If you are that down and out that nobody

will lend to you, you may need to consider a career change or going back home and getting some public assistance to get you back on your feet. If you just like to order gadgets and flights from the convenience of your smartphone however, a Thai credit card will meet your needs just fine.

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