



newzoo  
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## Monthly India Market Update

### Games

#### a. Sumo Digital expands operations in India.

Sumo announced it is opening a new studio in Bangalore, marking the studio's second India-based Studio India, following its 2007 opening of Sumo Pune. The studio head of Pune, Stewart Neal, will also lead the new studio. Sumo Pune has also secured additional office space to make room for 70 new employees. The team has seen significant growth over the past 15 years, supporting development on multiple critically acclaimed titles including BAFTA Award-winning Sackboy: A Big Adventure and Hood: Outlaws & Legends.

Neal commented: *"We are excited to share the next step in our journey with the announcement of Sumo Bangalore and further expansion at Sumo Pune. This organic growth will allow us to continue delivering across some of the most-exciting video game projects in the world, whilst welcoming new developers to join the Sumo Digital team. The continued growth of Sumo Digital's presence in India is a reflection of the skills and expertise of our team and our reputation as a highly successful co-development studio. I look forward to growing a team that will continue to establish Sumo Digital as a leading provider of end-to-end creative development within India."*

As we reported previously, other non-Indian game studios, such as Kwalee and CrazyLabs, are expanding their footprint in India and furthering their commitment to the country's development ecosystem. The influx of foreign investment in the Indian market has been a noticeable trend of 2021, and we expect to see a continued growth in the market. After all, we forecast India's online population, player base, and number of payers to grow significantly over the next four years.

#### b. Krafton addresses Battlegrounds Mobile India (BGMI) hacking concerns.

After a successful re-launch in July, Krafton's dedicated Indian version of PUBG Mobile, Battlegrounds Mobile India (BGMI), became one of the fastest-growing mobile titles in the market. However, a few months later, the title has received negative feedback due to a considerable number of cheaters using third-party hacks, which is driving some players away from the game. The community has been vocal about cheaters creating a negative playing experience. Some of India's most popular streamers, including Mortal and Scout, have also been vocal about the issues.

To address these concerns, Krafton recently issued a statement saying, *"measures against illegal programs cheats and cheaters remain our top priority. We have noted countless reports of cheaters using illegal programs to gain an advantage. A cheater is a cheater, and we understand your frustration when you come across one. We would like to take this opportunity to tell you the steps we have taken, and more importantly, the steps we will be taking to make BGMI a fair gaming environment. We work daily on logic enforcement and updates to illegal programs, blocking ad channels, and monitoring real-time, and have permanently sanctioned more than 1.52 million accounts till date and are working on modernizing our systems."*

It is worth noting BGMI is not the only game facing cheater-related issues. Globally, Call of Duty: Warzone has faced similar challenges. Free-to-play titles like BGMI and Warzone must strike a balance between making their games accessible while also adding enough anti-cheat and verification measures to ensure a level playing field. This is difficult, as verification measures can create player friction.

Also noteworthy is that Krafton clearly recognizes India as one of their key growth markets. Given PUBG Mobile's popularity in the country, Krafton undertook huge efforts to return to the market (via BGMI) after the original title was banned in September 2020. Krafton also delivered on its promise of bringing localized India-exclusive events to BGMI, resonating with many players. In early September, players in India enjoyed a special in-game event celebrating the festival of Ganesh Chaturthi, complete with special items, missions, and rewards. The event was successful and well-received by the community. We expect to see further innovations like this as the title faces increasing competition from Garena's Free Fire.

#### **c. Mobile Premier League (MPL) raises \$150 Million, valued at \$2.3 Billion.**

Mobile gaming and esports platform MPL recently announced it raised \$150 million in a series E round at a \$2.3 billion valuation. The latest funding round will contribute to the company's worldwide expansion, with particular investments in homegrown Indian tech and growth in the country. MPL CEO and co-founder Sai Srinivas commented: *"This investment is a recognition of the potential of the Indian gaming and esports industry and an endorsement of the capability of MPL to expand globally."*

MPL also recently expanded its presence in the Indonesian market and is planning to launch its services in the United States soon. The company raised \$90 million in September 2020 to fuel this growth. MPL is a known player in the real-money gaming and fantasy gaming spaces, two of the fastest growing segments within the highly competitive Indian games market.

## **Esports**

#### **a. NODWIN Gaming announces expansion to portfolio offerings.**

NODWIN Gaming, an independent subsidiary of Nazara Technologies Ltd., is arguably the market leader in the Indian esports space. The company made two key announcements over the course of September to consolidate this position.

NODWIN Gaming announced it had acquired gaming-focused IP business Only Much Louder (OML) Entertainment. OML manages some of India's most popular entertainment and gaming content creators, including Tanmay Bhat, Suhani Shah, and Samay Raina. It also owns popular IP like Bacardi NH7 Weekender, LOLstars, Headliners, and Breezer Vivid Shuffle. OML works directly with brands on high-profile events like YouTube FanFest and Levi's Music Week.

As part of the deal, Ajay Nair, Managing Director of OML Entertainment, will join the NODWIN Gaming board. Commenting on the partnership, Akshat Rathee (Managing Director of NODWIN Gaming) said: *"When you look at the market, it is segmented into hardcore gamers, mid-core gamers, and casual gamers. NODWIN has been catering to the hardcore gaming audience and has been majorly successful in engaging them. Now to expand NODWIN's audience pie to mid-core and casual gamers along with delivering similar engagement levels is where this convergence of comedy, music, and gaming will help us."*

A few days after this announcement, NODWIN Gaming announced it had signed a partnership with PVR Cinemas to bring esports viewing experiences to cinemas. The company accompanied this announcement with the launch of a Battleground Mobile India esports tournament, the NODWIN PVR Cup, and a show match between Mortal and Scout, two famous live streamers who signed exclusivity deals with PVR Cinemas in Gurugram for the event. Kamal Gianchandani, Chief of Strategy at PVR expressed that the partnership would unlock additional sources of revenue for the group, such as brand partnerships and collaborations, licensing streaming rights for its IP, and esports ticket revenues.

Boasting long-term partnerships with the likes of ESL, Riot Games, and Krafton, NODWIN Gaming has solidified its position as the go-to esports company for brand engagement and activations in India, despite facing fierce competition. NODWIN is also constantly expanding its product portfolio, so you can expect to hear more about the company in subsequent updates.

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