

A Look at India's Casual, Hyper-Casual, and Real Money Gaming App Industry Trends



Table Of Contents click to navigate



1

Foreword



Mobile Gaming Industry Boom in India



5

The Evolution of Mobile Gaming Behavior | 2021-2022

- Overall Installs Trends
- Stickiness Trends
- Revenue Trends
- Seasonality Trends



9

Cheat Codes to Successful Customer Engagement in Mobile Gaming: Push & In-App

- Push Campaigns That Deliver
- The Power of In-App Messaging



12

Leading with Insights to Power Robust Engagement Strategies

- All Things ASO: Application and Impact
- Insights-led Engagement in Action: How Gaming Brands are Thriving with MoEngage
 - Supreme Segmentation Capabilities
 - The Omnichannel Way for The Win
 - Predictive AI to Optimize Campaigns
 - -Al Assistant to Assist You in Making Proactive Maneuvers



21

Set Your Gaming Brand Up for Success with Insights



22

Meet the Insights-led Mentors



Foreword

moengage

Narasimha Rao

General Manager- India, Middle East



Projections suggest that the mobile gaming industry will continue to grow and generate more than **US\$100 billion by 2023.** Needless to say, there is a vast market opportunity to tap into. But growing as well as sustaining a loyal customer base is more challenging than it seems. Bearing this in mind, we set out to identify the mobile gaming behavior trends during and after the pandemic in India.

Over **100+** casual, hyper-casual, and real money gaming brands were analysed in order to achieve this. This report explains the findings from that analysis and serves as a roadmap for marketers in the Indian gaming industry that want to understand the impact of incorporating the right Martech tools in their engagement and retention strategies.

moengage



z apptweak

Karan Lakhwani Head of India

Policy changes from Google Play have created more opportunities for gaming companies in India. Since Google's announcement allowing India-based real money game apps, we've witnessed the rise of new gaming studios challenging the status quo. Big fluctuations among the ranking of the top 50 games in India signal the level of competitiveness in the market.

An increasing number of Indian gaming studios are launching global apps, not just focusing on the Indian market. Mobile gaming brands have been early adopters of the power of localization, personalization, and competitive benchmarking. They have leveraged insights from multiple Martech tools to create a sustainable competitive advantage. Thanks to these investments, we foresee the user experience reaching a new level.



Manuel Oothria Raj
Director of Business, India



We are effectively in the golden age when it comes to mobile gaming. This industry has become more and more popular at an unprecedented rate. Additionally, the overall baseline of usage has seen a significant spike, even as the post-pandemic "new normal" emerged. While this is a highly responsive market, breaking the glass ceiling in this segment comes with its own set of challenges. We hope that mobile gaming brands are able to take stock of these challenges through this report and can use some of the actionable insights mentioned to their advantage.

Mobile Gaming Industry Boom in India

As the world moves toward a more digital-centric society, gaming is becoming an increasingly popular pastime. In India, the mobile gaming market is snowballing due to the expansion of smartphone penetration and the availability of more affordable data plans. The availability of reasonably priced smartphones has grown at a rate of 15% annually over the past five years, according to the World Economic Forum (WEF), making mobile the main platform for the Indian gaming sector. Additionally, the widespread use of high-speed 4G internet and the lowest data rates in the world have made significant contributions. These propellants have

given rise to a massive opportunity for the gaming industry in the country to scale. India is a highly competitive market with more than 600 million smartphone users. Approximately 900 million Indians are expected to be online by 2025. With a growing number of internet users on smartphones users, the mobile gaming industry is one of the most significant growing segments in the country.

\$2.6 billion

Current valuation of the Indian gaming Industry

Expected to reach

\$8.6 billion

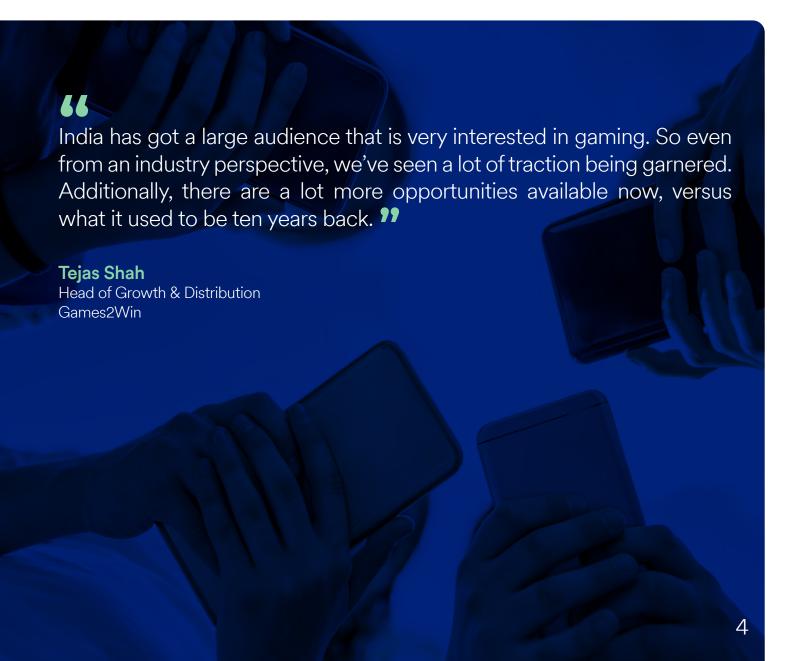
by the end of 2027.

Furthermore, Indian game developers are expected to increase their focus on developing mobile games, owing to the increasing number of gamers in India.



According to Ann Erickson's study, more than 80% of Indian millennials prefer to play games on their phones over any other device. Moreover, popular mobile gaming companies such as Nazara Technologies and Zynga have recorded revenues of more than US\$100 million each. This indicates that there is immense potential for the mobile gaming industry in India, and game developers are expected to see significant growth in the coming years.

Another significant factor has been the global pandemic. With COVID-19 halting any and all in-person interactions and confining people to their homes, we saw more and more folks using their smartphones for entertainment. Consequently, the overall baseline of usage remained high even as the "new normal" emerged significantly uplifting mobile gaming adoption in India. Therefore, the country saw a 22% increase in the use of mobile gaming in 2021 (no surprises there)! As the new mobile gamers start becoming more mature and seasoned in the segment, the growth will keep steadily increasing. Ergo, the industry is at the precipice of becoming a giant.



The Evolution of Mobile Gaming Behavior 2021-2022

Let's look at some stats to give you an idea of how ginormous this market is. Between 2019 and 2020, the gaming industry achieved net sales of US\$1.5 billion, and by 2025, it is anticipated to reach US\$5 billion in India!

In terms of the user base, which has surpassed 300 million, the Indian gaming sector recently surpassed that of the United States! In India, mobile devices dominate the gaming market; in 2021, 86% of all gaming apps were phone-based. Three sub-segments were at the top of the popularity table: hyper-casual, casual, and real-money/social casino gaming apps.

Now let's take a look at what **mobile gaming behavior** looked like for these sub-segments from all of 2021 till the end of Q1 2022.

Overall Installs Trends (Normalized)

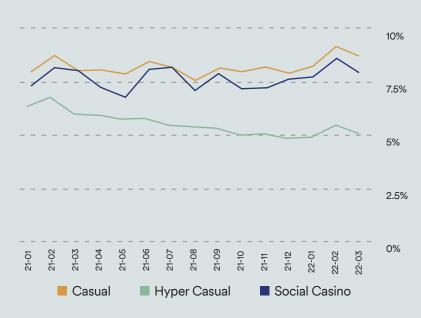
With the second wave of the pandemic hitting India back at the beginning of 2021, it's no surprise that there was an upsurge in the overall installs of mobile games countrywide. Consequently, with another lockdown in progress, the Android installs saw over a 90% uplift in casual games in May 2021, compared to January 2021! The interest in hyper-casual and social casino applications also spiked and compared to in May 2021, with an almost 50% increase compared to January 2021 and a 40% increase compared to February 2021, respectively.



Note: These trends have been observed across AppsFlyer customers.

Overall Stickiness Trends (Normalized)

How relevant your mobile gaming app is to customers is indicated by the app's stickiness. High stickiness indicates strong user interest in your game and encourages frequent visits from the players. Naturally, with the rise in mobile gaming app installs right after the second wave of COVID-19, stickiness also soared. Casual games and social casino apps clocked an increase in the stickiness of almost 9.5% and 11.1% in February 2021 compared to January 2021, while hyper-casual games trailed in at a 5.8% uplift in the same time frame. While the stickiness has remained considerably constant within the same time period across all three sub-segments of gaming, there is major scope for game developers to try out newer methods to re-engage their customers!



Note: These trends have been observed across AppsFlyer customers.

3 Overall Revenue Trends (Normalized)

Unless they are utilizing a subscription model like Netflix or Spotify, the majority of applications on the Play Store are free to download. So, precisely how do they bring in the money to continue doing what they do?

IAA, i.e., in-app advertising, and IAP, i.e., in-app purchases, are the two main revenue streams in this equation. Considering people around the globe spend **one-third of their waking time on mobile applications,** IAA and IAP are extremely vital factors in driving revenue for mobile apps.

The size of the IAA market, which was estimated to be worth US\$168.12 billion in 2020, is expected to increase to US\$544.93 billion by 2028, with a CAGR of 19.96% between 2021 and 2028! Additionally, the IAP market was estimated to be worth US\$76.43 billion globally in 2019 and is expected to rise to US\$340.76 billion by 2027, with a CAGR of 19.8% between 2020 and 2027.



Note: These trends have been observed across AppsFlyer customers.

The proliferation of **the number of mobile gaming app users** that the pandemic caused also gave way to an increase in the revenue from IAA in the industry. This fact is evident when we compare the difference in IAA revenue uplift as seen in a matter of 4 months, i.e., January 2021 and May 2021: casual games and social casino apps saw a **20X** and **12X** jump, respectively, from January 2021 to May 2021. Taking stock of the same time period, hyper-casual games witnessed almost an **83%** increase in IAA revenues!

The global in-app purchase market has also exploded in recent years, reaching a \$103.2 billion whopping Additionally, the market is further expected to grow in the forecast period of 2023-2028 at a CAGR of 20.8% to, reach about \$284 billion by 2026. So, it's not surprising that there was a remarkable increase of 27.96% in IAP for casual games in April 2021, from a drop of -20.19% in March. For hyper-casual games, there was a shorter spike in revenues than its peer categories, with an increase of 9.77% in May, from a drop in April of -1.39% in IAP. Real money gaming apps saw a fluctuation around March 2021, where the revenue spending decreased by 12.4% and saw a huge increase in April of 35.27%.



4 Seasonality Trends

Seasonality in app stores refers to variations in user behavior induced by time-based external variables such as traffic, spending, and conversions. App stores, like any other market, are influenced by seasonality and the resulting fluctuations in user behavior. Just like we see a surge of downloads for shopping apps such as Amazon and Myntra during the festive season, we also observe higher spending and downloads in other categories. The seasonality of download trends of the three gaming categories in the Play Store from 2021 to 2022 shows a typical overview of mobile usage pre- and post-pandemic behavior.

Note: This data depicts the seasonality trends observed by AppTweak's customers.

With the ongoing hike in downloads, the value of the casual gaming sector is **expected to reach \$2.08 billion** in 2025. As more users turn to casual games thanks to leaders like Ludo King, downloads saw significant growth in the first half of the year 2021. Downloads surged 16% during April 2021 and received another boost in January 2022, with a growth of 21.55% in downloads.



In 2021, hyper-casual games observed a pattern where downloads increased toward the beginning of the year. There is a 35% recovery of downloads in April after the download rates had dropped significantly by -12% in March.

Real money games as a category have seen their downloads increase in large numbers as more and more people start spending on the Play Store. The year 2021 was one of great highs and lows, with downloads increasing by 13.9% in April and again by 50.8% in May 2021. After a short sharp decline of -39.66% in August, it picked up again in January 2022 by 54.85% and only continued to grow by 36.47% and 26.33% in the consecutive months.

As we observe the patterns of downloads increasing in the first half of each year, there is a fall in download and spending rates observed as we proceed toward 2022.





Cheat Codes to Successful Customer Engagement in Mobile Gaming: Push & In-App

Despite the exponential growth of the Indian mobile gaming industry, there are still challenges that need to be overcome in order to capitalize on this emerging market opportunity. Two primary challenges Indian mobile gaming brands seem to be facing are retaining and engaging customers effectively. This fact is evident as we see a dip in

popularity across different factors that we analyzed for this report (revenue IAA and IAP, overall installs, etc.) as we enter 2022. These are especially challenging for game app developers with limited data on users due to the lack of real-time observation and analytics.

So how do gaming brands go about tackling these pertinent issues?

It all boils down to the **customer engagement tech stack.** The lack of an effective marketing analytics tool is a significant hindrance in monetizing games because developers are unable to analyze customer behavior and identify opportunities to improve their customer retention strategy. Therefore, opting for the right Martech tool is crucial. The end game should be to use such a tool to build better relationships with customers and identify opportunities for upselling other services in addition to games.





But, with a litany of analytics tools on the market, which is the one that's appropriate for this scenario? Opting for a multichannel and holistic tool like a customer engagement platform (CEP) could be the solution.

CEPs help marketers make sense of relevant consumer insights and provide intelligent analytics and powerful segmentation capabilities to create personalized customer journeys. A CEP like MoEngage helps brands move from a campaign-centric approach to a customer-centric approach to customer engagement. By opting for MoEngage, brands are able to precisely understand their customers, study customer journeys keenly and analyze how customers respond to their campaigns.



Unify player behavior and attribute data

Empower teams with 360-degree insights about every customer for driving personalized engagement



Drive gamer engagement and monetization

Generate rich insights into user behavior and orchestrate engagement journeys to engage & monetize players



Enterprise-grade platform

Open platform with 100+ integration. Secure and compliant. Inbuilt data reporting & role-access controls

Let's take a look at what kind of success some of India's leading gaming brands have achieved by utilizing two of the most important channels for this industry with a CEP like MoEngage:

Push Campaigns That Deliver

The importance of push notifications isn't lost on any marketer in the world. Push notifications are highly crucial to any brand in engaging with its customers, improving brand recall, and building long-term relationships with them.



With MoEngage's stylized push template capabilities and Push Amplification® Technology, brands have seen a clickthrough rate of 3.34% against over 1.4 million notifications sent!



Such behavior can also be seen across the conversion rates, with gaming brands witnessing a high of 91% for their push notification conversions!

2 The Power of In-App Messaging

It's hard to retain long-term customers no matter what industry or sector you're in, whether you're a fintech brand, a retail giant, or a media magnate. Furthermore, 68% of users launch a mobile app less than 10 times after downloading it from the Play Store, which is even more of a problem with mobile retention.

But channels like in-app are a solid way to crack the retention code. Due to their hyper-focused nature, in-app messages play an inherently instrumental role in helping brands in retaining customers. It becomes highly relevant in the gaming industry because, if you do not engage your customers regularly, someone else will grab them. Add a CEP like MoEngage to the equation, and we have a formula for retention success.

By using the in-app channel, our gaming customers were able to successfully cross-promote relevant games to players to increase organic growth for games. This was done by creating cross-promotional campaigns that encouraged players to check out more games on other platforms.



Such campaigns saw conversion rates ranging from 15%-44%!

In fact, on an average of 1 million impressions on these in-app initiatives, MoEngage's gaming customers

see a 38% conversion rate!



Leading with Insights to Power Robust Engagement Strategies

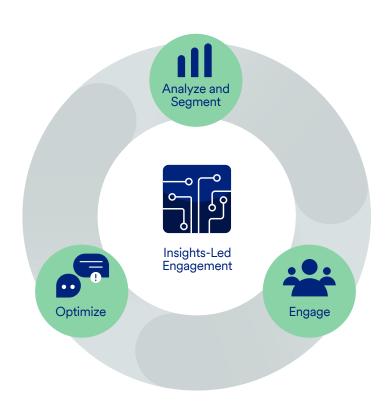
The impact of low customer engagement rates is gargantuan and can really hurt your brand-irrespective of the industry. A direct result of this is lower chances of a brand retaining its customers, which therefore affects your business's profitability. It's common knowledge that acquiring a new customer is five times more expensive than retaining an existing one. So you can only imagine how detrimental losing customers can be for a

mobile gaming brand trying to find success in a bull market like India. This is why CEPs are crucial. Tools like CEPs help you lead with insights. They help you by tapping into the vast pool of customer **insights** available to optimize your customer engagement strategies and personalize customer journeys. An insights-led approach will help you build and retain a loyal customer base.

66

After we switched to the insights-led strategy, players enjoyed engaging with our platform even more! Every communication a player receives from our platform adds value, so they know we get them and trust the app even more. And the best part, using MoEngage, we can automate most of the manual tasks now.

Harivanam Senior Team Lead, CRM, Classic Rummy





All Things ASO: Application and Impact

The process of improving your app's visibility and discoverability in an app store should be continuous. The higher your app ranks in an app store's search results, the more visible it is to potential users. Therefore, it is important to understand the range of actions you can take to get your app in front of as many potential customers as possible in app store.

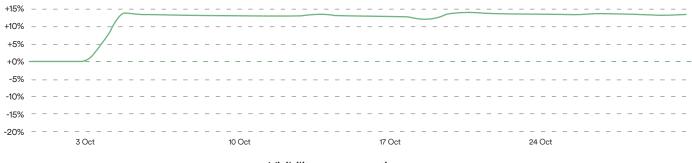
This is where app store optimization (ASO) comes into play. Let's see how AppTweak, one of the leading ASO tools driven by data science, helps gaming brands across the globe improve their app's visibility and maximize its appeal to users throughout the app's lifecycle to increase the number of downloads.

1 Increasing Search Visibility: Understanding Which Keywords Drive Downloads

App stores list apps based on the keywords developers include in the metadata (app title, subtitle, short description, keyword field, etc.). This is the first core factor that influences search algorithms. Like SEO, the app stores will consider the keywords included in metadata to try to match an app to a user's search query. Therefore, it is essential to make sure you include relevant keywords in these fields based on the user's search behavior.

On AppTweak, you can monitor the progression of your game's visibility on any keyword or group of keywords using the keyword dashboard. You can use the lists of keywords that you built to have a very clear understanding of exactly which keywords your game has improved or dropped. You can tie this to the metadata iterations you've made and see if your strategy has worked or not and benchmark your app against the competition.





Visibility score over time

RummyCircle- Rummy Card Game

Here is a list of keywords for which RummyCircle was not ranking in September 2022, but they observed a tremendous increase in their keyword ranking.

			Rank		
Keywords			2022-09-01	2022-10-31	Growth
rummy royal		-	Unranked	7	493
clasic rummy	B	-	Unranked	7	493
rummy cyber		-	Unranked	7	493
ramee game		^ 3	Unranked	7	493
easy money		-	Unranked	7	493
rami game		→ 5	Unranked	8	492
rummy best		-	Unranked	8	492
ace		~ 2	Unrnaked	10	490
rammy gold		- 10	Unranked	12	488
rummy friends		-	Unranked	12	488
cash indian	M	-	Unranked	1	499
real cash indian	M	-	Unranked	1	499
cash indian rummy	M	-	Unranked	1	499
rummy real online		-	Unranked	1	499
rummy		-	Unranked	1	499
eran mony game		-	Unranked	1	499
earing money game		-	Unranked	1	499
cercul game		-	Unranked	1	499
games from earn mo		-	Unranked	1	499

2 A/B Tests to Increase Conversion

Conversion rate optimization (CRO)—increasing conversions—is any activity that "converts" impressions or store listing visitors into downloads. Category, competition, intended market, and user persona data should all be taken into consideration when evaluating what you perceive to be a best practice.

So, to determine how well your hypothesis and assets are performing in comparison with your expectations, it's crucial to run tests to validate the same to assess how your hypothesis and assets fared compared to your expectations. AppTweak keeps track of all metadata updates and A/B testing for any app or game available in the stores. As an outcome, you can go back in time and examine your competitors' previous ASO upgrades to discover what worked and what didn't, measure performance changes using sequential analysis and use the data to estimate how the same change will affect performance in your main market.





Ratings and Reviews: Understanding the Feedback and Monitoring User Sentiment

App ratings and reviews play a crucial role in driving app downloads. Users are never keen to install an app with a rating below 4.0 stars. Given the intense competition in app stores, even an app rated below 4.5 stars is at a disadvantage compared with its higher-rated counterpart. The app stores also consider your app's ratings when ranking your app in the search results or displaying your app in different collections throughout.

AppTweak helps brands monitor trends and compare the average star rating with competitors. The Reviews and Ratings dashboard highlights the sentiment behind the most repeated keywords. This helps brands quickly identify what people like or dislike about their game and gives them an edge over the competition. Analyze this information carefully and let these insights guide your brand when deciding on your product roadmap.



Supreme Segmentation Capabilities The Omnichannel Way for The Win Predictive AI to Optimize Campaigns AI Assistant to Assist You in Taking Proactive Measures

Insights-Led Engagement in Action: How Gaming Brands are Thriving with MoEngage

Now that we've acknowledged the importance of harnessing relevant customer insights and the importance of ASO, let's see how MoEngage helps gaming brands gather and utilize them in the most efficient manner:

1 Supreme Segmentation Capabilities

MoEngage's RFM Segmentation (Recency, Frequency, Monetary) helps gaming brands create deeper-level segments and provide personalized customer engagement for their users. RFM helps marketers dissect data to procure rich insights about their customers so that they can reach them with the most relevant and appropriate marketing campaigns.

RFM Analysis goes into great detail to help brands identify players who have not opened the game at least once in the last 24 hours and direct marketers to send this cohort of customers a reminder to play a game. It even helps gaming brands identify which are their 'Champion' players who play their games more frequently and are hence the best suited for referral asks!

Furthermore, MoEngage's Affinity segmentation capabilities enable you to devise marketing and promotional strategies that appeal to your customers' sentiments. Marketers are able to group customers based on their predominant preferences that go beyond just historical behavior.

Predictions are another feather in MoEngage's segmentation hat; they help gaming brands pinpoint players who are about to churn, go dormant or quit and uninstall their app. This gives them the opportunity to run re-engagement campaigns by sending them free coins or points to re-indulge them in their respective games.







Advanced Segmentation

Has not opened the game at least once in the last 24 hours. Send them a reminder.



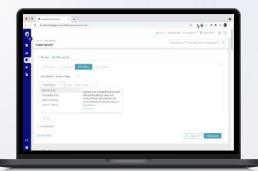
Predictions

Players who are about to churn. **Send them free coins/points**



RFM

'Champion' players who play more frequently. Best suited for referral asks.



Affinity

Customers who predominantly shop for 'skins' on the game Battlegrounds Mobile. **Tell them about the latest updates.**

2 The Omnichannel Way for the Win

MoEngage's Flows capability is the gift that keeps on giving powering your engagement not only across channels, including mobile, social, email, and web, but also OTT, voice, and Points of Sale. You can start where you are with any channel you pick, and MoEngage supports your growth across channels and platforms!

Whether it's driving app installs journeys using existing customer data or testing different onboarding flows to optimize installs or install to purchase- each and every consumer touchpoint is handled end-to-end by Flows.





Push Notifications



Ad Networks



In-App Messages



App Inbox & Chatbot



SMS MMS



E-Mail



Web





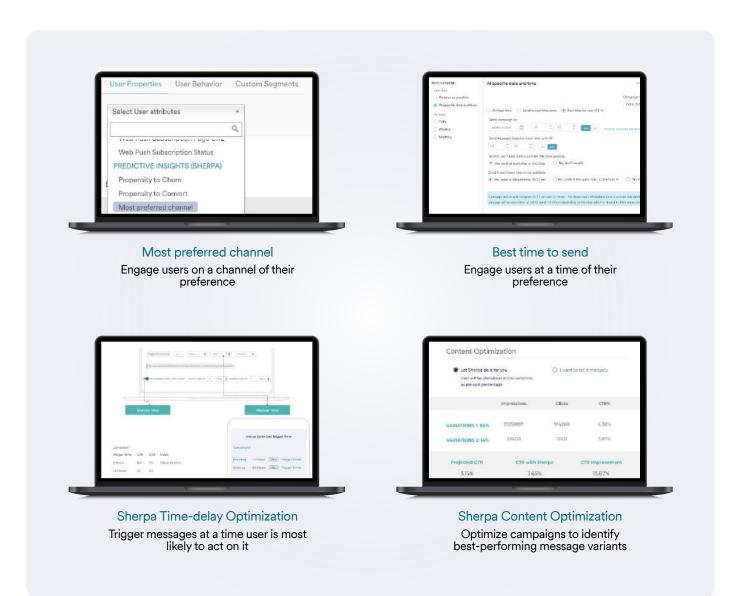


3 Predictive AI to Optimize Campaigns

MoEngage's AI engine, Sherpa, helps brands fuel their engagement campaigns with AI-driven insights! The AI engine automatically figures out what is the correct message variant and the right time to send it to every one of your customers. Optimizing engagement for messages by differentiating customers based on their individual time as well as channel preferences and engaging them accordingly gives our customers an upper hand! Under Sherpa, Best Time to Send takes care of engaging players at a time of their preference, while Most Preferred Channel engages players on a

channel of their preference! Trigger Delay Optimization works in tandem with Best Time to Send to trigger messages at a time when the player is most likely to act on them, thereby ensuring high customer engagement.

Additionally, let's say a marketer is trying to find out if messages littered with emojis garner higher engagement and conversions. This is where Sherpa steps in to help automate the A/B testing and identify and drive more customers to the better-performing variant for maximum engagement.





4 Al Assistant to Assist You in Making Proactive Maneuvers

MoEngage's Proactive Assistant (PA) is an Al-powered assistant that proactively enables marketers with vital and valuable insights that are actionable in nature. All this treasure of insights served on a platter in a simple and single-view window is all the ammunition a marketer needs to strengthen their advertising efforts!

Essentially, PA helps marketers identify and diagnose critical events across products, customers, sources, and campaigns, such as:



A significant drop in the first play



Sudden decreases or increases in in-game transactions



Anomalies such as clickthrough rates pointing at campaign setup error

Proactively getting insights into how different segments and campaigns are behaving gives gaming brands an edge in predicting what the logical next step from the customer's end is. And if you know your customers that well, chances are you will be able to re-engage them much more effectively.



Al Assistant

Double-down on referral campaigns as they are driving more active users

Set Your Gaming Brand Up for Success with Insights

There is no doubt that affordable internet services and the rise in smartphone usage are evidence of a promising future for the mobile gaming industry in India. But what's interesting to note is that we see a drop in the uplifts for overall installs, stickiness, and revenue (IAA and IAP) across sub-segments- casual, hyper-casual, and real money gaming apps- as we move to 2023. This is an incredibly significant find and serves as proof that while external factors like virality and the pandemic served to generate interest initially, mobile gaming brands seem to be dropping the ball when it comes to retaining this interest in the long run. This is why it's essential to develop a comprehensive understanding of your customers and preemptively communicate with them throughout the customer lifecycle. Given the rise in

the number of players and the growth in the market size, it has become increasingly important for mobile gaming brands to be able to engage with and retain their customers effectively.

By virtue of using the right kind of tools that help you garner relevant customer insights, brands can further customize their communications and stay one step ahead of the competition. CEPs help marketers do exactly that and therefore increase customer satisfaction. Now is the time for mobile gaming brands in India to pull out the big guns and go all out with respect to their customer engagement strategies. And it should come as no surprise that a happy, content customer will remain a loyal one, giving your retention rates a positive boost!

Game publishers prefer us for scalability













Meet the Insights-led Mentors



Raviteja Dodda, CEO & Co-founder





Yash Reddy, Chief Business Officer -APAC and EMEA





Narasimha Rao, General Manager. India, Middle East





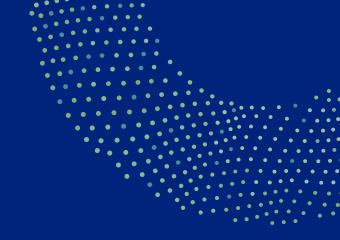
Shivangi Boghani, Assistant Vice President, India, Middle East





Dhruv Vats, Associate Director, India, Middle East





About moengage

MoEngage is an insights-led customer engagement platform that enables hyper-personalization for customer-centric brands based on behavior and journey. With industry-breaking AI capabilities and automation, Fortune 500 brands and Enterprises across 35+ countries such as Deutsche Telekom, Samsung, Ally Financial, Vodafone, and McAfee and internet-first brands such as Flipkart, Ola, OYO, Bigbasket, and Domino's use MoEngage to orchestrate efficient Customer Engagement and achieve sustainable growth.

MoEngage was recognized as a Leader in the Gartner Magic Quadrant 2020 for MobileMarketing Platforms and a Strong Performer in The Forrester Wave™ Report for Cross-Channel Campaign Management (Independent Platforms), Q3 2021. G2 alsonamed MoEngage a Leader in the Fall 2020 Grid® Report, and the #1 Mobile MarketingPlatform in the Spring 2021 Momentum Report.

Gartner



FORRESTER®



Schedule a Demo