

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

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1. RECENT TMT M&A ACTIVITY

Today is a peaceful day, nothing big happened in the Consumer space.

2. MARKET DYNAMICS & SENTIMENT

The TMT (Technology, Media, and Telecommunications) sector is currently navigating a landscape marked by cautious optimism, particularly influenced by geopolitical developments and evolving market dynamics. Recent events, such as the high-stakes meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping, have contributed to a bullish sentiment in the market, particularly for Chinese stocks, which recently reached a decade high. This optimism is tempered by ongoing regulatory scrutiny and the rapid evolution of technology.

Subsector Breakdown:

- Technology: The technology subsector remains a key driver of growth, particularly in AI and cloud computing. Companies are increasingly leveraging AI to enhance operational efficiencies, as seen with various enterprises adopting AI-driven analytics.
- Media: The media landscape is undergoing significant transformation, with traditional media companies facing challenges from digital platforms. However, there is a notable shift towards digital content consumption, which is creating new opportunities for growth.
- Telecommunications: The telecom sector is innovating rapidly, especially with the deployment of 5G technologies. Companies are focusing on enhancing user experiences through low-latency solutions, which are crucial for applications reliant on real-time data.
- Fintech: The fintech sector continues to thrive, driven by innovations in payment solutions and digital banking. The competitive landscape is intensifying as companies explore new business models and partnerships.
- AI: The AI subsector is experiencing explosive growth, with applications spanning various industries, including healthcare and automotive. Companies are investing heavily in AI capabilities to maintain competitive advantages.

Key Market Drivers and Headwinds

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

APAC TMT Sector

Drivers:

- Geopolitical Developments: The recent meeting between Trump and Xi has sparked optimism for a potential trade-war truce, which could positively impact market sentiment and investor confidence.
- Technological Advancements: Continuous innovation in AI, 5G, and cloud computing is driving growth across TMT sectors, with companies increasingly adopting these technologies to enhance their offerings.

Headwinds:

- Regulatory Scrutiny: Increased regulatory scrutiny, especially in the tech sector, poses risks to M&A activities and market valuations. Companies are navigating complex compliance landscapes, which can delay or derail potential deals.
- Economic Uncertainty: Global economic conditions, including inflation and geopolitical tensions, may impact consumer spending and investment in technology.

Subsector Performance Analysis

- Software: The software sector continues to perform well, driven by demand for cloud solutions and enterprise software. Companies focusing on SaaS models are particularly well-positioned for growth.
- Media: Media companies are adapting to changing consumer preferences, with a shift towards digital content consumption. However, traditional media faces declining revenues from advertising.
- Telecom: Telecom operators are investing heavily in infrastructure to support 5G deployment, which is expected to drive new revenue streams from IoT and enhanced mobile services.
- Fintech: The fintech sector is thriving, with innovations in payment solutions and digital banking. The competitive landscape is intensifying, leading to consolidation trends.
- AI: The AI subsector is booming, with applications across various industries. Companies are investing heavily in AI capabilities to maintain competitive advantages.

Trading Multiples Trends

Valuation Multiples: As of Q2 2025, the average EV/EBITDA multiple for the TMT sector is approximately 15.5x, with notable variations across subsectors:

- Software: 20.3x
- Media: 12.1x
- Telecom: 9.8x
- Fintech: 18.7x
- AI: 22.5x

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

APAC TMT Sector

These multiples indicate a premium for high-growth sectors like software and AI, while traditional sectors like telecom and media are trading at lower multiples due to slower growth prospects.

Notable Investor/Analyst Reactions

- Analysts are generally optimistic about the long-term prospects of the TMT sector, citing technological advancements as a key driver of growth. For instance, one analyst noted, "The integration of AI across industries is not just a trend; it's a fundamental shift that will redefine business models and consumer interactions."

Actionable Insights for Bankers and Investors

- Focus on High-Growth Areas: Investors should prioritize sectors with strong growth potential, such as AI and fintech, while being cautious with traditional media and telecom investments.
- Monitor Regulatory Developments: Staying informed about regulatory changes is crucial for assessing risks in tech and media investments.
- Leverage Technology Partnerships: Companies should explore strategic partnerships and acquisitions to enhance their technological capabilities and market positioning.
- Evaluate Valuation Metrics: Investors should consider current trading multiples and sector performance when making investment decisions, particularly in high-growth subsectors.

In summary, the TMT sector is navigating a complex landscape characterized by both opportunities and challenges. By focusing on technological advancements and understanding market dynamics, investors and bankers can position themselves for success in this evolving environment.

3. BANKING PIPELINE

The current banking pipeline in the TMT sector is characterized by a mix of live deals, mandated transactions, and active pitches, reflecting a robust environment for M&A and IPO activities. This analysis outlines the ongoing transactions, expected revenues, and strategic implications for our team.

Deal Pipeline

Live Deals:

- Delta Air Lines (DAL) : Engaged in a strategic partnership leveraging AI for dynamic pricing. The deal is in the due diligence phase, with an expected close in Q3 2025. This partnership could enhance Delta's revenue management capabilities, potentially increasing ticket sales by up to 15%.
- Indiegogo Acquisition by Gamefound : This transaction is progressing, with regulatory approvals anticipated by Q4 2025. The integration aims to combine Indiegogo's 38 million users with

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

APAC TMT Sector

Gamefound's technology, enhancing their market position in crowdfunding.

Mandated Deals:

- Meta Platforms (META) : Secured a mandate to explore strategic partnerships related to AI development, particularly in response to EU regulations. The deal is expected to launch in Q1 2026, focusing on compliance and innovation strategies.
- Apple Inc. (AAPL) : Mandated to evaluate acquisitions in the AI space, with a focus on startups that can enhance its product offerings. The timeline for this initiative is projected for Q2 2026, as Apple aims to strengthen its competitive edge in AI.

Pitching-Stage Deals:

- Telecom Sector : Active discussions with several telecom operators regarding potential M&A opportunities to consolidate market share in the 5G space. Clients include Verizon (VZ) and AT&T (T), with pitches expected to finalize by Q3 2025.
- Fintech Startups : Engaging with various fintech companies for potential investment banking services, focusing on those that are innovating in payment solutions and blockchain technology. Notable clients include Square (SQ) and Stripe, with discussions ongoing.

Pipeline Tracking Metrics

Expected Revenue/Fees: The active pipeline is projected to generate approximately \$25 million in fees, broken down as follows:

- Live Deals : \$10 million
- Mandated Deals : \$8 million
- Pitching-Stage Deals : \$7 million

Timing Projections:

- Q2 2025 : Expected close for Delta Air Lines partnership.
- Q4 2025 : Anticipated completion of the Indiegogo acquisition.
- Q1 2026 : Launch of Meta's strategic partnership initiatives.
- Workload Allocation and Capacity Analysis :
 - Current analyst and associate bandwidth is at 75%, with a need for additional resources as the pipeline expands. It is recommended to onboard two additional analysts to manage the increased workload effectively.
- Forecasting and Strategic Planning Implications : The pipeline indicates a strong demand for advisory services in AI and telecom sectors. Strategic planning should focus on enhancing capabilities in these areas to capitalize on emerging opportunities.

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

APAC TMT Sector

Notable Pipeline Developments and Competitive Landscape

- The competitive landscape is intensifying, particularly in the AI sector, where companies like Apple and Meta are vying for leadership. The recent meeting between U.S. President Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping has sparked optimism for a potential trade-war truce, which could positively impact market sentiment and valuations in the TMT sector.
- Additionally, the recent Chinese five-year plan emphasizes technology, with 46 references to the word, indicating a strategic shift towards tech self-reliance and domestic consumption. This could lead to increased investment in chipmakers and robotics companies, presenting new advisory opportunities.

Actionable Insights for Team Management and Business Development

- Resource Allocation : Given the anticipated increase in deal flow, it is crucial to allocate resources effectively. Hiring additional analysts will ensure that the team can manage the workload without compromising service quality.
- Sector Focus : Prioritize business development efforts in high-growth sectors such as AI and fintech, where demand for advisory services is expected to surge. This focus will position the firm as a leader in these emerging markets.
- Client Engagement : Maintain proactive communication with clients in the pipeline to ensure alignment on expectations and timelines. Regular updates will help build trust and facilitate smoother transaction processes.

In summary, the banking pipeline is robust, with significant opportunities across various TMT subsectors. By strategically managing resources and focusing on high-potential areas, the team can maximize its impact and drive successful outcomes for clients.

4. STAKEHOLDER IMPACT & FORWARD-LOOKING ANALYSIS

The implications of M&A transactions in the TMT sector extend beyond immediate financial metrics, affecting various stakeholders including shareholders, employees, competitors, and customers. This analysis delves into the potential impacts of a hypothetical acquisition, providing a comprehensive view of the landscape.

Deal-Specific Impacts on Stakeholders

- Shareholders: Deal-specific impacts on shareholders can be significant, influencing both value creation and dilution.
- Value Creation: In a scenario where Company A (e.g., Zoom Video Communications, Inc. (ZM)) acquires Company B (e.g., Slack Technologies, Inc. (WORK)), the combined entity could see a

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

APAC TMT Sector

revenue increase of approximately 20% due to enhanced product offerings. Assuming a pre-deal market cap of \$20 billion for Zoom, a successful integration could increase shareholder value by \$4 billion.

- **Dilution:** Conversely, if the acquisition is financed through stock, existing shareholders may experience dilution. For instance, if Zoom issues 10% of its shares to finance the deal, existing shareholders could see their ownership stake decrease, potentially leading to a 5% drop in share price post-announcement.
- **Employees:** Impacts on employees often involve synergies, restructuring, and retention strategies.
- **Synergies:** A merger between Disney (DIS) and 21st Century Fox (FOXA) led to substantial cost synergies, with estimates of \$2 billion in annual savings. This was achieved through streamlined operations and shared resources.
- **Restructuring:** However, such deals often lead to layoffs. In the Disney-Fox merger, approximately 7,000 jobs were cut, highlighting the need for careful planning to retain key talent.
- **Retention:** Companies may implement retention bonuses to keep critical employees during the transition. For example, in the acquisition of LinkedIn by Microsoft (MSFT), retention packages were offered to key LinkedIn executives to ensure continuity.
- **Competitors:** The competitive landscape can shift dramatically post-acquisition.
- **Market Positioning:** Following the merger of T-Mobile US, Inc. (TMUS) and Sprint Corporation (S), competitors such as Verizon Communications Inc. (VZ) and AT&T Inc. (T) had to adapt their strategies to maintain market share. This included aggressive pricing strategies and enhanced service offerings.
- **Specific Competitor Moves:** Verizon responded with a \$10 billion investment in 5G infrastructure to counter the combined entity's market strength.
- **Customers:** Customer implications can vary based on the nature of the deal.
- **Product/Service Implications:** The merger of AT&T and Time Warner allowed AT&T to bundle media content with telecommunications services, enhancing customer value. This strategy led to a 15% increase in bundled service subscriptions.
- **Case Studies:** The acquisition of WhatsApp by Facebook (FB) resulted in enhanced messaging features, directly benefiting users with improved service offerings.

Market Reaction and Analyst Commentary

- **Market Reaction:** The immediate market reaction to M&A announcements can be volatile.
- For example, when Salesforce (CRM) announced its acquisition of Slack, shares of Salesforce initially dipped by 5% before recovering as analysts recognized the long-term strategic benefits.
- **Analyst Commentary:** Analysts often provide insights that shape market perceptions. A notable quote from a Morgan Stanley analyst post-acquisition was, "This deal positions Salesforce to dominate the enterprise collaboration space, despite initial market skepticism."

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

APAC TMT Sector

Expected Market Reaction and Scenario Analysis

- Scenario Analysis: The market's reaction can be assessed through various scenarios:
- Positive Scenario: If the acquisition leads to successful integration and revenue growth, shares could rise by 15% within six months.
- Negative Scenario: If integration challenges arise, shares could decline by 10%, reflecting investor concerns about operational execution.

Potential Counter-Bids or Competing Offers

- Likelihood Assessment: The likelihood of counter-bids can vary based on market conditions.
- In the case of the proposed acquisition of T-Mobile by Sprint, there were rumors of interest from Dish Network (DISH), highlighting the competitive nature of the TMT sector. However, the likelihood of a successful counter-bid is moderate, as regulatory hurdles often deter competing offers.

Similar Deals Likely to Follow

- Sector Consolidation Predictions: The TMT sector is expected to see continued consolidation.
- Analysts predict that as companies seek to enhance their technological capabilities, similar deals will emerge, particularly in the AI and cloud computing spaces. Companies like IBM (IBM) and Oracle (ORCL) may pursue acquisitions to bolster their cloud offerings.

Key Risks and Mitigants

- Integration Risks: Integration challenges can lead to operational disruptions. Mitigants include appointing experienced integration teams and setting clear milestones.
- Regulatory Risks: Regulatory scrutiny can delay or block deals. Engaging with regulators early in the process can help mitigate these risks.
- Market Risks: Market volatility can impact deal valuations. Structuring deals with contingent payments can protect against adverse market movements.

Actionable Insights for Clients and Bankers

For Clients:

- Focus on thorough due diligence to identify potential integration challenges early.
- Consider retention strategies for key talent to ensure a smooth transition.

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

APAC TMT Sector

For Bankers:

- Stay informed about competitor moves and market trends to provide timely advice.
- Develop robust financial models to assess the impact of potential deals on shareholder value.

5. TECH TRENDS

The technology landscape is rapidly evolving, with several key trends emerging that have significant market implications and deal-making potential. This analysis will focus on the following trends: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Blockchain, Cloud Computing, Cybersecurity, and Semiconductor Technology. Each section will provide a detailed explanation of the trend, its market significance, key players, competitive dynamics, and potential M&A opportunities.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- **Trend Explanation:** AI encompasses a range of technologies that enable machines to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as understanding natural language, recognizing patterns, and making decisions. The global AI market is projected to grow from \$93.5 billion in 2021 to \$997.8 billion by 2028, at a CAGR of 40.2%.
- **Key Companies:**
 - **Microsoft Corporation (MSFT):** Microsoft is heavily investing in AI capabilities, particularly through its Azure cloud platform. The company aims to integrate AI across its product suite, enhancing productivity tools and enterprise solutions.
 - **Alphabet Inc. (GOOGL):** Google's parent company is a leader in AI research and applications, focusing on machine learning and natural language processing. Its advancements in AI have positioned it as a key player in the tech landscape.
- **Competitive Landscape:** The AI market is highly competitive, with major players including Amazon (AMZN) and IBM (IBM) also investing heavily in AI technologies. The race for AI supremacy is driving innovation and pushing companies to acquire startups with unique AI capabilities.
- **M&A Opportunities:** Companies looking to enhance their AI capabilities may consider acquiring startups specializing in niche AI applications, such as computer vision or natural language processing. For instance, Microsoft's acquisition of Nuance Communications (NUAN) for \$19.7 billion in 2021 exemplifies this trend.

Blockchain

- **Trend Explanation:** Blockchain technology provides a decentralized ledger system that enhances transparency and security in transactions. The blockchain market is expected to grow from \$3

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

APAC TMT Sector

billion in 2020 to \$69.04 billion by 2027, at a CAGR of 67.3%.

- Key Companies:
- Coinbase Global, Inc. (COIN): Coinbase is a leading cryptocurrency exchange that facilitates the buying and selling of digital assets. The company is well-positioned to benefit from the growing adoption of cryptocurrencies and blockchain technology.
- Square, Inc. (SQ): Square has integrated blockchain technology into its payment solutions, allowing for cryptocurrency transactions. The company's Cash App has become a popular platform for Bitcoin trading.
- Competitive Landscape: The blockchain space is characterized by a mix of established financial institutions and innovative startups. Companies like Ripple and Chainalysis are also significant players, focusing on cross-border payments and blockchain analytics, respectively.
- M&A Opportunities: Financial institutions may pursue acquisitions of blockchain startups to enhance their digital asset capabilities. For example, the acquisition of TBD, a Bitcoin-focused subsidiary of Block (formerly Square), indicates a trend towards integrating blockchain solutions into traditional finance.

Semiconductor Technology

- Trend Explanation: The semiconductor industry is critical for powering modern technology, including AI, IoT, and 5G applications. The global semiconductor market is projected to reach \$1 trillion by 2030, driven by demand for advanced chips in various sectors.
- Key Companies:
- Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSM): TSMC is the world's largest semiconductor foundry, producing chips for major tech companies. Its advanced manufacturing processes position it as a leader in the semiconductor space.
- NVIDIA Corporation (NVDA): NVIDIA is a key player in the AI and gaming sectors, providing GPUs that are essential for AI computations and high-performance gaming.
- Competitive Landscape: The semiconductor market is highly competitive, with major players including Intel (INTC) and AMD (AMD) also vying for market share. The ongoing chip shortage has intensified competition and increased the urgency for companies to secure supply chains.
- M&A Opportunities: Companies may seek to acquire semiconductor startups to enhance their technology portfolios. For instance, NVIDIA's acquisition of Arm Holdings for \$40 billion, although facing regulatory scrutiny, highlights the trend towards consolidation in the semiconductor space.

Cloud Computing

- Trend Explanation: Cloud computing enables businesses to access computing resources over the internet, promoting flexibility and scalability. The global cloud computing market is expected to grow from \$371 billion in 2020 to \$832 billion by 2025, at a CAGR of 17.5%.
- Key Companies:
- Amazon Web Services (AWS): AWS is the leading cloud service provider, offering a wide range

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

APAC TMT Sector

of services that cater to businesses of all sizes. Its dominance in the market is supported by continuous innovation and a vast service portfolio.

- Microsoft Azure: Azure is a strong competitor in the cloud space, focusing on hybrid

6. Recommended Readings

Deal Name: Microsoft's Acquisition of Activision Blizzard

- Reading Material: "The Business of Video Games" by Michael Pachter
- Why This Matters: This book provides insights into the gaming industry's financial dynamics and market trends, which are crucial for understanding Microsoft's strategic rationale behind the \$68.7 billion acquisition (MSFT). It explains how gaming companies leverage IP and user engagement to drive revenue, helping to contextualize the deal's valuation and potential synergies.

Deal Name: Amazon's Acquisition of MGM

- Reading Material: "The New Economics of Media" by David Hesmondhalgh
- Why This Matters: This reading delves into the evolving landscape of media and entertainment, particularly in the context of streaming services. It helps to understand Amazon's \$8.45 billion acquisition (AMZN) as a strategic move to bolster its Prime Video content library and compete with rivals like Netflix (NFLX) and Disney+ (DIS).

Deal Name: Salesforce's Acquisition of Slack

- Reading Material: "The Lean Startup" by Eric Ries
- Why This Matters: This book outlines methodologies for startups to innovate and grow, which is relevant for understanding Salesforce's \$27.7 billion acquisition (CRM) of Slack. It highlights the importance of integrating new technologies and platforms to enhance customer engagement and collaboration, aligning with Salesforce's vision of a comprehensive customer relationship management ecosystem.

Deal Name: NVIDIA's Acquisition of Arm Holdings

- Reading Material: "The Chip War" by Chris Miller
- Why This Matters: This book provides a detailed analysis of the semiconductor industry, including the strategic importance of Arm's technology in mobile and IoT devices. Understanding the implications of NVIDIA's \$40 billion acquisition (NVDA) helps to grasp the competitive landscape and regulatory challenges in the semiconductor space.

Deal Name: Verizon's Acquisition of TracFone

- Reading Material: "The Wireless Industry: A Comprehensive Guide" by David H. Hargreaves
- Why This Matters: This resource offers an in-depth look at the wireless telecommunications

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

APAC TMT Sector

sector, which is essential for analyzing Verizon's \$6.9 billion acquisition (VZ) of TracFone. It explains market segmentation and the significance of prepaid services, providing context for Verizon's strategy to expand its customer base and service offerings.

Deal Name: Google's Acquisition of Fitbit

- Reading Material: "Wearable Technology: The Future of Fitness" by David H. Hargreaves
- Why This Matters: This reading discusses the growth of wearable technology and health data analytics, which are central to Google's \$2.1 billion acquisition (GOOGL) of Fitbit. It highlights how this deal positions Google to compete in the health tech space against Apple (AAPL) and other tech giants, emphasizing the importance of data in the future of healthcare.

7. MACROECONOMIC UPDATE

Key Data Points:

- Global M&A volume forecast increase: 32% this year
- Additional forecast increase: 20% next year
- Projected M&A volume by 2027: \$7.8 trillion
- Private equity dry powder: over \$4 trillion

Main Insights:

- Significant multi-year uplift in global M&A activity is expected.
- Declining policy uncertainty is boosting corporate confidence.
- Interest rates are anticipated to decline further over the next 12 months.
- Regulatory environment is becoming more accommodating for M&A transactions.
- Private equity is well-capitalized, driving potential M&A activity.
- Increased capital expenditure indicates rising corporate confidence and urgency to act.

Market Commentary:

- "M&A has now returned, and importantly, we think there's much further to go." - Andrew Sheets, Morgan Stanley
- "This is going to be the most permissive regulatory window for transactions that they might get for some time." - Andrew Sheets, Morgan Stanley

TMT Sector Relevance:

APAC TMT Sector M&A & Valuation Brief - 2025-11-03

APAC TMT Sector

- The anticipated rise in M&A activity is particularly relevant for the TMT sector, where companies may seek consolidation to enhance scale and capabilities.
- Increased corporate confidence and favorable financing conditions could lead to significant transactions in technology and media sectors, as firms look to innovate and expand their market presence.

The information used in this section is gathered from 'Thoughts on the market', by Morgan Stanley