YOURSTORYRESEARCH

APPNIRBHAR BHARAT

The Made in India App Landscape Report

Message from Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad

Union Minister for Law & Justice, Communications and Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India

रविशंकर प्रसाद
RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD

सत्यमेव जयते

मंत्री
विधि एवं न्याय, संचार
एवं
इलेक्ट्रॉनिकी और सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी
भारत सरकार

MINISTER OF
LAW & JUSTICE, COMMUNICATIONS
AND
ELECTRONICS & INFORMATION, TECHNOLOGY
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MESSAGE

I am happy that YourStory is bringing out a report on Indian mobile app ecosystem and has named it "AppNirbhar Bharat" keeping up with the spirit of AatmaNirbhar Bharat call given by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi.

Mobile app economy has become an important part of the economy and India, which has the largest Internet user base in the world among democracies, is playing a significant role in this. However, currently India stands at the top in terms of mobile app downloads. The clarion call for AatmaNirbhar Bharat aims to develop India a top country in terms of mobile app uploads as well by encouraging local app developers and innovators for creating world class mobile apps. I am happy to note that some concrete suggestions have been shared by YourStory in this report for creating a vibrant mobile app ecosystem in India. Let's work on these suggestions.

The AppNibhar Bharat report has showcased all the finalists of the AatmaNirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge and also highlighted Swadeshi alternatives of other popular apps under different categories.Summarizing the features of these apps will also encourage all the app developers and innovators.

I congratulate the entire team of YourStory led by Shradha Sharma for this pioneering research report on Indian app ecosystem. Hope in future also efforts like this will continue to bring out such meaningful insights that help in developing a vibrant and innovative Digital India ecosystem.

My best wishes.

(Ravi Shankar Prasad)

Digital India
Power To Empower

Electronics Niketan, 6 C.G.O. Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-110003
Phone: 011-24369191, 24362626 FAX : 011-24366070

स्वच्छ भारत
एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

Shradha Sharma

Founder & CEO,

YourStory

Foreword

Over the past few years, India has undergone a rapid transformation into a digitally empowered society. With a digital population of over 600 million, India is today ranked the world's second-largest online market. The country's startup ecosystem has also grown to become the third-largest globally, with its entrepreneurs and tech innovators building lasting solutions to solve for not only India, but also for the world.

India is also the top country in the world in terms of the number of apps installed and used per month. India's app ecosystem has, in fact, never been in a greater position of strength, thanks to the renewed enthusiasm and vigour among Indian techies, innovators, and entrepreneurs to build from India, for India and the world.

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently raised the clarion call for India to become 'vocal for local' and Aatmanirbhar, or self-reliant, he also put the spotlight on the need for an 'Aatmanirbhar App Ecosystem' when he launched the Government of India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge.

"Today, when the entire nation is working towards creating an Aatmanirbhar Bharat, it is a good opportunity to give direction to their efforts, momentum to their hard work, and mentorship to their talent to evolve Apps which can satisfy our market as well as compete with the world," PM Modi said.

Indeed, India has shown the world that it is second to none when it comes to building tech solutions, at scale, which can compete with global rivals and find use cases in different markets. It's encouraging to note that all these world-class solutions have been developed with a unique model of partnership between government, industry, and academia.

That's why I believe that PM Modi's Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge is yet another bold step in that direction, and a momentous opportunity for Indian tech developers, entrepreneurs, and companies to build for India at a scale and get a pie of the multi-billion-dollar global app

market.

Most importantly, I believe these apps will give rise to an Aatmanirbhar App Ecosystem, as envisioned by PM Modi, and go on to inspire many other app developers to solve for India and build world-class apps for the world.

To honour this historic step in the move towards a more Atmanirbhar App Ecosystem, or what we at YourStory are calling an AppNirbhar Bharat, we present YourStory Research's AppNirbhar Bharat report.

YourStory Research's AppNirbhar Bharat Report aims to:

1. Celebrate the innovations and efforts by India's very own app developers — with a particular focus on the 24 winners of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge

2. Showcase many of the other more established Made in India apps and some notable new and upcoming apps, many of whom participated in YourStory Research's month-long AppNirbhar Bharat survey

3. Highlight emerging trends in India's mobile app development space based on YourStory's app survey

4. Most importantly, provide an 11-point recommendation for enabling a robust Indian app ecosystem and creating an AppNirbhar Bharat.

More personally, this report highlights YourStory's continued commitment to championing the stories and achievements of Indian innovators and changemakers — so that, together, we can write the future of a nation that can be truly Aatmanirbhar.

Here's to an 'AppNirbhar Bharat.' Jai Hind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

YourStory Research, the research arm of YourStory Media, is the definitive source for data-led insights and analysis of trends impacting the Indian entrepreneurial and tech ecosystem. YourStory Research focuses on market research, market intelligence, startup discovery, and consulting in the startup ecosystem in India.

YourStory Media Private Limited is India's leading digital platform for positive, inspirational stories of changemakers and entrepreneurs across India.

Produced by YourStory Research

Editor-in-Chief: Shradha Sharma
Lead Editors & Producers: Tenzin Pema, Saheli Sen Gupta
Lead Authors: Aparajita Saxena, Meha Agarwal, Ryan Frantz
Lead Design: Aditya Ranade, Anubhav Anurag

YourStory Editorial team:
Writers: Sohini Mitter, Sindhu Kashyap, Rishabh Mansur, Vishal Krishna, Shreya Ganguly, Nirandhi Gowthaman, Rekha Balakrishnan
Editors: Teja Lele Desai, Dipti Nair, Megha Reddy, Suman Singh
Additional inputs from Trisha Medhi, Rashi Varshney, Palak Agarwal, Tenzin Norzom, Bhavya Kausal, Roshni Balaji, Anju Ann Mathew

Website: https://brands.yourstory.com/appnirbhar-bharat
YourStory website: www.yourstory.com
Email: research@yourstory.com

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Introduction

India is today the fastest-growing app market in the world. With more than 500 million smartphone users in the country, India has become the top country globally in terms of the number of mobile apps installed and used per month.

Admittedly, the maturing of the Indian app economy has come about on the back of the rapid digital transformation in the country. Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2015 launch of the Government of India's flagship Digital India campaign — aimed at creating a digitally empowered society — a number of initiatives and programmes have been launched to drive technological innovations and digital adoption across the nation.

Other factors such as affordable internet rates, low price of smartphones, and mobile phone penetration beyond the metros have all contributed to turning India into a truly digital nation. In September 2016, the Jio effect changed how Indians used mobile phones and the internet, with the Mukesh Ambani-owned Reliance Jio luring almost 100 million users in less than a year — including millions of first-time internet users online — by offering free 4G services.

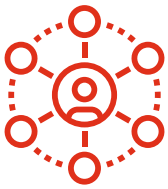
Now, India is the second-largest online market with a digital population of over 600 million. Mobile phones have today become the most ubiquitous technology in both urban and rural India, and with it, mobile applications, or apps, have become an integral part of our daily life.

From consuming news and entertainment to accessing financial services, buying groceries or apparels, hailing a cab or making payments — mobile apps have truly become indispensable tools for carrying out essential activities and interacting with people and businesses.

In 2019, Indians reportedly downloaded over 19 billion apps, according to App Annie's State of Mobile 2020 report. However, given the limited number of app uploads from India, there is a strong need for Indian app developers to create and upload more homegrown mobile apps in order to meet the enormous local demand as well as remove the country's dependence on foreign apps.

Already, we're seeing Indian app developers and entrepreneurs take up the Government of India's challenge to create more homegrown apps to use and scale globally. Ever since the Indian government announced a ban on

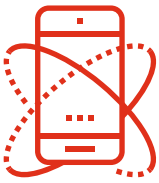
Indian mobile app market opportunity



India's digital population

600 mn+

(source: TRAI, MeitY)



No. of smartphone users in India:

500 mn+

(source: Counterpoint Research)

Total wireless subscribers in India (2G, 3G & 4G)

1.15 bn

as of December 2019

(source: TRAI)

Chinese apps — 59 initially and 47 more recently — there have been hundreds of new app launches by Indian techies and app developers.

The speed, agility, and ingenuity of Indian tech entrepreneurs and app developers were on full display as they heeded PM Narendra Modi's call for an Aatmanirbhar Bharat that will power India to become a $5 trillion economy in the near future.

In this report, we've sought to celebrate this spirit of Indian entrepreneurship and innovation by putting the spotlight on Made in India apps. To this end, we highlight the 24 apps that won the government of India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge from the total number of 6,940 applicants from across the country. We also give you a glimpse into the new Aatmanirbhar app revolution taking place, where hundreds of homegrown apps are being launched every month as alternatives to popular banned Chinese apps such as TikTok and SHAREit.

Indeed, with the focus on Made in India apps and an ecosystem that fuels homegrown innovations, the time for Indian techies to innovate and solve for the world is now.

India's app landscape

Total number of app downloads in India (2019)

19 bn

on Google Play

(source: App Annie)

Average time spent per day by average Indian mobile users (2019)

3.5 hr

(source: App Annie)

Total spend on mobile apps by Indian consumers (2019)

$320 mn

(source: App Annie)

India's contribution to total global consumer spending on mobile apps (2019)

0.3%

(source: App Annie)

Mobile apps: top categories by usage in India

Games

Shopping

Communication

Video

Made in India app stats

Number of apps from Indian publishers on Google Play

130,159

(source: 42matters)

Average rating of india apps from Indian publishers on Google Play

3.65

(source: 42matters)

Percentage of gaming apps released by Indian publishers

13%

(source: 42matters)

Percentage of non-gaming apps released by Indian publishers

87%

(source: 42matters)

In the driver's seat: India's app economy

The app landscape for India is on the precipice of an important change, where, for the first time in the history of the country's digital journey, homegrown apps — across categories — stand poised to bag a greater share of the Indian market than their foreign counterparts.

India today ranks number one in the world in terms of the number of apps installed and used per month, with the market projected to have a growth rate of over 200 percent to 37.2 billion installs by 2022, as per App Annie estimates. In fact, India's app economy is maturing so rapidly that app developers, businesses, investors, and marketers can no longer afford to not have the market on its radar, particularly if they're looking to tap the country's large and growing digital user base.

But despite India's large install base, China continues to take home the trophy for the most revenue earned from apps, as well as for usage; this is mainly because of companies like Tencent and Baidu that have made apps that cut across various industries — from gaming, social networking, entertainment, news, and chat apps, to ecommerce, productivity, and photo and video editing.

Essentially, they create a synergistic ecosystem of apps which, over time, makes it difficult for users to get out of. In comparison, India's most popular apps category continues to be Shopping, which boasts the largest number of installs, even as the COVID-19 pandemic has driven an acceleration in adoption of mobile apps to carry out other activities.

Indian app makers are more fragmented in that domestic apps tend to specialise in certain types of services or areas. For example, Paytm — which is the closest to a 'super app' in India — has more apps for its various financial services offerings, than it does for its ecommerce, ticket booking, and gaming offerings.

Even if the 'super app' stipulations are removed, Indian apps that are hyperlocal — delivery or financial services apps — find relatively more acceptance than other categories, primarily because they solve for local Indian problems.

Before the moratorium on Chinese apps, Indian app makers had been trying to sell the idea of using desi apps, especially social media and networking, by taking the Indic language route and recommending users use the apps in whatever regional language they prefer. At the time, however, this strategy yielded very little in the way of users for Indian apps because even apps like TikTok by Chinese company ByteDance allowed users to access regional content.

All that changed with the ban on Chinese apps. The increasing appetite for Made in India products and solutions, amidst growing nationwide hostility towards China in the wake of data privacy and national sovereignty concerns, have prompted Indians to rapidly adopt India-made apps, many of which come preloaded with vernacular language support. As a result, consumption habits are rapidly changing.

Indian users, particularly those in rural India, are helping expand the growing popularity of Indian apps, buoyed by the accessibility and ease of use that homegrown mobile applications provide. This habit-forming consumption bodes well for Indian app makers who can continue to capture users, long after they are seen as just alternatives to the banned Chinese apps.

Changing user trends is just one facet of the ban. Ultimately, though, the move to ban Chinese apps directly translates into more opportunities for Indian companies, and is, quintessentially, an embodiment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for the country to become Aatmanirbhir, or self-sufficient.

For Indians, using these homegrown apps means supporting Indian techies and encouraging Made in India innovations, while also helping generate employment opportunities for thousands. For app makers, it means being able to compete on a level playing field and advance to a level of sophistication mostly seen in apps coming out of Silicon Valley.

AATMANIRBHAR BHARAT APP INNOVATION CHALLENGE

"Let us code for an Aatmanirbhar Bharat!," wrote Prime Minister Narendra Modi on July 4 as he announced the Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge as part of the government's efforts to boost innovation in India and reduce dependency on foreign apps.

The aim of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge — an initiative by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology and the Atal Innovation Mission — is to give better visibility and clarity to existing Indian apps to help them achieve their goals and to create tech products that solve for India.

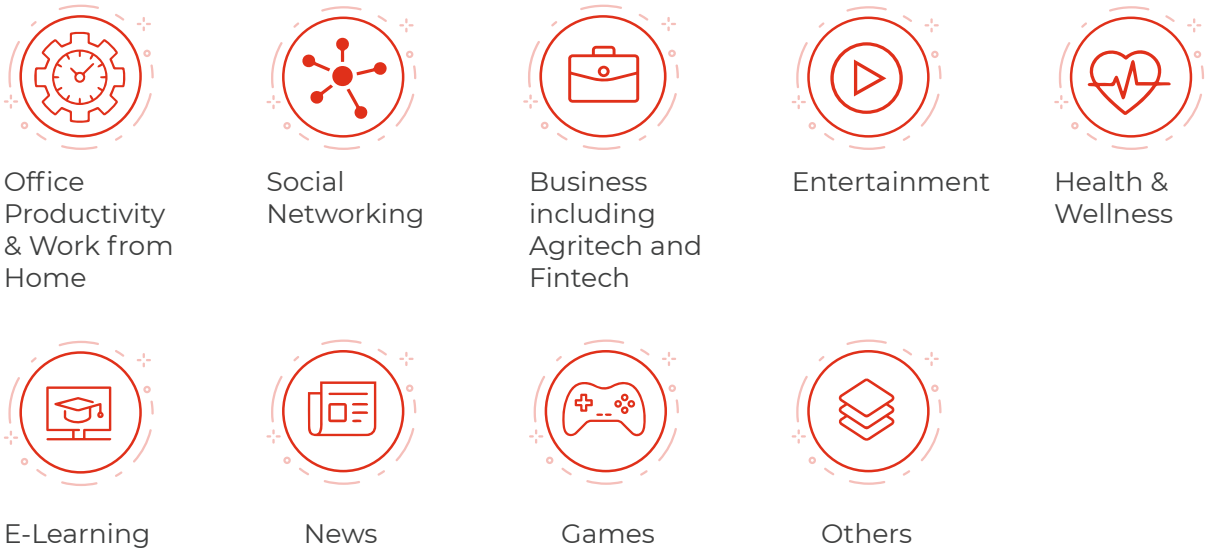
As part of this initiative, the government set out to "identify the best Indian apps that are already being used by citizens and have the potential to scale and become world-class apps in their respective categories".

About the App Innovation Challenge

The Challenge was organised under two tracks:

1. Promotion of Existing Apps: For the promotion of existing apps and platforms across various categories, the government will provide mentoring, hand-holding, and support. Track-01 will work in mission mode for identifying good quality apps for the leader-board.
2. Development of New Apps: For incubating new Apps and Platforms, Track-02 initiative will work to help create new champions in India by providing support in ideation, incubation, prototyping, and roll out along with market access.

The Challenge saw participation from 6,940 tech entrepreneurs and startups in nine categories:



Around 900 app entries received were from the health and wellness segment, 1,062 under e-learning, 1,155 social networking apps, 326 under games, 662 office and work from home apps, 237 news, and 320 under the entertainment segment. Around 1,135 app entries were submitted under the 'others' category.

Given the enthusiastic response to the Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge, the government had decided to extend the last date of submission of entries to the challenge to July 26, 2020. Earlier, the last date for submission of entries was July 18.

WINNERS OF THE APP CHALLENGE

The results of the hackathon — which saw 24 winners — were announced on August 7, 2020. The top-three winners under each of the categories will receive Rs 20 lakh, Rs 15 lakh, and Rs 10 lakh for first, second, and third positions, respectively, from the government.

Below is a list of all the winners across nine categories.

Entertainment

CaptionPlus, Meme Chat, and FTC Talent apps received first, second, and third position respectively in the Entertainment category, while Boom and Docubay were selected for the special category award.

News

Logically stood first and IsEqualTo second in the News category, while the special category award went to LetsUp and Paperboy.

Games

Hitwicket Superstars got the first position, while ScarFall: The Royale Combat and World Cricket Championship 2 (WCC2) stood at second and third position, respectively. The special category awards went to apps Math Games, Learn Add, Subtract, Multiply & Divide; Donkey Master; and Kite Fly.

Office

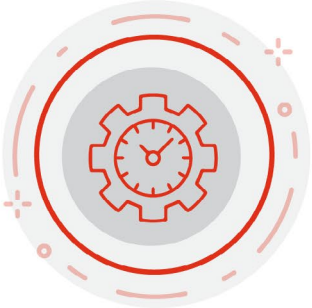
Zoho Workplace & Cliq and SureMDM attracted first and second position, respectively, while Spark.Live, IamHere, and Kaagaz Scanner were nominated for the special category award.

Health

StepSetGo (SSG) stood first and iMumz second. Sasta Sunder and Aurum were among the special mentions.

E-Learning

Disprz, Kutuki Kids Learning App, and Hello English: Learn English apps stood first, second, and third position. ChalkLit and eMedicoz were nominated for the special category award.



Business

Zoho Invoice, Books & Expense won the first position, while Mall91 and GimBooks stood second and third, respectively. Boomer and Linq My Business got special mentions.

Social

Chingari was at first place, while YourQuote and Koo stood at second position. Hidoc Dr. and Mitron were among the special category awards.

Others

MapmyIndia Move, AskSarkar, and myitreturn at first, second, and third position, respectively. Xploree AI Keyboard and LifeHacks got special mentions.

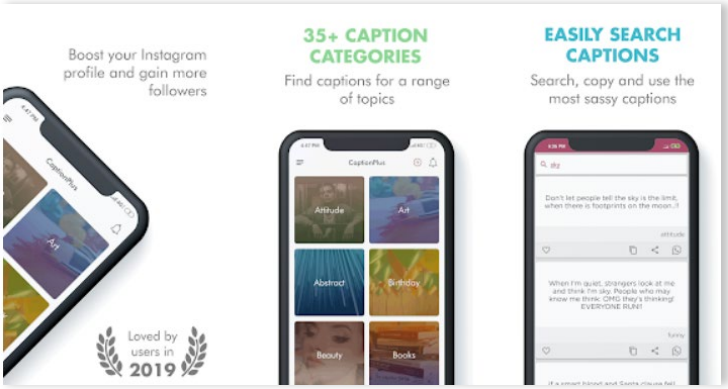
Winners league

Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge

Entertainment

Parent company:
NinjaBots
Founder(s):
Rahul Maurya, Anurag Kumar, and Jitendra Yadav
Launched in:
2018
Downloads:
1,000,000+
Notable features:
Working to create a search engine of the most trending and catchy Instagram captions

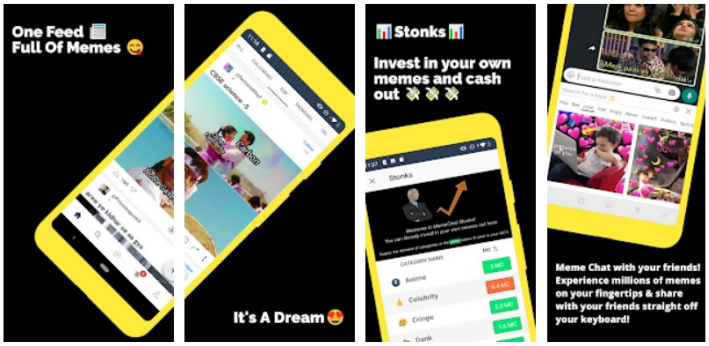
1 | CaptionPlus



CaptionPlus is leveraging the rising popularity of photo sharing apps in India. It allows users to write compelling captions and add relevant hashtags to complement photos shared across social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. It also helps in increasing the organic reach of the shared photos. The app is available for free and has in-app purchases.

Parent company:
MemeChat Pvt. Ltd
Founder(s):
Taaran Chanana, Kyle Fernandes
Launched in:
2019
Downloads:
500,000+
Notable features:
Users can upload their images to create memes

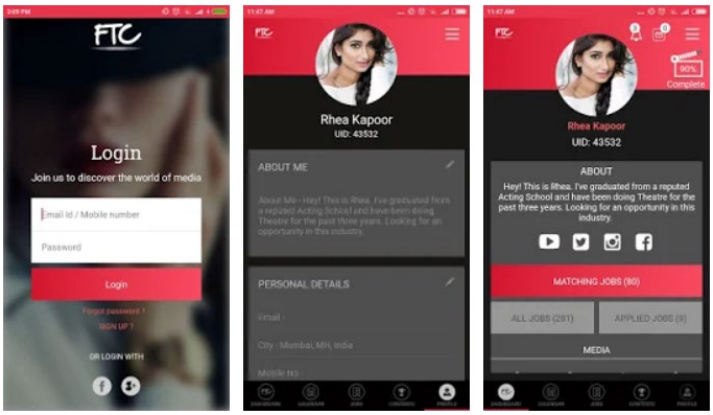
2 MemeChat



MemeChat is an app to create memes. It offers templates, trend-wise categories, stickers, and also helps highlight memes in different groups. People can use it to earn money by creating memes using the paid templates. It also claims to be an expert in viral engineering, thereby helping brands to create viral popular ad campaigns. The list of clients include Alt Balaji, Amazon Prime, Hotstar, MX player, OnePlus, Xiaomi, Vayner Media among others. The app is available for free for users, except for the premium templates.

Parent company:
FTC Talent Media & Entertainment
Founder(s):
Suniel Shetty
Launched in:
2018
Downloads:
100,000+
Notable features:
Offering contests and workshops to participate from home

3 FTC Talent

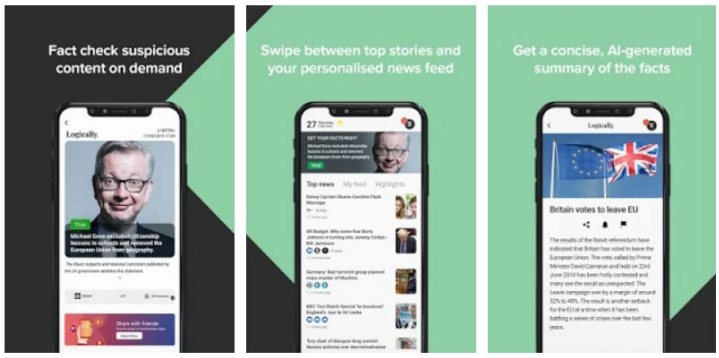


Talent is an online global platform that connects artists to recruiters in the media and entertainment industry. It also allows people to create an online profile and an online portfolio. It organises live workshops and offers networking opportunities to aspiring talents in the industry. The app is available for free.

News

Parent company:
LogicallyHQ
Founder(s):
Lyric Jain
Launched in:
2019
Downloads:
100,000+
Investors:
XTX Ventures, NPIF: Mercia Equity Finance
Funding raised so far:
$12.7 million
Notable feature:
Uses AI and a team of in-house fact checkers to validate information

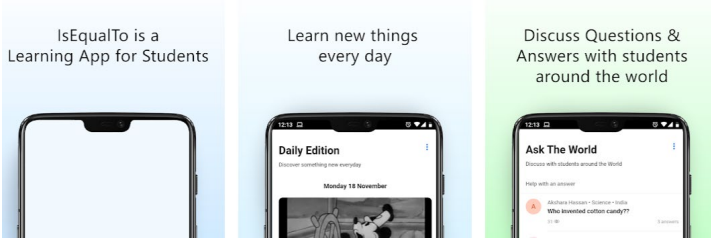
1 Logically



Logically is a fake news checker. It helps users verify news stories being shared across social media platforms like Facebook and messaging apps like WhatsApp. The users can also check other facts, images, and find breaking news.

Parent company:
IsEqualTo Learning Systems Pvt. Ltd.
Founder(s):
Saumil Gandhi
Launched in:
2018
Downloads:
50,000+
Investors:
CA.Amol Mishra, Saakar Yadav, Sahil Singla
Notable features:
Short content snippets for easy reference and readability

2 IsEqualTo



IsEqualTo is a learning platform that helps students stay updated with the daily news, take quizzes, and improve their general knowledge. It offers several features for both students and schools. The app is free for students and offers a unified school administration platform to schools on subscription.

Games

Parent company:
Octathorpe Web Consultants
Founder(s):
Kashyap Reddy, Keerti Singh
Launched in:
2019
Downloads:
500,000+
Investors:
The Chennai Angels
Funding raised so far:
$300K
Notable Features:
Offers a 3D experience on Mobile and an AI-powered immersive mobile experience.

1 Hitwicket Superstars

Hitwicket Superstars is a cricket game app which allows users to create their own teams, play as a captain, and a coach. It is a multiplayer game, wherein users can participate in real-time auctions, challenge friends, and more. The app is free to download and has in-app purchases.

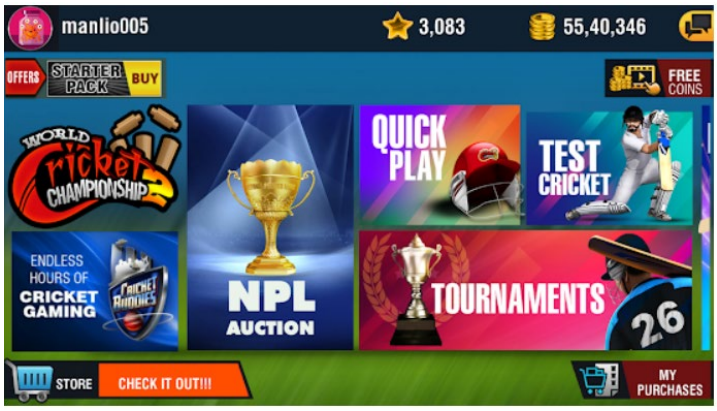
Parent company:
Phoenix Games
Launched in:
2019
Downloads:
1,000,000+

2 Scarfall: The Royale Combat

Scarfall is a multiplayer online battle arena video game. It is an action shooting game with survival options where the player needs to survive a battlefield by killing all opponents. The game can be played offline or online. The app is available for free and offers in-app purchases.

Parent company:
Nextwave Multimedia
Founder(s):
Rajendran PR
Launched in:
2015
Downloads:
50,000,000+
Notable features:
Realism and authenticity

3 World Cricket Championship 2 (WCC2)

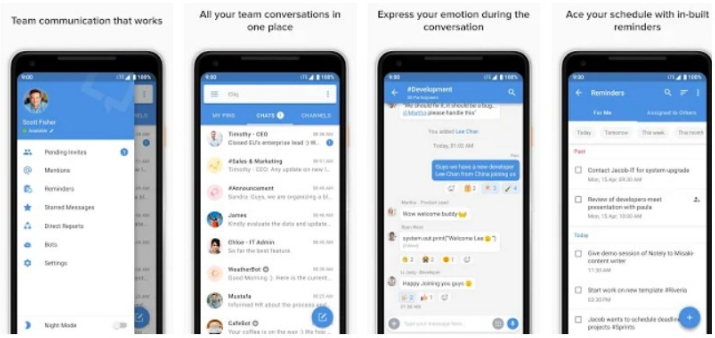


WCC2 is an advanced 3D mobile cricket game, which allows players to hit all kinds of shots like Dil-scoop and the Helicopter shot. Animations, cricketing venues, new controls, and new camera angles are other features offered in the app. The app is free to play and has in-app purchases.

Office

Parent company:
Zoho Corporation
Founder(s):
Sridhar Vembu, Tony Thomas, Sreenivas Kanumuru
Launched in:
2017
Downloads:
100,000+
Notable featureS:
Uses AI and a team of Provides simplified task management tool

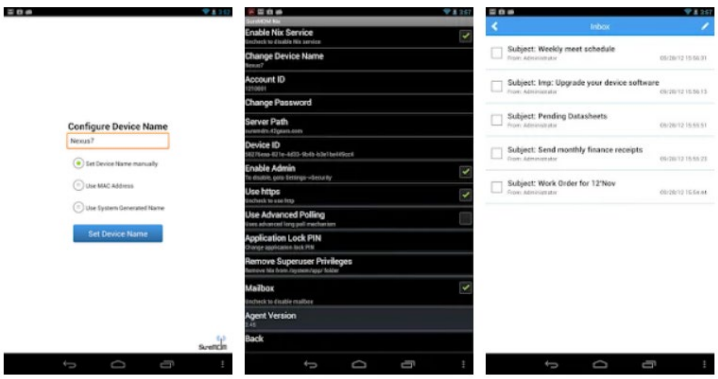
1 Zoho Workplace & Cliq



Zoho-Cliq is a team communication and collaboration app, which offers features like real-time messaging, audio and video calls. It also offers facilities to integrate third-party applications such as Google Drive, Mailchimp, Zoho CRM, Jira, Github, and Salesforce.

Parent company:
42Gears Mobility Systems
Founder(s):
Onkar Singh, Prakash Gupta
Launched in:
2011
Downloads:
100,000+
Notable Features:
Remote accessibility for troubleshooting

2 SureMDM

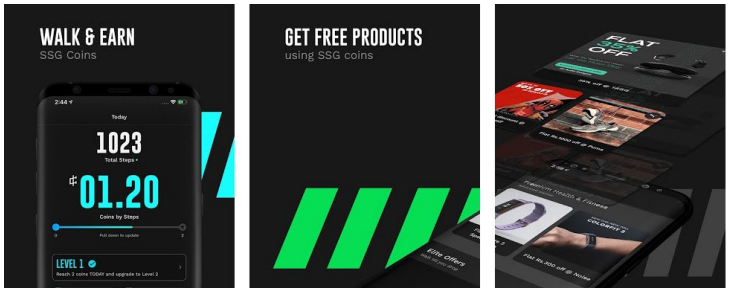


SureMDMoffers mobile device management solutions. It helps companies to remotely deploy mobile apps and to secure, track, and troubleshoot devices. It offers a 30-day free trial plan and a premium subscription ranging between $3.99 and $7.99 per month.

Health

Parent company:
Pepkit Media Pvt. Ltd.
Founder(s):
Shivjeet Ghatge, Misaal Turakhia, Abhay Pai
Launched in:
2019
Downloads:
5,000,000+
Notable features:
The number of coins available continues to increase as the usage increase, thus motivating users further

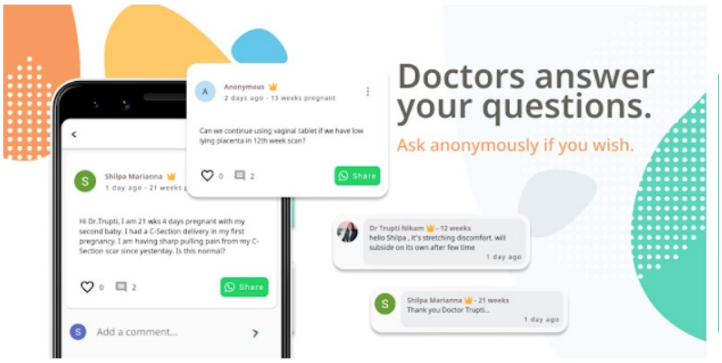
1 StepSetGo



StepSetGo is a fitness app that encourages users to walk; after every 1,000 steps completed, the user receives one SSG coin. Users can collect these SSG coins and use them to purchase products or avail discounts in the in-app bazaar. The company has collaborated with a number of health and fitness brands to offer a wide variety of purchase options for the users.

Parent company:
Pruoo
Founder(s):
Ravi Teja Akondi, Dr Jaideep Malhotra
Launched in:
2019
Downloads:
65,000+
Notable features:
Helps in maintaining mental health of would-be mothers

2 iMumz

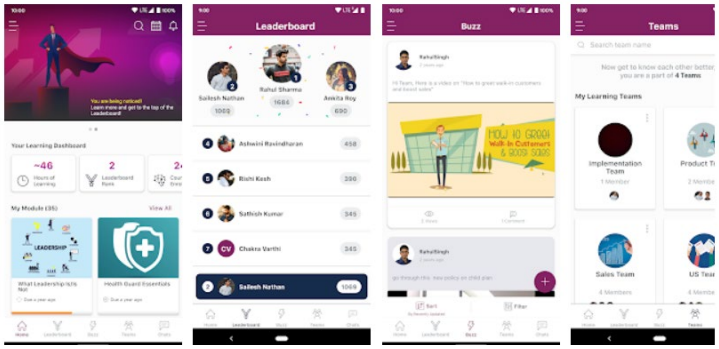


iMumz is an app for would-be mothers. It offers a week by week pregnancy planner for would-be mothers to help them understand the changes in their bodies. Users can ask questions, if they have any. The platform revives the focus on the Vedic philosophy of Garbh Sanskar, which strongly advocates the need for physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and intellectual wellness for a mom-to-be. The app is available for free.

E-learning

Parent company:
Disprz
Founder(s):
Subbu Viswanathan, Kuljit Chadha
Launched in:
2018
Downloads:
10,000+
Investors:
Xseed Partners, Innoven Capital, Kae Capital, Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Ltd.
Funding raised so far:
$2.9 million

1 Disprz



Disprz is a B2B skill development edtech startup, which offers organisations three solutions across team management, employee engagement, and a marketplace of enterprise learning experiences. It helps organisations increase team capability across functions such as sales, R&D, technology, manufacturing, or blue-collar heavy operations.

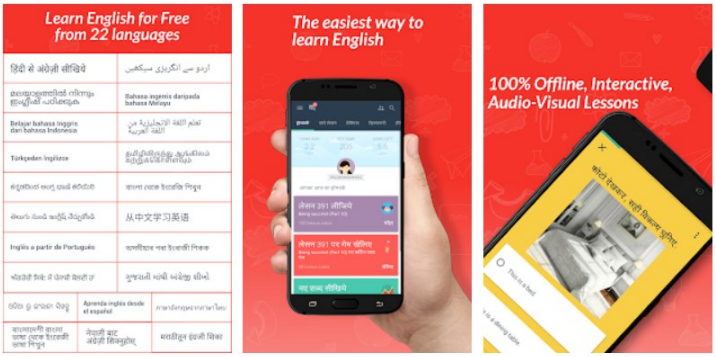
Parent company:
Kutuki - Kids Learning Videos & Songs
Founder(s):
Bharath Bevinahally, Sneha Sundaram
Launched in:
2019
Downloads:
100,000+
Investors:
Jerry Rao, Better Capital
Funding raised so far:
Undisclosed
Notable features:
100% Indianised content

2 Kutuki

Kutuki is an online kids learning platform for preschoolers and kids aged under seven. It offers learning experience with help of interesting themes and engaging cartoon learning partners Kutu, Ki, Minku. The app content focuses on phonics, maths, social science, and cognitive development. Educational videos, general knowledge questions, and sing along rhymes are other added features. The app is available for free and has in-app purchases.

Parent company:
CultureAlley
Founder(s):
Pranshu Patni, Nishant Patni
Funded by:
Tiger Global
Launched in:
2015
Downloads:
10,000,000+

3 Hello English: Learn English

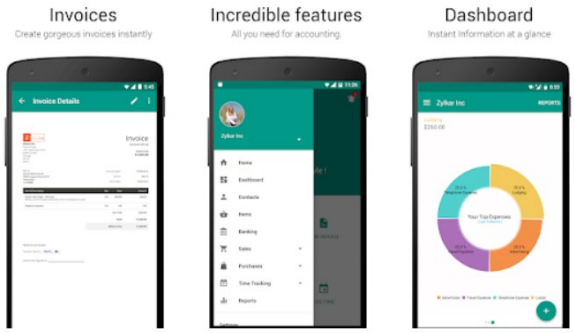


The app allows users to learn English through 22 different languages. The lessons are available in both audio and visual modes, and are available offline. Not only users practice conversations, but they can also resolve doubts from teachers. It also offers a dictionary of more than 10,000 words. The app is available for free and has in-app purchases The company has over 50 million users.

Business

Parent company:
Zoho Corporation Pvt. Ltd.
Founder(s):
Sridhar Vembu
Launched in:
2015
Downloads:
100,000+
Notable features:
Data is accessible on cloud, preventing data loss and allowing for 24x7 connectivity with the finance team

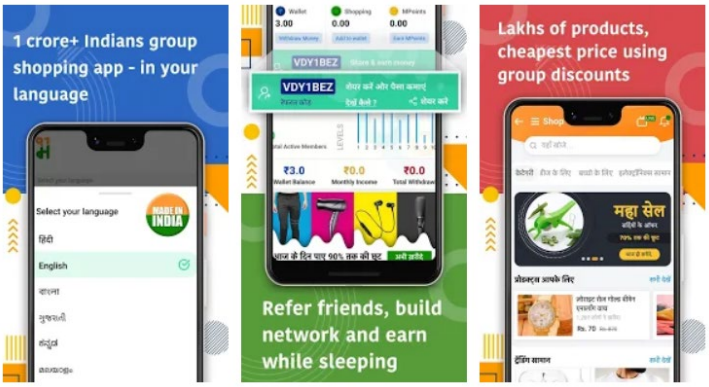
1 Zoho Invoice, Books & Expenses



Zoho Books is a product of the Zoho Suite. It is a GST-compliant accounting app to track a company's financial transactions. A business can monitor its expenses, send invoices, reconcile accounts, create bills, and collaborate with the team directly via the app. It offers pricing plans in the range of $6.65 (Rs 499) to $106.62 (Rs 7,999).

Parent company:
Roviri Innovation
Founder(s):
Nitin Raj Gupta, Shubham Paramhans
Launched in:
2018
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
Go-Ventures, First Cheque, Kalaari Capital, BEENEXT
Funding raised so far:
$7.5 million
Notable features:
Users can create local chat group based on pincodes, avail group discounts on purchases, and more

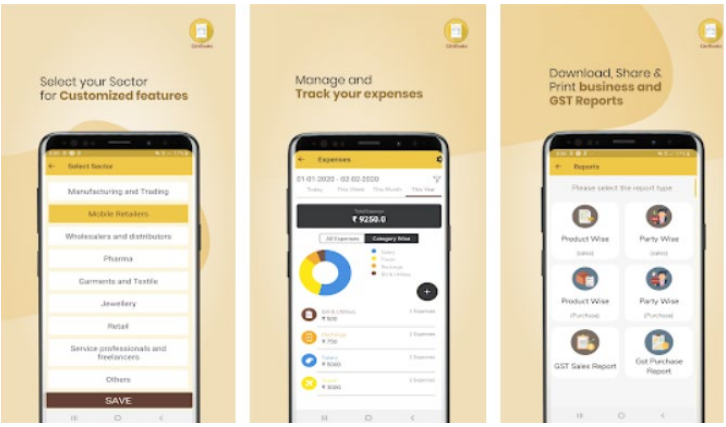
2 Mall91



Mall91 is a vernacular social commerce startup targeting the rural Indian audience. It calls itself 'Bharat Ki Dukaan' and helps Tier III areas and beyond in online shopping, with features like live video-based shopping, vernacular voice-led product discovery, and order checkouts through a chat-based WhatsApp-like window. The app can be accessed for free, similar to all ecommerce apps.

Parent company:
GIM Infotech Private Limited
Founder(s):
Yash Raj Agarwal, Rishi Raj Agarwal
Launched in:
2017
Downloads:
500,000+
Notable features:
Can create invoices according to consumer's industry

3 GimBooks

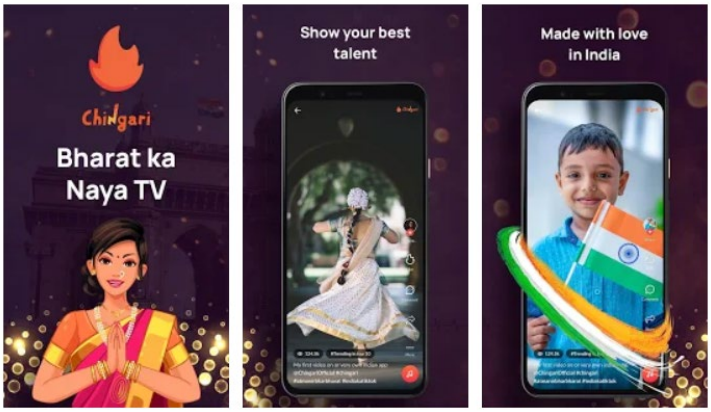


GimBooks is an invoice managing application which allows users to create invoices, eway bills, do GST billing, apply for loans, and more. It also provides reports for business, sale and purchase, ledgers, and accounts in the app. GimBooks offers 15 days of free trial and charges $13.32 (Rs 999) to $46.44 (Rs 3,499) in accordance to the period of use or number of eway bills created.

Social Media

Parent company:
Tech4Billion
Founder(s):
Sumit Ghosh, Biswatma Nayak
Launched in:
2018
Downloads:
26,000,000+
Investors:
LogX Ventures, Utsav Somani (AngelList), Jasminder Singh Gulati (NowFloats), AL Trust (Vistra ITCL), Village Global
Funding raised so far:
$1.3 million
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
TikTok
Notable features:
Offers advanced camera features with editing and filter tools

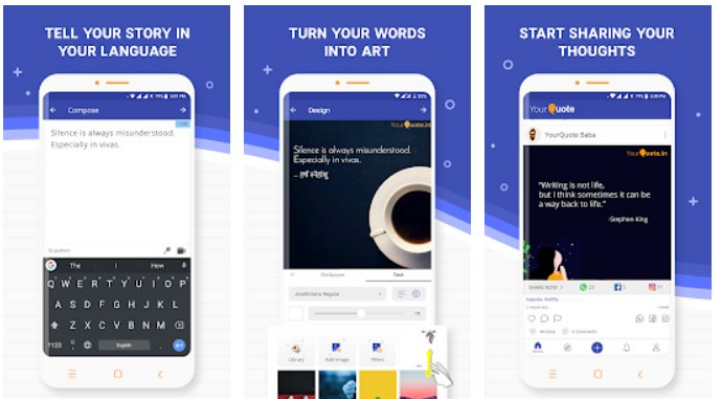
1 Chingari



Chingari allows users to create short videos in more than nine Indian languages. This includes English, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, and others. As its popularity soars with TikTok's ban in India, the startup is looking to add more tools and add Indianised AR filters as well. The app is currently available for free for users, and runs on an advertisement-led revenue model.

Parent company:
YourQuote Solutions Private Limited
Founder(s):
Harsh Snehanshu, Ashish Singh
Launched in: **2016**
Downloads:
1,000,000+
Investors:
IDG Ventures India, Atul Goel (Essel City Group), Axilor
Funding raised so far:
$1 million
Notable features:
Users can publish books and earn real-time royalty

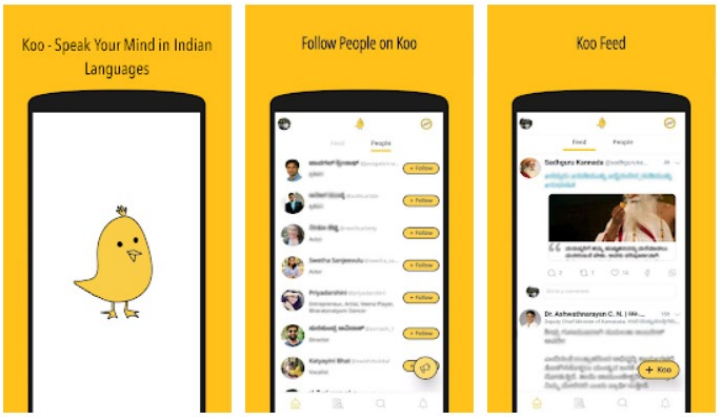
2 YourQuote



YourQuote is primarily for writers. It allows users to write books, quotes, stories, poems, and blogs with customisable wallpaper backgrounds. Users can write in more than 14 Indian languages including English, Hindi, Odia, Kannada, Malayalam, Bangla, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati, Assamese, among others. It is free but has in-app purchases.

Parent company:
Vokal
Founder(s):
Aprameya Radhakrishna, Mayank Bidawatka
Launched in:
2020
Downloads:
500,000+
Notable features:
Users can follow Indian news reporters, journalists, politicians, cricketers, actors, activists and other interesting people on one platform

3 Koo

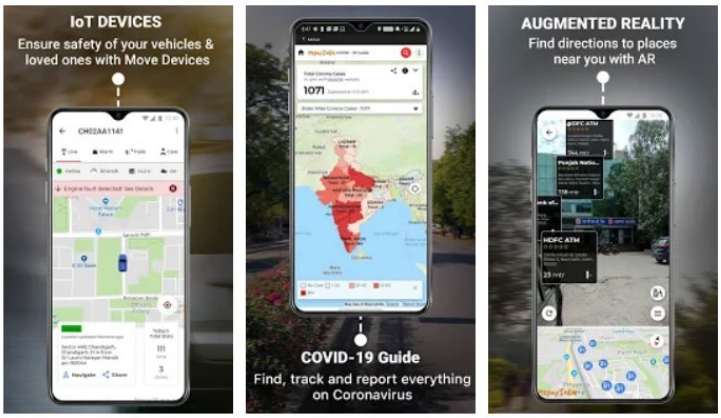


Koo is a micro-blogging platform to discuss or debate on the latest Indian news stories and help users share their opinion in Indian languages. One can Koo in text/ audio/ video or a combination of these modes. The app is currently available in Hindi, Kannada, Tamil, and Telugu.

Others

Parent company:
C.E. Info Systems Pvt Ltd
Founder(s):
Rashmi Verma, Rakesh Verma
Launched in:
2011
Downloads:
1,000,000+
Investors:
Lightbox Ventures, Nexus Venture Partners, Qualcomm Ventures, Zenrin
Funding raised so far:
$34 million
Notable features:
Users can navigate till the last mile up to the doorstep of their destination - house address or building

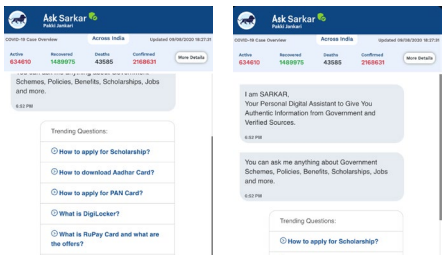
1 MapmyIndia Move



MapmyIndia Move app is a Google-like app built to support users for navigation, traffic updates, local search and more. It also allows users to pinpoint hyperlocal issues at specific locations such as broken street lights, crimes, unsafe routes etc. The founders believe they have a deep understanding of Indian dialects, languages, geography among others to compete with global organisations such as Google. The application is currently available for free.

Parent company:
CoRover.ai
Founder(s):
Ankush Sabarwal, Manav, Kunal
Launched in:
2019
Investors:
R P Singh
Funding raised so far:
Undisclosed
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any): **UC Browser**
Notable features:
A one-stop solution for verified government information

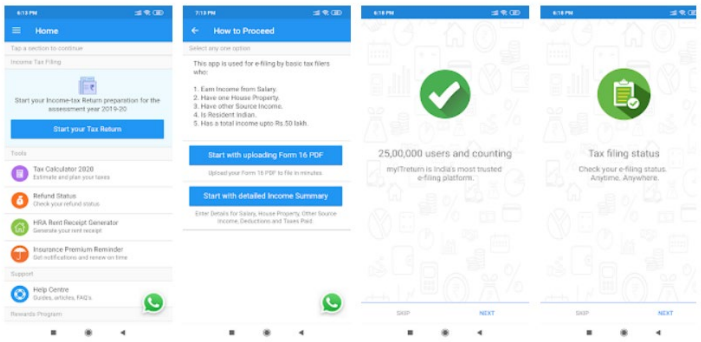
2 AskSarkar: Pakki Jankari



AskSarkar, a web-app (the only web-app among the winners), is a personal digital assistant, which helps users get information from government and verified sources. One can ask for information on scholarships, jobs, government schemes, policies, benefits, scholarships, jobs, and more. The idea is to help people ask questions in vernacular languages and through voice. It offers content in 10 languages.

Parent company:
Skorydov Systems Private Limited
Founder(s):
CA.Amol Mishra, Saakar Yadav
Launched in:
2015
Downloads:
500,000+
Notable features:
Can upload Form-16 and E-file.

3 myITreturn



myITreturn helps users file their income tax returns, generate rent receipts, and track the status of tax refunds. It is an authorised e-return intermediary registered with the Income Tax Department, Government of India, and is a registered service provider under MCA for XBRL filing. The services are available in 10 languages, including English, Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, and Punjabi. myITreturn is free, but has premium versions ranging from $2.65 (Rs 199) to $46.44 (Rs 3,499).

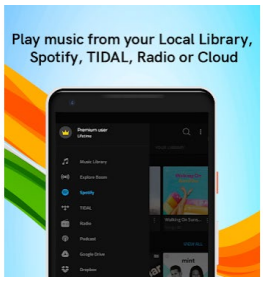
Special mentions

Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge

Entertainment

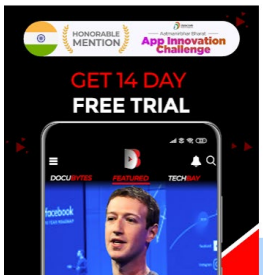
Boom

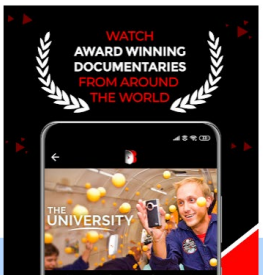
A music player with 3D surround sound, powerful Bass, and advanced Equalizer. The music app helps users create a 3D immersive sound experience.

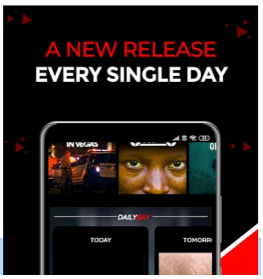


Docubay

A premium membership based streaming service, the app allows users to download international documentaries from more than 100 countries.



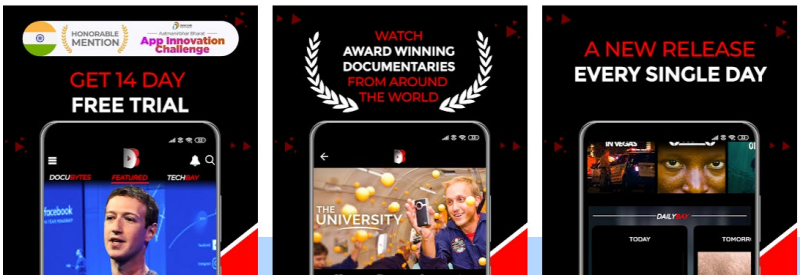




News

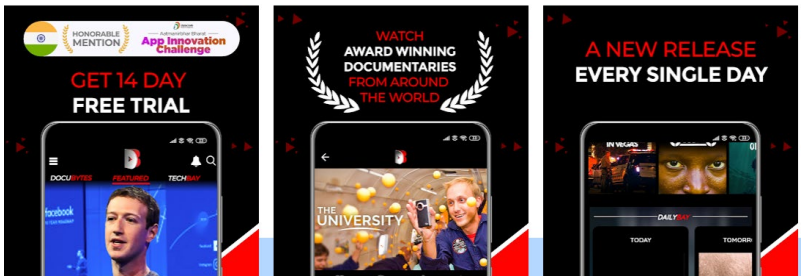
LetsUp

Popular as an infotainment app, it offers local breaking Marathi news and live updates. Users can also access podcasts, videos, and infographics in Marathi.



Paperboy

A vernacular app that offers a wide range of Indian newspapers and magazines from across regions that are uploaded in real time.



Games

Math Games, Learn Add, Subtract, Multiply & Divide

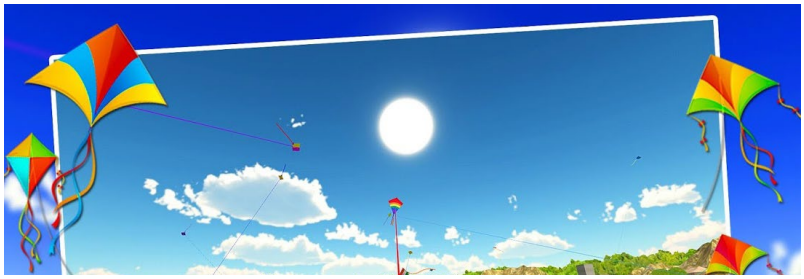
A free mathematics practice app for both children and adults. The app is available offline and in international languages.

Donkey Master

An online multiplayer adaptation of card game Donkey, where the one who is left with the maximum number of cards in hand is crowned as 'DONKEY'.

Kite Fly

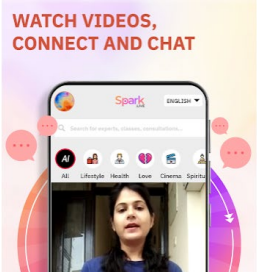
The app offers a realistic kite-flying experience in 3D environment, with 360-degree sky view and allows users to showcase their 'Khech', 'Dhil,' and 'Thumka' kite-flying skills.

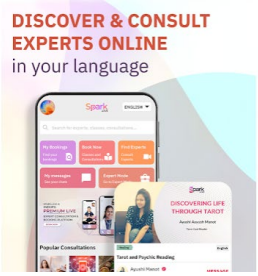


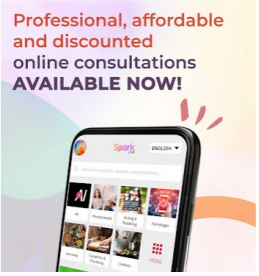
Office

Spark.Live

The app helps users connect with influencers and expert professionals through social profiles, chat, and video call.

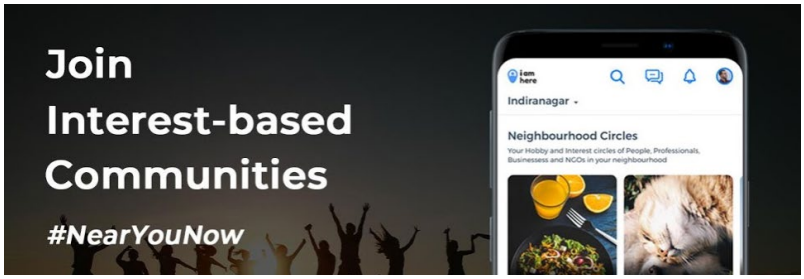






IamHere

A hyperlocal social network to help connect with like-minded peers, NGOs, and more to discover, connect, and engage in the neighbourhood for hobby, interest, and profession.



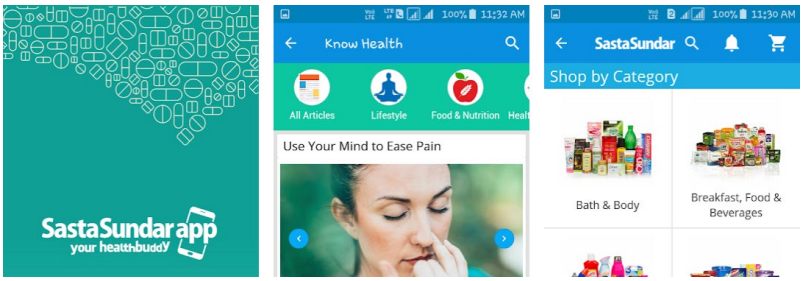
Kaagaz Scanner

A document scanner app, it turns your phone camera into a PDF scanner and allows users to share scanned files as PDF or JPG.

Health

Sasta Sunder

A complete healthcare solution medicine app that facilitates online medicine purchase for all medical, health, and personal care needs. It also allows users to avail healthcare services and consult a doctor.



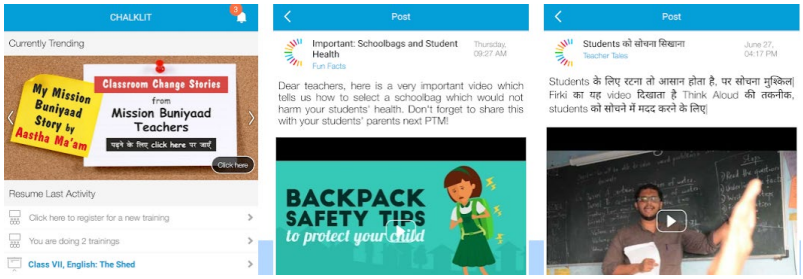
Aurum

A tech-enabled app to help users handle depression, anxiety, and other mental health ailments and emotional wellness.

E-Learning

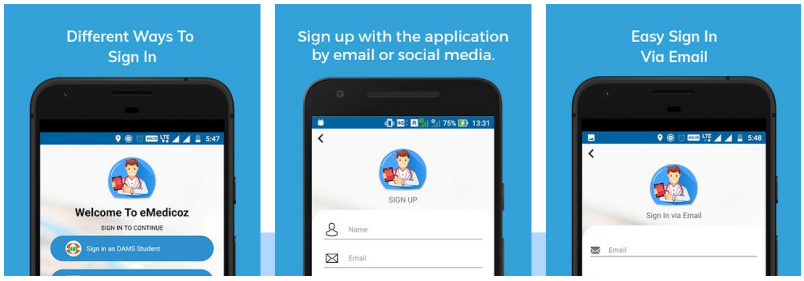
ChalkLit

An app for teacher education and training, it offers personalised peer-to-peer social micro-learning network where teachers can learn from the best practises and experience of other teachers.



eMedicoz

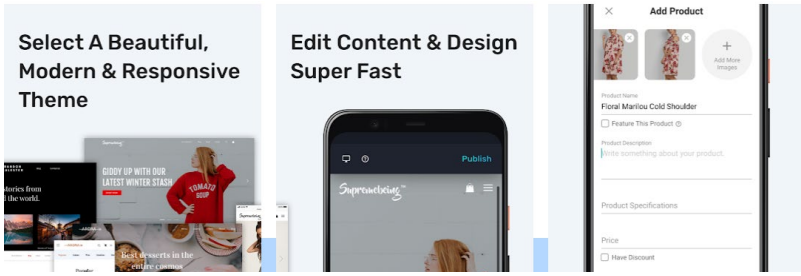
A one stop digital e-learning resource for medical students. This app has three broad sections: Feeds, Videos, and Courses.



Business

Boomer

A brand builder and store maker app which helps retailers go online in minutes with connected social media and payment APIs.



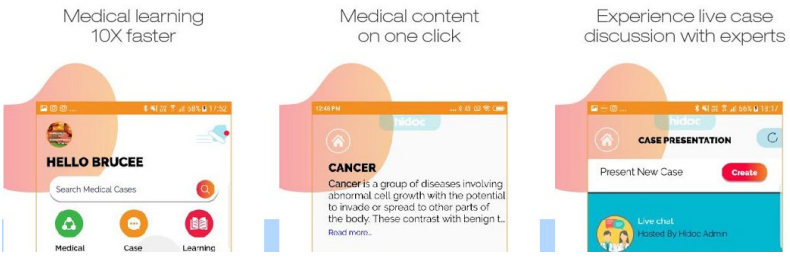
Linq My Business

The app helps businesses share information with customers in an effective manner. It allows businesses to create a unified digital identity and attract and track customers.

Social

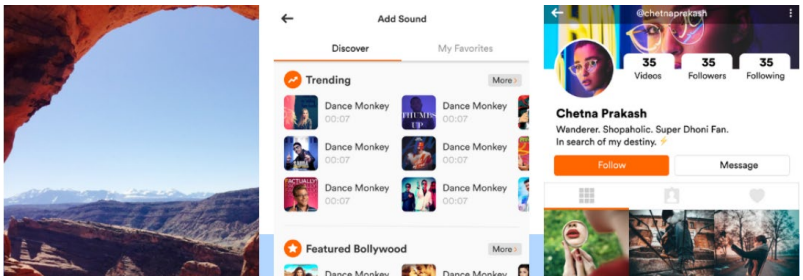
Hidoc Dr

A medical learning app that provides doctors with access to over one million articles, cases, calculators, guidelines, news, drugs, clinical trials, and videos.W



Mitron

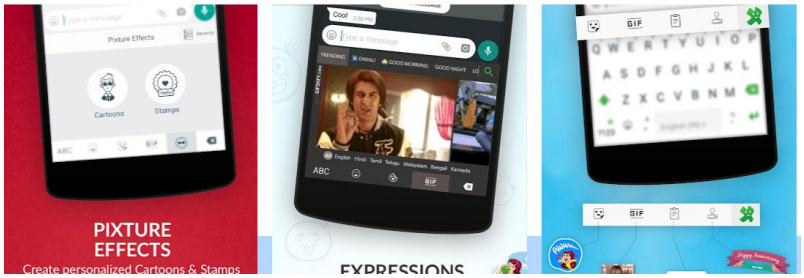
A free short video and social platform for users to showcase their innovative videos under the theme of light humour. Users can create, edit, and share their videos, or browse the library.



Others

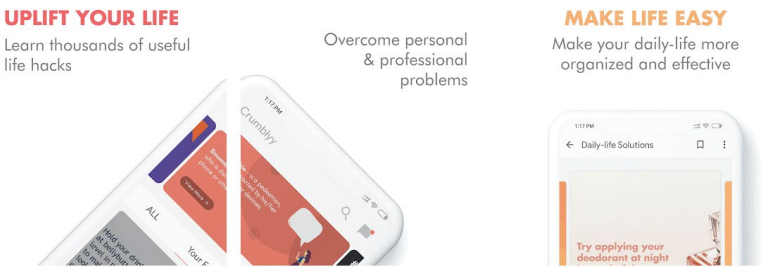
Xploree AI Keyboard

The app offers an AI keyboard for faster multi-lingual typing, themes, GIFs, stickers in Indic languages, and cute emojis. Users can also create selfie stickers and their own cartoon photos.



LifeHacks

The app allows users to learn simple and smart tricks to ease everyday tasks. Users can search for any life hack to get results from the best life hacking content creators of the world.



STARTUP PROFILES

CaptionPlus: the app for brands to turn pictures into stories

It is said, a picture is worth more than a thousand words. But sometimes, a picture remains incomplete without the words.

According to international social media marketing firm Socialbakers, posts with explanatory text overlay generated 41 percent more interactions on average over the course of 2017.

Worldwide, storytellers, content creators, and influencers have been brainstorming to produce quirky, engaging, and connecting captions to images. India is no different. With more than 500 million smartphone users, 281 million Facebook users, and 100 million Instagram users, the country is gradually becoming a hub of social media influencers.

In 2018, three Delhi University students, Rahul Maurya, Anurag Kumar, and Jitendra Yadav found this an opportunity to help content creators. The trio launched CaptionPlus in beta in August 2018 with zero monetary investment after initial market research and studying profiles of thousands of people.

"We intend to build a super app and not just an application that can bridge all the gaps between multiple stages of content creation. Since we are all technology students, we started with design, technology, and the Android app part ourselves," says Maurya.

In two years since the beta launch as a simple repository of captions and hashtags, the app has now integrated an AI engine, which can show users contextual captions and hashtags to the images. This is similar to the tags or emoji options one can get while doing the SEO optimisation or drafting any social media message.

The humble beginnings

The three co-founders met each other by chance during their internship at Design Innovation Center (DIC). The trio was doing multiple projects providing client assistance, software support, and campaigns as part of the company TLine Infotech.

"While doing these projects, we realised the importance of captions in gaining engagement across social media platforms for the images we were posting both from the personal or promotion aspects," says Maurya.

So they hired an intern, asked her to write some captions and uploaded a simple beta version on the app store. The response received was

phenomenal. Within two-three months, they received more than one and a half lakh of downloads. The turning point came when the founders saw sprinter Hima Das using their app for putting hashtags on her social media images.

"By August 2019, we had launched a structured application with AI engine and monetisation model in place," he adds. A new beta version of CaptionPlus, is a full-fledged app that not only helps in finding captions or hashtags but also lets the user design stories, posts, add stylish fonts to the posts, and much more.

Now targeting influencers

The startup is at present monetising through personalised advertisements from Google. The founders have multiple companies who sponsor the different categories on the app like travel, shopping, among others.

CaptionPlus provides a huge opportunity for brands to be visible to a young userbase and engage with them. Users can contribute their own captions in the app and increase their popularity.

The startup is now focusing on building the nano-influencer community along with the brands. With the vernacular gaining hype amid the Indian app community, the founders are also exploring to add more languages apart from Hindi and English.

"But what is empowering is that we are receiving thousands of requests from Indonesia, Philippines, and Spain to add their language into the app.We are working on a system where we can implement more languages," adds Maurya.

The future plans for CaptionPlus include nurturing its writer community and running paid and prized caption writing contests.

MapmyIndia Move: a super app for maps, mobility, safety, and hyperlocal discovery

Delhi-based MapmyIndia Founders Rakesh Verma and Rashmi Verma's gamble to put maps online paid off. Over the years, as the market for digital maps exploded in India, the country saw a major shift in adoption of connected devices and the internet.

Businesses involved in ecommerce and hyperlocal delivery to logistics and supply chain management started using digital maps and built them into their products and services. MapmyIndia, which was launched in 1995, capitalised on this and monetised its map offerings through consumer apps, navigation devices, licensing, map APIs, tracking, and analytics, etc.

The company has grown its prowess with location technology, specifically in the areas of navigation, tracking, IoT, and analytics to provide products, services, and solutions to over 10 million end users – be it consumers, enterprises, or the government.

It sold its solutions to customers in industries such as automobile, ecommerce, banking and insurance, spacetech, and more. MapmyIndia's inbuilt digital map solutions are used by auto companies Tata Motors, Hyundai, Mahindra & Mahindra, BMW, Ford, Jaguar, TVS Motors, and others. Its maps also power Flipkart, Amazon, and Ola Cabs.

MapmyIndia's technologies and maps are used by 5,000 enterprise customers across the public and private sectors. It claims 80 percent of all cars in India with navigation systems use MapmyIndia, and thousands of the large and small technology companies and app developers use MapmyIndia's APIs and solutions, leading to 20 crore Indians benefiting from MapmyIndia's maps and technologies.

Its app, MapmyIndia Move, is a super app for maps, mobility, safety, hyperlocal social discovery, and more, and offers a detailed house number level map search, compatibility with India's own satellite imagery service from ISRO's Bhuvan, real-time traffic and safety-based navigation, and safety monitoring of vehicles and loved ones on the move.

It also provides hyperlocal social discovery of nearby places of interest, and map-based hyperlocal issue reporting by community members to help governments, local authorities, and businesses fix issues faced by citizens and consumers on ground.

Rakesh Verma, Chairman and Managing Director, MapmyIndia, said, "Our vision that someday 80 percent of all data would have a location component, and our desire to build something that could benefit all of India, led us to build this digital map product with world-class advanced location-based technologies."

MapmyIndia Move is powered by maps from MapmyIndia. Over the last 25 years, MapmyIndia has built from the ground up detailed, comprehensive, feature-rich, and continuously updated maps that cover house-number and building-level detail, comprehensive village-level detail (about 7 lakh), 99 percent of India's road network (about 66 lakh kilometres), and 1.5+ crore points of interest across 360 categories.

"MapmyIndia knows India, and it is reflected in the better detail and localisation of our intelligent maps and app. We , and we do not use user's data for advertising, unlike global search giants, making MapmyIndia Move a better, safer, and more intelligent alternative for Indians," Rakesh added.

Features of the app:

MapmyIndia Move claims to offer India's best 3D and house-level maps with voice-guided navigation, remote GPS tracking of vehicles through connected GPS IoT gadgets, and coronavirus-related hyperlocal information, such as nearby containment zones, testing centres, treatment hospitals, and isolation wards, to help users stay safe.

The super app also offers live safety alerts about upcoming potholes, speed breakers, and accident-prone zones during navigation, precise directions to the exact doorstep of buildings through house number maps, and the revolutionary eLoc, a six-character unique location ID for every place that across the country which simplifies India's complex addressing system.

Users can also access community reports of hyper local issues on the map to help authorities fix issues by citizens on-ground, and as well as hyperWlocal social networking and discovery features through My World View to help people stay connected with people, places, things and information around them in real -time.

It also allows multiple apps to be integrated into the MapmyIndia Move app by leveraging MapmyIndia's APIs, giving users continuously increasing features and functionality.

Chingari: Adding fuel to the short-video sharing app fire in India

Over the last couple of months, indigenous short video-sharing app Chingari has seen a growth spurt that most in the business can only dream of. If there were any app developers - especially in India - on the fast track, it would be Sumit Ghosh, the company's Co-founder and Chief of Product, and Co-founder Biswatma Nayak, whose TikTok-like app reportedly saw 10,000 users per minute a day after the Chinese app ban in India.

In fact, the app saw so much of TikTok's traffic right after the ban that it crashed a few times even as Sumit and Biswatma stayed up all night to scale up their infrastructure. The rapid growth also prompted the company to embark on a massive hiring spree in India to add to their UI/UX, as well as its content moderation teams, to keep up with the traction they seemed to be getting.

As of the latest count on Google Play Store, Chingari had over 10 million installs and was among the top social media apps, along with Roposo, Josh, ShareChat, and Trell. The app was one of the 24 winners of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation challenge, and separately raised $1.3 million in a seed round from venture capitalists, including AngelList India, Utsav Somani's iSeed, Village Global, LogX Ventures, and Jasminder Singh Gulati of NowFloats.

What sets Chingari apart from the hundreds of other short video apps that popped up after the Chinese app ban is its underlying tech and user experience, which the company has been refining ever since its inception in 2018.

"We have been doing Chingari before TikTok came to India. Our inspiration was Musical.ly, rather than TikTok. But TikTok came and took over the entire market from us before we could do anything about it. What you're seeing right now is the result of the ban - a lot of copycat apps have jumped into the short video market, but our product was around even before the ban happened," Sumit told YourStory.

Till date, the app has not spent anything on advertisements, and its growth to 25 million-plus users has been completely organic, Sumit says.

Original creators

Sumit says creators on Chingari are mostly all original, as opposed to other copycat apps that have scraped together content from TikTok, aside

from five or six original creators.

The way the content is distributed to users is also very different - Chingari ensures videos from original creators shows up in every user's feed first and is never repeated again - a feature that Sumit says others have not been able to crack yet.

"[A user's] feed is the key. Machine learning will eventually catch up and be able to learn the user's video-watching preferences. But right now, only Chingari offers a feed where every creator gets a part," he adds.

Recently, Sumit tweeted that the company was contemplating building a tool to let users import all their TikTok content to Chingari. "As you own your content, [you] can move it anywhere you want," he said.

In addition to sharing short videos, the app allows users to access news, play games, check local weather forecasts, etc. — unique features that other apps, including TikTok, lack.

"Chingari is not limited to being a video sharing platform like other short video apps. It's a platform where you can read local and international news, check the weather forecast of your city, play games, participate in quizzes, and win prizes... Anyone can download a video and share it on other social platforms. We have a dedicated download button in the app for this," Co-founder Biswatma tweeted recently while fielding questions about the app on social media platform Twitter.

The early challenges

Initially, as a bootstrapped company, Chingari was not able to compete with TikTok, which poured half a billion dollars to acquire the Indian market, and, as a result, the India-made app had to largely remain tethered to a very niche audience.

But that changed when an anti-China sentiment set in following border skirmishes in the Galwan river valley, which resulted in the death of at least 20 Indian soldiers.

With a lot more organic users, Chingari's challenges today are quite different than what they were before. Retaining and keeping users hooked to the platform is a key problem Sumit and team are looking at, he said, along with ensuring that more and more people come back to the app every day.

User experience had also once been Chingari's biggest negative, according to user feedback, but the company says it has revamped its entire app experience, and, as a result, managed to bag more positive reviews from users over the last couple of months.

Ensuring user experience, privacy, and creativity

Sumit says he does not plan to monetise the app anytime soon, especially with disruptive ads that ruin users' viewing experiences. Instead, the company is getting brands on board to do other creative challenges using hashtags.

"We are monetising at some level, but are waiting for network effects to kick in for larger monetisation."

To ensure user privacy, Chingari says it stores all data in encrypted form on Edelweiss' servers in India itself, in compliance with the country's data privacy laws.

The company is currently working on a host of new in-app features, which mostly have to do with its camera and its video editor. It plans to soon launch AR filters and editing features such as motion control and music track additions to give creators more advanced tools to work with.

Chingari currently has three million daily active users, and 20 million monthly users on the back of 26 million downloads, Sumit said.

"

It's the love and goodwill of the FTC Talent family that made us winners (of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge). Congratulations to MyGov and MeitY for the fabulous challenge. Blown away by the efficiency and transparency of the team and an ace initiative by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji. We at FTC Talent are humbled at our App win in the Entertainment space."

Suniel Shetty

FTC Talent

AskSarkar: How CoRover's app is disrupting the AI chatbot segment in India

Numerous Indian startups and entrepreneurs are working on innovative solutions to help the country become "Aatmarnirbhar Bharat". Bengaluru-based conversational AI startup CoRover is one of them. One of the 24 winners of Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge, the startup is making waves with its AI assistant and chatbot AskSarkar.

CoRover was founded in 2016 by Ankush Sabharwal along with Rahul Ranjan, Manav Gandotra, and Kunal Bhakhri. The startup provides a conversational AI platform that offers managed Chatbot-as-a-Service to help businesses improve customer experience, operational efficiency, generate revenue, and save costs.

Ankush says that while AI-based chatbots have existed for long, users could not always find satisfactory solutions because most chatbots are designed to find answers to queries across all segments.

CoRover, on the other hand, builds chatbots to answer queries related to specific use cases.

Apart from this, Ankush says in several instances companies such as Google provide the AI platform for the chatbot while their client companies feed data and use cases to the technology. This leads to one party designing the platform without knowing the use cases, while one party continues to feed data without knowing the technology.

What does AskSarkar do?

According to Co-founder, AskSarkar - Pakki Jankari was launched in October 2019 to solve issues related to mismatched and unverified information provided during online searches for content available on central government websites such as government services, GST, tax, startup funding among others.

"Sometimes if you search PAN card or scholarships on Google, the first two results are generally two ads, followed by private web pages or posts with good SEO. The official government website comes somewhere in the middle. AskSarkar was launched to solve this problem and lead users to authentic government websites relating to their queries related to central government offerings," Ankush explains.

Speaking about the technology, he says AskSarkar uses artificial intelligence(AI), machine learning (ML), and natural language processing

(NLP), and recognises the intent of what users are asking. The chatbot provides authenticated information and portals to answer the user queries. Currently, the app supports more than 12 Indian languages and provides solutions in text, audio, and video formats.

The co-founder claims that the app currently has around seven lakh active users. Speaking about future plans, Ankush says, "AskSarkar will be soon scaled up to include information from all states and for all government departments."

Products and services

Ankush says prior to establishing CoRover, he worked in the corporate sector and led tech development for many companies, including Wipro, Misys, Altisource, and Digital Harbour. During his stint with corporates, he understood the importance of responding and clarifying user queries to sustain a business.

In October 2018, the startup went live with its AI chatbot, Ask Disha, on Indian Railways' IRCTC website. According to the company, the bot can answer user queries on train timings, PNR status, and how to cancel tickets.

Apart from this, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bengaluru startup launched an AI-based doctor-video bot AskDoc that provides automatic answers to queries related to coronavirus and safety measures announced by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, and WHO. It also connects users with doctors via video, chat, or audio to get clarifications about the pandemic.

The co-founder claims CoRover has built 70 chatbots till date and counts big names such as Microsoft, Birlasoft, Google, Accenture, AGC, ATC/ITC, Indraprastha Gas Limited, Novigo Solutions, Automation Anywhere, UI Path, IRCTC, Flipkart, Orange, KSRTC, DAVP, NPCI , more than 50 Banks, over 10 media houses, NITI Aayog, and BOSCH among others as its partners and clients.

The business model

CoRover operates on a B2B2C model. Currently, the AI conversational platform has over 235 million unique active users, over four million DAU, and eight lakh concurrent users.

"We have three revenue models. The ad-based revenue model is for chatbots deployed by businesses with a very high number of user queries, for instance IRCTC. The subscription-based model is in place with clients such as ITC, Indraprastha Gas Limited, etc., and then there's the user-based model where clients are charged per query," Ankush says.

While the co-founder did not reveal details about pricing, he says it depends on the number of user queries, number of questions being asked, different intents, concurrent users among other factors. Prices vary for different clients.

Speaking about the competition, Ankush says CoRover competes with other players such as Haptik and Yellow Messenger. However, the team feels it has a competitive edge due to the multi-format and omnichannel support along with the tech advantage of using AI, ML, and NLP.

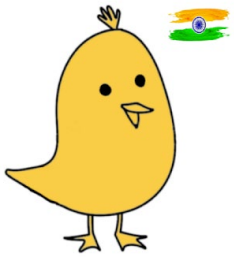
The startup is looking to scale and expand operations beyond India, and aims to be "the global leader in the AI chatbot segment".

"We raised a seed round last year from an entrepreneur and angel investor, RP Singh, who is also an advisor on board. Now, we are looking to raise $2 million to accelerate GTM in the global space," Ankush says.

"We're very excited about being one of the winners of the Aatmanirbhar App Challenge. PM Modi is giving startups, innovators, and entrepreneurs a very good platform to showcase their creation and we're grateful for this opportunity. We look forward to taking Koo to a wider India that wants to connect with people in their mother tongue."

Aprameya Radhakrishna

Vokal



Koo: Vokal founders build Twitter-like site for Bharat users

Koo is a Twitter-like microblogging platform for Indian language speakers. It is currently available in Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada languages.

In a country like India, which has several regional languages, locals are most likely to exchange their views in their native languages rather than in English.

However, the offerings are limited, with only a handful of Indian startups catering to such a large population. Aprameya Radhakrishna and Mayank Bidawatka wanted to fill this gap and founded a Twitter-like platform Koo in March 2020.

The serial entrepreneurs are also the founders of Vokal, a Quora-like platform for Indic languages, which they had launched in 2017. The duo also received feedback from several users on Vokal, the peer-to-peer knowledge sharing platform, that they needed a platform where they could express themselves as well.

What does it do?

Initially, the founders had built a button on the Vokal app itself. Having realised that Vokal was built in a Q&A format, like that of Quora, with videos and voices, the founders decided to develop an app where users can converse in their regional languages.

Koo is an Indian language-based microblogging platform currently available in four languages, including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, and Kannada.

The homegrown app enables users to 'speak their minds' using text, audio, and video. Users can either convey their thoughts in 400 characters of text, or one-minute short audio or video Koos. It also features people's feeds, 1-1 messaging, English to regional language keyboard, language news feeds, and hyper-local hashtags.

The platform boasts of influential individuals like Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka Dr. CN Ashwathnarayan, Union Minister Ravishankar Prasad, Indian cricketers Anil Kumble and Javagal Shrinath, and spiritual teacher Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev, among others.

"We aim to bring India's top influential people on the platform. The focus is on like-minded people to connect and follow one another," says Aprameya.

According to Mayank, unlike other social media platforms, Koo allows the influencers to touch base with their local community where they can have

conversations with their fans on topics of mutual interest.

"The kind of people on the platform are authors, poets, journalists, and politicians, who want to touch base with the right community on different ideas and trends," he adds.

Most of the conversations on the Koo app revolve around daily thoughts, events, and news trends within the communities. The app has all content moderation policies in place, where people can be unfollowed, blocked, content can be blocked, comments can be blocked, or hidden as well.

"Apart from this, you also have the option of a people feed, where you get a list of people whom you can follow," adds Mayank. The platform has a people scoring algorithm, that scores each person based on likes, interactions, feeds, and activities. This, Mayank says, is what differentiates the app from its competitors.

The need for local apps

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, a significant rise in people seeking entertainment online emerged as one of the key trends.

According to data released by Carat India, smartphone usage increased by 1.5 hours a week, and social media consumption nearly doubled to 280 minutes a day. Of India's 670 million internet users, a significant percentage live in rural areas, which saw a surge in demand for local language content.

Meanwhile, the Indian government's decision to ban 59 Chinese apps, following the face-off of Indian and Chinese soldiers in Ladakh, further fueled the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Vokal for Local' initiatives. Since July 2020, several entrepreneurs have jumped on this bandwagon and have introduced a slew of homegrown apps.

The Bengaluru-based micro-blogging platform is one of the winners of the Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge under the social media category. The country-wide challenge, which was supported by the MeitY Startup Hub, along with Niti Aayog and Atal Innovation Mission, saw participation from nearly 7,000 tech entrepreneurs and startups across India.

On winning the challenge, Aprameya says, "We're very excited about being one of the winners of the Aatmanirbhar App Challenge. PM Modi is giving startups, innovators, and entrepreneurs a very good platform to showcase their creativity, and we're grateful for this opportunity. We look forward to taking Koo to a wider India that wants to connect with people in their mother tongue."

Aprameya and Mayank believe that winning this challenge has given the team an additional boost and validation to focus deeper on solving for the language gap seen on the internet today.

Monetisation and future

Aprameya says the app is looking for monetisation at scale, and currently, it is exploring the advertising model. However, the co-founders want to follow a more targeted approach, focussing more on the demography and interests of their users.

"The idea is to have an influencer base that has a deeper connection with people in their local languages," explains Aprameya.

Currently, the platform has close to 200,000 downloads and has users who spent time on the app in double digits. It is also one of the top ten apps on the Google Play Store. It competes with the likes of ShareChat and Chingari, who also rose to prominence after the ban of Chinese apps.

Koo will soon have live chat rooms and stories, which will focus on increasing user engagement on the platform. "There clearly is a need for a platform where people can express and interact with their community in a language they are comfortable with; we see Koo doing that," Aprameya says.

> "Indians can build world-class products and today, these products can be used by Indians as well. Many of these (Zoho) apps are built by teams not just in Chennai, but by our teams in smaller towns."
>
> **Sridhar Vembu**
> Zoho

Zoho: SaaS unicorn's apps shine in business and office category

Chennai-based software as a service (SaaS) major Zoho Corp serves the SMB and CRM market with cloud applications. Co-founded by Sridhar Vembu, the 25-year-old company has over 45 business applications in the areas of CRM, HR, finance, office productivity, and customer service, and a customer base of 50 million users worldwide.

Zoho, which won the first place in the business and office categories in the Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge, said: "A nationwide open competition like this is the fastest way to quickly turn the spotlight towards apps that can make a difference in the everyday life of business owners. Although the products from Zoho have an established reputation across the globe, the competition wasn't easy. From scalability and adaptability to local languages and privacy, the products were evaluated in such a way that it is easy for a small business to get started with, yet is comprehensive enough to handle complex requirements of a mature business."

Five apps from Zoho - Zoho Cliq, Zoho Workplace, Zoho Invoice, Zoho Expense, and Zoho Books - won in the office and business categories.

"We'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of India and the esteemed panel of jurors who evaluated all the apps. This is a significant milestone for us, and we are proud to continue to build world-class products that are made in India, for Indian businesses and the world," said Zoho.

Zoho Workplace

Zoho Workplace is an integrated suite of productivity applications that become online workplace for teams working remotely across geographies. For teams that want to co-create, communicate, and collaborate meaningfully, Workplace centralises and streamlines all team files and communications.

What it offers: Next generation email, fully-featured online office suite, instant messaging and calls, organisation intranet, and online meeting and video conferencing.

Zoho Cliq

Zoho Cliq is an enterprise grade team communication and collaboration software built keeping security and organisational controls in mind to optimise workplace productivity.
What it offers: Simplified team communication, remote work tools like remote checkin, group calling,

actionable conversations, organisation policy and configurations, and role-based security.

Zoho Books

Zoho Books is a cloud-based, GST-compliant double-entry accounting application that simplifies accounting and GST filing for Indian businesses. According to the company, Zoho Books helps business owners from non-accounting background manage all their accounting needs by simply recording what they buy and sell, and also helps file GST returns for these transactions.

Zoho Books is the first accounting software in India to bring banking capabilities within the application contextually. Using this capability, businesses can carry out important banking activities like reconciling transactions, making vendor payments, request a loan, and more.

Zoho Invoice

Zoho Invoice is a GST-compliant invoicing application that helps businesses digitise their invoicing and payment collection process. It offers a wide variety of ready-to-use and customisable transaction templates from the template gallery.
Zoho Invoice helps businesses collaborate with customers online through the client portal instead of having to work with lengthy mail threads. Customers can also make online payments via multiple payment modes like UPI, netbanking, credit and debit cards.

This application is used by professional services, consultancies, law firms, entertainment sector, travel and tourism businesses, construction firms, and many others.

Zoho Expense

Zoho Expense is a GST-compliant, online expense reporting and management application, built to streamline expenses, simplify approvals, and speed up reimbursements.

Managing organisational expenses is one of the toughest challenges for any business as it involves a lot of manual work, compliance regulations, and ample amount of time and money. The company said Zoho Expense was built with the purpose of simplifying expense reporting processes for managers, finance teams, and employees alike, with the help of robust features, powerful automations, and an easy-to-use interface.

Zoho Expense can also scale with a business as it grows. Thousands of businesses from various sectors, across 150 plus countries, are currently using Zoho Expense to control their spending and gain better visibility into their expenses.

Mall91: How this social commerce startup wooed small-town India

In the past 24 months, a host of language-focussed social commerce startups have mushroomed in India, following the success of video and social commerce in China. One of them is Noida-based Mall91, founded in 2018 by Nitin Raj Gupta and Shubham Paramhans, and it seeks to fulfil rural India's online shopping aspirations.

But what is social commerce? As the name goes, social commerce is when social media enables commerce, i.e. businesses leverage platforms like WhatsApp, ShareChat, YouTube, etc., to curate, promote, and sell products.

When you look up 'Mall91' on Google Search, the results take you to a Hindi website and a Hindi app listing. When you dig deeper, more local languages show up. And, that captures the essence of the platform, which calls itself 'Bharat Ki Dukaan' and plans to reach 400 million first-time internet users in India's Tier III, IV and V towns and villages.

Co-founder and CEO Nitin Gupta tells YourStory, "Most of the consumer internet in India has been built for metros and Tier-I cities. Businesses were cloned and copied from China and elsewhere. We saw an opportunity to build for small-town India, where content consumption was happening due to the smartphone and data revolution. But, there was no unique indigenous commerce model until now."

How the platform works

Mall91 blends live video-based shopping, vernacular voice-led product discovery, and order checkouts through a chat-based WhatsApp-like window.

Users can shop individually or in groups (a feature that is modelled on the offline bazaar experience), and can even earn commissions on referrals and transactions they facilitate. They can also earn by playing games, watching videos, and scratching cards.

Nitin explains, "We follow a direct B2C aggregation model where people bring in their families and friends. We call it network commerce and it happens in micro-clusters. Even a mohalla can be a network. When you bring in more users and the buying happens in groups, you pay a discounted price for the product."

A lot of live interaction happens within the app, with users "luring and convincing" each other to buy a product. For two hours every day, a live host demonstrates the product

catalogue and users can enjoy a TV-like shopping experience too.

Mall91's most "high frequency, high engagement users" hail from small towns of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Odisha. "These are small 1,500-people localities, which mostly shop for aspirational products like mobile accessories, selfie sticks, AirPod knockoffs, sunglasses, Bollywood-inspired fashion, and lifestyle items," shares the co-founder.

5X operational growth

That startup claims to have a presence in over 2,000 locations across India. Since launch, it has witnessed a 5X growth in "all business metrics".

The Mall91 app has recorded 10 million downloads on Google Play Store; its daily active users have crossed a million, with average user sessions lasting 10 minutes. Its selection includes 2,00,000 items across 15,000 SKUs. The platform also houses 1,500 product videos across eight languages.

In December 2019, the startup acquired Delhi-based ERP solutions provider StompMarket. The latter's product will empower Mall91's seller community with state-of-the-art solutions, such as cloud-based inventory management, cross-channel selling support, procurement, warehouse management, order fulfilment, and more.

Nitin shares, "We hit a single-day peak of 10,000 orders in November 2019. We managed to grow more than 100 percent in December and January. In the last two months, the topline has grown at about 50 percent." Going forward, Mall91 is confident that it can post monthly revenue growth of 50 percent in FY21, and increase app downloads by three to four million.

Mall91 raised $7.5 million in a Series A round, led by Go-Ventures (the investment arm of Indonesia's Gojek) in October 2019. The round also saw participation from its early backers Beenext, Kalaari Capital, and AngelList India. Prior to that, in December 2018, it had raised a seed round of $1 million.

The startup plans to use the capital to expand its business domestically and internationally. It also looks to ramp up its product, engineering, and supply chain, and add more languages to the platform.

At the time of funding, Go-Ventures' VP Investments, Aditya Kumar stated, "Mall91's vision and approach can be successful in emerging markets across the world, and we look forward to supporting the company's growth going forward."

Despite ecommerce activity dropping to sub-zero levels in the months of April, May, June, Mall91 has been able to recover in July and hit "close to pre-lockdown ecommerce volume" in August. The startup has strengthened its unique community commerce and community logistics model at the

pincode level, and is taking to scale up the business via that route.

It has also been among the Top 10 apps in the 'Business' category in the last few weeks.

New features

In an upgrade released last month, shortly after the government's ban on Chinese apps, Mall91 added social and communication features to its platform. These include:

a) Wall91 - It lets users create and upload short videos, GIFs, viral clips, and aims to offer a platform to "creators" from banned Chinese apps such as Helo, Vigo Video, VMate, etc.

b) Chat91 - It resembles a private social network and allows users to create micro chat groups within their pincodes, villages, towns, and cities. Users can also enter chat rooms and join Telegram-like theme-based channels on English speaking, General Knowledge, Local News, Bollywood Celebrities, Sports, and more.

"There's so much opportunity right here in our country, to build something for our people - that's truly made in India, for India and the world! It's very encouraging to see the government taking cognizance of gaming in India and the potential for creating a world-class game Made in India, for India and the world."

Keerti Singh

Hitwicket

Hitwicket: Breaking into the boys' club of gaming startups

Hitwicket Superstars - Cricket Strategy Game 2020 by Hyderabad-based startup Hitwicket emerged as one of the favourite Made in India apps in the gaming category in the recent AatmaNirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Hitwicket Superstars, which was launched in early 2020 for both Android and iOS, seeks to put India on the world map for mobile gaming and e-sports, Hitwicket Co-founders Keerti Singh and Kashyap Reddy tell YourStory.

In line with PM Modi's clarion call for an Aatmanirbhar Bharat, or a self-reliant nation, and more particularly, his call for an Aatmanirbhar App Ecosystem, Hitwicket aspires to create a truly world-class gaming experience for the billion cricket fans, with their Made In India game for India and the world. Their vision is to host Hitwicket World Cup 2023, the grandest e-sports event for cricket.

"There's so much opportunity right here in our country, to build something for our people - that's truly made in India, for India and the world," says Keerti.

"The best gaming titles in the world have one thing in common, and that's immersion. To create a world-beating cricket game, we need to be driven by innovation in gameplay that is inspired by elements of fantasy and can immerse the user in an imaginary virtual world," she adds.

Since the launch of Hitwicket Superstars, the game has totalled more than 900,000 downloads and is enjoyed across 100 countries, with 30 percent of its users nestled abroad. Hitwicket Superstars enjoys a diverse user base, 20 percent of whom are female and 35 percent above the age of 30 — highly representative of the young, diverse team behind the game.

Furthermore, the team behind the game plans to make India a prime hub for e-sports championships by orchestrating the all-ambitious Hitwicket World Cup, tentatively scheduled for 2023 — wherein users from all across the globe would compete in a virtual IPL-

like tournament at zonal, state, national, and international levels.

"It's very encouraging to see the government taking cognizance of gaming in India and the potential for creating a world-class game Made in India for India and the world," says Keerti Singh, Co-founder and VP - Growth, Hitwicket Cricket Games.

Building an inclusive game

It's no secret that for long, gaming and cricket have both been perceived to be segments largely dominated by men. In 2019, however, women constituted 51 percent of mobile gamers globally.

This is a far cry from the stereotypical image of what a 'gamer' is meant to be. In 2019, women made up for 51 percent of mobile gamers worldwide. Trends like these give impetus to the new reality that inclusivity isn't merely a choice, but a necessity in an evolving gaming industry.

Hitwicket Superstars embraces inclusivity by adding female cricketers who are as powerful - if not more - and hit it out of the park just as often as their male counterparts do.

True enough, Hitwicket Superstars transports users into a virtual world where they own a cricket team of superheroes, with each player boasting a unique superpower of their own.

The user trains the team from rookies into world-class superstars capable of mind-numbing feats — from batsmen scoring 12 runs in a single ball, to bowlers conceding negative runs to the batting side, and bringing down the total.

Leveraging cricket's mass appeal

Cricket as a sport exists at very grassroots levels in India. From kirana store owners to working professionals — a deep, intellectual discourse surrounding the game pervades every segment of society.

"Our goal is to marry the mass-appeal of cricket with the accessibility of mobile gaming and put India on the world map as a prime hub of esports and mobile gaming", says Kashyap Reddy, Co-founder, Hitwicket Cricket Games.

The global e-sports market is estimated to surpass $1.5 billion by 2023, with top prizes in esports tournaments easily ballparking to millions of dollars. The Hitwicket World Cup is one such upcoming global tournament that the team tentatively plans to launch in 2023.

"Zonal contests between local team owners would lead to state-level competitions, which would in-turn segue into national and international matches", adds Kashyap.

Indeed, a global orchestration of this scale operating at granular, grassroots levels shall create income generation possibilities for in-game team owners, local sponsors and game veterans willing to mentor contestants for a price.

The goal is not merely to entertain, add value, and incentivise opportunities, but enlighten and empower users to aspire beyond the rut of daily life and bring alive the cricketing superstar within them — all at the tap of a thumb, Keerti says.

iMumz: The mobile app for mothers-to-be

According to Pruoo Health Tech Pvt Ltd, the company that has launched the app, iMumz focuses on the holistic health of both mother and baby. The app aims to provide information and interaction via activities to help expecting mothers look after themselves and their babies.

The company was started by two IIT Varanasi alumni - Ravi Teja Akondia and Mayur Dhurpate - along with Rajesh Jagasia, a life coach and meditation expert, and Dr Jaideep Malhotra.

Ravi and Mayur graduated from IIT in 2017 and gave up corporate offers to start up in the health sector as they were regularly meditating and engaging in holistic health practices through their volunteering activities at Art of Living centers.

Witnessing the benefits of these practices, they wanted to spread information about a holistic approach to human health. After interactions with over 100 people including gynaecologists, pregnant women, prenatal and perinatal psychologists, they decided to start iMumz to help expecting mothers in 2019. Through research they were able to narrow down that the antenatal stage was most crucial in a child's future development.

Dr Jaideep Malhotra, Co-founder of Pruoo, says, "We know that the origin of most of the diseases is from the womb of the mother. We call this fetal origin. Adult diseases like diabetes, hypertension, obesity, many cancers, and more take in the womb. Because of increasing C-section rates and women getting very anxious about delivery, there is not a lot of bonding, which affects the personality building of the child. All that has to begin from early pregnancy stages, so the journey has to be more holistic."

iMumz currently has over 65,000 users with 1,200 to-be-mothers joining the platform every week and 2,500 daily active users who sign in to receive credible information on pregnancy.

On the app, women can engage in activities that stimulate their creativity and make them aware of the benefits of mindfulness. It offers mental exercises, music therapy, conscious breathing lessons, nutritional advice, fetal learning, physical activity and more. These activities help them bond with their babies and reduce their stress and worries.

It is also planning to include remote consultation sessions in the future.

Some key stats:

- 65K+ pregnant mothers using the app on both iOS and Playstore combined
- To-be-mothers from 16 countries and 578 cities
- Live QnA sessions with doctors every single day. 118 sessions so far, 4 lakh cumulative views and 20,000+ questions answered free of cost
- Live Lifestyle webinars by experts every Sunday

> "We have always believed in Aatmanirbhar and, as a company, have focused on building indigenous technologies and remained profitable. MapmyIndia knows India better, which is reflected in the better detail and localisation of our intelligent maps and app, and we do not use user's data for advertising, unlike global search giants, making MapmyIndia Move a better, safer, and more intelligent alternative for Indians."

Rakesh Verma

MapmyIndia

Kutuki: Changing how India's 200 mn youngest learners learn

Sneha Sundaram, Founder of Kutuki, is on a mission to leverage art and technology to transform how India's 200 million youngest learners learn. Along with her husband, Bharath, she has developed Kutuki, India's first early learning app that uses a proprietary story and song-based curriculum to attract India's youngest learners.

Currently based in Bengaluru, Sneha was born and raised in Mumbai. She pursued a master's in organisational psychology at the London School of Economics as a Tata Scholar. Her love for music started when she was young. She started lessons in Carnatic music at the age of four, and then moved on to exploring Western classical music, mainly opera, which she says was pretty unheard of in a middle-class Tamil family. Having worked in organisations like Teach For India and set up multilingual children's choirs in slum communities, Sneha realised that the creative arts give every child a level-playing field to discover and express themselves.

"Storytelling, songs, and other creative media are far more appealing to children when discovering something new, as against mere instruction. I was tremendously drawn to this idea since I was 18 and continue to be to this day," she says.

Along with her creative pursuits, Sneha worked in some of India's leading organisations like Infosys and Diageo in various roles in the People Practices Division. In her last corporate stint, she led learning and development initiatives for 3,000+ employees at Diageo, South. While these roles certainly brought a lot of important learnings, growth, and stability she says she always had the entrepreneurial itch, especially when it came to creating impact through the creative arts.

Songs and stories

After the husband-wife duo quit their respective jobs, they taught music to thousands of students, upskilled as audio producers, performed with Grammy winners. Sneha and Bharath also continued their experiments and designed experiential learning tools through the medium of music and songs for young children.

Sneha recalls, "Our work there took us to organisations like Teach For India and preschools where educators expressed their frustration over singing the same old nursery rhymes and using learning resources that were force fit-from the West with little or no relevance to the Indian context. In fact, in one of our interactions, a veteran teacher told us that 33 percent of children in her preschool were being screened for a learning disability when, in fact, the problem was the difficulty in understanding the accents, language, and contexts in the audio-visual learning aids being used. The same concept, when explained in familiar accents in their mother tongue while using everyday Indian contexts, prompted a flurry of questions and participation among children."

The children's songs that came out of this experiment were a success and revealed how underserved the early learning space in India is. This sowed the seeds for Kutuki. After many months of research, the duo brought together a passionate and committed team of educators, artists, musicians, and storytellers, with deep experience in working with young children, to build Kutuki.

Launched in January 2019, Kutuki is a play on the word kautuka, meaning "the curious one" in Sanskrit. It has created hundreds of original, engaging, and culturally relevant stories and songs in English and Indian languages across 30+ preschool aligned themes to help India's youngest learners build a strong foundation in English, STEM, and socio-emotional and life skills.

The founders also want to ensure easy access to mothers, educators, and children across India by going mobile-first and leveraging technology.

"When young children listen to stories and songs with characters that look like them, their parents, and grandparents, eat the food they eat, speak the languages they speak, and celebrate their festivals, there is an almost automatic emotional connection," Sneha explains.

More than one lakh mothers and children, and 130+ preschools are using Kutuki across Tier I, II, and III cities. It is even being used in some anganwadis. "The one common feedback is that children connect with our stories and songs, set in familiar Indian contexts. They enjoy learning shapes through bindis, counting with pooris, and singing songs about their dada and dadi or thata and paati," Sneha adds.

Kutuki's content revolves around three main characters: a young boy named Kutu, an adventurous little girl named Ki, and their best friend, Minku the haathi. Children connect with these characters because they are Indian, and enjoy having them as their learning companions.

The app recently released a free-to-use, no-panic, child safety awareness song called Corona se daro na in line with WHO's guidelines to support parents and educators to talk about COVID-19 to children in a child-friendly way. Some of the features on the app are free to use while premium content is available on a subscription model.

Sneha says early learning is a broken and a grossly underserved market in India, with close to 200 million children in this age group and less than 40,000 preschools catering to them. "Like Sesame Street (US culture) and Peppa Pig (British culture), we want to build a pre-eminent Indian edutainment brand that children and families across India can connect with and easily access via technology. We are also seeing an opportunity to look at other distribution models and product offerings, in physical, digital, and phygital forms," Sneha says.

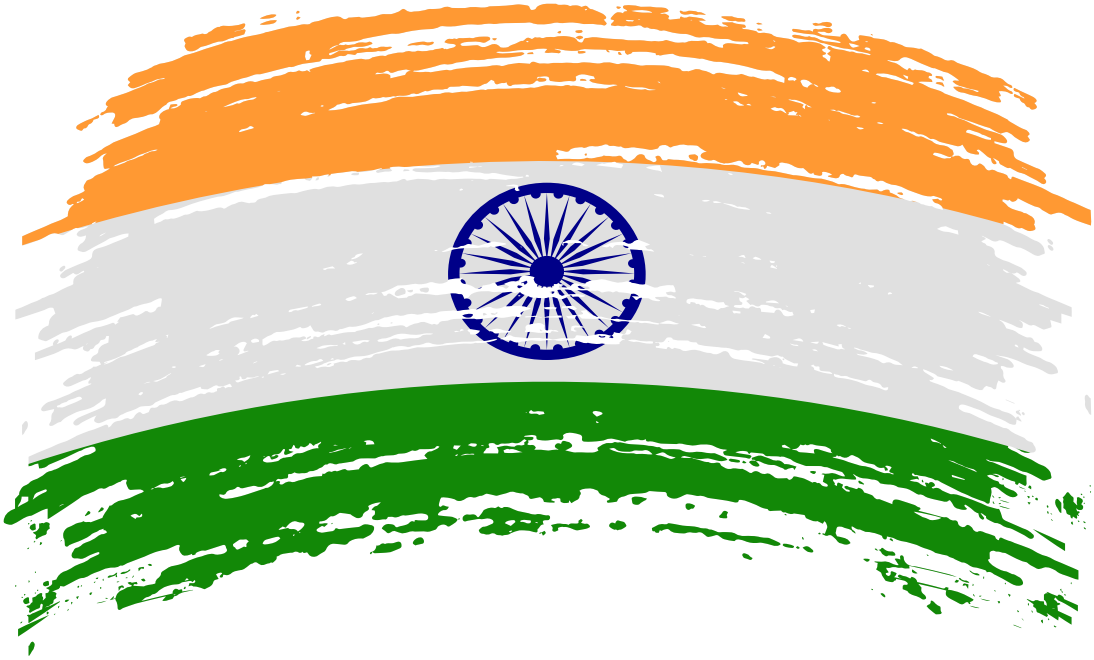
"It's an honour to be chosen as a winner in the News category and receive recognition for the incredible effort and work our team has put into building Logically's fact-checking capabilities and our mobile app over the last three years. We aim to build key initiatives to help our users orient themselves in a fast-moving world with reliable and context-rich news and defend them against misinformation and disinformation from malicious domestic and foreign actors."

Lyric Jain

Logically

MADE IN INDIA APPS

Indian app alternatives to banned Chinese apps



The Indian government on June 29, 2020, banned 59 mobile apps, including China's TikTok, ShareIt, and WeChat, terming them prejudicial to sovereignty, integrity, and national security of the country.

In an official statement, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) said it has received many complaints from various sources, including several reports about the misuse of some mobile apps available on Android and iOS platforms for "stealing and surreptitiously transmitting users' data in an unauthorised manner to servers which have locations outside India."

"The compilation of these data, its mining, and profiling by elements hostile to national security and defence of India, which ultimately impinges upon the sovereignty and integrity of India, is a matter of very deep and immediate concern which requires emergency measures," MeitY said.

The Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, Ministry of Home Affairs, had also sent an exhaustive recommendation for blocking these malicious apps. "On the basis of these, and upon receiving of recent credible inputs that such apps pose threat to sovereignty and integrity of India, the Government of India has decided to disallow the usage of certain apps, used in both mobile and non-mobile Internet-enabled devices," MeitY said.

Since the initial ban in June, the government of India has culled more Chinese apps, taking the number to over 100. Chinese tech giant ByteDance, which owns TikTok, estimated a loss of $6 billion due to its ban in India. Others are expected to take huge hits to their bottom-lines too.

But China's loss is India's gain, say homegrown tech startups.

With growing hostility and wariness towards China, countries across the globe are following in the footsteps of the Indian government in imposing bans on Chinese apps. US President Donald Trump recently announced that TikTok would be banned in the US, unless it agrees to sell at least its US business to an American company by September 15. Reportedly, the White House is helping Microsoft broker a deal with China for acquiring TikTok.

Additionally, Australia and Japan are also looking into whether TikTok's data storage practices pose a national security threat, or if their citizens' data is being used by Beijing illicitly.

These bans could spell doom for China's tech sector, which despite having a stronghold in its home market, relies on international business to drive profits.

For Indian tech companies though, the stage is set and Act I has just begun. With a resounding call and support from the government and users alike for 'desi' apps, the time for homegrown apps to become full-fledged businesses has never been riper.

Indian apps and Aatmanirbhar Bharat

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, Indian startups and MSMEs are in the midst of an unprecedented crisis. The government has taken several steps to support these industries, asking consumers to choose Indian products over imported ones, as well as reduce their reliance on raw material imports.

The embargo on the Chinese apps is also a step in that direction. Shortly after the announcement of the ban, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) announced an Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge to identify and promote promising Indian apps, as well as encourage developers to build new ones.

The ban itself has had a quantifiable effect. India-made apps have been registering a record number of users since the ban, and app makers have compared the decision to the Swadeshi movement of the early 1900s.

"With this move, startups like ours will play a great role in boosting the Indian economy and help build an independent tech and startup ecosystem. We are all geared up and ready to be a part of the Digital India revolution and enable our creators to earn a sustainable income while they focus their efforts to make in India," Pulkit Agrawal, Co-founder of Trell, said shortly after the decision. His app crossed the one million-user mark days after the announcement, and currently has over 10 million installs.

"This is the digital Aatmanirbhar moment that most Indians have been rooting for," quipped Naveen Tewari, Founder and CEO of InMobi Group, which owns Glance, a fast-growing mobile content platform. Glance, as of writing this report, had recorded over 100,000 installs.

For Indian companies that seem to be on their way to becoming 'super apps', the ban provides an opportunity for increased traction because they would now be able to compete with the more popular global counterparts in sectors such as gaming, entertainment, and ecommerce, in addition to their India-only offerings.

Key initiatives to boost local innovation

India's ban on Chinese apps has opened the floodgates for homegrown innovation. Along with the government, some corporates and investors are also keen to assist and invest in Made in India tech solutions.

Following the Indian government's ban on 59 Chinese apps in June, the country is being swept by a wave of 'Made-in-India' products and services.

The thrust on homegrown technologies that can eventually become world beaters is increasing by the day. Support is pouring in for desi techies from all corners — government, corporates, investors, and the citizenry.

At the core of the 'Vocal for Local' battle cry is the central government's 'Digital India Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge'.

The initiative was launched in July by the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) and Niti Aayog's Atal Innovation Mission. It looks "to identify the best Indian apps that are already being used by citizens and have the potential to scale and become world-class apps in their respective categories".
Besides the main app challenge, the government, along with a few corporates and investors, are also calling for several other product entries, logo designs, and more.

Made in India video conferencing solution

Shortly after India went into a nationwide lockdown in March, the demand for remote collaboration tools and video conferencing solutions skyrocketed. From private and public organisations to schools and colleges to regular users, use cases for e-meeting apps ballooned.

Silicon Valley startup Zoom became the default option. However, as concerns around its privacy and security features grew louder, the Indian government called for a homegrown alternative to Zoom under the Digital India programme.

On April 13, Union Minister for Electronics and IT Ravi Shankar Prasad tweeted, ***"Announcing Innovation Challenge for Indian startups and innovators for developing a world-class video conferencing solution. Urge the innovators, software product startups to come forward and take part in this effort. #DigitalIndia,"***

The initiative is powered by MyGov.in, MeitY Startup Hub, and National e-Governance Division. The product will have to adhere to rules and regulations under the National Policy on Software Products 2019.

"MeitY announces the challenge to develop a video conferencing solution showing capabilities in terms of scalability, market reach and domestic value addition," the government stated.

The challenge will be conducted in three stages:

Stage-1 (Ideation): Top 10 startups would be selected out of all entries. Each team will receive a funding of Rs 5 lakh to build their respective prototypes.

Stage-2 (Prototype): The shortlisted entries from Stage-1 will get a chance to present their prototypes to a distinguished Jury. Top three teams from this stage will be shortlisted for the next stage.

Stage-3 (Solution Building): Each of the three teams selected by the jury will receive a funding of Rs 20 lakh from MeitY to build the solution.

MeitY stated, "The winner will get a fixed amount of Rs 1 crore towards deploying the solution for use by the Government of India and State Governments for a year and further support of Rs 10 lakh per year towards Operations and Maintenance, for a period of three years after the first year of deployment subject to terms and condition of the final contract to be signed."

Interest from Silicon Valley investors

Balaji Srinivasan and Naval Ravikant, noted Indian-origin venture capitalists from Silicon Valley, have invited pitches from Indian app developers building alternatives to the banned Chinese apps.

They are keen to see, support, and back homegrown innovation.

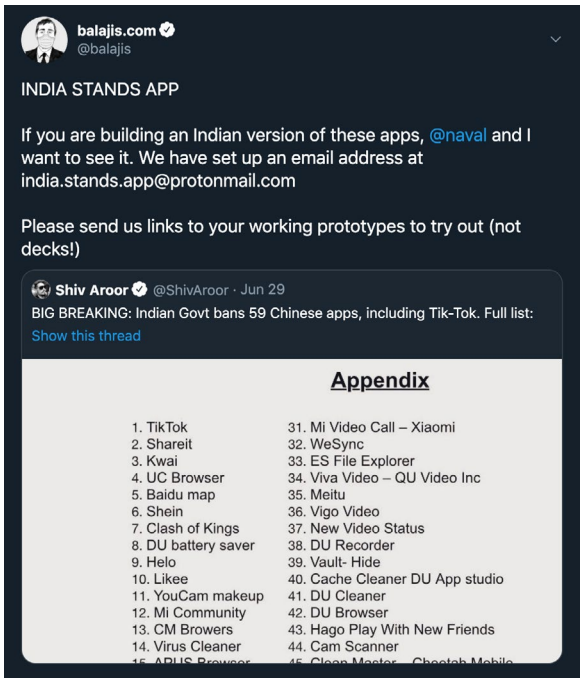
Balaji, a former general partner at Andreessen Horowitz, tweeted, "If you are building an Indian version of these apps, @naval and I want to see it. We have set up an email address at india.stands.app@protonmail.com. Please send us links to your working prototypes to try out (not decks!)"

He later said that they "got many emails" and are currently in the process of "scoring these submissions". The size of the investment is subject to variation.

Balaji and Naval also received support from various corners.

Punit Soni, former Flipkart CPO, angel investor, and founder of Suki (a Silicon Valley startup), also joined the chorus. "Shamelessly tacking on too. If anyone is building Indian versions of these Apps, I want to help. Big businesses might be there to build," he tweeted.

Balaji was quoted in the media saying, "This is an Indian Sputnik moment — a time to show the world that India can build apps on par with anyone."



Support from Indian corporates

India's largest business conglomerate Reliance Industries has invited entries from Indian app developers for the Jio Developers programme that will provide them an opportunity to 'Build for India'.

"Through the Jio Developers programme, any app developer can develop, launch, and monetise their apps. Developers who wish to partner with Jio can visit https://developer.jio.com/ for details," said Reliance Jio

Director Akash Ambani at the RIL AGM in July.

Jio has also made available to download the JioDeveloper Software Bundle for developers to get started. Apps built as part of the programme will be published on the Jio App Store. Reliance is inviting entries across genres, including entertainment, education, health, cooking, yoga, gaming, religion, and more.

Another Indian business conglomerate interested in funding homegrown tech innovation is the Mahindra Group. In fact, Chairman Anand Mahindra had expressed interest in a Made in India social network more than two years ago.

In a tweet dated March 2018, Mahindra said, "Beginning to wonder if it's time to consider having our own social networking company that is very widely owned and professionally managed and willingly regulated. Any relevant Indian startups out there? If any young teams have such plans I'd like to see if I can assist with seed capital."

Cut to June 2020, Mahindra announced that he had finally found one, after investing $1 million in Gurugram-based startup Hapramp.

"Took two years, but I finally found the startup I was looking for! @Hapramp is indigenous, built by five young founders and brings together a best-in-class combination of creativity, technology and data protection. Look out for @gosocial_app their social networking platform," Mahindra tweeted.

"Hapramp is building a Web 3.0 social network. It is built on emerging digital technologies, has a solid business model which rewards content creators, protects personal data, and best of all,

is built here locally in India," Jaspreet Bindra, former Mahindra executive and Advisor to Hapramp, told the media.

Made in India super app Elyments

India's Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu launched the Elyments app, a new social media platform under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat campaign, in July.

It is being touted as the world's first social networking super app that will allow users to 'Connect globally. Shop locally. Pass time conveniently'.

Elyments is the handiwork of more than 1,000 engineers and product experts. It includes a secure audiovisual calling, end-to-end encrypted messaging, online shopping, and entertainment experiences. It supports eight Indian languages and has crossed one million downloads on Google Play Store.

The app also aims to promote Indian brands on its marketplace platform, and will enable secure online payments through the Elyments Pay feature.

SWADESHI APP ALTERNATIVES

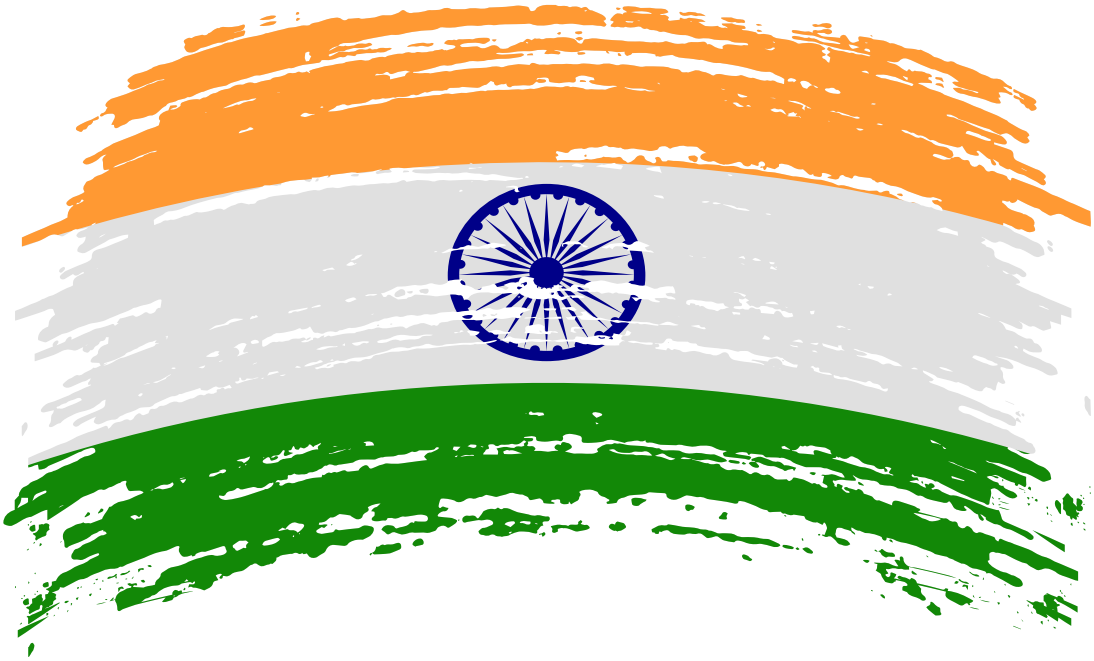
Swadeshi app alternatives

The Indian government's decision to ban 100+ Chinese apps has put the spotlight on homegrown apps that serve as alternatives to the banned apps. Many Indian apps, built in India for India, saw an overnight surge in the number of downloads ever since the ban was announced in late June.

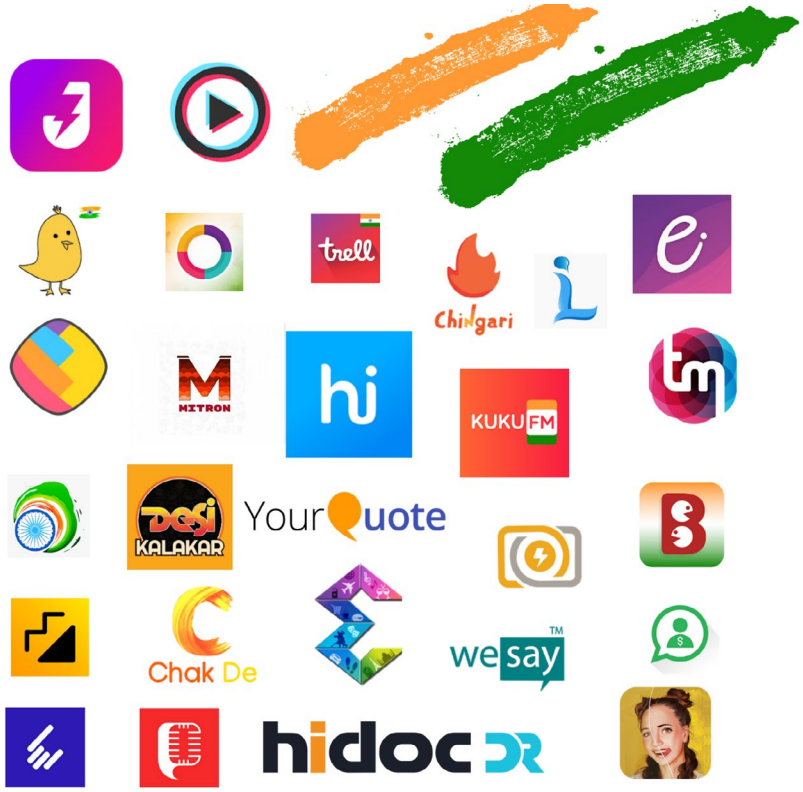
YourStory brings you a list of the top desi apps that are built by Indian companies. These apps, which are Made in India, were chosen based on:

- Their popularity, measured by the number of installs on Google Play Store
- Respondents to YourStory Research's AppNirbhar Bharat Survey

A significant number of these apps, particularly those that have participated in a YourStory Research's AppNirbhar Bharat Survey are relatively lesser-known Indian apps, poised to power India's digital Swadeshi apps revolution.



Social Media



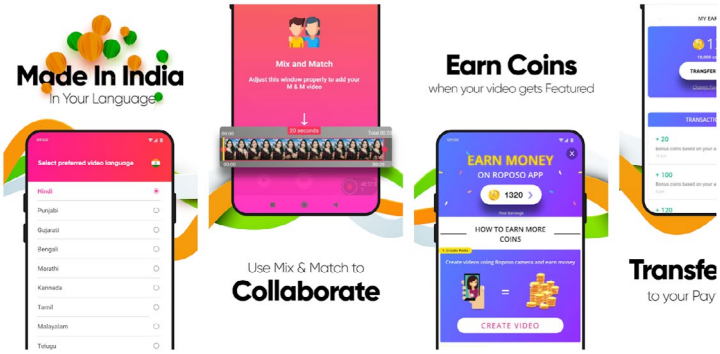
Parent company:
ShareChat
Founder(s):
Ankush Sachdeva, Bhanu Pratap Singh, Farid Ahsan
Launched in:
2014
Downloads:
100,000,000+
Investors:
Lightspeed Ventures, SAIF partners, Xiaomi, Morningside Ventures, others
Funding raised so far:
$222.8 million
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any): **TikTok**
Notable features:
Available in 15 languages

ShareChat

ShareChat is an Indian regional social media platform, which allows users to share their opinions, record their lives, and make new friends — all in the comfort of their native language. The platform, which has 60 million users, currently offers its services in 14 languages.

Parent company:
InMobi
Founder(s):
Mayank Bhangadia, Avinash Saxena, Kaushal Shubhank
Launched in:
2014
Downloads:
50,000,000+
Investors:
Tiger Global Management, Bertelsmann India Investments, and India Quotient
Funding raised so far:
Acquired by Glance, InMobi Group in 2019 for an undisclosed amount
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
Vmate, and Tiktok
Notable features:
Using Roposo, users can become a seller or reseller. The app has a channel called Bazaar, where users can sell products similar to Olx or Facebook marketplace.

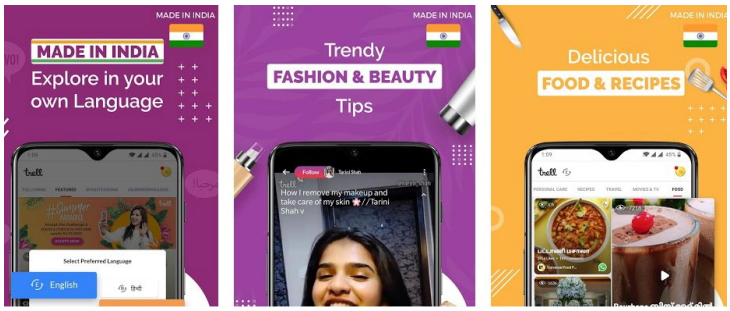
Roposo



Roposo offers a TV-like interface that allows users to watch videos in 12 Indian languages and across 24 channels that are powered by a pan-India network of regional influencers. It has more than 14 million video creators and 80 million videos created monthly.

Parent company:
Trell Experiences Private Ltd.
Founder(s):
Pulkit Agarwal, Prashant Sachan, Arun Lodhi, Bimal Kartheek Rebba
Launched in:
2016
Downloads:
100,000,000+
Investors:
Sequoia Capital India, Fosun RZ Capital, BEENEXT, WEH Ventures
Funding raised so far:
$5.5 million
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
TikTok
Notable features:
A platform that makes blogging fun, visual, and intuitive.

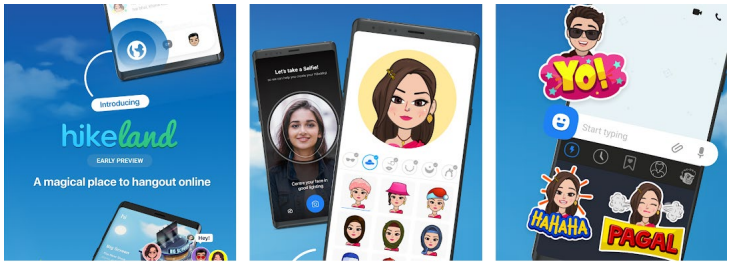
Trell



Trell (trail experiences and tell your friends) is a mobile-first visual blogging platform where users can share their experiences of visiting unique places and trying out new palates, as well as discover those of others. It offers travellers and foodies a unique way to show their journeys—called 'trails'—with quirky titles, images, anecdotes, and tags.

Parent company:
Bharti Enterprises
Founder(s):
Kavin Bharti Mittal
Launched in:
2012
Downloads:
100,000,000+
Investors:
Bharti Enterprises, Tencent Holdings, Tiger Global Management, Softbank, Foxconn Technology Group, Matt Mullenweg
Funding raised so far:
$261 million
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
WeChat
Notable features:
An instant messaging app with a Voice over IP (VoIP) application where users can interact using stickers and multimedia files

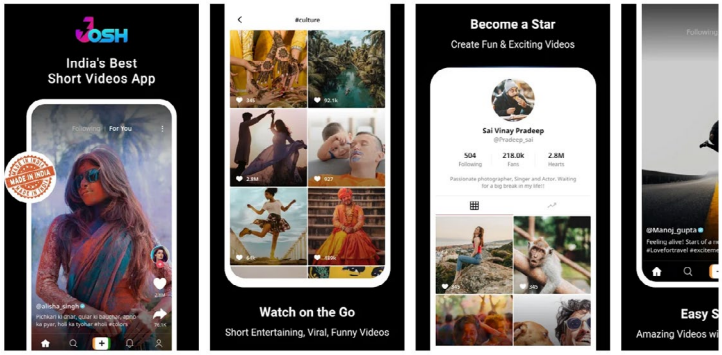
Hike



Hike is a cross-platform instant messaging service that allows users to interact within a virtual environment through text, convivial stickers, photos, and videos. It also lets users chat privately with password protection and enables conversations in their native languages.

Parent company:
DailyHunt
Founder(s):
Virendra Gupta
Launched in:
2020
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
Omidyar Network, Goldman Sachs, Falcon Edge Capital, Sequoia Capital India, Sofina, ByteDance, Sequoia Capital
Funding raised so far:
$146 mlllion
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any): **TikTok**
Notable features:
Available in vernacular languages

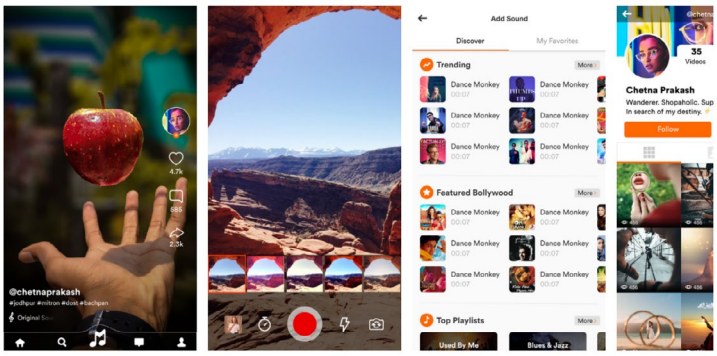
Josh



The short-video app player offers users a range of topics to follow. It also allows creators to edit videos, add captions, and music to it.

Parent company:
Mitron TV
Founders(s):
Shivank Agarwal and Anish Khandelwal
Launched in:
2020
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
3One4 Capital and LetsVenture
Funding raised so far:
$300,000
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
TikTok

Mitron

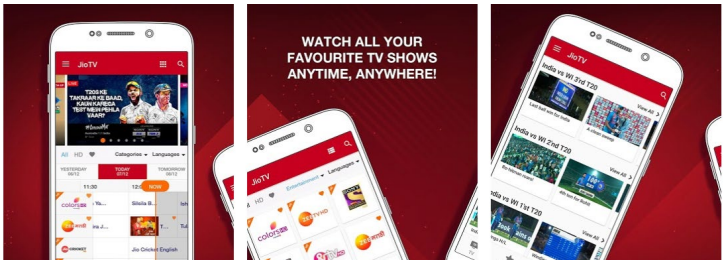


Mitron is a free short video and social platform designed for people to showcase their innovative videos. Mitron provides an easy and seamless interface for users to create, edit, and share their videos, and at the same time, browse through a library of top videos across the globe.

Entertainment

Parent company:
Reliance Industries Limited
Founder(s)/Chairman:
Mukesh Ambani
Launched in:
2016
Downloads:
100,000,000+
Investors:
Reliance Industries, Google, Vista Equity Partner (for all Jio platforms)
Funding raised so far:
$20.09 billion
(for all Jio platforms)
Notable features:
A mobile-first video content app with a live-streaming feature

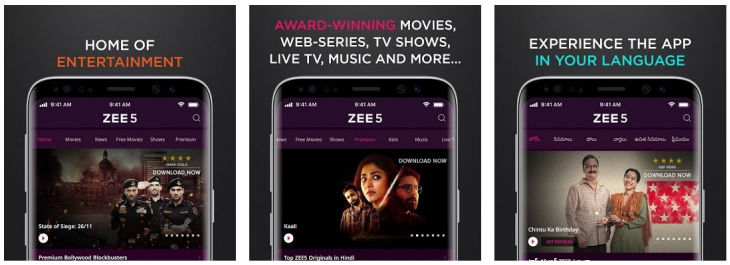
JioTV



JioTV is an application that lets users watch their favourite movies, TV shows, and programmes on their phone or other electronic devices. The app also allows to live-stream content from over 300 channels in Hindi, English, and multiple local languages.

Parent company:
Essel Group
Founder(s):
Subhash Chandra (Founder of Zee Entertainment)
Launched in:
2018
Downloads:
100,000,000+
Funding raised so far:
Undisclosed
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
TikTok (HiPi alternative)
Notable features:
Creating fun content on HiPi — a TikTok like platform. Its upcoming features include karaoke, AR effects, photo templates, duet live, skill-based chat rooms, and celebrity wishes

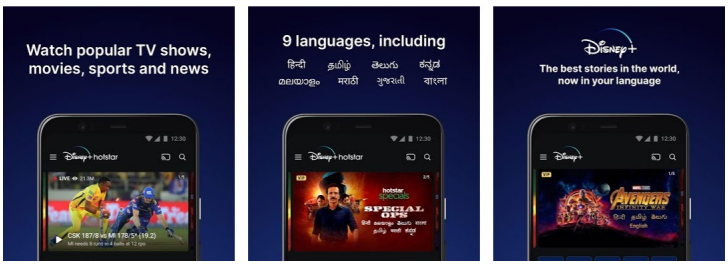
ZEE5



ZEE5 is an over-the-top (OTT) platform that offers over 4,500+ movies, original shows, and news. It also offers its viewers a chance to watch TV shows before being aired on TV, provides exclusive access to curated content with ZEE5 Club, and much more in their regional languages.

Parent company:
Novi Digital Entertainment
Founder(s):
Sunil Rayan
Launched in:
2000
Downloads:
100,000,000+
Investors:
Star India Pvt. Ltd.
Funding raised so far:
$226.8 million
Notable features:
The app offers thousands of hours of some of the most popular Indian movies, Star TV shows, reviews and highlights of cricket and other sports, and the latest news.

Hotstar

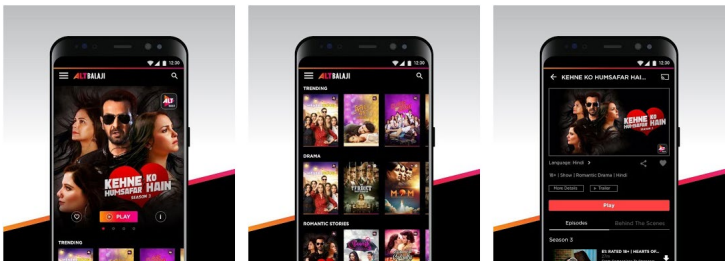


The Disney+Hotstar app is an over-the-top (OTT) platform that hosts live sports, TV shows, and movies. It has over 10,000 hours of TV shows and movies from India and across the world.

After it was acquired the Walt Disney Company last year, Indian users also got access to all the content from Disney, Pixar, Star Wars, and Marvel Studios through Disney+. This content is also dubbed in Indian languages like Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu.

Parent company:
Balaji Telefilms
Founder(s):
Ekta Kapoor
Launched in:
2017
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Notable features:
The app creates custom-made content for Indians across the world.

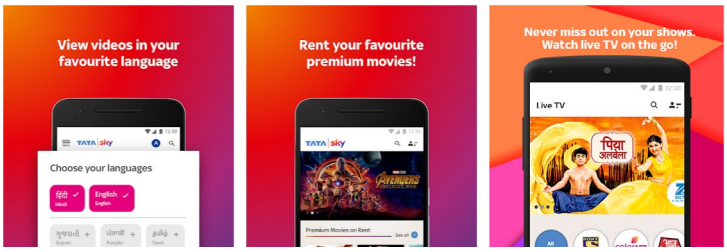
ALTBalaji



ALTBalaji is a subscription-based video-on-demand app that offers online web series written by acclaimed writers, and directed by award-winning directors. Users can also watch some of the episodes for free. Shows range from thriller, mystery, and crime to drama, comedy, horror-comedy, and romance.

Parent company:
Tata Group, Walt Disney and with Temasek Holdings
Founder(s)/MD & CEO:
Harit Nagpal
Launched in:
2013
Downloads:
300,000+
Investors:
Temasek Holdings, The Walt Disney Co., Tata Opportunities Fund

TataSky



TataSky is an Indian direct-to-home broadcast satellite service provider that launched its mobile app in 2013. The TataSky app enables its subscribers to watch Live TV programmes and on-demand shows from a host of channels. The subscribers can also catch up on most of their missed TV shows from the previous week, anytime and anywhere.

News

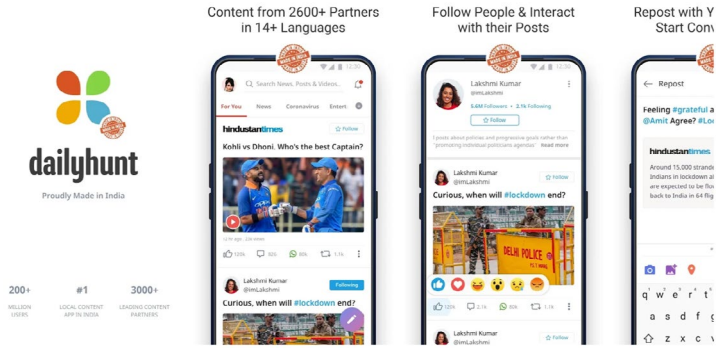
Parent company:
Inshorts
Founder(s):
Azhar Iqubal, Deepit Purkayastha, Anunay Pandey
Launched in:
2019
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
Tiger Global, Lee Fixel, Sachin Bansal, Binny Bansal, Rebright Partners, Tlabs
Funding raised so far:
$29 million
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
Helo
Notable features:
Public app is currently available in Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, Malayalam, and Telugu.

Public

Public is a location-based social network, which enables people in Tier-I, II, and III cities to record and share happenings such as elections, cricket matches, power cut, water shortage, film star visits, religious events, etc. around them and provide real-time local updates.

Parent company:
DailyHunt
Founder(s):
Virendra Gupta Founder, Umesh Kulkarni, Shailendra Sharma
Launched in:
2010
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
Omidyar Network, Goldman Sachs, Falcon Edge Capital, Sequoia Capital India, Sofina, ByteDance, Sequoia Capital
Funding raised so far:
$146 million

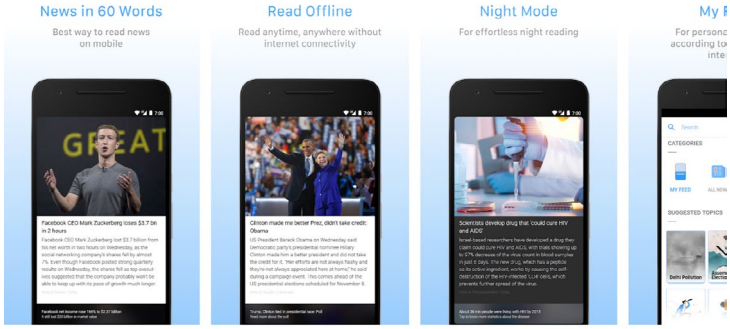
DailyHunt



DailyHunt is one of the world's top mobile applications for news and has been predicted by Goldman Sachs to become one of 'Indian billion dollar babies'.

Parent company:
Inshorts MediaLabs Pvt. Ltd
Founder(s):
Azhar Iqubal, Deepit Purkayastha, Anunay Pandey
Launched in:
2013
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
Tiger Global, Lee Fixel, Sachin Bansal, Binny Bansal, Rebright Partners, Tlabs
Funding raised so far:
$29 million

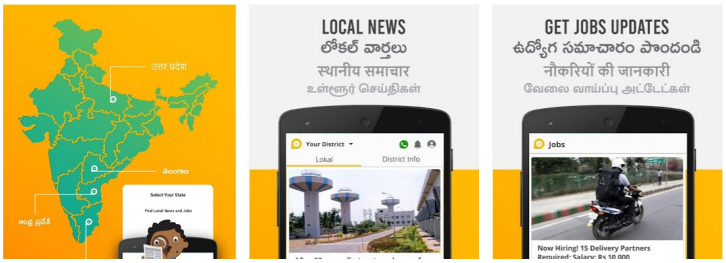
Inshorts



Inshorts is a news app, which selects the latest news stories from across multiple sources and summarises them. It presents these summaries in just 60-words in English or Hindi. You can also access the original story from within the app itself.

Parent company:
Behtar Technology
Founder(s):
Jani Pasha, Vipul Chaudhary
Launched in:
June 2018
Downloads:
1,000,000+
Investors:
3one4Capital, Y Combinator, RB Investments, SOMA Capital, and India Quotient
Funding raised so far:
$3.89 million
Notable features:
Makes short videos to flag fake news

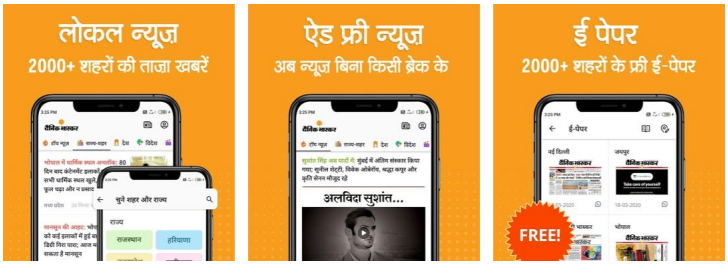
Lokal app



Lokal is a Telugu and Tamil language news app that provides hyperlocal news content and local job opportunities. It covers topics ranging from local news headlines to politics, agriculture to entertainment updates and bulletins. It also puts out local content and gives information about the weather, vegetable prices, gold prices, and contact information of doctors and police.

Parent company:
DB Corp Limited
Founder(s):
Dwarka Prasadji Agarwal
Launched in:
2018
Downloads:
200,000+
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
UC News
Notable feature:
Ad-free video news

Dainik Bhaskar



One of India's largest newspaper group headquartered in Bhopal, Dainik Bhaskar launched its app, featuring free e-paper and advertisement-free Hindi video news. The app provides news from across the business, sports, lifestyle, crime, health, tech, and entertainment verticals, among others.

Gaming

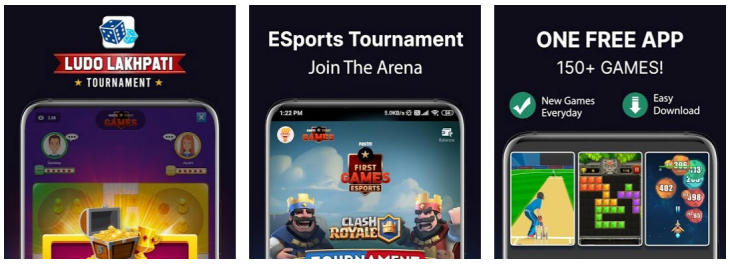
Parent company:
Gametion Technologies Pvt Ltd
Founder(s):
Vikash Jaiswal
Launched in:
2016
Downloads:
100,000,000+
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
HAGO - Play with New Friends
Notable features:
Can play with two to six players online, and can also play with a computer if there is no internet connection on the phone.

Ludo King

Homegrown gaming app Ludo King ranks as India's #1 gaming app on both Android and iOS. Ludo King adds a modern touch to the royal game of Pachisi, which used to be played by Indian kings and queens in ancient times, has surpassed top gaming titles like Candy Crush Saga, PUBG, Clash of Clans, Subway Surfers, Temple Run, and others in monthly active users in India.

Parent company:
Paytm
Founder(s):
Vijay Shekhar Sharma
Launched in:
January 2018
Downloads:
5,000,000+
Investors:
One97, AGTech Holdings
Funding raised so far:
$26 million
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
Clash of Kings, HAGO - Play with New Friends, Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

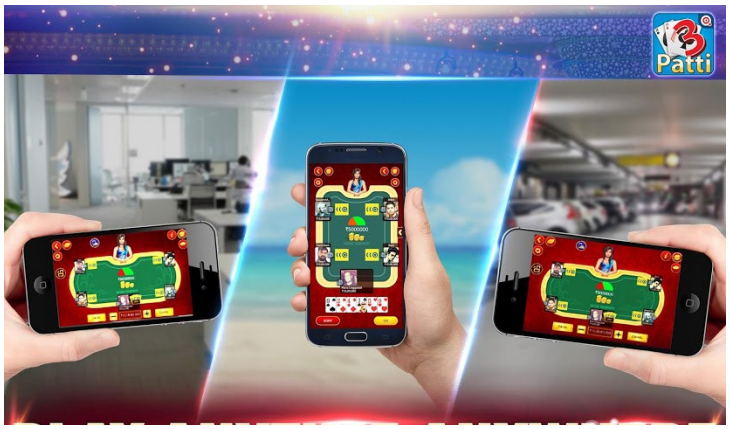
Paytm First Games



Paytm First Games is a one-stop gaming app that features over 200 games, which include rummy, ludo, fantasy cricket, quizzes, and arcade games. The games can be played alone and in real-time with other players. Players can win Paytm cash for winning games. The app is free to download and has in-game purchases.

Parent company:
Octro Inc
Founder(s):
Saurabh Aggarwal
Launched in:
2013
Downloads:
5,000,000+
Investors:
Sequoia Capital
Funding raised so far:
$15 million
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
Clash of Kings, HAGO - Play with New Friends, Mobile Legends: Bang Bang

Teen Patti



Teen Patti is an online three card game, also known as Indian poker. The game offers multiple avatars, game modes, and variations, and is available in multiple languages like English, Hindi, Marathi, and Gujarati. It is free to download.

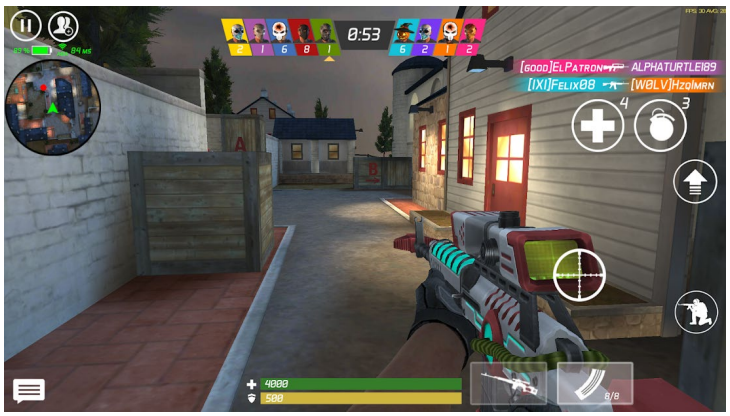
Parent company:
Nazara Technologies
Founder(s):
Nitish Mittersain
Launched in:
2016
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
West Bridge Capital, IIFL Special Opportunities Fund, Rakesh Jhunjhunwala and Turtle Entertainment GmbH. (Crunchbase)
Funding raised so far:
$64.3 million
Notable features:
International players, includes all major cricket playing nations, live commentary, includes modern batting and bowling styles

Epic Cricket - Best Cricket Simulator 3D Game

EPIC Cricket is aimed at letting users experience the most complete and immersive experience of playing cricket on mobile devices. The app provides HD quality visuals with life-like international players. The app is free with in-app purchases.

Parent company:
June Gaming Pvt Ltd
Founder(s):
Roby John, Navneet Waraich, Sreejit Jayanthan, Avinash Pandey
Launched in:
2019
Downloads:
36,000,000+
Notable feature:
Users can customise their characters with wacky costumes and also expect competitive gameplay.

MaskGun

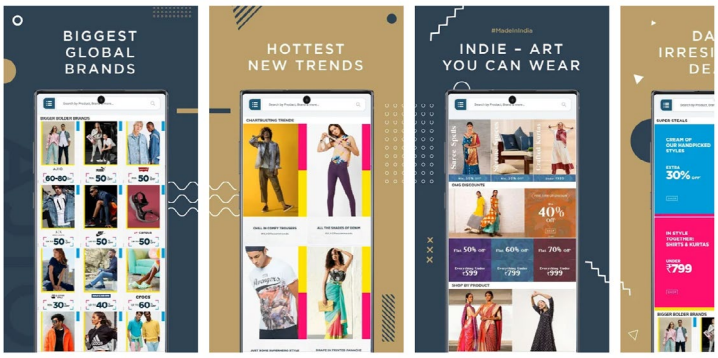


A hybrid of Counter-Strike and Fortnite, MaskGun is a real-time online Multiplayer 3D first-person-shooter built for every mobile device with over 35 million installs.

ECOMMERCE

Parent company:
Reliance Retail
Founder(s):
Vineeth Nair
Launched in:
2016
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
Reliance Retail
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
Shien, Club Factory
Notable features:
Also lists apparels made by Indian artisans

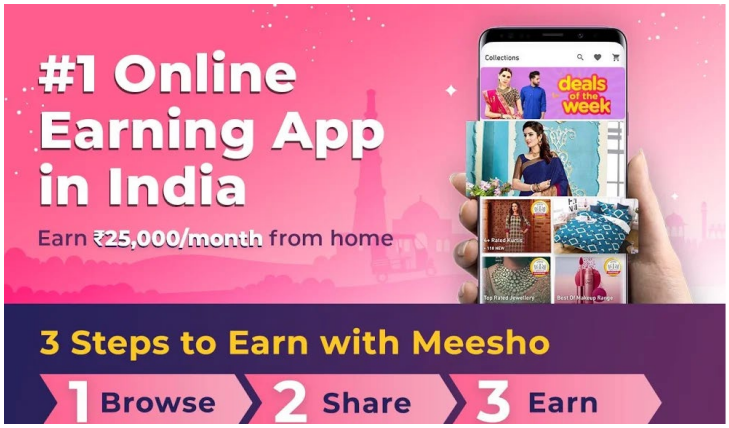
AJIO



AJIO, a fashion and lifestyle brand, is Reliance Retail's first pan-Indian ecommerce venture that unveiled in April 2016, at Lakme Fashion Week in Mumbai. With fashion technology, in particular, AJIO forayed into a category that combined technology with the aesthetics of contemporary fashion by featuring a carefully handpicked selection of premium gadgets and tech accessories.

Parent company:
Meesho Inc.
Founder(s):
Sanjeev Barnwal, Vidit Aatrey
Launched in:
2017
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
SAIF Partners, Venture Highway, Sequoia Capital, Facebook, Prosus & Naspers, DST Partners, RPS Ventures, Shunwei Capital
Funding raised so far:
$215.2 million
Notable features:
80 percent of Meesho's user base is female.if there is no internet connection on the phone.

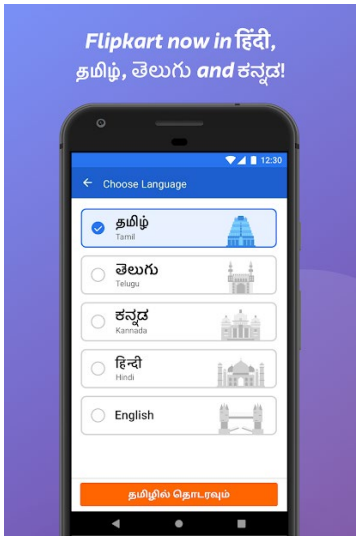
Meesho

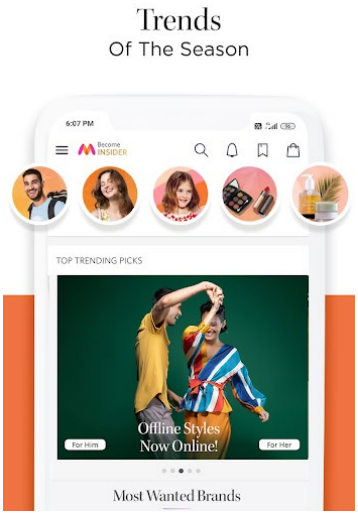


Meesho is empowering women entrepreneurs, housewives, students, and anyone willing to start a part-time or home-based job without any investment. It is the most popular reselling app for women who want to work from home.

Parent company:
Walmart (acquired in 2018)
Founder(s):
Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal
Launched in: **July 2011**
Downloads: **100,000,000+**
Investors:
Walmart, eBay, Microsoft, Tencent, Accel Partners, Tiger Global, Iconiq, Naspers, Dragoneer, Vulcan Capital, Morgan Stanley, Sofina, DST Global, GIC, GreenOaks, Baillie Gifford, Steadview Capital management, and Qatar Investment Authority.
Alternative for banned Chinese app:
ClubFactory and Shein
Notable features:
It also launched OTT platform Flipkart Video in 2019, which is integrated with the shopping app. It offers online shopping service in local languages like Tamil, Kannada, and Telugu.

Flipkart/Myntra





The homegrown ecommerce app has a catalogue of more than 80 crore products ranging from clothing and apparel to grocery, gadgets, gaming consoles, home and kitchen appliances, and furniture.

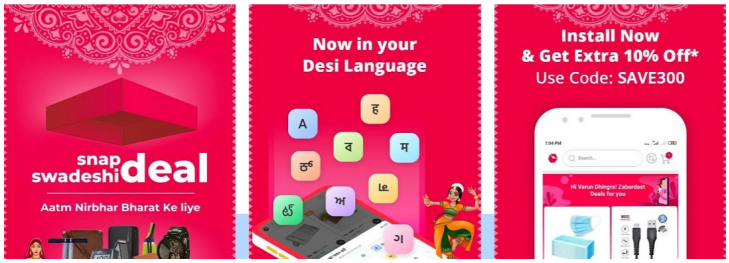
Parent company:
Trustroot Internet Private Limited
Founder(s):
Amod Malviya, Vaibhav Gupta, and Sujeet Kumar
Launched in: **June 2017**
Downloads:
5,000,000+
Investors:
Lightspeed Venture Partners, DST Global, Tencent, Altimeter, Footpath Ventures, Hillhouse, GGV Capital, and Citi Ventures
Funding raised so far:
$899.9 million
Notable features: **Allows businesses to create their brand presence and network through features to share feeds and follow each other.**

Udaan

Udaan is a B2B marketplace that connects wholesalers, retailers, and manufacturers. Designed to suit the needs of small and medium businesses (SMB) in India, the platform provides insights into trends in the B2B marketplace.

Parent company:
Jasper Infotech
Founder(s):
Kunal Bahl and Rohit Bansal
Launched in: **April 2012**
Downloads: **100,000,000+**
Investors:
Anand Piramal, Titan Capital, SoftBank, BlackRock, Temasek, Foxconn, Alibaba, Intel Capital, Bessemer Venture Partners, eBay, and Ratan Tata.
Funding raised so far: **$1.8 billion**
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
Shein and Club Factory
Notable features:
It offers online shopping services in regional languages like Kannada, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, and Bengali

Snapdeal

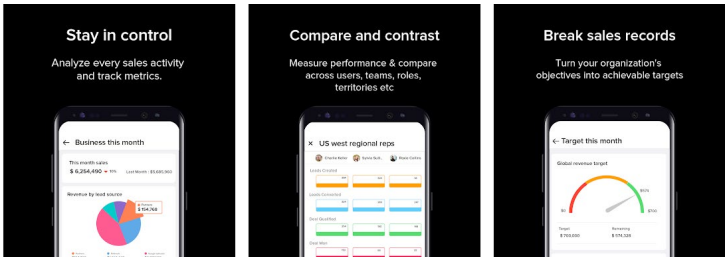


Snapdeal is an ecommerce app featuring more than 85 million products including gadgets, kitchen appliances, and apparel. The app allows users to place orders, carry out online transactions, and track their orders for free.

Productivity and Utility

Parent company:
Zoho Corporation
Founder(s):
Sridhar Vembu, Tony Thomas, Sreenivas Kanumuru
Launched in:
2001
Downloads:
500,000+
Notable features:
CRM, Sales IQ, Project Management and collaboration

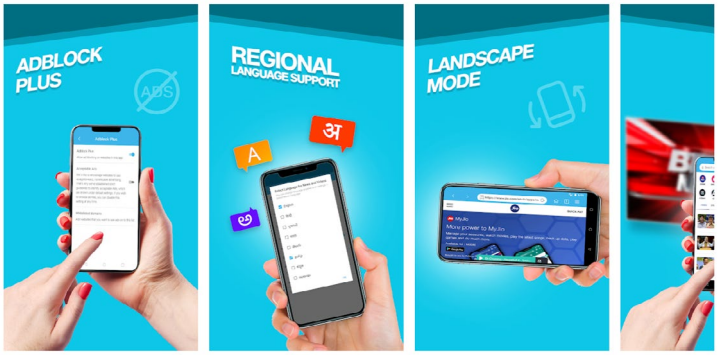
Zoho CRM



Zoho CRM provides customer relationship management (CRM) solutions that help organisations achieve multiple goals of clinching sales, marketing and customer support activities. It streamlines the company processes by acting as a one-stop solution.

Jio Browser

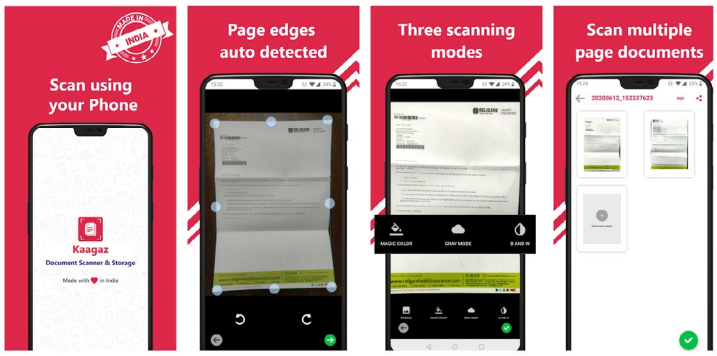
Parent company:
Jio Platforms
Founder(s)/Chairman:
Mukesh Ambani
Launched in:
2018
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
L Catterton, PIF, Silver Lake, General Atlantic Singapore, Facebook, TPG, KKR, L Catterton, General Atlantic, Vista Equity Partners, two sovereign wealth funds from Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia.
Funding raised so far:
$20.09 billion
(for all Jio platforms)
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
UC Browser
Notable features:
Users can schedule downloads on time convenient



JioBrowser by Reliance is designed specifically for Indian users and provides premium experience on weak internet or lower specifications phones as well. The browser allows users to search, download the files and share the information through the browser. JioBrowser supports 8 Indian languages.

Kaagaz Scanner

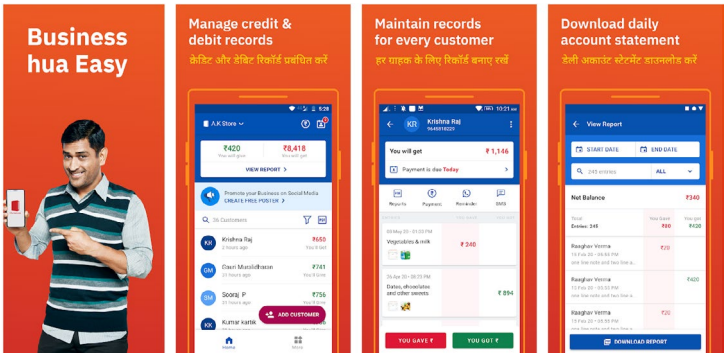
Parent company:
Ordenado Labs
Founder(s):
Snehanshu Gandhi, Gaurav Shrishrimal, and Tamanjit Bindra
Launched in:
2020
Downloads:
500,000+
Investors:
NASSCOM 10,000 Startups, Axilor Ventures Accelerator
Alternative for which banned Chinese app (if any):
CamScanner
Notable feature:
Users can create a PDF with a mix of gallery docs and images and documents scanned.



Kaagaz Scanner was launched just a day after the ban on 59 Chinese apps was announced. The app aims to replace CamScanner, which allows iOS and Android devices to be used as image scanners.

Parent company:
KhataBook Inc.
Founder(s):
Ravish Naresh, Dhanesh Kumar, Jaideep Poonia, Ashish Sonone
Launched in:
2016
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
GGV Capital, Partners of DST Global, Sequoia India, Tencent, others.
Funding raised so far:
$173 millon
Notable features:
The app also provides support in regional languages and helps businesses understand and make better decisions with reports that it generates.

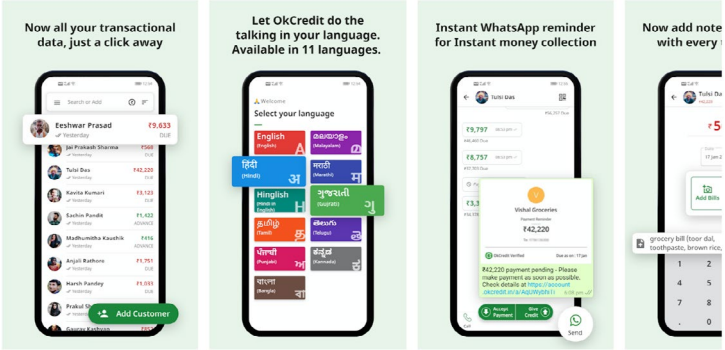
Khata Book



KhataBook is a mobile app service that shares WhatsApp and SMS reminders with users when money is due to be paid or collected. Businesses can manage their credit accounts on the app, where transactions are recorded and available for review. The app also backs up all transactions online automatically, so that merchants don't have to worry if they lose their smartphone.

Parent company:
Psi Phi Global Solutions Pvt. Ltd
Founder(s):
Harsh Pokharna, Gaurav Kumar, Aditya Prasad
Launched in:
2017
Downloads:
10,000,000+
Investors:
Lightspeed India Partners, Tiger Global Management
Funding raised so far:
$84.2 million
Notable features:
The app uses WhatsApp reminders to help users increase collections from customers without having to visit them.

OkCredit



OKCredit is a mobile app for small merchants to keep track of their day-to-day purchases and sales. The app wants to change how India's smallest merchants do their daily bookkeeping, from paper-based register notebooks to a more digitised and structured manner via the mobile.

YourStory Research's AppNirbhar Bharat Survey

The objective of YourStory Research's AppNirbhar Bharat Survey is to identify and shine a light on existing — and upcoming — apps made by Indians, along with fortifying Prime Minister Narendra Modi's message for an Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

YourStory launched an online survey to gauge the Indian app landscape, as well as to record information about apps which may not have too many users or exposure as the ones that were in the news, or had a lot of traction on app stores already.

The month-long survey was initially launched with YourStory's community of startup founders, techies, and investors at the start of July via newsletters, website pop-ups, and social media pages. The survey consisted of 18 questions (not all compulsory) to record information such as the name of the app, founders' names, funding status of the app or its holding company, total number of downloads on Google Play Store (and Apple App Store, if applicable), the date the app was launched, and some of the app's special features, among others.

While the report is peppered with responses from the survey throughout, following are some stark trends YourStory was able to identify from the 800+ respondents:

- Of the total responses to the survey, 25.6% were from the social media category, the largest sector, followed by edtech (21.6%) and gaming (10.6%)
- Utility and productivity, healthcare, online commerce, and travel were the smallest sectors.
- 76.9% were free apps, while 14.1% offered in-app purchases. Only 9% were paid apps. Monetisation of apps in India is a relatively new concept, especially considering that users of Indian apps are few and far between.
- 77.9% of the apps that responded to YourStory's survey are available in English, or support English language. Hindi and Bengali were the next two most popular languages, followed by several other Indic languages.
- The apps were largely self-funded, or had investments from friends and family, and were bootstrapped (49% of the respondents). Only a handful had formal commitments from industry investors.
- Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Pune were where the maximum number of apps were based.
- June, July, and August were the months when most of the apps were released, over the last five years.
- Many apps were born to solve COVID-19-related issues - from hyperlocal food delivery to medicine delivery.

YOURSTORY

11-POINT RECOMMENDATION FOR AN APPNIRBHAR BHARAT

1 RECOMMENDATION
Create Made in India branding for apps

2 RECOMMENDATION
Continued focus on Digital India initiatives

3 RECOMMENDATION
More app hackathons and initiatives

4 RECOMMENDATION
Public-private partnership model to solve for India

5 RECOMMENDATION
Framework for non-personal data sharing

6 RECOMMENDATION
Ecosystem players to promote homegrown apps

7 RECOMMENDATION
Strengthen the app developer community

8 RECOMMENDATION
Integration of deeptech capabilities

9 RECOMMENDATION
Redefine role and significance of product manager

10 RECOMMENDATION
Create a Bharat Appstore to enable discovery of apps

11 RECOMMENDATION
Create an equity-based, regulated crowdfunding infrastructure in India

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to one of the worst disruptions to the global economy, including India's. As the country went into a nationwide lockdown, businesses across sectors and regions suffered. To help companies tide through these difficult times, the government of India announced a Rs 20 lakh-crore-reform package, which came as a relief to all. Further, **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's** clarion call for an **Aatmanirbhar Bharat** has also fuelled homegrown innovations across the startup ecosystem.

As we step into a 'new normal', the need for tech-led innovations is being felt more than ever before, particularly with the acceleration in digital adoption in a world of contactless interactions. The significance of the **Government of India's Make in India** and **Digital India** initiatives as well as its vision for a digitally empowered nation have truly come to light in the post-COVID-19 world. Along with this, the need for a robust Indian app ecosystem developing **Made in India** apps that cater to the diversity and scale of the Indian user base has become all the more apparent.

But as **Ravi Shankar Prasad**, Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology, and Law and Justice, Government of India, so astutely pointed out, India needs to make the shift towards becoming a world leader in the number of apps developed in and uploaded from India for India and the world to download, as opposed to the current reality where India leads in the number of apps downloaded but only make up a fraction of the apps uploaded to various app stores. For this to happen, India needs to create its own **Aatmanirbhar App Ecosystem**, as envisioned by PM Modi.

Based on our interactions with startups, app developers, tech innovators, and other ecosystem stakeholders, YourStory Research is putting forth a set of recommendations that we believe will help India create an Aatmanirbhar App Ecosystem, or what we at YourStory are calling an **AppNirbhar Bharat**.

1. Made in India branding:

The Government of India may come up with a solution to provide verified Made in India branding for credible Indian apps solving for Bharat and the world. This will help users identify innovative, world-class apps that can find global use cases, while catering to India's rich and diverse local user base. With app clones being developed every day, such a branding, which Indian apps can apply to, will help users distinguish the high-quality innovations from the metro ones.

2. Continued focus on Digital India initiatives:

One of the major challenges for app developers and users in India is data connectivity. Addressing this requires a continuous focus on driving digital inclusion of 1.3 billion Indians, with the

rollout of high-speed connectivity, including 5G services, improving internet infrastructure and smart devices penetration in Tier-III, Tier-IV, and remote areas of India.

3. More app hackathons and initiatives like Aatmanirbhar Bharat Innovation Challenge

The Government of India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge saw 6,940 Indian startups, techies, innovators, and app developers apply for the challenge in less than one month. This highlights the need for more such app hackathons and initiatives to enable the Indian app economy. These initiatives can be expanded and executed in the following formats:

- *Nation-level challenges to identify best apps in different categories*

Initiatives like these can be regularised to take place annually. Such events will help create more awareness about both established and new Made in India apps across different categories and provide opportunities for them to scale globally.

- *Smaller competitions that boost state-level innovations, encourage early and idea-stage apps*

This will encourage idea and/or early-stage app developers across different states to showcase their solutions, get validation for their product, and find mentorship and support from the government and the ecosystem.

- *Promote niche app developers (categories)*

This will help identify apps being developed in niche categories to target the vast and diverse digital audience in India. Such initiatives will also provide the government much-needed visibility into the regulatory framework and enabling environment required to be created to fuel app innovations in these niche areas.

4. Public-private partnership model to solve for India

Indian app developers who are winners of these app hackathons can be encouraged to partner with the government to create apps that solve real India problems.

5. Framework for non-personal data sharing

Impetus should be on implementing a framework for non-personal data sharing under data protection regulation. This will help early-stage app developers gain access to a lot more data-led insights that can drive decision-making, and will play an important role in creating a level-playing field for Indian apps to grow at a pace similar to that enjoyed by larger global rivals.

6. Encourage ecosystem stakeholders to promote Made in India apps

Ecosystem stakeholders, such as established app developers, seasoned entrepreneurs, and investors should come together as a community to foster the growth of Made in India app ecosystem and inspire a new wave of Indian app-preneurs. In particular, the investor community should consider setting aside funds and adapting their investment

strategies to stimulate investments and fund flow into the Indian app ecosystem, with a special focus on apps that solve for 1.3 billion Indians and have the potential to spur the growth of the Indian economy into a $5 trillion one by 2025.

7. Strengthen the app developer community

Indian app developers should focus on building a community of app developers that work together with a shared goal leveraging their respective skill sets and innovations to solve for India and fuel the country's economic growth. Instead of building apps in silos, app developers should collaborate and build applications in a stack, solving deep-rooted problems and creating a more efficient ecosystem. The focus should be on promoting open APIs among app developers.

8. Integration of deeptech capabilities

More emphasis should be placed on data-based decision-making/predictive analysis. The integration of deep tech capabilities has the potential to disrupt the entire industry, and hence, the need for creating a conducive environment for developing such deeptech skillsets and capabilities at various levels of society.

9. Redefine role and significance of product manager

With the deeper penetration of digital devices (smartphones, tablets), mobile apps are now reaching a wide range of audience. In order to leverage this opportunity, app development companies should redefine the role and significance of product managers, laying emphasis on building products that allow for superior user experiences and that cater to both new adopters of smartphones as well as advanced users.

10. Create a Bharat Appstore to enable discovery of apps

Create a **Bharat appstore**, designed specifically for Made in India and India-focused apps. The two key platforms available for Indian app developers are Google Play Store and App Store - Apple. Both these play stores rank Indian apps on the global competitive parameters. With many Indian apps now targeting to reach primarily the Indian audience in vernacular format, this will help the homegrown apps to increase their reach in a better manner.

11. Create an equity-based, regulated crowdfunding infrastructure in India:

Create an equity-based, regulated crowdfunding infrastructure in India that will serve the dual purpose of enabling investments into early-stage app development companies in exchange for equity stakes in the business, while providing app developers access to funds for product development and growth.

Conclusion

With a digital population of more than 600 million, India is the world's second-largest online market. It is also the third-largest startup ecosystem in the world — with more than 30,000 startups, at least 27 tech unicorns, and three decacorns — pointing to a healthy innovation landscape.

And yet, global companies have, for long, dominated the market, leveraging the opportunities that India's larger and diverse population presents. However, with the rise of smartphone usage and increased internet penetration, this scenario has changed dramatically over the past few years and is continuing to evolve rapidly — all in favour of Made in India solutions and products.

The rise of local language app and internet users from across India presents a new set of opportunities and gaps for innovators to address. In fact, for the first time, in 2019, rural users (277 million) outnumbered urban users (227 million) by 10 percent, thereby eliminating the digital divide that had existed earlier.

But comprehending the sheer size of the country, its cultural diversity, and understanding the needs of hundreds of millions of first-time internet users, who may not be tech-savvy, cannot be addressed solely by foreign companies.

'Building for India' requires 'building in India'.

Indeed, the foundations for this were laid by the government of India after 2014, when it launched the Make in India and Digital India initiatives.

Today, we're moving from just Make in India to Made in India, with a focus on turning India into an Aatmanirbhar Bharat, or a self-reliant nation.

And the opportunities to do this are many for businesses, big and small. The government of India's recent ban on Chinese apps is a case in point of the opportunities available for Indian app developers to solve and build for India. Likewise, the government of India's recent Aatmanirbhar Bharat App Innovation Challenge, which received over 6,940 entries, is another proof of the vast talent available in the country for Indian app makers and startups to build world-class solutions for India and for the world.

The app landscape, therefore, finds itself on the precipice of a new era. Solving for the new dynamic has magnified the scope for innovative business models to address real and pressing Indian problems. This makes app creators more sustainable on their home ground.

It's truly an 'appt' time and opportunity to innovate in India, for India and the world.

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