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Interview: Salil Bhargava, CEO of Jump Games Says The Indian Mobile Games Market Is Rs. 30 Crores; Things More Sane Now

By [Nikhil Pahwa](#) · October 22, 2008 ·  [Email This Post](#) ·  [Print This Post](#) · [Post a Comment](#)



In [Part 1 of this interview](#), Salil Bhargava, CEO of Jump Games, a Reliance Entertainment company, had told [MediaNama](#) had outlined the companys plans for the US market. Interestingly, he had said that, at present, around 70 percent of their revenues come from overseas. Part 2 of our discussion with him, he talks about how the mobile gaming market in India has changed over the past year:

How big is the India market, if you take out the operator share?

If you take out the operator share - there are taxes etc - but I don't think it's more than Rs. 30 crores. But there are new revenue streams that are making a difference - like using mobile advertising and WAP site. It's still small, but those kind of models will also emerge in India.

Is there a significant dependancy for you on Reliance Communications for revenues?

Not at all. There's no dependancy at all. We're operator agnostic. We're a part of Reliance Entertainment.

Is the mobile gaming business in India viable yet - standalone?

Not yet, but I think it is becoming more and more viable for the existing players. There are very few people left in India.

What happened in India?

Most of the players who were focused on 20 other things, have stopped making games, or figured that they really can't compete with those who're making high quality games, which is what the operators are beginning to ask for in India as well. A lot of those people who flooded the market with a lot of content, are now beginning to fall off the radar in terms of mobile gaming. Most of them doing all kinds of other stuff also, and they've gone back to doing other things - ringtones and wallpapers business, and some becoming a platform company.

Are you in the black in India?

We're privately held so I can't disclose. We as a company don't focus purely on India. What we have is a global deployment team. We have a team which does some aggregation for India, but in terms of deployment, it's a global deployment. It's still early for us as a company - we've only completed two years of the company.

Well, I'm asking because I've heard that Paradox Studios (the previous avatar of Jump Games) was shut down as a sick company...

No. I don't know where you've heard this. It was restructured because all the people moved and started a new company called Jump, as a part of Reliance Entertainment. Paradox Studios was a legacy company, and used to do different things, including PC and console stuff. When we started Jump, we took a decision to focus on Mobile.

What kind of games are you making? Any iPhone games?

Not for India specifically. We do have the SDK and our teams are working on it, and we should have a game ready in the next 3-4 months.

What about multiplayer games?

We've done a few in the past as well. Its very early, and the bread and butter of this business for quite a while is going to be single player casual games. That's not going to change anytime soon. A lot of people talk about multiplayer and bluetooth games, but its easy to stay in the news that way. The number one mobile game of all time is Tetris. It's just a simple fun game. Most consumers don't want to press a million buttons - they don't want to complicated a game.

What needs to be done to ease the process of game discovery in India?

I honestly think, it's education from the operator themselves, and the real growth will come when the subscriber growth starts tapering off. It'll lead to a spurt in data. It's understandable - for example, if an operator has \$100, he'll spend the money on subscriber growth. When that starts tapering off, he'll still have \$100 to spend. I honestly think it will take 2-3 years.

Until then, what does a mobile gaming company do?

Handset manufacturers are now embedding content discovery applications. One key thing in this business is, a lot of revenue generation takes place when a person buys a new phone. By having applications embedded, it becomes easier - like try and buy. I think it will be application based, and dependent on the handset manufacturer.

Yeah, but that N-Gage model hasn't really taken off, right?

The content discovery model is doing pretty well, even in India.

What does it take to get on a handset platform?

I think it's just quality content. It's going to be the same as what it takes to get on an operator platform.

But it's a lower revenue share - split between an operator, and handset manufacturer and a gaming company

Right. But it'll help people discover the content.

What's the shelf life for a game on operator decks in India?

A successful game can stay for a long time. We've had games that have stayed for one-year or two years.

Typical would be 2-3 months, but if it's a hit in 2-3 months, the operator will not take it off.

How does the Bollywood vs Non-Bollywood work out, and has the era of Bollywood games ended?

I don't think it's ended, but it was way too much of it happening. We did a few deals, and we saw 50 other deals from everywhere. There was just a glut of Bollywood based content, and the companies couldn't really put out the quality. You can't create a game in a week and put it out there.

How many games do you create in a year?

We've got close to a 100 now, if you include some of our older games, and from a roadmap perspective, we create 20-25 games a year. We have licensed around 15 games, but that's where we're very rapidly looking to add to our portfolio.

So is this is a numbers game - trying one game after the other, something works, something doesn't...

Yeah, it's a lot like the films business where one will give you significant amounts of revenue.

What plays out better for you in terms of margins - distribution business or creating your own games?

Creating your own games, but there's a limit to how many quality games you can create. You can't become a content factory - it's not an assembly line.

What's you take on the ad-supported games model, versus an advergaming model?

If you offer too many games, it's often that many of these games will be of great quality. For the ones we have done, we created a game which offers good quality gameplay.

What are the stages of game development?

This business has changed rapidly over the last couple of years. The whole world dynamics have totally changed. Earlier you could create a game and put them out in 3-4 months. Now the reality is that operators are willing to only accept quality content. It now takes from 6-9 months for deployment.

There's a concept stage which is fleshed out in the game design document. We put it in 3 stages - where the programming and the graphics get involved, with an "alpha build", which are then reviewed, and there's QA. Then it goes back into production. That is then QA'ed. Finally we develop what is called a "Gold Master", where 3-4 handsets are normally picked as master handsets. Once that is done, it then goes into porting. Today we support 700-750 handsets. That takes a couple of months, and there's a QA process. It's really changed a lot.

Things that need to change in India

We didn't grow up with gaming. The generation that is growing up with gaming, that is where the design capability will come it. Very few people from my generation remember what an Atari was, or a Commodore 364. As they grow up, we'll see that design capability. We also need high-end programming. We've seen people in the mobile gaming business who are coming from the traditional business.

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