

HOW TO REACH MORE PLAYERS WITH DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION

Empowering players to discover your game with an optimized multi-platform experience

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WHY DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION MATTERS

The Digital Demand

Digital game distribution isn't a new concept. It's been around since the 1980s; however, the way we consume entertainment - specifically games - has dramatically changed in the past two decades. As early as 2017, consumers purchased nearly 83% of all video games in digital form.

With the rise in popularity of mobile apps and mobile versions of cross-platform games, players' demand for a way to easily pay for video game products and services in one place is spiking. Also fueling the need for a comprehensive approach to video game distribution is the growing population of mobile gamers (both banked and unbanked, using cash and e-wallet options) who prefer on-the-go payment methods and desire convenience.

At its core, digital distribution is the future of video game discoverability. With the right approach and tools, the future can deliver a vast audience that should be within your reach.

The Response

Inspired by the last few years' rising tide of gamers, many well-branded digital distribution platforms and marketplaces have sprung up: Most recently, well-marketed brands such as Steam, GOG, Uplay, HumbleBundles, and others have become de-facto gaming content destinations. Their wild success (reach, revenue, and retention) even influenced AAA studios to build their own - Electronic Arts' Origin, Blizzard's Battle.net, and Epic Games' Store, among key players.

While these behemoth digital distribution platforms do suffer from an overlap of audiences, they also boast their own loyal, repeat customers that prefer to use one over the others for a variety of reasons:



The platform has specific titles players seek.



Games in a platform's catalog have "perks" like friendly pricing, attractive discount offers, or incentives such as free games or trial periods.



Players' preferred payment options are supported to ensure a smooth purchase experience.



The marketplace's interface is ubiquitous. Much like Starbucks' coffee, their brand is hard to resist because it's everywhere. These popular platforms propagate friend networks, where gamers can easily connect and chat and share new and cool discoveries inside the service.



The platform's interface is compelling, simple to use, or a fun, engaging experience. For example, Steam has built-in gamification, rewards users with badges, stickers, and profile customization.

The Way Forward

Given the trend toward centralization of the entire gaming experience, it makes sense for developers to **release their games in as many places as possible**, maximizing audience reach and - where eyeballs overlap - becoming as visible as possible.

Multiplying exposure across marketplaces not only results in increased game views but improves your opportunity to be featured in platform showcases and promotions players can't miss.

Broader visibility means more revenue and long-term viability for your game.

DISTRIBUTION PAIN POINTS

More exposure translates to a boost in earnings and long-term sustainability. The idea sounds great, right?

Given big distribution platforms' predefined interfaces and heavily controlled user experiences, does staying inside these "walled gardens" actually maximize your exposure worldwide? Here are three key challenges with this approach.

The Expense

Cost varies depending on which ecosystems you choose for distributing your game. Let's skim over a handful of top game platforms and their prices. According to Pew Research Center, early 80 percent of American consumers (gamers and non) Approximately 80 percent of Americans shop online, so these massive providers are key to getting in front of gamer eyeballs.

- **Steam** takes 30 percent of all sales made up through the first $10 million, then drops to 25 percent up through $50 million. Steam asks for a 20 percent cut for each sale falling in this top tier.



- **Epic** takes 12 percent of the revenue from all games sold. CEO Tim Sweeney tweeted that of the 12 percent, Epic's net profit is only about 5 percent.
- **Sony Playstation** reportedly grabs 30 percent from games sold in the store, though no public statements verify the actual revenue split.
- **Microsoft Xbox** enjoys 30 percent from games sales, plus in-game purchases sold through the console's store.
- **Itch.io** is an outlier. Unlike Steam, the itch.io platform asks a mere 10 percent of each transaction and offer creators an option to shift the split as low as zero or as high as 100 percent. The incentive is in their revenue model which embraces open revenue sharing. In an open post on the subject, the itch.io team explains their "pay-what-you-want" business model that started with the end-user and evolved to include creators: "We believe in making it easy for creators to collect money for their creations in a non-obtrusive way. No matter how large or small the project, it should be simple for fans to donate or pay what they think is fair." They further provide a key statistic validating the business model "30% of all money spent on itch.io is "extra" money that is paid above the minimum. The average purchase on itch.io is about 1.50 more than the minimum."

The Marketplace Saturation

Large platforms and marketplaces like Steam, GOG, and Uplay have facilitated game distribution for a few years now. However - as shown above - provider costs are rising in an already saturated market. By December 2020, nearly half a million mobile gaming apps were available on Google Play. Like a digital needle in a virtual haystack, single titles float alongside big studio games, thousands of indies, and the digital neon of big-brand marketplaces - all of them all vying for gamers' attention.

The Experience

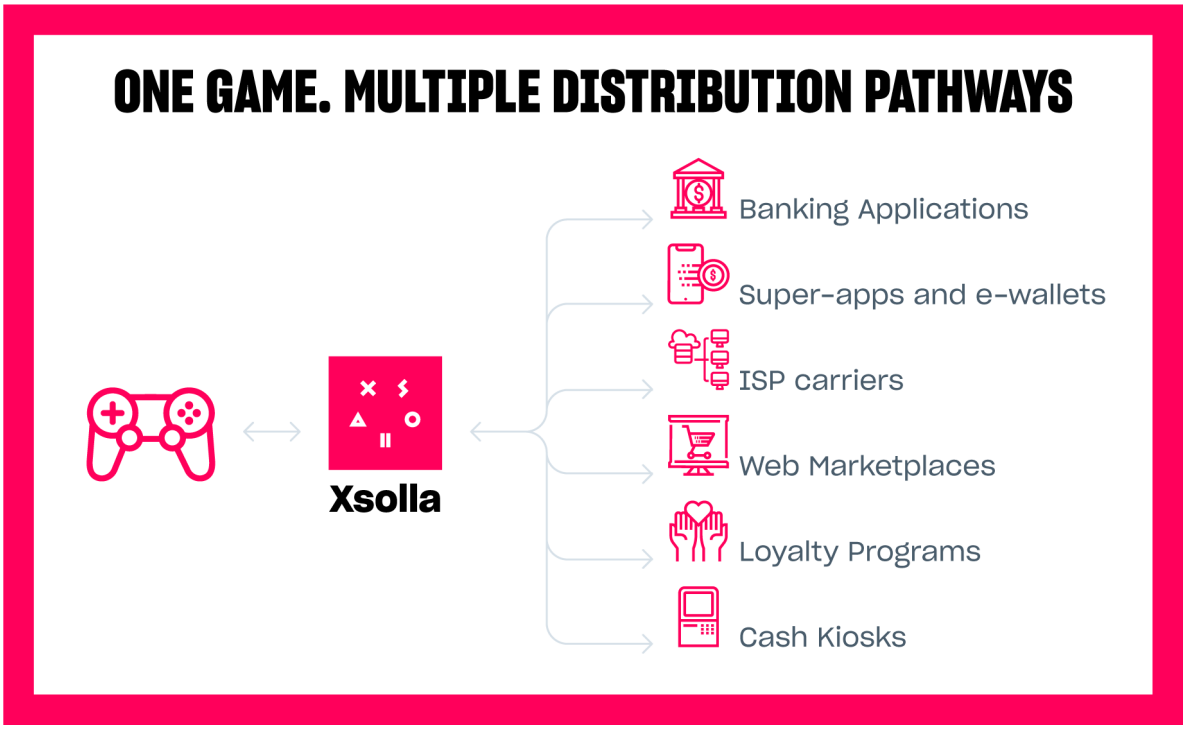
Another issue facing game developers choosing to distribute exclusively inside giant branded services is the lack of control over user experience. Surrounding the edges of your game is a behemoth platform with total say over how you're presented – from how you appear in search results to the method of payment offered and whether the ecosystem meets individual gamers' localized needs.

DIRECT YOUR GAME'S GROWTH

To connect with today's expanding audience, game studios must release their games in as many places as possible, provide a broader portfolio of payment methods, and par tner with vendors offering new audiences in booming gaming regions.

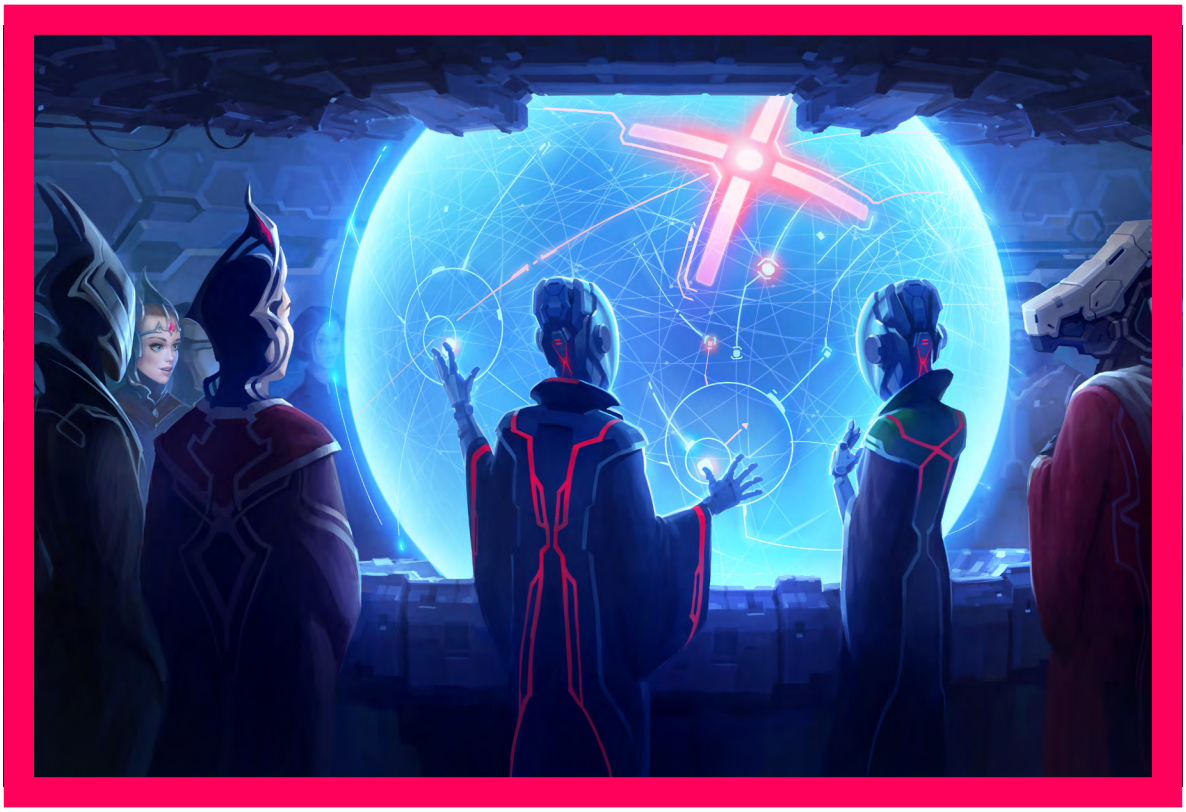
The rising number of gamers with purchasing power outside of studios' current reach is why more and more game developers are trending towards self-publishing. As one component of a larger business bigger strategy, self-publishing offers massive benefits:

- Draws new eyes to your games;
- Generates a new stream of revenue;
- Reinvigorates your back catalog and gives older games a chance to find new audiences.



Self-publication and partnering with super-apps is a solid approach for developers who wish to reduce costs, increase revenue, control their IP, and get access to more players far beyond the oppressive walled gardens of big-brand distribution markets.

Of course, much like a billboard in your backyard, the approach alone doesn't market your game, nor is it the sole source of funds for your studio. The smart move is to **find a partner that can help you connect with a broader portfolio of distribution channels and connect to new people in more places**.



A SMARTER APPROACH

What if one centralized solution could present your game to hundreds of thousands of new players while allowing you to control your e-commerce and brand platform?

What if this same solution that broadens your game's reach could also connect convenience-hungry gamers all over the world with hundreds of leading payment providers, regardless of a player's device, location, or language?

A distribution hub is an approach that connects multiple gaming content ecosystems, allowing you to widen your visibility with the mission of growing your audience and revenue streams - all while letting you decide how to customize the experience for your customers.

An effective, player-friendly, centralized game distribution hub can:

- Leverage common options, including mobile banking applications, e-wallets, and cash kiosks that display available games in digital storefronts;
- Cater to banked and unbanked players' spending behaviors, helping video game companies increase market penetration and brand awareness;
- Provide convenience to users across many gaming markets by "pushing" funds to players' game accounts and allowing them to transfer funds without logging in to the game for a secure and frictionless payment experience;
- Encourage payment method providers such as e-wallets, bank applications, and web marketplaces to become digital distribution hub partners and boost their own customer acquisition by placing enticing game buttons on their platforms/websites/apps.

Xsolla develops products and solutions with this exact approach in mind - to provide you with the right tools and support to help you self publish and distribute your games.

The Providers

Xsolla designed Digital Distribution Hub to connect game developers with multiple distribution channels offering their own platforms or ecosystems. Here are some of today's major players in the distribution space.

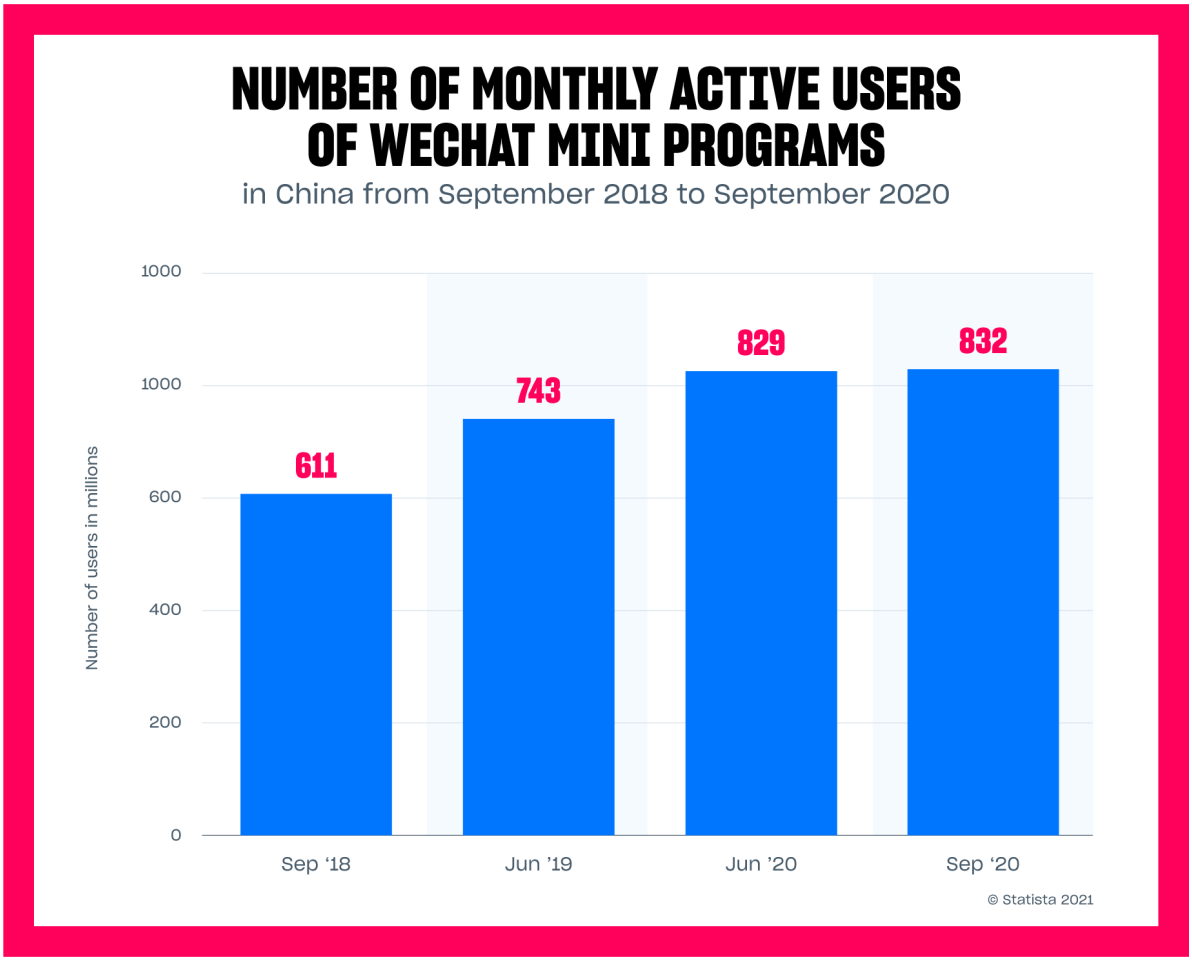
Super-apps and e-wallets

A super-app is a single experience that gives users access to many different activities, ranging from playing a game to making dinner reservations.

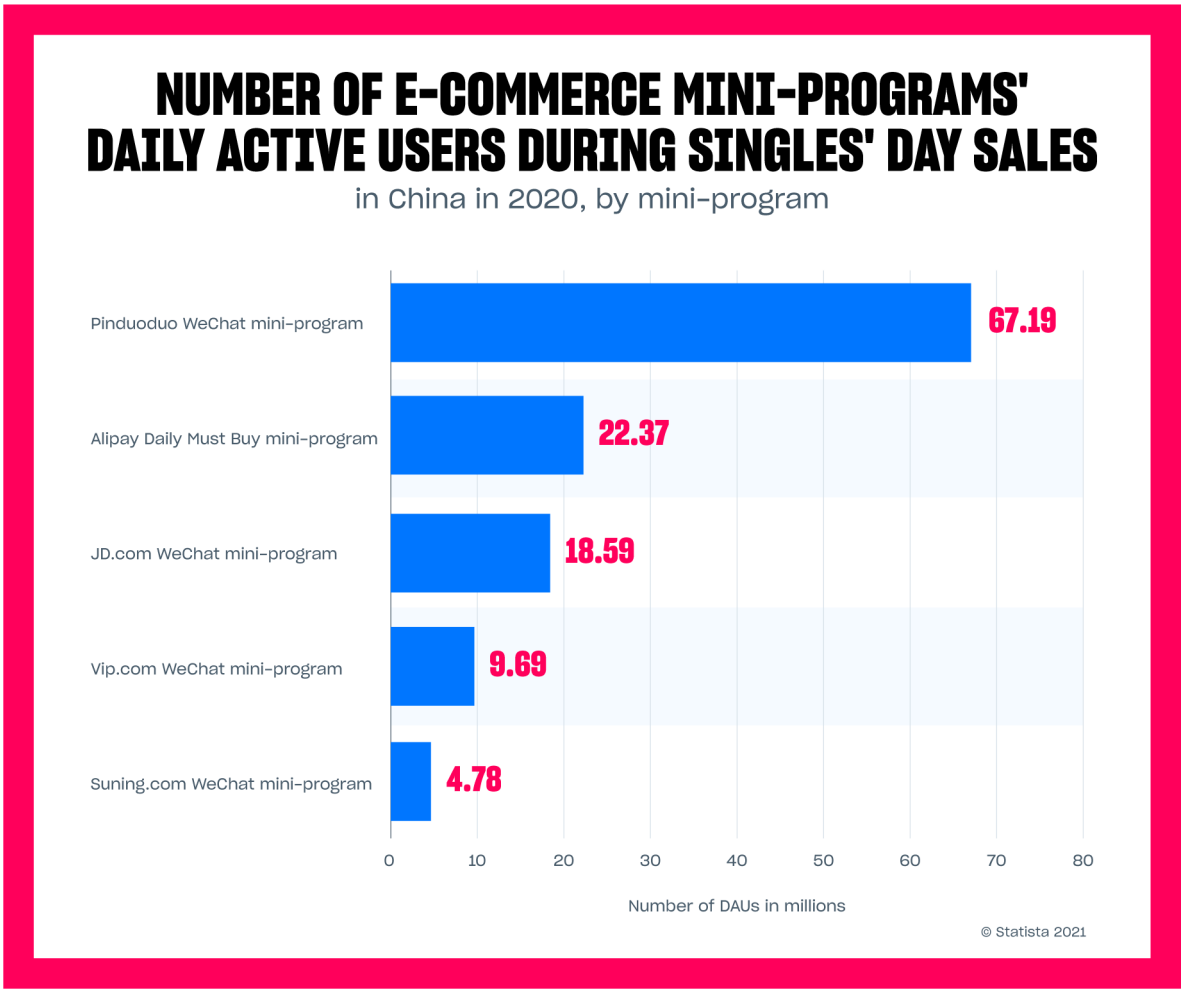
HOW MANY ACTIVE USERS?	1,500,000,000 (1.5 BLN)
WHERE ARE THEY MORE POPULAR?	SEA, EUROPE, NORTH AMERICA
WHICH ARE THE MOST POPULAR?	WECHAT PAY, ALIPAY, GOJEK, AND MORE
DO THEY WORK WITH GAMING?	YES

The most successful super-apps appeal to today's mobile users with engaging interfaces that are functional, friction-free, and provide excellent customer service:

- **WeChat Pay (微信支付)** is a digital wallet service inside WeChat by Tencent. WeChat Pay allows users (most recently at 832 million MAU) to make mobile payments and transfer money between contacts.



- **AliPay** was launched in 2004 by Alibaba Group. AliPay is another super-app offering a vast catalog of services to its users and a growing selection of promotional and advertising opportunities to its merchants. Currently, AliPay hosts 160k+ merchants' mini-programs.



- **PayMaya** is a Philippine-based e-wallet service providing consumers safe, contactless transactions for purchasing physical goods, sending money, making bank transfers, paying bills, and more.

PayMaya recently launched a new mini-app catering to a booming population of mobile gamers. Aptly named **PlayMaya**, the in-app offering enriches the experience with exclusive content, cashless transactions, and cashback rewards.

The added value appears to be effective: In 2019, forty-three million Filipinos spent nearly $600 million on mobile games.

- **Go-Pay** is Indonesia's leading digital payment platform in Indonesia, accepted by 900k+ merchants in the region. It's presented to users as an offering inside Gojek's super-app, allowing customers to pay directly from their mobile devices, make cashless payments, top-up game accounts, and pay bills.

Banking Applications

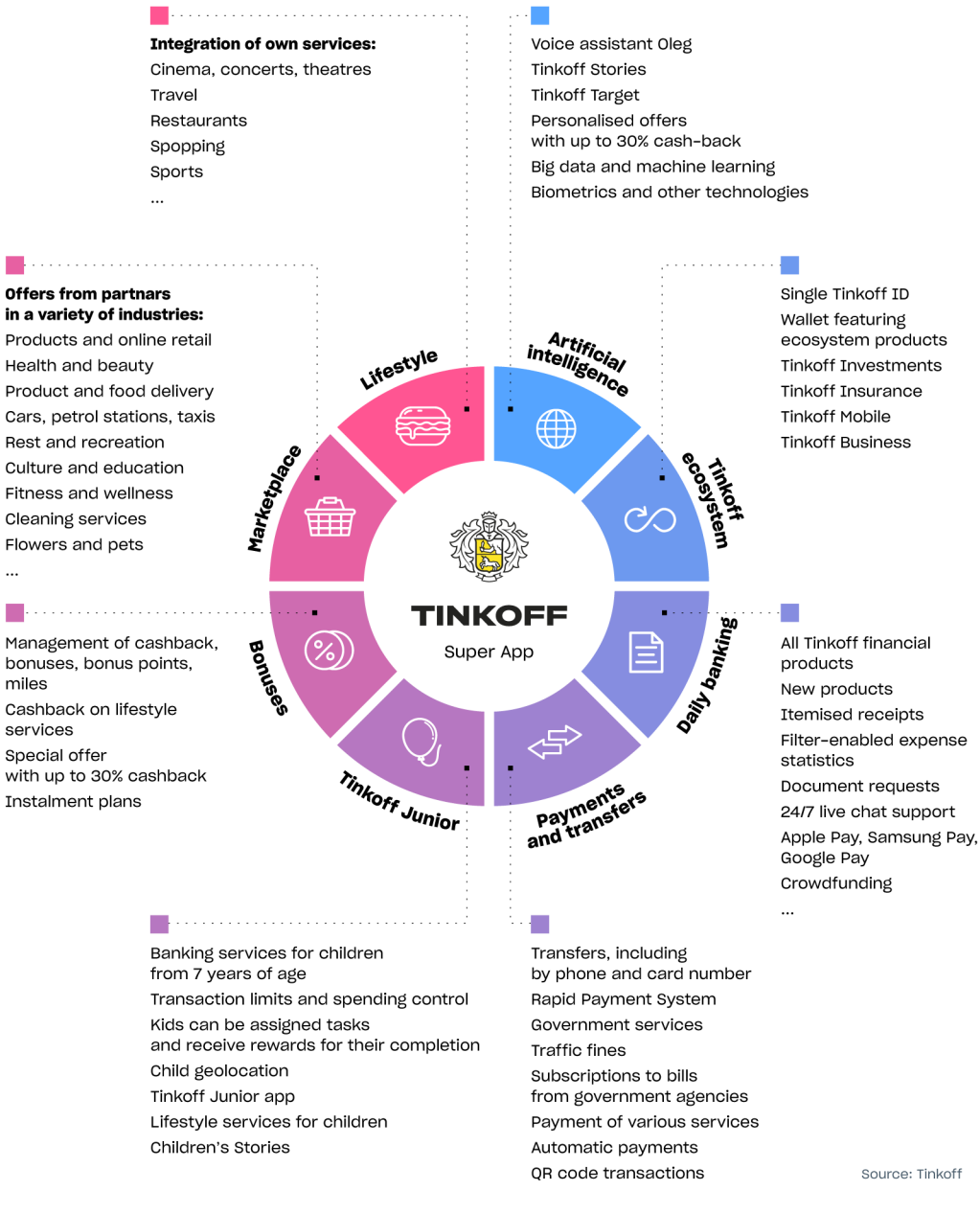
For financial institutions across the globe, the convenience of mobile banking apps is a trend customers eagerly embrace. With the onset of the 2020 pandemic, mobile banking apps have evolved into crucial tools for customers and the banking organizations that serve them.

HOW MANY ACTIVE USERS?	2.1 BLN
WHERE ARE THEY MORE POPULAR?	RUSSIA, SEA, NORTH AMERICA, EUROPE
WHICH ARE THE MOST POPULAR?	REVOLUT, WEBANK, TINKOFF, PAGBANK, MONZO
DO THEY WORK WITH GAMING?	YES, BUT NOT ALL

However, the growing trend carries a caveat: Mobile technology competition inspired financial organizations to follow suit with value-added banking ecosystems.

Today's consumers fully expect to check account balances, transfer money, and pay bills from their bank's application. As the mobile app trend grows, clients will crave related services. Some banks have already taken a step toward providing a more enriching experience with additional conveniences and content:

- **Tinkoff** is a Russian bank that launched the first financial services super-app in 2019. Tinkoff is proud to say they “meet almost any financial, leisure, or lifestyle need its users may have,” including:



- Tinkoff digital banking and all its financial products;
- Tinkoff lifestyle services such as movies, concerts, theaters, restaurants, travel, shopping, and sporting events, etc.;
- Seamless integration with all Tinkoff services, including investments, mobile, business, and insurance – all accessed through one Tinkoff sign-on;
- A marketplace for products and services provided by Tinkoff partners to cater to users' needs and interests;
- Personalized recommendations and services, based on customer needs;
- End-to-end integration with the Oleg voice assistant;
- Partner deals, discounts, and cash-back programs from some of the region's largest commerce and content providers.

- **Revolut** is one of many emerging European "challenger" banks – a recent trend of small (typically online) retail banks that compete directly with the longer-established banks.

  Just launched in 2022, the Revolut bank is a 2022 initiative from its six-year-old fintech parent company of the same name. Revolut's added value includes options for money transfer and crypto marketplace, to hotel reservations and other lifestyle amenities, and – with fifteen million users and 100 million monthly transactions – is on a trajectory to becoming "the first global financial super-app".

ISP carriers

HOW MANY ACTIVE USERS?	3.97 BILLION
WHERE ARE THEY MORE POPULAR?	WORLDWIDE
WHICH ARE THE MOST POPULAR?	VERIZON, VODAFONE, MTS GROUP
DO THEY WORK WITH GAMING?	YES, BUT NOT ALL

Everyone hopes to grab a piece of the global gaming marketplace. Internet Service Providers and mobile carriers. The way telecom operators are jumping on board include some creative initiatives:

- Creating partnerships with leading gaming companies, allowing customers to access exclusive game releases or in-game operator advertisements;
- Establishing partnerships with game developers and eSports tournaments, enabling game top-ups and host gaming conventions;
- Developing and launching their own games and products.

Tele2 is an Eastern Europe operator with an Entertainment section in their app offering their customers a way to subscribe and pay for various ancillary services, including video games.

Web Marketplaces

Web marketplaces are multi-channel ecosystems with products and services offered by many third-party vendors. Such platforms are enjoying a COVID-fueled boom in sales and revenue.

HOW MANY ACTIVE USERS?	3+ BILLION
WHERE ARE THEY MORE POPULAR?	WORLDWIDE
WHICH ARE THE MOST POPULAR?	AMAZON, LAZADA, SHOPEE, G2A
DO THEY WORK WITH GAMING?	YES

All Online marketplaces have the following characteristics:

- There are many sellers and buyers within the same marketplace.
- One platform can accommodate the sale of both physical and digital products.
- Consumers can purchase products without leaving the site (or app.)

According to recent reports, 47% of e-commerce sales (including many for video games) were made through web marketplaces in 2020, including ubiquitous brands such as Amazon, eBay, BestBuy, and Lazada.

Cash Kiosks

Push payments first appeared in cash kiosks - machines that let people buy airtime minutes for mobile phones using cash.

HOW MANY ACTIVE USERS?	50 MILLION
WHERE ARE THEY MORE POPULAR?	RUSSIA & CIS
WHICH ARE THE MOST POPULAR?	QIWI, EMANAT, EASYPAY
DO THEY WORK WITH GAMING?	YES

As cash kiosks grew in popularity, upgrades to hardware and software ensured that citizens could pay for much more than just their phones. Individuals were soon able to use cash kiosks to add money to digital wallets, perform money transfers, and make payments for basic needs like water and electricity. Eventually, other categories of purchasable services became available as well, including internet service, entertainment subscriptions, and of course, video games.

By 2011, cash kiosks had spread to more than 300,000 locations in the CIS, allowing unbanked gamers in just about every town to top-up their online game accounts while heading to work, school, or their local grocery store.

Over time, banks incorporated the model into their ATMs. They replicated push payments in their applications, making it possible for gamers to conveniently top up their accounts for gaming companies, like Activision Blizzard, Wargaming, and Steam, directly from a mobile banking application on their smartphone.

The video game payments interfaces on cash kiosks, ATMs, banking applications, and social media networks have digital storefronts that display the names and logos of various companies and games. Securing space in this display is a great tool for getting your brand in front of the region's gaming population. On top of that, these digital menus have other categories of payments that include space for paid advertisements, giving you an additional touchpoint to market to non-gamers and gamers alike.

By enabling cash kiosk payments for your customers, you can:

- **Expand your global reach.** Cash kiosks are popular, especially in Russia and CIS countries.
- **Access unbanked players.** About 18% of CIS customers pay for everyday expenses exclusively with cash. Cash kiosk payments are also very popular among younger customers who might not have electronic payment options.

Loyalty Programs

Companies create and offer loyalty programs to attract and retain their loyal customers. They offer discounts or other special incentives to reward a customer's repeat business.

HOW MANY ACTIVE USERS?	200 MILLION
WHERE ARE THEY MORE POPULAR?	WORLDWIDE
WHICH ARE THE MOST POPULAR?	EMIRATES SKYWARDS, MILES & MORE, CITI THANKYOU®
DO THEY WORK WITH GAMING?	NO

There are different types of loyalty programs:

- **Point-based** is one of the most popular loyalty programs. Typically leveraged by airline companies, they let customers accumulate points they can redeem for freebies, cashback, perks, etc.
- **Tiered loyalty** is a type of membership where customers get different benefits depending on their rank. Businesses often rank membership into groups depending on certain metrics like sales or engagement. These rewards programs give customers a goal – the higher their tier, the more exclusive and better rewards they'll receive.

- **Paid/fee-based** loyalty is a concierge-style loyalty program promising customers benefits for a recurring or one-time participation fee. One of the most known examples of an annual paid loyalty program is Amazon Prime.

- **Value loyalty** programs involve donating a percentage of purchases to charity or welfare programs. Customers can choose multiple options for different charities. In this type of loyalty program, customers don't receive tangible rewards; rather, it allows customers to enjoy recognition by the company, and the actual value is to society's benefit.

A good example of the loyalty program is GrabRewards. Singapore-based GrabPay is an e-wallet with a tiered loyalty benefit. GrabPay customers earn GrabReward points for every $1 that they purchase with the e-wallet and have access to ancillary services where they can convert their airline miles to GrabReward points.

Other Vendors

Other vendors that can augment game developers' visibility and sales are streaming services such as Twitch TV. For more than a decade, the phenomenon of streaming services launched channels in many categories, from online cinemas to gaming.

While streaming services - in and of themselves - honor loyal consumer behavior, Twitch TV's "Twitch Drops" loyalty program enables developers to grant highly engaging in-game rewards to streamers they play their game or complete in-game missions. Rewards include:

- Offering per-channel Drops prompts.

- Requiring viewers to claim their Drop perk on Twitch.

- Requiring account connection only after players claim a reward.

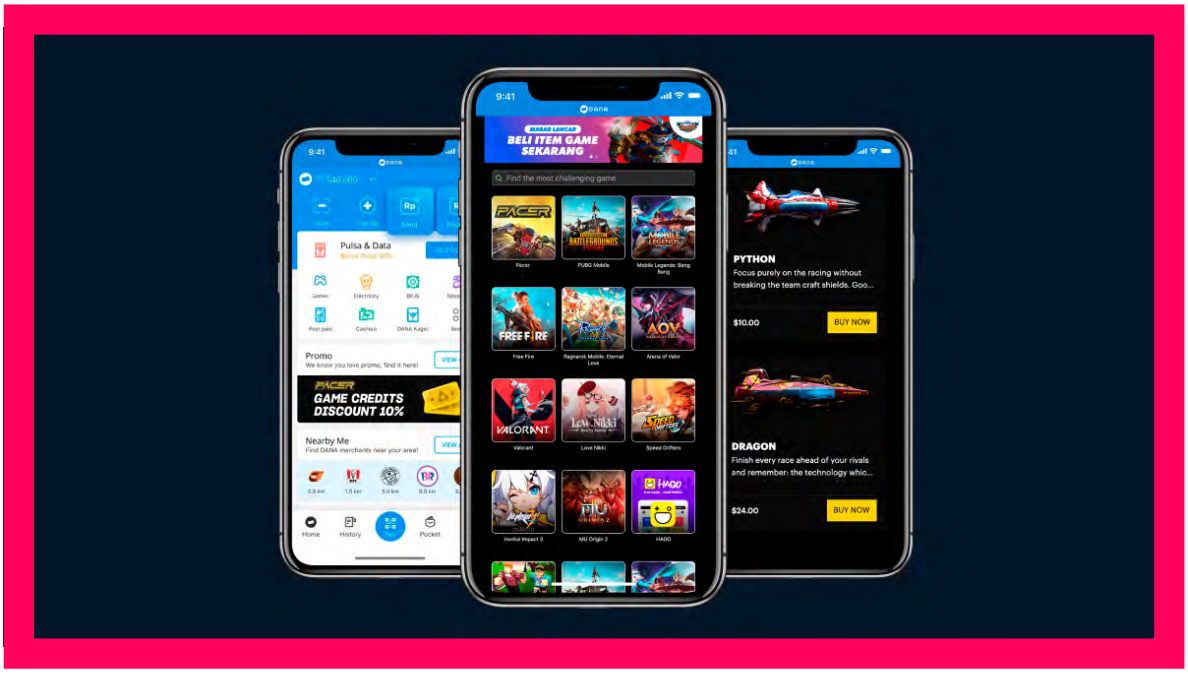
- Providing a "home base" where streamers and viewers can get more details on a campaign and the associated requirements and rewards.

DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION HUB – AN XSOLLA SOLUTION

The Product

Digital Distribution Hub is an Xsolla product that distributes self-published games to third-party marketplaces, platforms, and ecosystems such as super-apps, bank apps, ISP carriers, web portals, and other vendors. All providers are available in one product, with one easy integration.

When you become an Xsolla partner and implement Digital Distribution Hub, your game lives within existing super-apps and is distributed through ISPs and carriers. That will enable your players to purchase game content directly from their banking app, earn loyalty rewards they can transform into game currency, and gain access to unique perks and events they can only get from you. All from within the same apps and platforms they spend most of their time on.



By leveraging Digital Distribution Hub, you have the opportunity to:

- **Connect** to a global network of numerous platforms and digital ecosystems.
- **Engage** digital wallet users to make payments directly from their existing payment accounts.
- **Save** up to 20% on distribution costs – compared to major digital distribution platforms – by driving traffic directly to third-party game marketplaces.
- **Reach** a vast audience of new users by running promotions and placing ads in public groups based on your first-hand knowledge of users' preferences.
- **Boost** earnings by offering users access to exclusive gaming content, events, trials, and other marketing promotions.
- **Convert** secure mobile banking apps into revenue drivers for your business.

The Benefits

Digital Distribution Hub helps you reach players and gain revenue share from every transaction. In addition to letting gamers pay how they want, when they want, there are other tangible benefits[1]:

ZERO UP-FRONT COST

- Xsolla revenue kicks in as soon as merchants generate revenue;

BRAND REACH

- Connect to a global network of numerous platforms and digital ecosystems
- Boost organic discoverability on third-party platforms (ads, banners)
- Reach a vast audience of new users by running promotions and placing ads in public groups based on user preferences

AMP EARNINGS

- Boost revenue by offering users access to exclusive gaming content, events, and more.

LOWER DISTRIBUTION EXPENSES

- Digital Distribution Hub offers a lower fee than big-name platforms, digital marketplaces, and physical retailers.

BETTER USER EXPERIENCE AND IMPROVED SAFETY/SECURITY

- Seamless integration into merchant's product flow
- Top-tier partners are selected and onboarded in each territory
- Safe, trusted, and secure transfer of funds

ZERO FRAUD

1 Based on Xsolla internal analysis and business model

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Need More Info?

The future of game development is exciting! Find out more about how to create a Digital Distribution Hub:

- Head to Xsolla's Digital Distribution Hub landing page,
- Download our free Digital Distribution Hub 1-Pager;
- Read our related blog post, "How to Enhance Your Mobile Game with Digital Distribution";
- Contact one of Xsolla's distribution experts to learn how you can start focusing your game's profit potential.

How It Works

Xsolla Digital Distribution Hub provides access to all providers mentioned, with no up-front cost or additional integrations required.

If you're not yet an Xsolla partner, contact us at business@xsolla.com to learn about how we can help you successfully reach more players and offer more convenient ways to experience your game.

If you're currently an Xsolla partner, contact your account manager and set up a time to discuss how to help make the most of current distribution opportunities. You can also speed up your Digital Distribution Hub integration by logging into your Xsolla Publisher Account today:

1. Choose the game for which you would like to enable Digital Distribution Hub.

2. Configure your Store module and populate your catalogs with anything you want to make available for digital distribution, such as game keys, virtual items, or virtual currencies.

3. Enable Digital Distribution Hub for your project. Now, you have access to every hub partner with an easy opt-in or opt-out option.

4. Relax and focus on your brand because Xsolla negotiates, signs, and manages all deals with global vendors, onboards new partners from all verticals every month, and distributes your products to each platform and digital ecosystem.

5. Breathe easy with 24/7 Xsolla global support for all payment issues or questions.

The Results

Your benefits from enabling Digital Distribution Hub for your projects include:

- **Acquire more paying players.** Increase your MAU 40%[1] by providing your clients more ways to pay;

- **Increase product visibility.** Reach 500M+ users[2] and a global network of vendors;

- **Improve existing players' engagement.** Run exclusive promos and events with vendors;

1 Based on insights from expert analysts

2 Based on data from current Digital Distribution Hub merchants

- **Reduce reacquisition costs.** You can mitigate attrition by providing your existing customers with more ways to pay directly from their favorite super-apps, using their ISP's marketplaces or their banking app, and making the payment flow much easier and user-friendly.

- **Leverage vendors' promotional budgets.** Partner with vendors to offer promotional activities and perks to customers.

- **Access unbanked gamers:** Increase your revenue by up to 60%[1] by ensuring that you access your unbanked users by providing them with alternative ways to pay for games on the go.

Players actively enjoy benefits from your activating Digital Distribution Hub, including:

- Paying how they prefer;

- Spending more time playing than paying;

- Purchasing safely, on the go with more confidence.

The Successes

We've worked with some of the biggest names in gaming to build better businesses through our easy-to-use platform, industry connections, and expertise.
Here are two recent partnerships to implement Digital Distribution Hub.

- **Steam.** In 2011, we began helping Valve accept payments for their game distribution platform, Steam, through a network of cash kiosks in Russia and the CIS region. They have since used the full range of our digital distribution services to seamlessly connect their platform to digital wallets and banking apps, all with no upfront cost or resources. Our integration resulted in Steam experiencing twelve times growth since launch, with over five million successful payments.

-

1 Based on insights from expert analysts

- **Nexters,** a game developer out of Cyprus, grew their revenue over twenty times by implementing our multi-platform strategy. They saved nearly 20% on platform fees and connected with untapped audiences in new markets like Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

- **Gaijin Entertainment.** In 2017, Budapest-based MMOG game developer/publisher Gaijin Entertainment (known for MMOGs such as Crossout, Star Conflict, and Enlisted) connected with Xsolla to help boost their already popular flagship title War Thunder. They became one of the first Xsolla partners to use Xsolla's Digital Distribution Hub solution to sell their games with cash and digital distribution platforms. They gained access to over 700 payment methods, 300% growth in successful payments, and accelerated distribution in Russia, the USA, South Korea, Netherlands, Poland, China, and India.

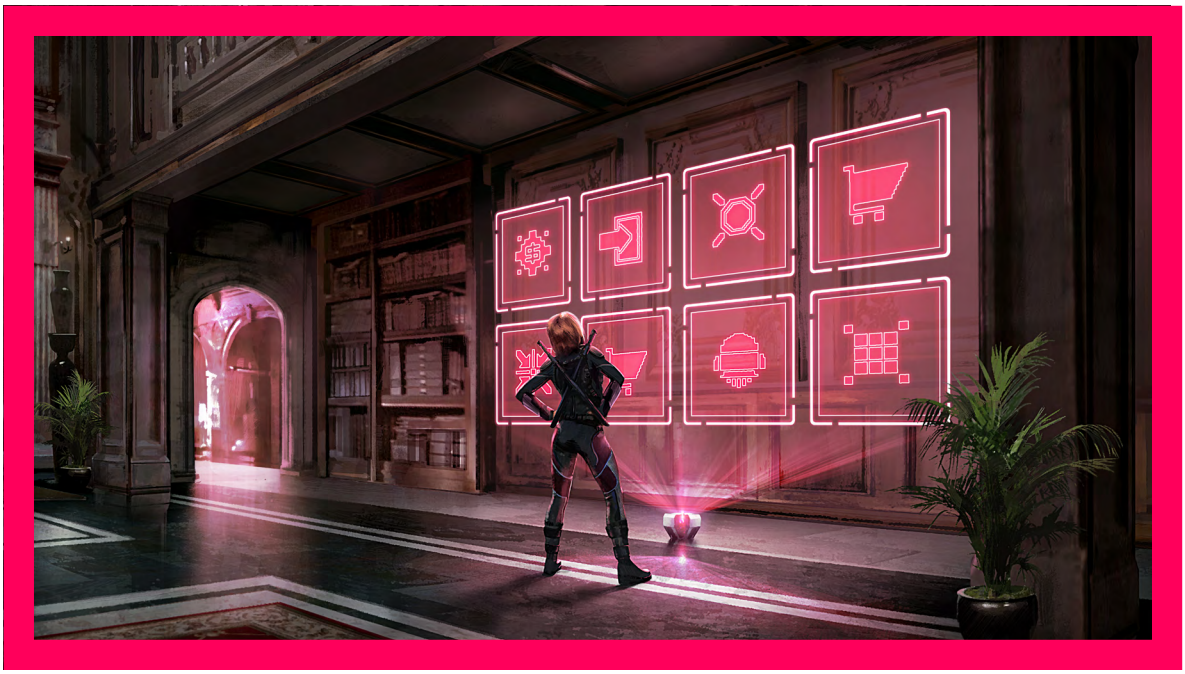


OTHER XSOLLA INTEGRATIONS

Digital Distribution Hub is just one effective component of Xsolla's portfolio of products and services. Xsolla Business Engine was developed as a multi-faceted ecosystem, allowing you to customize your game's operations to players' needs and your specifications. Below are a few of our recommended Xsolla product integrations.

Xsolla Partner Network

Our **Partner Network** is a global solution to help build a game's brand, acquire new users, and distribute the title by providing centralized access to dozens of affiliate networks, millions of influencers, and hundreds of gaming media portals. Revenue Share or CPA-based campaigns can easily be configured and implemented in minutes. Since Xsolla is pre-integrated with all affiliates, you won't need to make those integrations yourself. Distribute your offer or message to influencers and gaming platforms, and pay right from the Xsolla publisher account without needing to sign individual agreements with each affiliate -- which saves time, money, and R&D resources.



Xsolla Site Builder

Site Builder is an agile website construction tool that lets developers create their own online space to sell games and in-game goods directly to players. There's no need to invest in costly web development resources. Take complete control of your online presence with mobile-responsive landing pages and advanced analytics to help you discover new players and deliver targeted outreach.

Xsolla Anti-fraud System

Anti-fraud System defends our partners against fraudulent users and attacks. As a product within Xsolla Payments, the Anti-fraud System activates when you integrate Pay Station. The Anti-fraud System includes several components for advanced protection: Tools like fingerprinting, authentication for additional users, manual reviews of suspicious transactions, blocking rules for different user groups, and more. Through the Xsolla Publisher Account, partners receive all the statistical data about transactions, fraudulent users, and refunds.

Xsolla Subscriptions

Our **Subscriptions** solution enables developers to build a more stable, consistent revenue stream with flexible plans that grant premium access to content. You can boost loyalty and increase engagement with tiered subscription plans catering to different budgets and play styles. Migrate existing users or integrate your current payment gateways with no billing interruptions, and let players pay how they want, with global coverage for 700+ recurring and non-recurring methods, including credit and debit cards, digital wallets, and offline payments.