

Xbox now available in China

SHANGHAI, CHINA: Microsoft has finally launched its Xbox One game console in China, the first foreign company to enter the potentially massive market after the government lifted a 14-year ban against foreign companies.



Microsoft's Xbox One is the first gaming console allowed to be sold in China but users say the games on offer are dull and uninspiring and the prices for the consoles are too high. Image: Xbox

The launch, which was delayed a week for reasons Microsoft did not reveal, comes as the US company faces a government investigation over alleged monopoly actions regarding other products like its flagship Windows operating system, used on the majority of computers in China.

In January China formally authorised the domestic sale of game consoles made in its first free trade zone (FTZ) in Shanghai, ending a ban that has been in place since 2000. Chinese authorities were concerned about the content of games sold for consoles. The FTZ was established exactly a year ago.

At a branch of Chinese electronics chain store Suning in downtown Shanghai, a salesman said the outlet sold more than 30 limited-edition consoles priced at 4,299 yuan (\$699) after staying open past midnight. A more basic package retails for 3,699 yuan (\$602) in China.

Buyers were lured by Kinect, which obeys motion and voice commands, but some expressed disappointment at the lack of available games in China - only 10 for the launch. Prices are also far higher than other markets like the United States, where the website price is \$400 for the basic console and \$500 with Kinect.

Games are boring claim users

"The console price is too high, the first batch of games has no attraction, can we buy something more practical?" said Diu Dasu in a microblog.

Of the ten games, half are sport or racing titles. Others are aimed at younger players, like "Zoo Tycoon" and puzzle-solving game "Max: The Curse of Brotherhood".

Absent are first-person shooter games like the popular "Call of Duty" series, although Microsoft says it has more than 70 titles in the pipeline to bring to China.

Under the rules of the FTZ, games must pass inspection by cultural authorities, who conceivably could censor content they deem to be obscene, violent or politically sensitive. Microsoft still beats rivals like Japan's Sony, which makes the PlayStation console, and Nintendo's Wii into the Chinese market.

A joint venture between Sony and Chinese tourism and cultural firm Shanghai Oriental Pearl Group is planning to start operations in the FTZ from December.

Microsoft Chief Executive Satya Nadella last week visited China for the first time since taking over in February, in what Chinese state media portrayed as an attempt to appease regulators over the investigation.

The head of China's State Administration for Industry and Commerce, which is carrying out the investigation, met Nadella and urged Microsoft to "cooperate" in the probe, China Industry and Commerce News reported.



Microsoft's new boss, Satya Nadella, has met with Chinese authorities in an effort to appease them as a probe into Microsoft's 'monopoly' in the country continues. Image: Wikipedia

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