

Market Watch

Korea Venture Investment Corporation
Quarterly Journal

vol.13
—
September
2024



Disclaimer

KVIC MarketWatch has been prepared by Korea Venture Investment Corp. (KVIC). It is a periodical publication intended to spur investments in SMEs and startups, and bring about a more sophisticated industrial structure by reporting the performance of Korea Fund of Funds and other funds managed by KVIC. The publication ultimately aims to serve public interest and support balanced economic growth.

The content contained in this publication is not intended as a recommendation or solicitation by KVIC of any investment in a particular company and should not be used as the basis for any investment decision. Under no circumstances will KVIC be liable for any loss or damage caused by your reliance on information obtained through this publication. KVIC cannot and does not guarantee the accuracy and completeness of the information contained herein. The information and opinions in the publication are subject to change without notice.

The ownership and rights of this publication including all content, information and data shall be the sole and exclusive property of KVIC. Except media citation, the content of the publication and any information obtained or generated from the content shall not be reproduced, copied, distributed or transmitted, in whole or in part, without the prior written permission of KVIC.

The content of this publication originated in Korean. No warranty of any kind, either expressed or implied, is made as to the accuracy, correctness or reliability of any translations made from Korean into English. KVIC shall not be liable for translation errors.

KVIC kindly asks for your understanding that any primary data owned by KVIC with respect to this publication will not be disclosed.

Contents

1	KFoF-Backed Funds: Trends in Fundraising, Investments and Exits	06
2	Industry Trends in KFoF-Backed Investments	14
3	10 Well-Funded Companies	20
4	10 Successfully Exited Companies	40
5	Promising K-Startup	44
6	Promising VC	48

Market Watch

Korea Venture Investment Corporation
Quarterly Journal

Issuer

Korea Venture Investment Corp.
KVIC Building, 16 Seocho-daero 45-gil,
Seocho-gu, Seoul, South Korea

Editing and Planning

Korea Venture Investment Corp.
www.kvic.or.kr

Publisher

ShangHan Shin

Questions

MarketWatch@kvic.or.kr

Design

KS Sensation

1

Market Watch

KFoF-Backed Funds: Trends in Fundraising, Investments and Exits

&

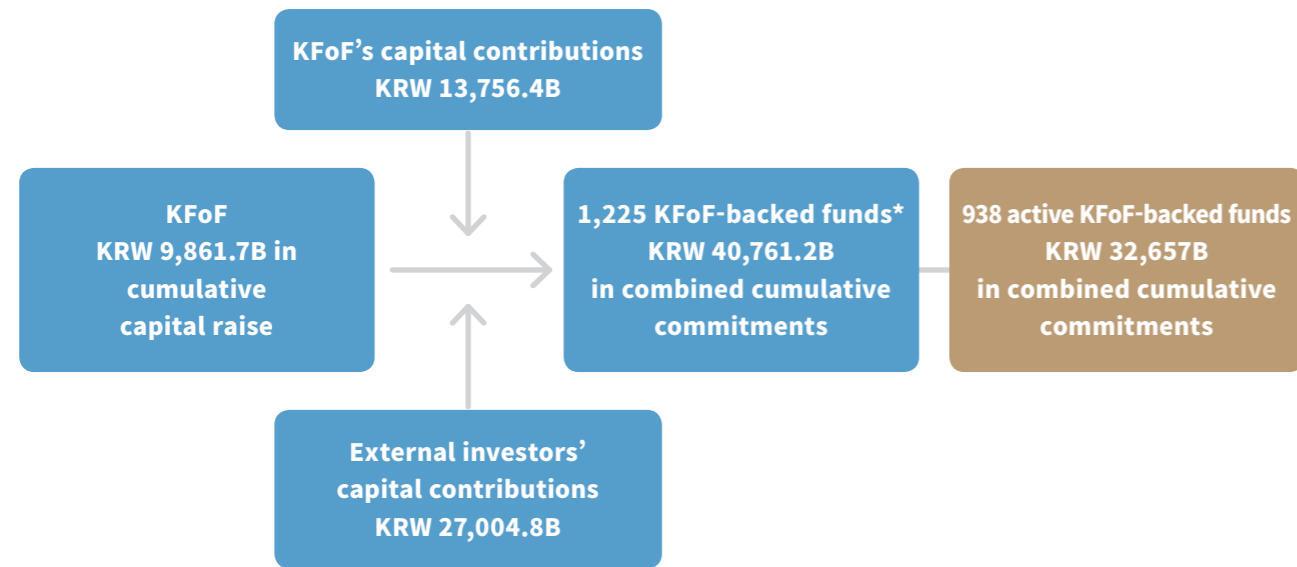
Industry Trends in KFoF-Backed Investments

This report is updated quarterly.
The findings provided below are based on data from Q1 2024.

1. Korea Fund of Funds (KFoF)

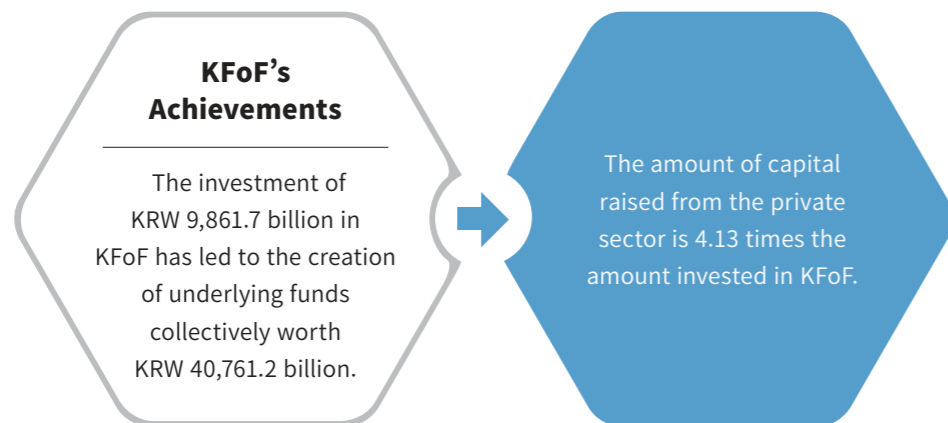
As of March 31, 2024, Korea Fund of Funds (KFoF) has raised a cumulative total of KRW 9,861.7 billion. To date, KFoF has established 1,225 funds* with capital commitments totaling KRW 40,761.2 billion, of which KRW 27,004.8 billion came from external investors, reflecting a slight increase. Among these funds, 938 are currently active, with combined commitments of KRW 32,657 billion. Since its inception, KFoF has invested in 10,066 companies** through its underlying funds.

Figure 1) KFoF at a Glance



* KFoF's underlying funds (hereafter, KFoF-backed funds) include Korea Venture Funds (KVF), new technology venture investment partnerships, private equity funds (PEFs), corporate restructuring companies (CRCs), and private investment funds.

** Overlapping companies have been removed from investment activity data.



2. Fundraising

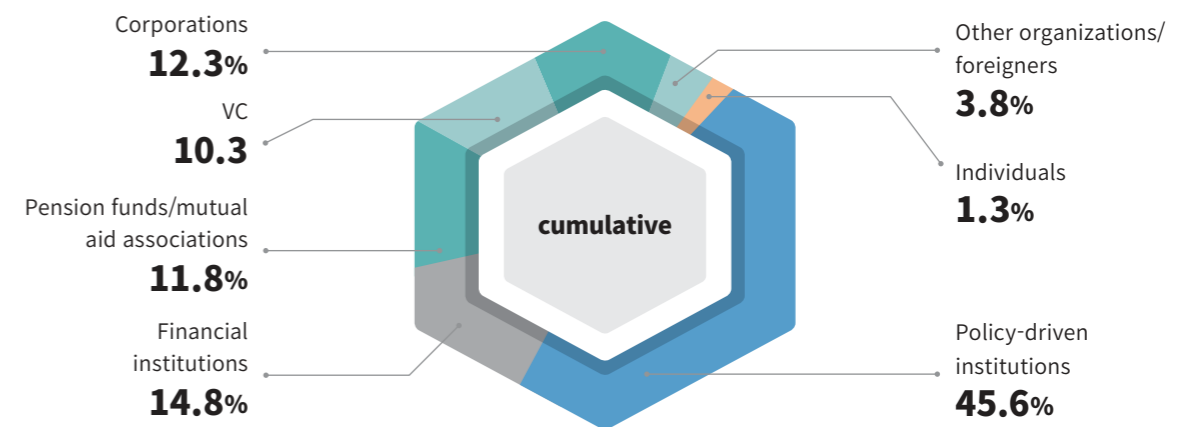
Q1 2024 Fund Creation by KFoF

During the first three months of 2024, KFoF launched nine new funds with total commitments of KRW 266 billion. The largest of these new funds are LAGUNA Scale Up Fund No. 6 and Ulmus 2024 Secondary Fund, each with commitments of KRW 50 billion.

LP Composition in KFoF-Backed Funds

The composition of investors or limited partners (LPs) in KFoF-backed funds as of March 31, 2024 is illustrated in Figure 2 and Table 1 below. On a cumulative basis, policy-driven institutions (i.e., policy-based financing institutions) have been the largest contributors, with KRW 18,587.2 billion (45.6% of the total capital committed to KFoF-backed funds), followed by financial institutions with KRW 6,027.8 billion (14.8%) and pension funds with KRW 4,799.3 billion (11.8%). For new KFoF-backed funds, policy-driven institutions were also the largest investors, committing KRW 127.5 billion. The next two largest LP types were financial institutions (KRW 64.5 billion) and corporations (KRW 49.2 billion).

Figure 2) LP Composition in KFoF-Backed Funds



Source: KVIC

Table 1) LP Composition in KFoF-Backed Funds

(KRW 100M)

	Policy-driven institutions	Financial institutions	Pension funds/mutual aid associations	VC	Corporations	Individuals	Other organizations/foreigners	Total
Q1'24	1,275	645	-	112	492	97	40	2,660
Cumulative	185,872	60,278	47,993	42,120	50,273	5,462	15,614	407,612

Source: KVIC

* Based on vintage year

※ Criteria for Sorting Partners (Based on KVCA Standard)

	Category	Description	
Policy Finance	Fund of funds	Korea Fund of Funds (KFoF), managed by KVIC	
	Other policy-driven institutions	Central government, local governments, public funds (including government funds established under Article 5 of the National Finance Act), Korea Development Bank (KDB), and other funds of funds	
	Growth finance	Korea Growth Investment Corp.	
Private-sector Investment	Financial Institutions (excl. KDB)	Banks, savings banks, insurance companies, securities companies, collective investment vehicles, specialized credit finance companies, new technology investment partnerships, financial investment companies, venture funds, VC, etc.	
	Pension funds/mutual aid associations (MAA)	Pension funds	National Pension Service, corporate pension funds, etc.
		MAA	The Police Mutual Aid Association, the Korea Scientists and Engineers Mutual Aid Association (SEMA), the Military Mutual Aid Association, the Korea Fire Officials Credit Unions, Public Officials Benefit Association (POBA), the Korea Teachers Credit Unions (KTCU), Local Finance Association, the Correctional Mutual Aid Association, etc.
	Venture capital (VC)	General partners (investment company, new technology investment company, limited liability company, accelerator, etc.)	
	Corporations	For-profit corporations	
	Individuals	Individuals and money market trusts	
	Other organizations/foreigners	The Korea Institute of Finance (KIF), foundations, associations, schools, religious organizations, etc./individuals and corporations residing overseas	

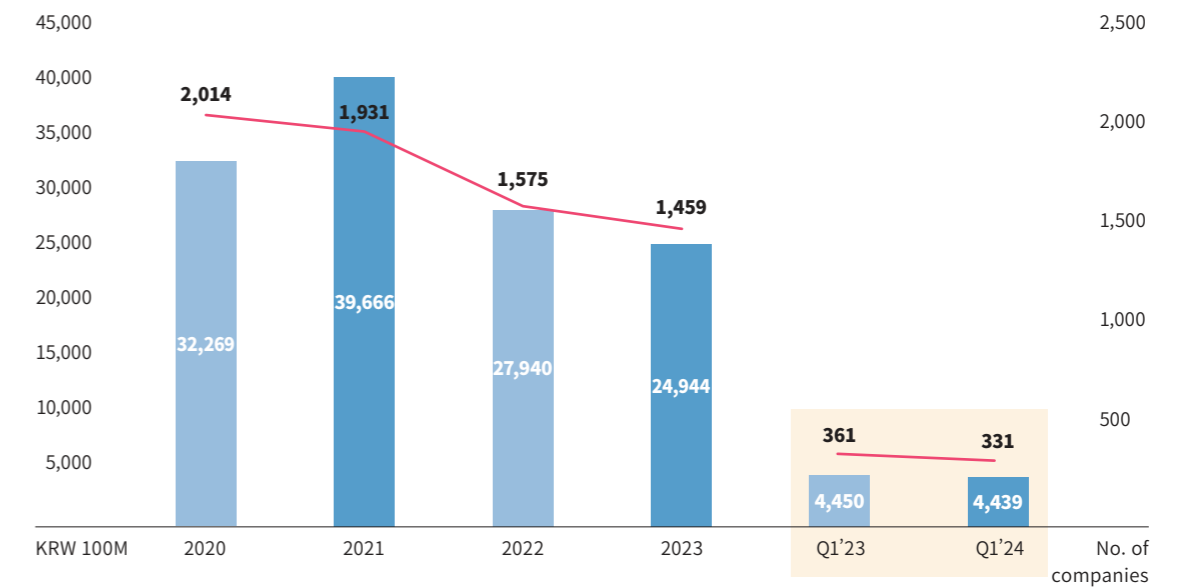
* KVCA - Korea Venture Capital Association

3. Investments

Investment Activity by KFoF-Backed Funds

In Q1 2024, 216 KFoF-backed funds invested a cumulative total of KRW 443.9 billion in 331 companies. Deal value and the number of companies receiving investment decreased by 0.2% and 8.3%, respectively, as the dampened investor sentiment for VC persisted into 2024.

Figure 3) 5-year Trend in Investments by KFoF-Backed Funds



■ Deal Value — No. of Investees

Source: KVIC

* As of March 31, 2024

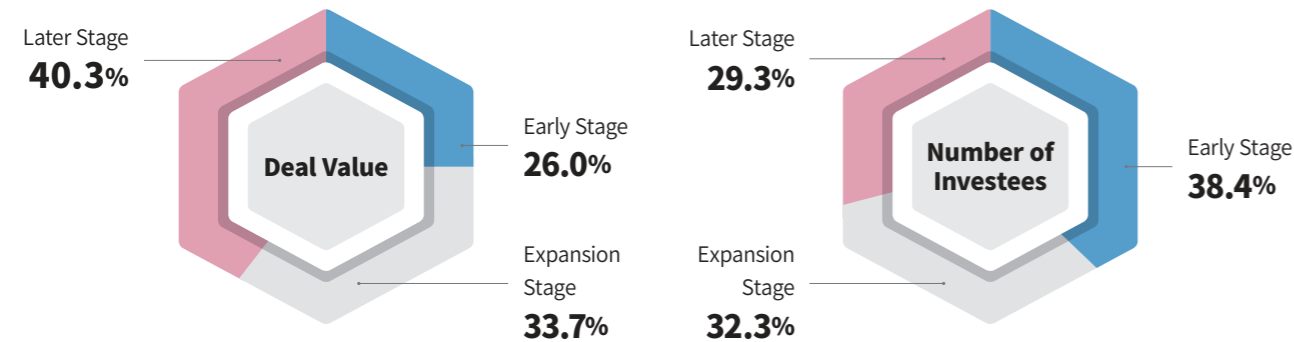
Deals by Stage

During the first quarter, KRW 115.4 billion was allocated to early-stage companies (defined as being 3 years old or younger), representing 26% of the total deal value. KRW 149.8 billion went to expansion-stage companies (3-7 years old), accounting for 33.7% of the total, while KRW 178.9 billion was poured into later-stage companies (above 7 years old), comprising 40.3% of the total. By investee count*, there were 127 early-stage companies (38.4% of all investees), 107 expansion-stage companies (32.3%), and 97 later-stage companies (29.3%).

Looking deeper into new deals by stage, expansion-stage companies experienced the most significant reduction in deal value compared to the same period last year, with an 8.1% drop. Early-stage companies followed with a 4.4% YoY decline. In contrast, later-stage companies saw a 22.3% uptick in deal value.

The average deal size for early-stage companies was KRW 0.91 billion, marking an 8.4% YoY decline. For expansion-stage companies, the average deal size was KRW 1.4 billion, down 2.1% YoY. Later-stage companies reported an average deal size of KRW 1.84 billion, a 15.1% YoY decrease.

Figure 4) Q1'24 Deal Activity by Stage - KFoF-Backed Funds



Source: KVIC

* Number of investee companies: 331 (excluding overlapping companies)

Deals by Region and Industry

In Q1 2024, KFoF-backed funds allocated the largest proportion of the total deal value—76% or KRW 337.3 billion—to companies in the capital region including Seoul, Incheon and Gyeonggi Province. While KRW 92.9 billion (20.9% of the total) was deployed across companies in non-capital regions, KRW 13.7 billion (3.1%) was invested in companies overseas. Overall, the total deal value increased by 5% YoY. Notably, the deal value for companies abroad skyrocketed by 124.6% YoY, marking the largest increase. The deal value for companies in the capital region rose by 12.1% YoY, whereas the deal value for companies in non-capital regions sank by 19.6% YoY.

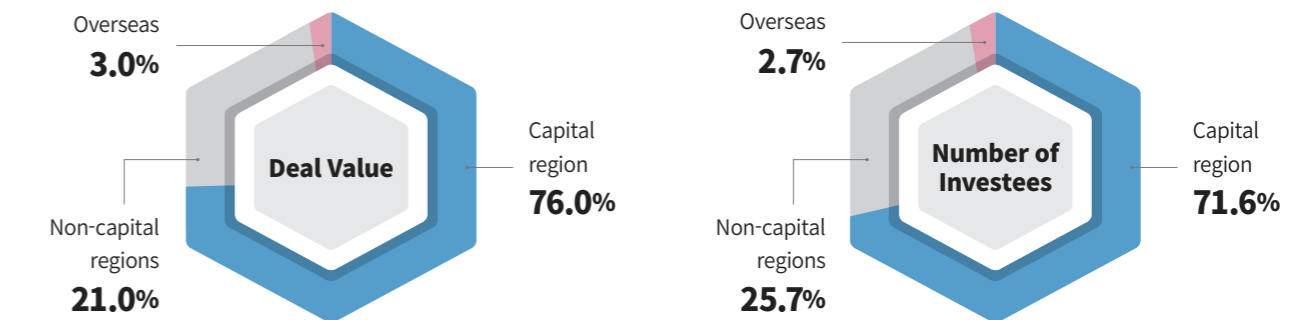
In terms of investee count by region, 237 companies were located in the capital region, accounting for 71.6% of all investees. In non-capital regions, 85 companies were recipients of deals, constituting 25.7% of the total, while 9 companies were based overseas, making up 2.7%. Compared to Q1 2023, the capital region and overseas regions exhibited increases in the number of investees by 5.3% and 12.5%, respectively. However, non-capital regions registered a 3.4% decline.

Within the capital region, Seoul, Gyeonggi, and Incheon all displayed YoY upticks in deal value. Seoul received KRW 223.1 billion in investments (up 4.2% YoY) across 165 companies (up 3.1% YoY). Gyeonggi Province reported KRW 99.1 billion (up 36.5% YoY) across 66 companies (up 11.9% YoY). Incheon witnessed KRW 5.1 billion (up 10.9% YoY) invested in 6 companies (unchanged YoY).

In the five metropolitan cities, 55 companies secured KRW 64.1 billion, representing 14.4% of the total deal value. Daejeon was the largest recipient among these cities, with KRW 31.9 billion, while Gwangju had the lowest deal value, totaling KRW 3.6 billion.

In other provinces, a total of 30 companies raised KRW 28.8 billion, showing YoY drops in both deal value and investee count from 35 companies with KRW 45.4 billion in Q1 2023. Among these provinces, Chungnam recorded the largest deal value and average deal size at KRW 11 billion and KRW 2.2 billion, respectively.

Figure 5) Q1'24 Deal Activity by Region - KFoF-Backed Funds



Source: KVIC

* Number of investee companies: 331 (excluding overlapping companies)

** Regional classification

[Capital region] Seoul, Incheon, and Gyeonggi Province

[Non-capital regions] Five metropolitan cities: Busan, Daegu, Gwangju, Daejeon, and Ulsan

Local cities and provinces: Gangwon, Gyeongnam (South Gyeongsang), Gyeongbuk (North Gyeongsang), Jeonnam (South Jeolla), Jeonbuk (North Jeolla), Jeju, Chungnam (South Chungcheong), Chungbuk (North Chungcheong), and Sejong

In Q1, ICT services received the largest share of fresh investments from KFoF-backed funds, totaling KRW 121 billion, which accounted for 27.3% of the total deal value. This was followed by biotechnology/healthcare with KRW 64.9 billion (14.6%), and electrics/machinery/equipment with KRW 60.7 billion (13.7%). Meanwhile, the average deal size in biotechnology/healthcare amounted to KRW 1.62 billion, the highest among industries. Electrics/machinery/equipment had the second-highest average deal size at KRW 1.48 billion.

Figure 6) Q1'24 Deal Activity by Industry - KFOF-backed funds



No.	Industry	% of Total
1	ICT Services	27.3
2	Biotechnology/Healthcare	14.6
3	Electrics/Machinery/Equipment	13.7
4	Distribution/Services	12.1
5	Film and TV/Performing Arts/Recording	11.7
6	Other	7.3
7	ICT Manufacturing	5.7
8	Game	4.5
9	Chemicals/Materials	3.2

No.	Industry	% of Total
1	ICT Services	26.9
2	Film and TV/Performing Arts/Recording	18.1
3	Distribution/Services	13.9
4	Electrics/Machinery/Equipment	12.4
5	Biotechnology/Healthcare	12.1
6	Game	5.7
7	ICT Manufacturing	5.4
8	Other	5.4
9	Chemicals/Materials	4.5

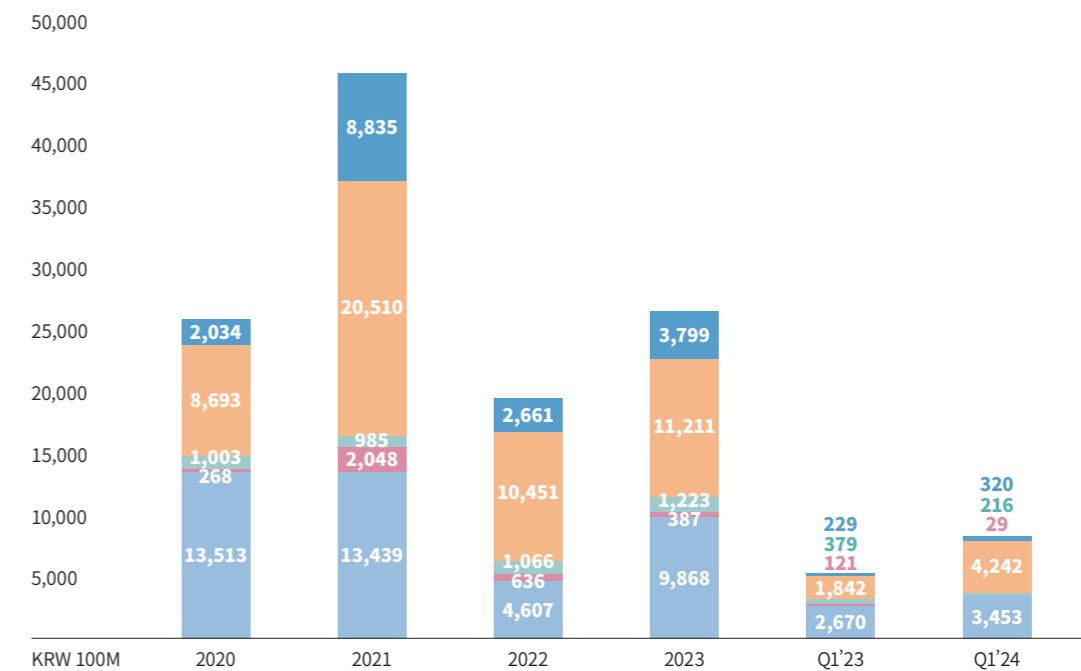
Source: KVIC

4. Exits

Exit Activity by KFoF-Backed Funds

Q1 2024 recorded exits worth KRW 826 billion, achieving a 2.7x multiple on invested capital (MOIC). This represents an increase of 57.6% or KRW 301.9 billion from KRW 524.1 billion in Q1 2023. Of the total exits, secondary sales stood at KRW 424.2 billion, constituting the largest proportion (51.4%). Exits via initial public offerings (IPOs) followed closely behind as the second most popular exit route, with KRW 345.3 billion (41.8%).

Figure 7) 5-year Trend in Exits by KFoF-Backed Funds



■ Other ■ Secondary sale ■ Project ■ M&A ■ IPO
 Source: KVIC
 * As of March 31, 2024

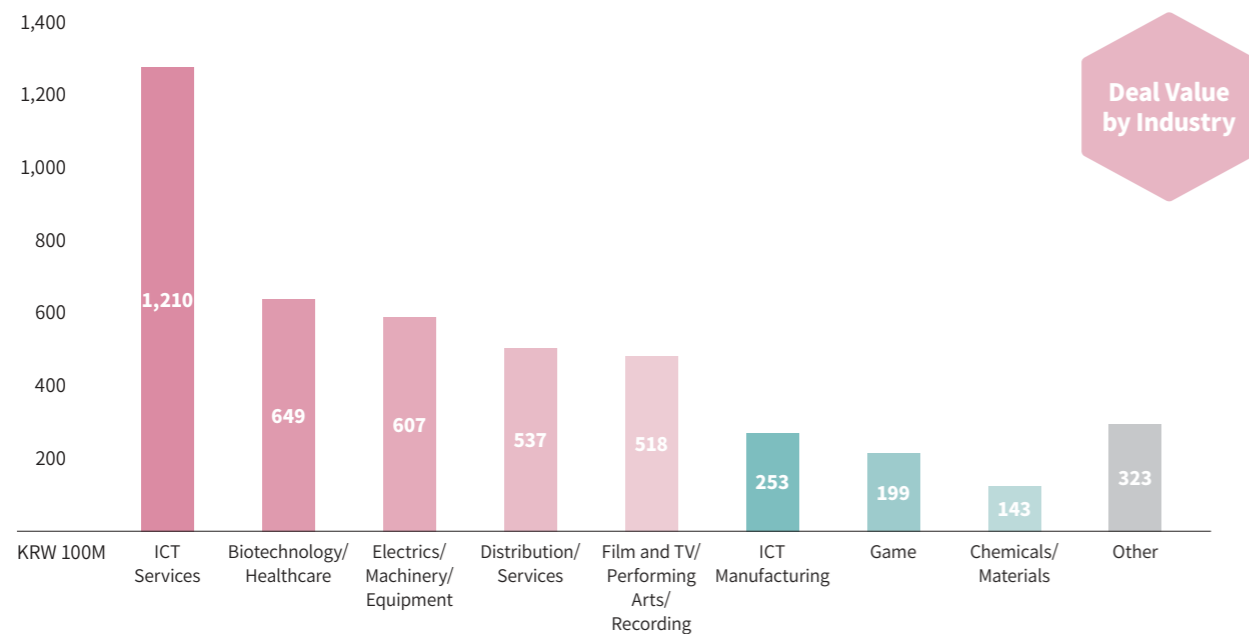
1. Q1 2024 VC Investments by Industry

In Q1 2024, KFoF-backed funds invested KRW 433.9 billion in 331 companies and projects, reflecting a 0.3% year-over-year (YoY) drop in deal value and an 8.3% YoY decline in the number of investees.

By industry, ICT services remained the leading sector in terms of deal value, securing KRW 121 billion and showing a 33.6% YoY increase. This industry retained its top position from the previous quarter. It was followed by biotechnology/healthcare, which attracted KRW 64.9 billion (up 3.2% YoY), and electrics/machinery/equipment, with KRW 60.7 billion (up 61.6% YoY), as the next two most funded sectors. Distribution/services ranked fourth, with KRW 53.7 billion, maintaining its position from the prior quarter. The fifth most funded sector was film and TV/performing arts/recording, with KRW 51.8 billion. Of the nine industries analyzed, all but the top three—ICT services, biotechnology/healthcare, and electrics/machinery/equipment—exhibited declines in deal value compared to the same quarter a year ago.

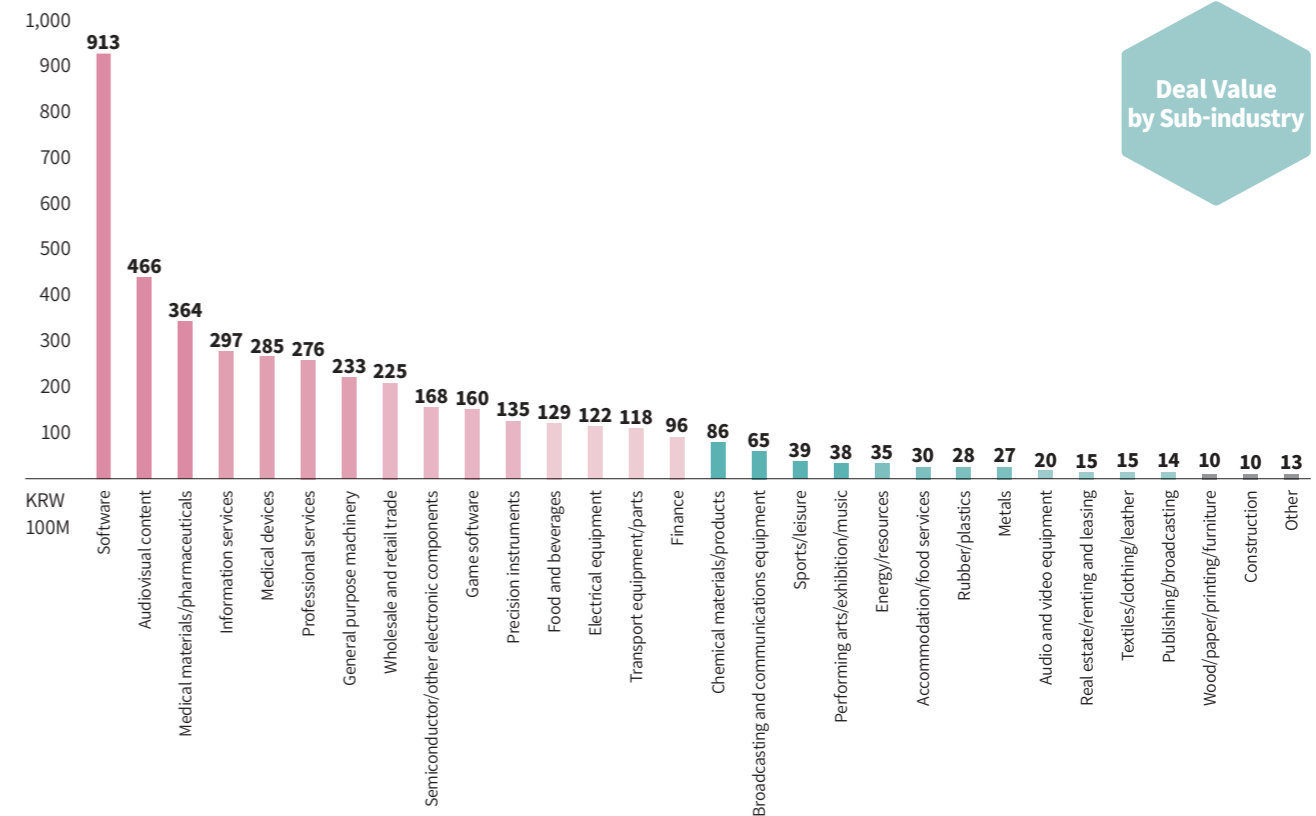
At the sub-industry level, software led with KRW 91.3 billion in funding from KFoF-backed funds, followed by audiovisual content with KRW 46.6 billion and medical materials/pharmaceuticals with KRW 36.4 billion. Information services bagged KRW 29.7 billion, moving up to fourth place from ninth in the previous quarter.

Figure 1) Q1'24 Deal Activity by Industry - KFoF-Backed Funds



Source: KVIC

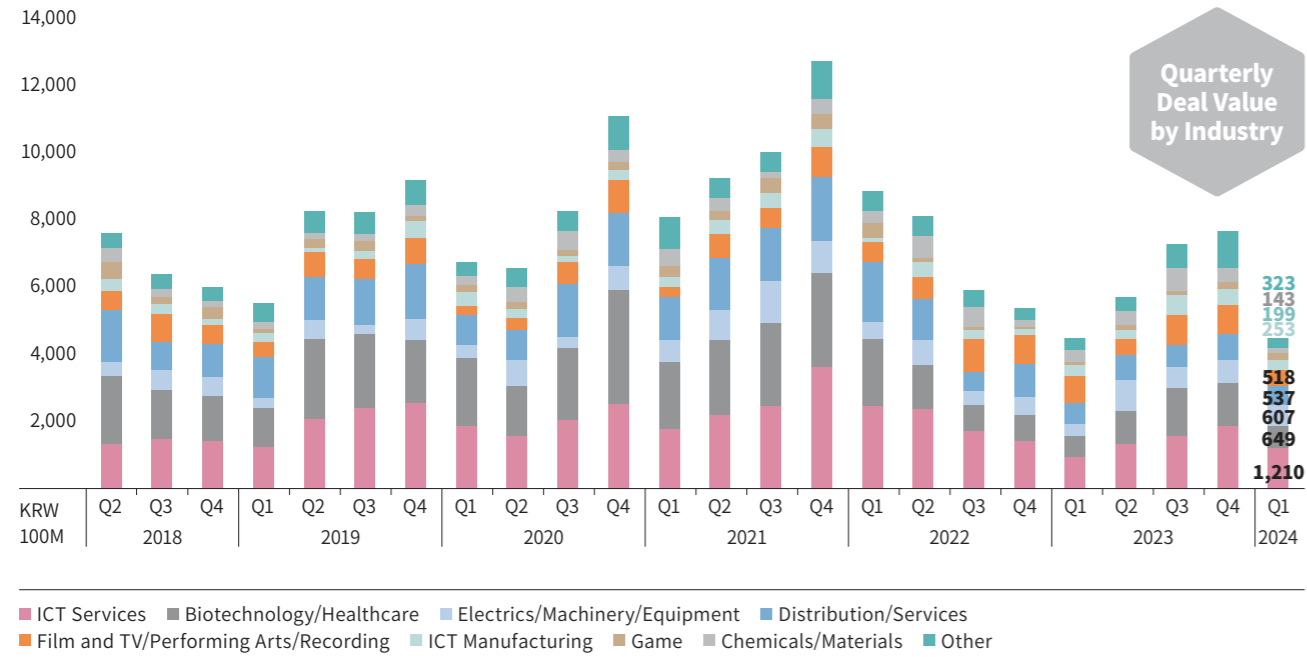
Figure 2) Q1'24 Deal Activity by Sub-Industry - KFoF-Backed Funds



Source: KVIC

The average amount invested per company or average deal size was KRW 1.34 billion, representing an increase of nearly KRW 0.11 billion YoY but a decrease of KRW 0.33 billion quarter over quarter (QoQ) from KRW 1.67 billion in the previous quarter. Excluding the “other” industry category, which had an average deal size of KRW 1.9 billion, the largest average deal size was observed in biotechnology/healthcare, reaching KRW 1.71 billion. Electrics/machinery/equipment had the second-highest average deal size at KRW 1.56 billion. ICT manufacturing and ICT services ranked third and fourth, with average deal sizes of KRW 1.4 billion and KRW 1.39 billion, respectively.

Figure 3) Quarterly Deal Activity by Industry – KFoF-Backed Funds



Source: KVIC
 * Quarterly statistics reported as of March 31, 2024 may differ from the figures described in the MarketWatch issued in the corresponding quarter.

In Q1, there were two mega-deals greater than KRW 10 billion, one fewer than in the prior quarter. One mega-deal occurred in distribution/services, and the other in semiconductor/other electronic components.

Table 1) Q1'24 VC Investments by industry - KFoF-Backed Funds

Industry/Sub-industry	Amount invested	Number of investee companies	Average amount invested
Total	4,439	331	13.4
ICT Services	1,210	87	13.9
Software	913	69	13.2
Information services	297	18	16.5
Biotechnology/Healthcare	649	38	17.1
Medical materials/pharmaceuticals	364	27	13.5
Medical devices	285	11	25.9
Distribution/Services	537	41	13.1
Professional services	276	20	13.8
Wholesale and retail trade	225	18	12.5
Education	7	2	3.3
Accommodation/food services	30	1	30.0
Film and TV/Performing Arts/Recording	518	58	8.9
Audiovisual content	466	48	9.7
Performing arts/exhibition/music	38	8	4.8
Publishing/broadcasting	14	2	7.2
Electrics/Machinery/Equipment	607	39	15.6
Electrical equipment	122	11	11.1
General purpose machinery	233	16	14.6
Transport equipment/parts	118	4	29.5
Precision instruments	135	8	16.8
Chemicals/Materials	143	14	10.2
Chemical materials/products	86	7	12.3
Metals	27	3	9.0
Rubber/plastics	28	3	9.4
ICT Manufacturing	253	18	14.0
Semiconductor/other electronic components	168	13	12.9
Broadcasting and communications equipment	65	4	16.3
Game	199	19	10.5
Game software	160	17	9.4
Other	323	17	19.0
Energy/resources	35	3	11.7
Food and beverages	129	5	25.8
Finance	96	4	23.9
Textiles/clothing/leather	15	1	14.7
Real estate/renting and leasing	15	1	15.0
Wood/paper/printing/furniture	10	1	10.0
Other	13	1	13.5

Source: KVIC
 * Overlapping companies have been removed from the total count of companies.

2

Market Watch

10 WELL-FUNDED COMPANIES & 10 SUCCESSFULLY EXITED COMPANIES

This section provides an overview of companies that received substantial funding from KFoF-backed funds, as well as those that achieved significant exit values.

* Companies in both categories are presented in Korean alphabetical order.

Well-Funded Startup Rebellions

rebellions_

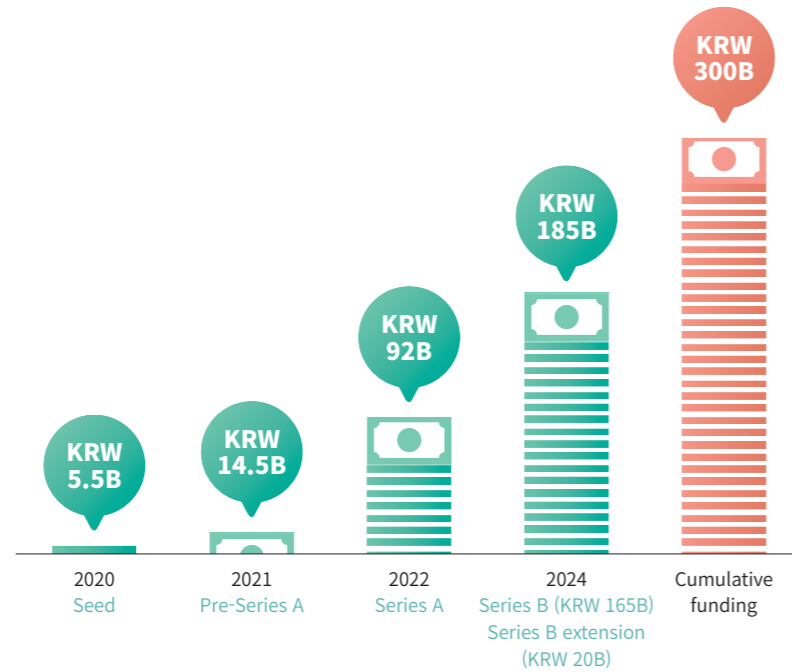
About Rebellions

An AI chip startup specializing in designing semiconductor hardware specifically designed for AI inference, and full-stack software, including compilers, for AI service development

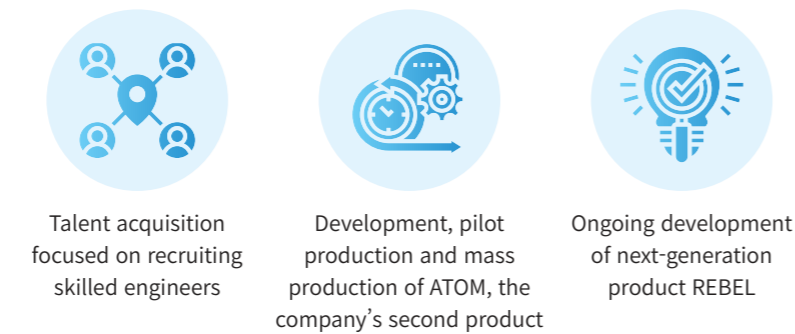
Company Profile

- **Company Name:** Rebellions Inc.
- **CEO:** Sunghyun Park
- **Founding Date:** September 1, 2020
- **Employee Count:** 100+
- **Capital:** KRW 220M
- **Revenue:** KRW 27.3B (as of 2023)
- **Main Business:** AI chip and software design
- **Location:** #102-801, 239 Jeongjail-ro, Bundang-gu, Seongnam, Gyeonggi Province
- **Contact:** +82 70 4104 8890
- **Website:** <https://rebellions.ai>

Funding Rounds



Use of Funds and Outcomes



Know-How for Securing Funding

- Efforts to enhance VCs' understanding of technological advantages in deep-tech**
 - Rebellions assisted VCs in understanding and assessing the technological competitiveness of deep-tech firms.
 - The company provided easy-to-understand materials on technologies and product roadmaps, and conducted on-site lecture-style sessions at VC firms.
- Promotional activities for the company and its technologies through diverse media**
 - The company leveraged various media channels, including newspapers and YouTube, with the support of existing VCs to enhance public understanding and awareness of the company and its technologies.
 - By establishing itself as a leader in the sector, the company successfully attracted strategic investors.

Products/Services

- Rebellions develops AI chips optimized for AI inference.**
 - Aims to deliver excellent energy efficiency and superior performance compared to conventional AI infrastructure.
 - Seeks to provide a stable environment for accelerating diverse AI models.
- ATOM™ (released in February 2023)**
 - AI chip for data centers, with mass production underway using Samsung Foundry's 5nm process since H1 2024
 - Outperformed global competitors in vision and language model fields during the MLPerf benchmark test in April 2023.
 - Successfully deployed in local data centers for KT Cloud just three months after its launch.
 - The only chip available in the domestic market that supports small language models (SLMs)



ATOM CARD



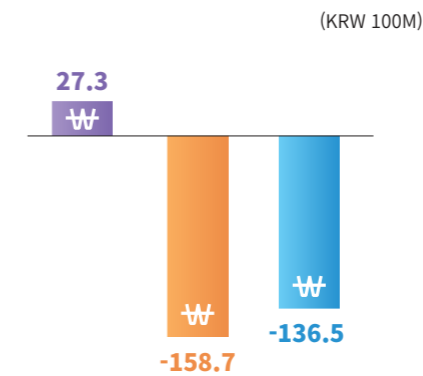
ATOM chip

Core Competences

- Full-stack development capabilities**
 Rebellions excels in full-stack development, encompassing hardware, firmware and compilers.
- Top talent**
 The team comprises over 100 highly skilled engineers with expertise in semiconductors and AI, who have previously worked at leading global tech firms such as Qualcomm, Google, and Nvidia.
- Broad partnerships**
 Rebellions collaborates with two leading players in the Korean IT sector: KT (investor) and Samsung Electronics (co-developer).

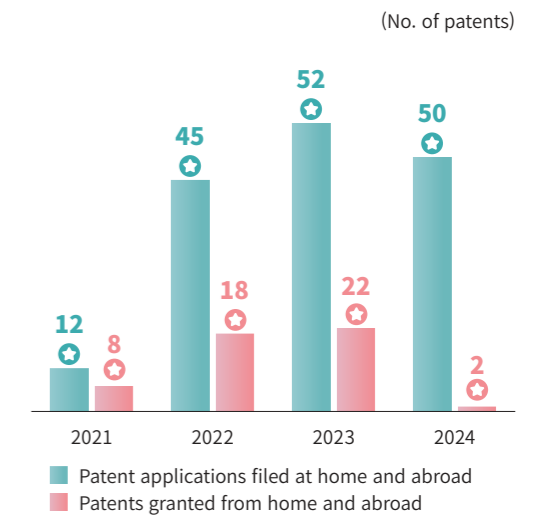
Performance

Financials (FY23)



※ Revenue generation began in 2023; earnings data prior to 2023 are not available.

Patents (by year)



Publications

Research papers on core technologies have been published in prestigious domestic and international semiconductor journals, including ISSCC 2024, HPCA 2023, and Hot Chips 2022.

Future Plans

- With ATOM, which accelerates SLMs, Rebellions will tap into domestic companies and organizations looking to build AI infrastructure.
- The company aims to complete the development of its next-gen AI chip, REBEL, which will support multimodal models and ultra-large AI, by Q4 2024.
- It will also focus on expanding into global markets, including Saudi Arabia and Japan.

Well-Funded Startup

LIVSMED

LIVSMED

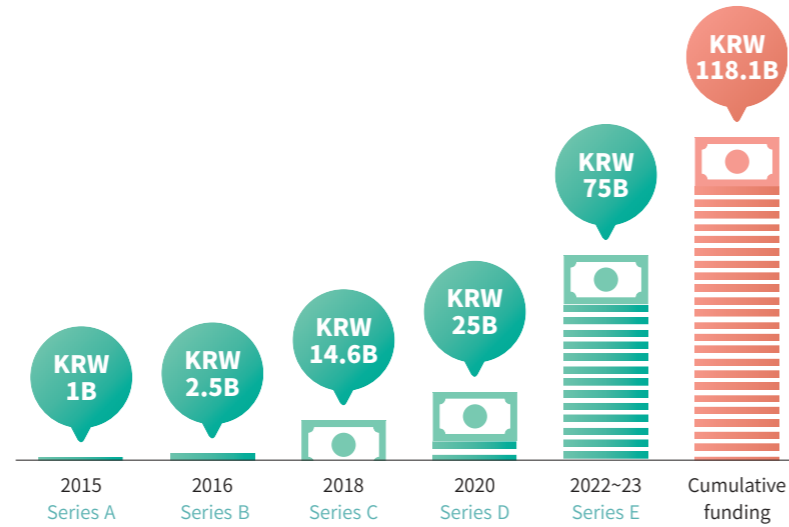
About LIVSMED

A medical device company with pioneering proprietary technologies, recognized as a future unicorn for its global competitiveness

Company Profile

- **Company Name:** LIVSMED Inc.
- **CEO:** Jeongju Lee
- **Founding Date:** June 16, 2011
- **Employee Count:** 240 (incl. headcount abroad)
- **Capital:** Approx. KRW 8.28B
- **Revenue:** KRW 40B (2024E)
- **Main Business:** Production and sales of multi-joint/multi-DOF laparoscopic instruments
- **Location:** #304, Bldg. D, 700 Pangyo-ro, Bundang-gu, Seongnam, Gyeonggi Province
- **Contact:** +82 1533 3221
- **Website:** https://livsmed.com

Funding Rounds



Use of Funds and Outcomes



Investment in R&D and global expansion



Expansion of production facilities to support rapid revenue growth



Development and planned launch of premium hand instruments

Know-How for Securing Funding



Articulation and elaboration of the company's vision and mission upon its establishment



Differentiation from competitors, focusing on product innovation



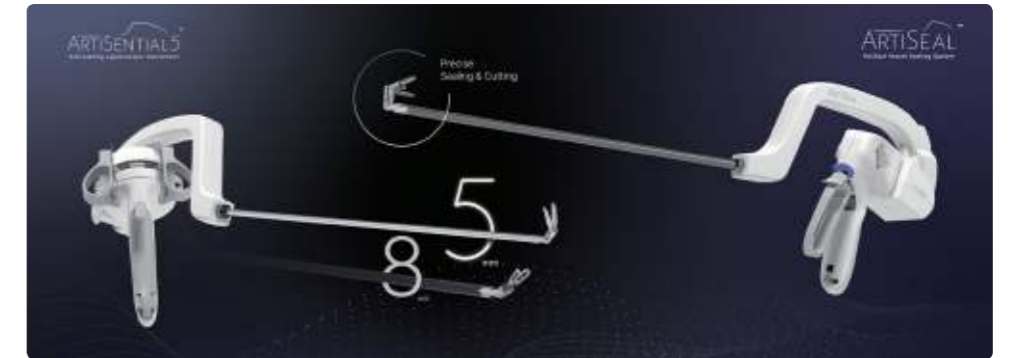
Development of detailed market strategies to obtain competitive advantages and establish a strong market presence



Professional management team and continued corporate value enhancement, driven by strong performance indicators

Products/Services

ArtiSential: Single-use multi-joint/multi-DOF laparoscopic instrument



Expected benefits for doctors

- Combines the cost-effectiveness of conventional straight instruments with the advantages of surgical robots.
- Features a multi-joint end tool with multiple degrees of freedom (DOF), mimicking the movements of human hands.
- Allows doctors to perform surgery intuitively, as if using their hands directly.
- Helps reduce surgery time, bleeding, and the risk of complications.

Expected benefits for patients

- Makes surgery more affordable, as it is covered by national healthcare insurance.
- Reduces post-surgery pain and enables faster recovery, shortening hospital stays.
- Helps patients return to daily life more quickly, improving their overall quality of life.

Core Competences

Technical prowess

- LIVSMED successfully launched ArtiSential, leveraging its multi-joint and multi-DOF platform technologies, which enable 90 ° motion in up, down, left and right directions.
- The company is poised to introduce world-class products across five global surgical instrument markets.

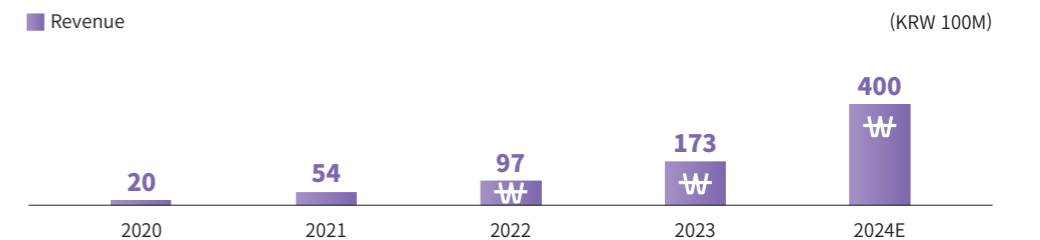
Intellectual property (patents)

- LIVSMED holds over 300 patents and more than 200 design rights and trademarks related to multi-DOF platform technologies.
- The company continues to expand its IP portfolio with new products under development.

Top talent

- LIVSMED is a tech-based startup employing 64 R&D professionals out of a total of 210 employees, representing 36% of its workforce.
- Over 20 employees hold master's or doctoral degrees, bringing high-level expertise and experience to the team.

Performance



Future Plans

- LIVSMED aims to establish itself as a global leader in medical devices.
- It will develop and execute tailored sales and marketing strategies for each country.
- The company will seek to partner with large distributors at both national and global levels.
- LIVSMED also plans to broaden its customer base and forge partnerships to create synergies.

Well-Funded Startup Mediquitous

Mediquitous

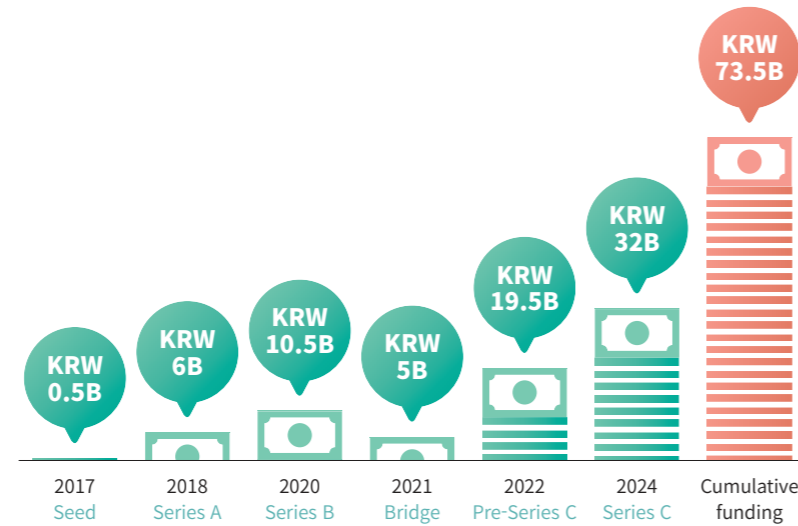
About Mediquitous

A global fashion & beauty e-commerce platform operator and brand builder

Company Profile

- **Company Name:** Mediquitous Co., Ltd.
- **CEO:** Doojin Lee
- **Founding Date:** January 2017
- **Employee Count:** 300
- **Capital:** Approx. KRW 860M
- **Revenue:** KRW 250B (2024E)
- **Main Business:** Fashion & beauty e-commerce platform and brand building
- **Location:** 2F-4F, 644 Nonhyeon-ro, Gangnam-gu, Seoul
- **Contact:** +82 10 2668 2439
- **Website:** <https://mediquitous.com>

Funding Rounds



Use of Funds and Outcomes

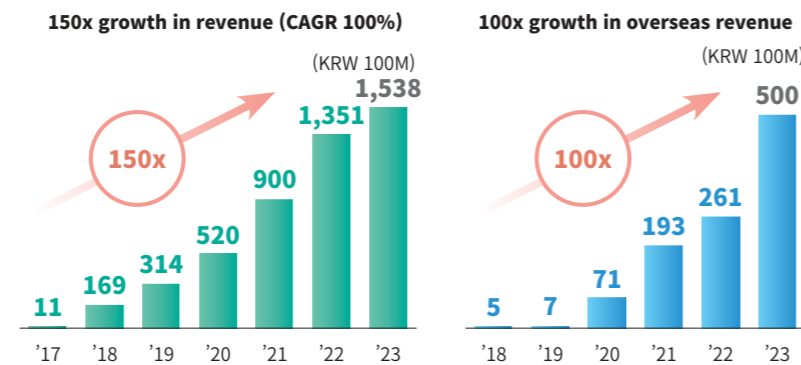
Revenue reached KRW 153.8B, with exports totaling KRW 50B, as reported in the FY23 consolidated financial statements.

Strategic investment results from the Japanese market

- Entry into the Japanese market has yielded notable outcomes, with its influencer-based fashion e-commerce platform NUGU emerging as the top fashion platform.
- Revenue from Japan is forecast to reach KRW 50B in 2024.

Hiring increase, startup acquisitions, and accelerating global expansion

- Workforce expansion included hiring over 300 new employees, contributing to job creation.
- Mediquitous has acquired a number of startups and is pushing for global expansion.



Know-How for Securing Funding

- Company-wide efforts focused on achieving visible revenue growth
- Positive external recognition on the company's global expansion efforts for long-term growth
- Funding plan formulated based on real-time communication with investors about the current state of the industry and the capital markets

Products/Services



NUGU: Japanese fashion e-commerce platform

- NUGU partners with over 100 local influencers, establishing itself as a leading fashion e-commerce app in Japan.
- Over 80% of the app's users are local women in their 20s. The fashion app's monthly active users (MAUs) and social media followers are growing rapidly.
- NUGU is leading the way in the Japanese fashion e-commerce market.

Fashion brands

- Mediquitous operates over 10 fashion brands (2024 revenue projection: KRW 120B).
- The company is expanding by developing a comprehensive online brand-building system, covering everything from launch to operation.
- Mediquitous aims to grow globally through the acquisition of brands abroad.

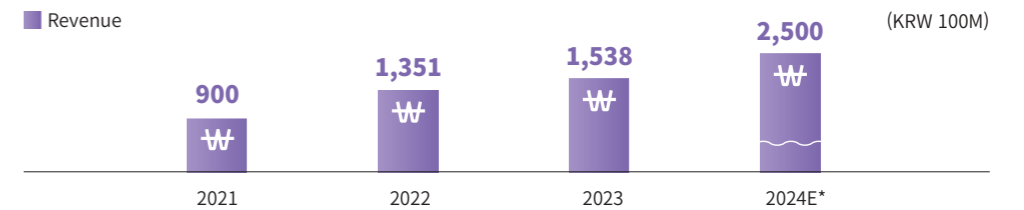
Beauty brands

- The company operates more than five beauty and inner beauty brands (2024 revenue forecast: KRW 35B).
- It has launched a skin brand targeting global markets.
- Through B2B sales, the company is nurturing its brands as K-beauty leaders in North America, Europe, and Southeast Asia.

Core Competences

- Mediquitous excels in fashion and beauty content, including trendy content creation and management.
- It has strong advantages in platform development and operation, as well as branding.

Performance



Note: The company reached its break-even point in Q1 2024, with projected consolidated operating income exceeding KRW 5B in 2024.

*2024E represents estimated revenue for 2024.

Future Plans

Mediquitous's growth strategy centers on aggressive expansion into global markets, emphasizing its growth keyword "global" rather than focusing on the domestic market.

NUGU, the Japanese fashion platform

- The company will accelerate its entry into the Japanese market both online and offline leveraging K-fashion and K-beauty products through the NUGU platform.
- NUGU aims to achieve 10M MAUs and JPY 100B in gross merchandise value (GMV) by 2028.

Fashion and beauty brands

- Mediquitous plans to introduce Korean fashion brands to the Japanese market, and drive further growth by partnering with or acquiring domestic brands.
- It will also pursue B2B exports of beauty brands to Japan, the US, Europe and Southeast Asia as part of its global expansion strategy for beauty brands.

Well-Funded Startup

PARKWON



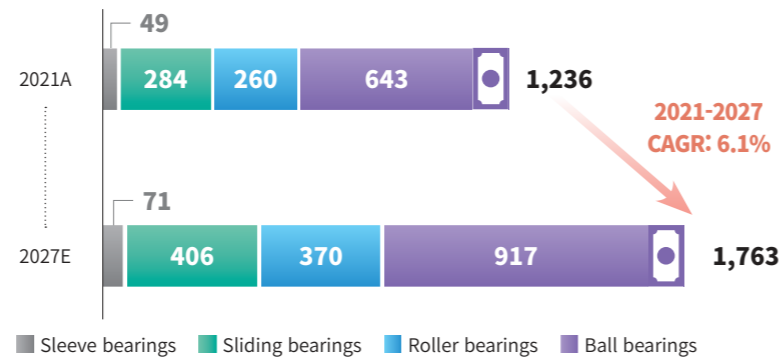
About PARKWON

Korea's largest steel ball manufacturer, providing essential components for ball bearings used in a wide range of machines and equipment

Company Profile

- **Company Name:** PARKWON Co., Ltd.
- **CEO:** Woongyu Park, Sangtae Kim
- **Founding Year:** 1973
- **Employee Count:** 256
- **Revenue:** KRW 55B (2024E)
- **Main Business:** Production of steel balls for bearings
- **Location:** 105 Bio valley-ro, Jecheon, North Chungcheong Province
- **Contact:** +82 70 4027 0986
- **Website:** <http://parkwon.co.kr>

Global bearings market size (US\$ B)



PARKWON's Five Strengths

- The leading steel ball producer in Korea, with 50 years of industry experience
- A long-standing customer base and stable demand, supported by its extensive coverage of the forward-linkage industries
- Sustained high profitability driven by its proprietary manufacturing capabilities and efficient process operations
- Top-tier technical capabilities developed through continuous R&D efforts
- Upside potential underpinned by its strong pricing competitiveness and robust production capacity

Use of Funds and Outcomes

Investment to stabilize the existing manufacturing platform

Financial investment to expand into ceramic balls production

Timely product development and successful customer acquisition

Know-How for Securing Funding

- PARKWON collaborated with investors who have networks of industry specialists and global market experts.
- The company focused on securing operational excellence.
- It established a foundation for an advanced and systematic corporate management system.

Products/Services

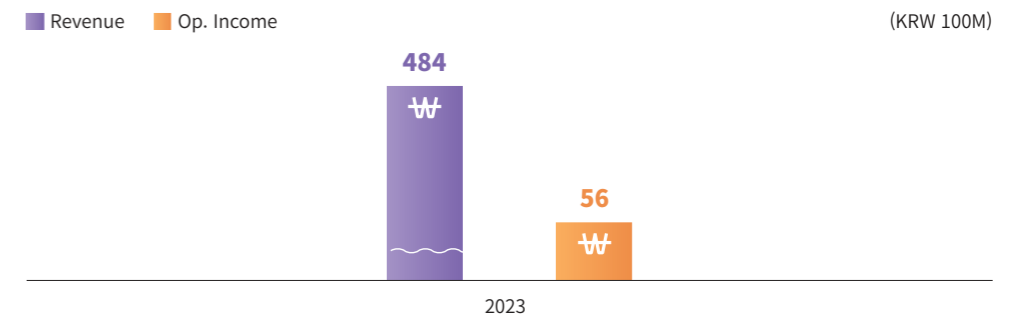
Steel balls for bearings are key components of ball bearings, used in most machines and equipment that involve rotary motion.



Core Competences

- **Stable forward-linkage markets**
 - The global bearings market has expanded at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of nearly 6% over the past decade.
 - The automotive, wind power, aviation, and construction industries are projected to grow at a CAGR of 7.5% to 7.9% from 2022 to 2030.
- **Overseas expansion**
 - PARKWON expanded into global markets with the completion of its factory in Vietnam and has secured new clients across 13 countries.
- **Entry into the ceramic balls market**
 - The company is the first in Korea to mass-produce ceramic balls, essential components for electric vehicles (EVs).
 - It has maintained long-term relationships with major global bearings companies in Korea, Europe, North America, and Japan.

Performance



* The revenue target is set to reach KRW 100 billion within the next five years.

Future Plans

- PARKWON will drive further growth by leveraging its unique position as the only company in Korea with a mass production system for ceramic balls.
- The company plans to develop new revenue streams aligned with renewable energy trends.
- It aims to secure competitiveness in ceramic balls, a core component in the EV industry, for the future.

Well-Funded Startup Vision Science



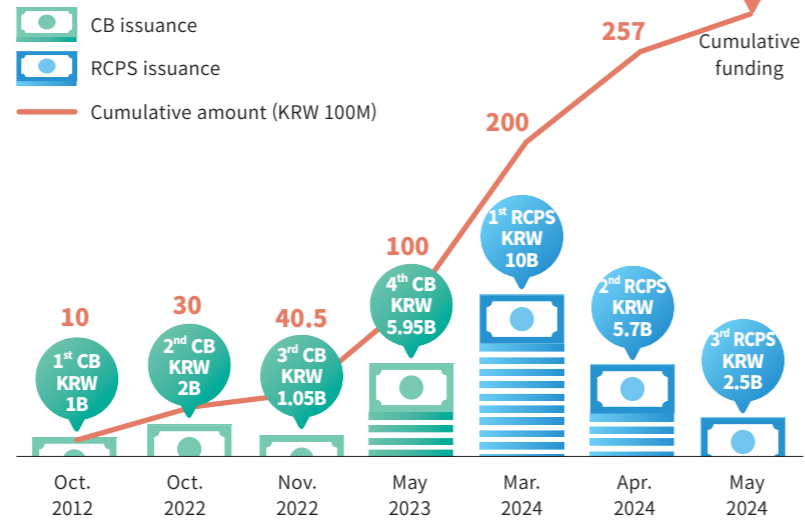
About Vision Science

A leading manufacturer of colored contact lenses, recognized globally for its distinctive quality and advanced technological expertise, with the world's largest production capacity in this sector

Company Profile

- **Company Name:** Vision Science Co., Ltd.
- **CEO:** Jinsu Hwang
- **Founding Date:** April 7, 2004
- **Employee Count:** 216
- **Capital:** Approx. KRW 900M
- **Revenue:** KRW 26B (2024E)
- **Main Business:** Production of colored contact lenses
- **Location:** 37-38, Maeyeo-ro 1-gil, Dong-gu, Daegu
- **Contact:** +82 53 857 3578
- **Website:** www.visionscience.co.kr

Funding Rounds



* CB - Convertible bonds; RCPS - Redeemable convertible preference shares

Use of Funds and Outcomes

- Total funding was deployed to enhance production efficiency at Factory 1 and expand production facilities at Factory 2.
- Factory 1's capacity rose by over 20%, leading to profitability gains backed by improved cost competitiveness.
- The expansion of Factory 2 will be completed by H1 2026, with an anticipated production capacity of 500M units per year through the addition of 20 new production lines.
- One production line with a capacity of 2M units per month will be added by August 2024, with three more production lines planned for completion by the end of 2024.

Know-How for Securing Funding

- **Transformation from supplier to manufacturer in colored contact lenses**
 - Vision Science established production facilities and quality assurance system, achieving international certifications.
 - The company enhanced R&D capabilities, technological expertise, and innovation, while developing global distribution networks.
- **Acquisition of key customers in major regions worldwide**
 - The company expanded into global markets, including Asia, the U.S., Europe, and the Middle East.
 - It formed partnerships with renowned retailers domestically and internationally, facilitating entry into new markets.
- **Strengthening R&D and supply chain for beauty contact lenses**
 - Vision Science possesses superior design development capabilities and product realization technologies compared to its peers.
 - The company has secured partnerships with 31 retail brands across 27 countries, thanks to its rapid response to market trends.

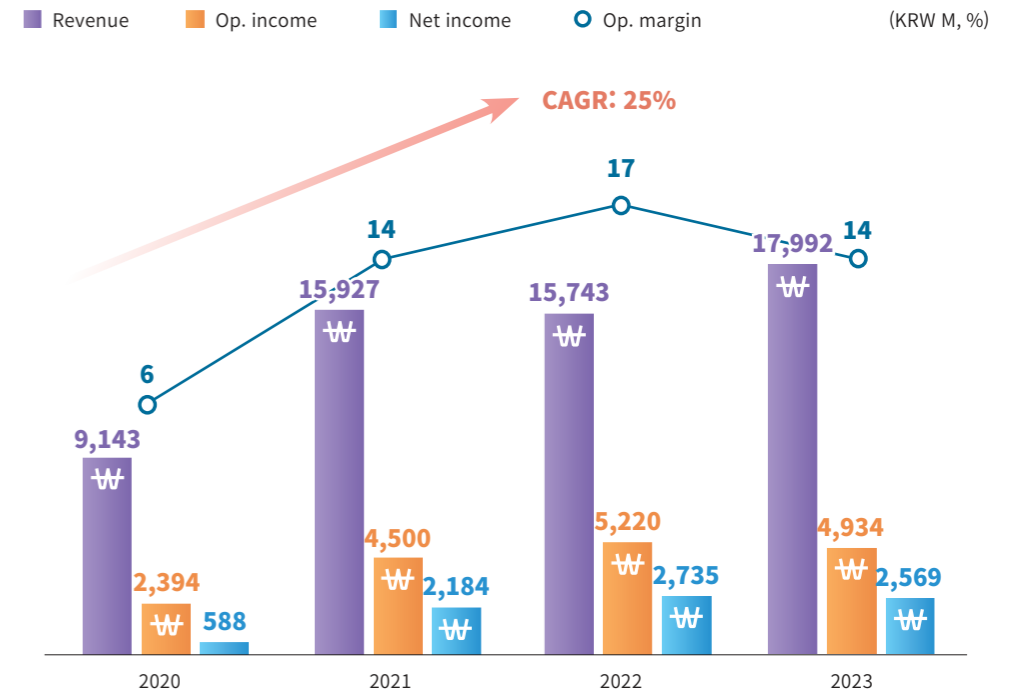
Products/Services



Core Competences

- **Strong trust-based partnerships**
Vision Science has formed solid, trust-based relationships with customers, including leading domestic and global companies.
- **Distinctive competitive advantages**
The company enjoys significant advantages over its competitors in both design and quality.
- **Highly efficient production**
Vision Science's production facilities are approaching full automation thanks to enhanced production processes.

Performance



Future Plans

- Vision Science aims to achieve the world's largest production capacity and enhance its technical capabilities to ensure superb product quality.
- It plans to enter global markets with its silicone colored lenses, known for their unmatched quality.
- Vision Science will expand its global presence through various collaborations with existing and new customers.

Well-Funded Startup

AGL



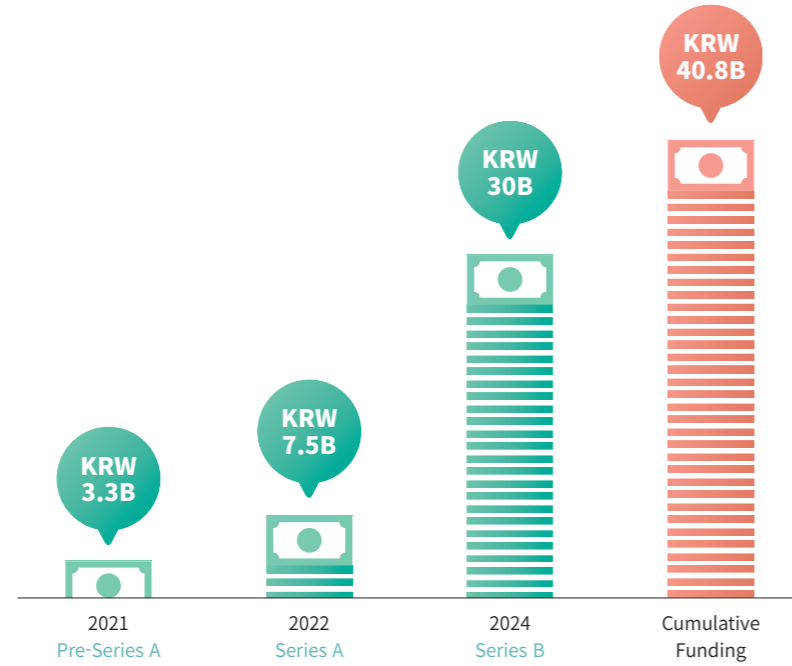
About AGL

A developer and operator of a SaaS-based, AI-powered golf platform that allows golfers to search and book tee times at golf courses worldwide, providing enhanced access and convenience for both golf clubs and golfers

Company Profile

- **Company Name:** AGL Co., Ltd.
- **CEO:** Jim Hwang
- **Founding Date:** March 6, 2019
- **Employee Count:** 69
- **Capital:** KRW 2.37B
- **Revenue:** Approx. KRW 21.6B (2024E)
- **Main Business:** Booking systems, IT solutions, data analysis
- **Location:** 1F-6F, 392 Ahasan-ro, Gwangjin-gu, Seoul
- **Contact:** +82 2 456 0245
- **Website:** https://www.aglgw.com

Funding Rounds



Use of Funds and Outcomes



AGL, the developer of the world's first global golf distribution system, used the funds raised to invest in platform service development.



Consumer satisfaction improved due to enhanced and more stable platform services.



The golf booking service is now available in 74 countries, as the 'Book Online' button for golf courses has been activated on Google.

Know-How for Securing Funding



AGL developed a first-of-its kind global distribution system in the golf industry, known as TIGER GDS.



This golf platform enables golfers to conveniently search, book, and pay for tee times at golf courses worldwide in real time, anytime and anywhere, in sync with global search engines and OTAs.



AGL, through its global platform, provides golf clubs around the globe with opportunities to enter international markets and explore the feasibility of market expansion.

Products/Services



TIGER GDS (Global Distribution System)

- A platform for real-time booking and payment for tee times at golf courses worldwide
- A global network system that provides real-time information on tee time prices and availability from golf courses to various distribution channels, akin to GDS systems used in the airline and hospitality industries
- * Main solutions: TIGER GDS, TIGER BGM (Business Golf Marketing)

Golf IT solutions

- AGL offers IT solutions optimized for golf courses, featuring contactless check-in and an all-in-one system for golf club operations and management.
- * Major solutions: TIGER PASS, GLOBAL TIGER PAY, TIGER ERP, etc.

Core Competences

First-of-its kind golf GDS

- TIGER GDS is a pioneering golf booking platform offering real-time tee time reservations, payments and cancellations, connecting golfers with golf courses globally.
- It is an open platform accessible via various affiliated distribution channels.
- TIGER GDS is built on AGL's proprietary high-performance RESTful API.

Largest tee time acquisition in Asia

- AGL has signed agreements with 1,800 golf courses, including the top 100 courses, across 160 cities in 20 countries.
- On average, more than 1M tee times are available daily.

Global partnerships (Reserve with Google)

- In July 2024, AGL launched Google Appointment Booking Service, enabling golf course bookings directly through Google.
- It has forged partnerships with leading global portals, travel agencies, financial institutions, online travel agencies (OTAs), media companies, and booking platforms.



Future Plans

2025: Become the No. 1 global golf platform

- AGL aims to become the No. 1 provider with the world's largest golf service coverage.
- The company will work closely with partners in the golf industry across Europe and the U.S., beyond Asia, to expedite market entry and solidify its position as the top global golf platform.
- AGL intends to expand its golf GDS by forming partnerships with global airlines.
- It plans to enhance the user experience and convenience for golfers through TIGER's AI-driven analysis.

2026: Evolve into a full-service golf platform company

- AGL will expand its golf IT solutions, including TIGER PAY and TIGER ERP.
- The company plans to launch TIGER PRESTIGE CLUB, a community based on a cooperative network of global golf clubs.
- It will diversify its business model and revenue streams to include maintenance, repair and operations (MRO), finance, and marketing solutions.

Well-Funded Startup WIRobotics



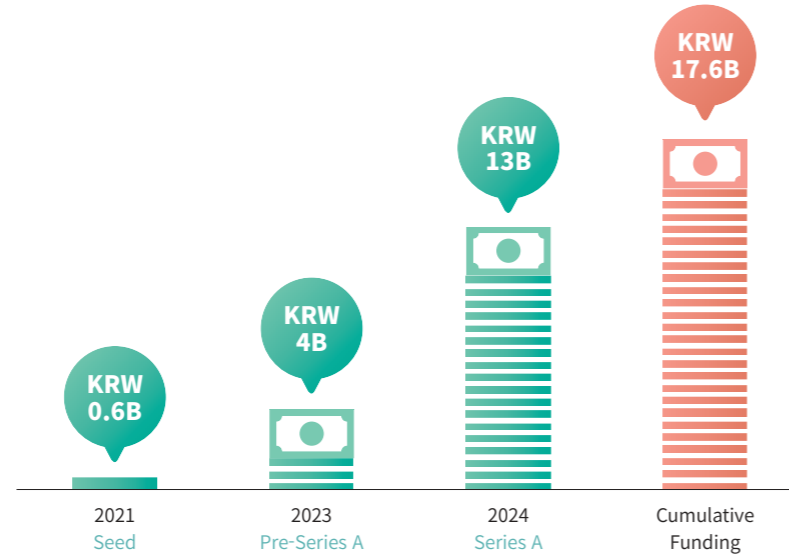
About WIRobotics

A pioneering wearable robotics company specializing in interactive robots, including cobots, humanoids, surgical robots, wearable robots, and anthropomorphic robot arms and legs

Company Profile

- **Company Name:** WIRobotics Inc.
- **CEO:** Yeonbaek Lee, Yongjae Kim
- **Founding Date:** June 2021
- **Employee Count:** 28
- **Capital:** Approx. KRW 21M
- **Revenue:** Approx. KRW 3B (2024E)
- **Main Business:** Wearable robots
- **Location:** 1600 Chungjeol-ro, Byeongcheon-myeon, Dongnam-gu, Cheonan, South Chungcheong Province
- **Contact:** +82 70 8810 2536
- **Website:** www.wirobotics.com

Funding Rounds



Use of Funds and Outcomes

- Funds were utilized to hire staff for mass production, and to start the mass production of WIM and WIBS, alongside the opening of the WIM Gait Training Center.**
- An online shopping mall was launched for selling WIM, marking the start of B2C sales.**
- A state-subsidized project was kicked off in collaboration with U.S. rehabilitation hospitals to build a track record ahead of international sales.**
- The company launched promotional and marketing campaigns, including pop-up store openings and various events.**

Know-How for Securing Funding

- Team of top talent and strong organizational skills**
 - WIRobotics boasts a team of experts with 10 to 20 years of experience in robot development.
 - The company has outlined its plans to commercialize wearable robots, positioning itself to capitalize on rapid market growth.
- Identification of product appeal to stimulate consumer and investor interest**
 - WIRobotics has embraced a flexible approach to product realization through iterative experimentation and adjustments.
 - It has focused on identifying the appeal of wearable robots by assessing the usability of pilot products.
- Rapid revenue generation and unmatched product competitiveness**
 - WIRobotics stressed its potential to be a first mover in the market, with exponential growth opportunities.
 - The company underscored the importance of securing funding to maintain its competitive advantage and outpace emerging competitors.

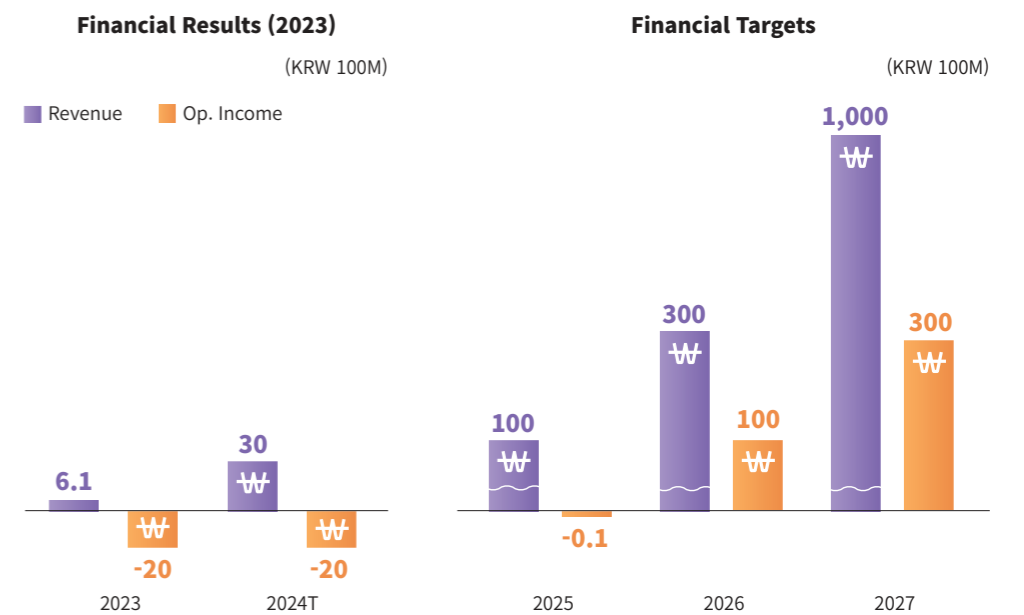
Products/Services



Core Competences

- Walking support mechanism technology based on a single differential-drive actuator**
 WIRobotics offers single actuator-based wearable robots, which employ innovative structure in terms of weight, cost and usability.
- Motion-based intent detection and gait optimization of actuator with high backdrivability**
 By eliminating the need for power sensors, WIRobotics can offer affordable wearable robots that deliver robust support, adaptable to various wearers and conditions.
- Real-time gait measurement and analysis based on motion data**
 Utilizing big data-driven deep learning, WIRobotics provides feedback on gait patterns and strengths, helping wearers understand and improve their walking performance.

Performance



Future Plans

- WIRobotics aims to achieve successful mass production of 1,000 units in Korea, establish a customer service system, and build brand recognition. Upon reaching these milestones, the company will embark on global expansion.**
 - In 2024, WIRobotics will launch B2B and B2C sales of its products while securing safety certifications in the U.S.
 - In 2025, the company plans to enter the US market, obtain European certifications, and achieve the sales of 10,000 units domestically and internationally.
 - In 2026, WIRobotics will introduce WIM to the sports sector, and further expand its presence into Europe.

Well-Funded Startup

EASYTEM



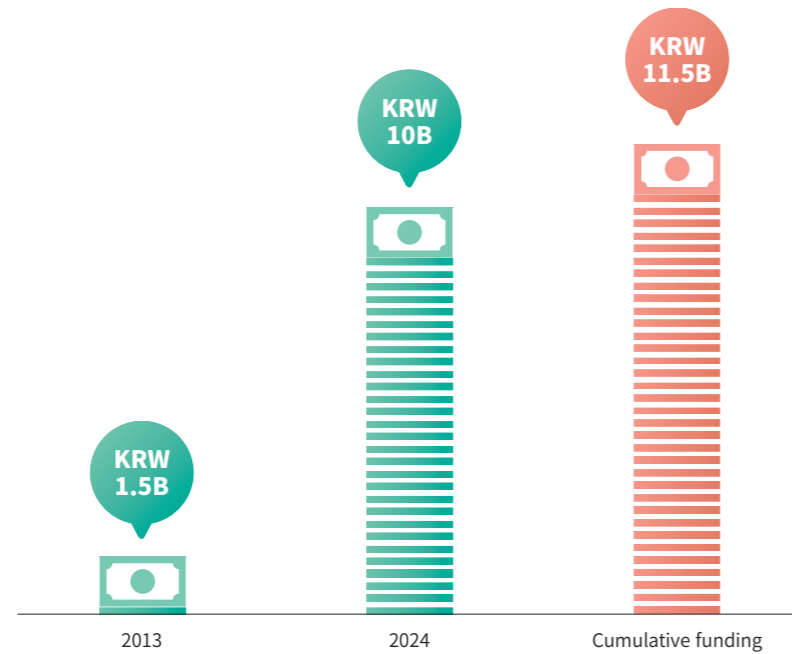
About EASYTEM

A developer and manufacturer of medical equipment and beauty devices, committed to continuous product innovation and enhancement

Company Profile

- **Company Name:** EASYTEM Co., Ltd.
- **CEO:** Haewook Lee
- **Founding Date:** August 20, 2008
- **Employee Count:** 87
- **Capital:** Approx. KRW 390M
- **Revenue:** Approx. KRW 42.79B (2024E)
- **Main business:** Production of medical equipment and beauty devices
- **Location:** #304, 25 Podowon-ro 116-gil, Siheung, Gyeonggi Province
- **Contact:** +82 31 312 1305
- **Website:** <https://easytem.co.kr>

Funding Rounds



Use of Funds and Outcomes

The funds raised were used to strengthen R&D capabilities, driving product development and enhancement.

EASYTEM invested in talent acquisition to bolster its marketing capabilities, and the expansion of digital marketing channels to boost brand awareness.

Investment aimed at ensuring stable raw material procurement enabled the company to place orders in advance for raw materials under long-term supply contracts. Timely procurement led to productivity gains.

Know-How for Securing Funding

- Proven track record of producing and selling 1.45M beauty devices between 2021 and 2023, showcasing robust production capacity and reliable quality
- Generation of new product revenue from four new clients in 2024, and superb technological capabilities and ODM business know-how
- Projected revenue growth driven by expanding skincare and beauty markets, and strong support from existing investors to attract new customers

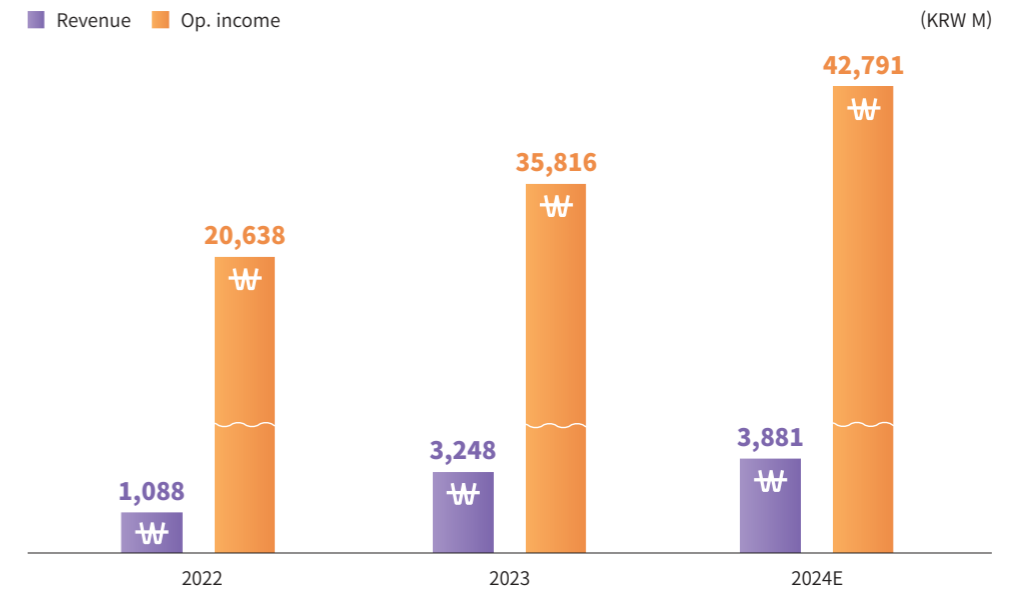
Products/Services



Core Competences

- **Largest production lines for beauty devices in Korea**
 - EASYTEM excels in R&D, design, and product realization, boasting a large-scale smart factory. These allow the company to offer high-quality products at competitive prices.
 - The company operates the largest production lines for beauty devices and healthcare products in Korea.
- **Proactive R&D and investment**
 - EASYTEM is dedicated to advancing R&D and investing in foundational technologies to drive product development and commercialization in beauty care devices.

Performance



Future Plans

- **In 2024, EASYTEM aims to diversify its customer base by acquiring new clients.**
- **In 2025, it is set to debut on the domestic stock market and secure stable funding.**
 - The company will focus on commercializing products under its own brand and maximizing gross margin.
- **In 2026, the company will pursue successful product launches under its own brand, with an emphasis on revenue growth.**
 - It will actively develop and commercialize infrared sensor and core body temperature sensing technologies.
 - EASYTEM aims to achieve KRW 200B in revenue and improve its operating margin, with the goal of becoming a unicorn.

Well-Funded Startup

PRENEU



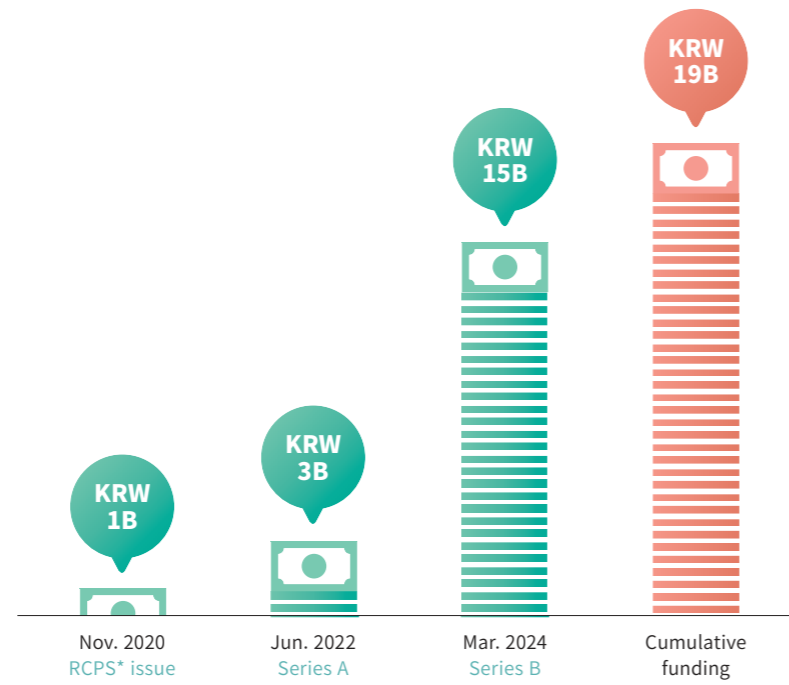
About PRENEU

A prominent manufacturer of drones and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) serving in the defense, public and private sectors

Company Profile

- **Company Name:** PRENEU Co., Ltd.
- **CEO:** Jongkyung Lee
- **Founding Date:** June 2, 2017
- **Employee Count:** 109
- **Capital:** Approx. KRW 1.22B
- **Revenue:** Approx. KRW 18B (2024E)
- **Main Business:** Industrial UAV design and production; hardware design and in-house production of core avionics components; software development for operations and control; service platform
- **Location:** #501-503, 513-514, 854, Sandan-ro 325-gil, Danwon-gu, Ansan, Gyeonggi Province
- **Contact:** +82 31 362 6200
- **Website:** www.preneu.com

Funding Rounds



* RCPS - Redeemable convertible preference shares

Use of Funds and Outcomes

- Product development and enhancement**
 - Planned release of two small UAV models, following the development of core component D-ARK
 - New product launch scheduled for H2 2024, bolstered by the development and enhancement of a service platform
- Top talent acquisition**
 - Accelerated growth through the recruitment of a CFO and a CSO
 - Product improvement and product line expansion, supported by the addition of tech experts
- Product facility expansion**
 - Expansion of factory facilities and equipment
 - Office space expansion

Know-How for Securing Funding

- PRENEU leveraged strategic advice on various funding aspects from experienced Series A investors.
- Existing investors played a proactive role in funding rounds, using their networks to connect PRENEU with potential investors.

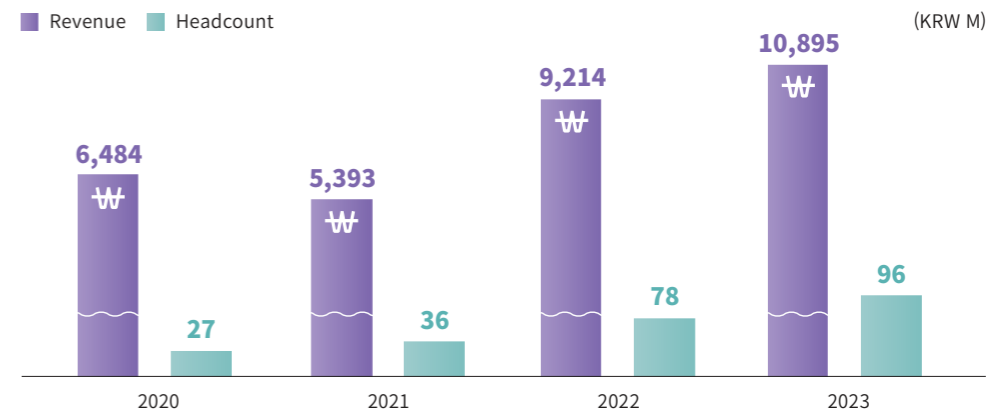
Products/Services



Core Competences

- Unique technical strength in Korea**
 - PRENEU excels in the design, processing and manufacturing of a wide range of UAVs.
 - The company possesses core technologies for key avionics systems and provides applied services.
- Growth opportunities underpinned by consistent revenue generation**
 - PRENEU is positioned for rapid revenue growth through its military UAV applications and swift R&D efforts.
 - The company offers tailored products for the domestic market, leveraging its technology R&D projects.
- Global expansion**
 - A U.S. drone manufacturer is currently testing PRENEU's sample flight controller.
 - The company is in talks with Poland to introduce combat and surveillance drones under a memorandum of understanding.
 - PRENEU is actively exploring export opportunities in markets such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania.

Performance



Future Plans

- Business strategies for the domestic market**
 - PRENEU aims to capture a dominant position in the defense market.
 - The company will expand its presence into the private sector, as well as local governments and public organizations.
 - It will continue to invest in strategic product development that aligns with customer and market demand.
 - PRENEU will broaden its platform-based services with the launch of a platform for various drone services.
- Business strategies for global markets**
 - The company plans to enter global markets with drone products designed for measurement and defense applications.
 - Target regions include Africa, Central Asia, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia.

Well-Funded Startup

PRND



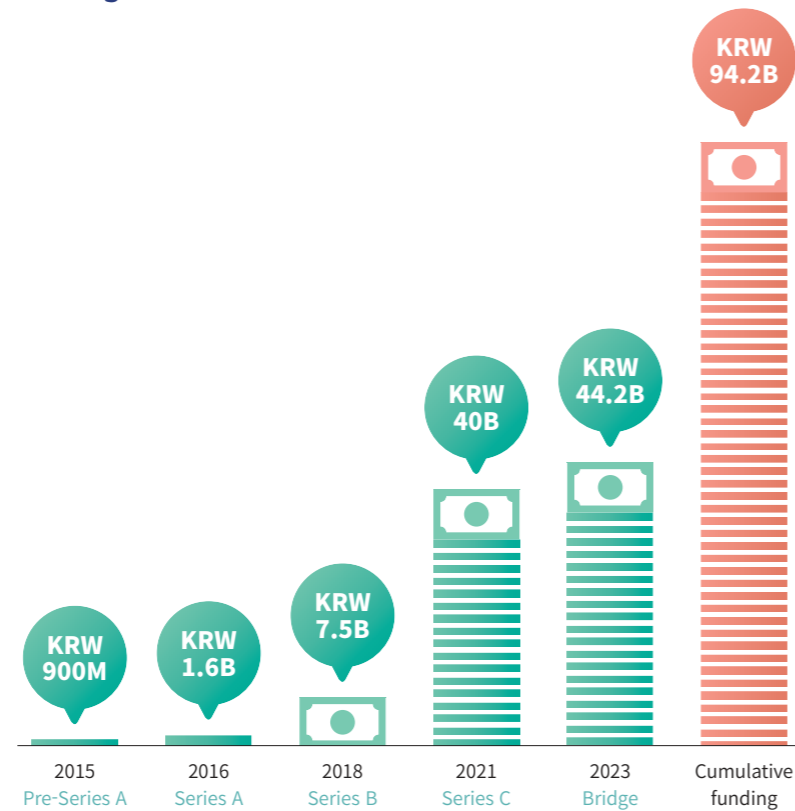
About PRND

A developer and operator of the top C2B auction platform for used cars, driving innovation in the used car market

Company Profile

- **Company Name:** PRND Co., Ltd.
- **CEO:** Jinwoo Park
- **Founding Date:** December 24, 2014
- **Employee Count:** 107
- **Capital:** Approx. KRW 300M
- **Revenue:** Approx. KRW 100B (2024E)
- **Main Business:** Used car auction platform HeyDealer
- **Location:** 8F, 14 Seocho-daero 74-gil, Seocho-gu, Seoul
- **Contact:** +82 10 5897 1385
- **Website:** www.prnd.co.kr

Funding Rounds



Use of Funds and Outcomes



Investment in marketing and branding led to a significant increase in user acquisition and the number of cars traded through HeyDealer.



Upfront investment was made to attract top talent for product development and service operations.

Know-How for Securing Funding

- **Support from existing investors**
 - Continued support from existing investors was crucial for securing the next rounds of funding. Their backing positively influenced new investors' decisions.
- **Proactive engagement with existing investors**
 - PRND has maintained proactive communication with existing investors, offering detailed explanations of the need for additional funding and discussing specifics, including the funding amount.

Products/Services



HeyDealer flagship advertising photo



Truck ads campaign: Ads on trucks to promote the platform and support drivers with ad fees



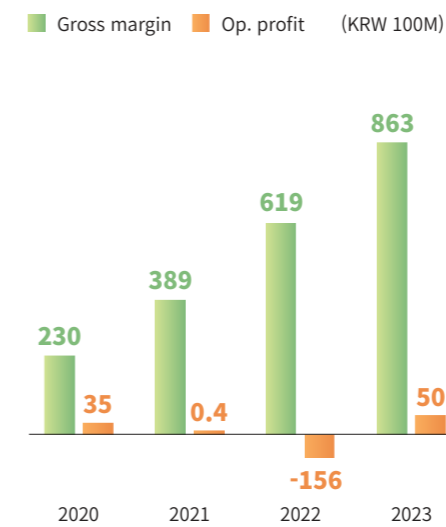
"Hey Little" pop-up event poster

Core Competences

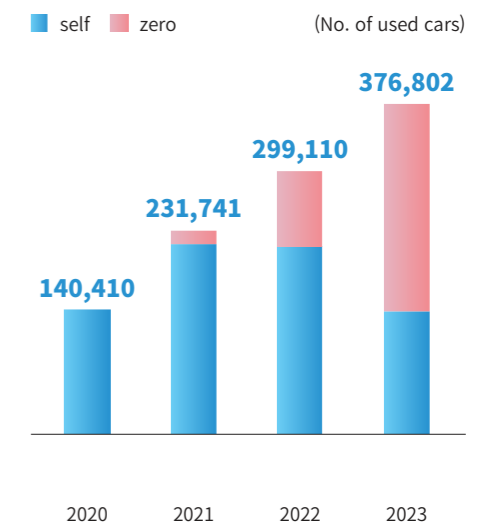
- **Extensive used car price data**
 - HeyDealer offers potential sellers accurate pricing information based on extensive auction data from over 1M used car sales annually.
- **High auction prices**
 - Used cars fetch high prices on the platform due to the largest network of participating dealers.
- **Easy-to-use UI/UX**
 - The platform provides a seamless experience, making it easy for users to navigate the entire process from auction application and sale requests to title transfer after a transaction.
- **Customer-centered operational policy**
 - HeyDealer offers a dispute resolution service, taking full responsibility for resolving any issues in transactions conducted on its platform.

Performance

Yearly Profit & Loss



Yearly Transaction Volume



Future Plans

- PRND plans to expand its HeyDealer ZERO service nationwide.
- The company aims to drive innovation in the used car buying experience with new services like HeyDealer Market.
- RPND will develop business software to support car shipment tracking and used car history checks for HeyDealer subscribers.

10 Successfully Exited Companies

A Glimpse into Startup Exits



The primary goal of investing in startups is to achieve a substantial return on the initial investment through successful exits. Exit routes for startups are largely divided into sales (acquisitions), mergers, and initial public offerings (IPOs). We anticipate the emergence of a healthier VC ecosystem that supports successful startup exits and involves various participants, including large corporations. This sub-section highlights the 10 startups with significant exit values that have successfully exited as of Q1 2024.

DEEPX

Millie Seojae

Viva Republica

AprilBio

APR

Angel Robotics

CONTEC

COXEM

Curocell

KRAFTON

3

Market Watch

Promising K-Startup

Doojin Lee - Mediquitous CEO
Mediquitous Embarks on Global Expansion

&

Promising VC

Seungpyo Hong - Novorsec Investment CEO
Achieving Milestones Step by Step Towards Our Goals



Promising K-Startup

An Interview with
Mediquitous CEO

Doojin Lee

The global retail landscape continues to be dominated by giant retailers making relentless, borderless moves.

Chinese e-commerce companies like Alibaba and Temu wield significant influence over online marketplaces worldwide.

Despite this, latecomers are knocking on the doors of the global e-commerce market, joining a battleground where established players fiercely compete. At the center of this is Mediquitous, the operator of fashion e-commerce platform NUGU.

The company is embarking on its journey into international markets, raising expectations. Mediquitous's first step onto the global stage has been in Japan, a market highly receptive to K-culture. In a short period, NUGU has successfully built its presence in the Japanese fashion e-commerce platform market, rapidly growing its user base. This early success is why many are watching the next steps of this fashion-driven e-commerce platform as it expands into the beauty industry. We spoke with Mediquitous CEO Doojin Lee to explore his blueprint for the global e-commerce platform business.

By Hyunjun Kim · Photographs by Byungwoo Jo

Can you tell us about your company, its business portfolio, and how they are operated?

Mediquitous is a fashion and beauty e-commerce platform provider and brand builder. We operate an e-commerce platform specifically targeting the Japanese market, alongside a range of fashion and beauty brands. By collaborating with local influencers, our fashion e-commerce platform NUGU has established itself as the leading app in Japan's Fashion and Apparel category, capturing the largest market share. More than 80% of its primary users are women in their 20s, and the app boasts one of the fastest user growth rates in Japan, drawing significant attention from customers. We manage over 10 fashion brands, including mahagrid and niceghostclub, and more than 5 beauty brands, covering skincare, hair & body care, and inner beauty, such as MEDI247, aniilO, Bananal, and LACTIVE. Last year, Mediquitous recorded KRW 153.8 billion in revenue, with over KRW 50 billion coming from exports. Our company has grown at a CAGR of 100% from 2017 to 2023, showing a 100-fold increase in overseas revenue.

You were already engaged in the fashion e-commerce business before establishing Mediquitous in 2016. What inspired you to create Mediquitous and launch the fashion e-commerce platform NUGU in Japan in 2020?

From the moment I graduated from university, I was determined to start my own venture. Even during my school days, I aspired to build my own business rather than work for a company. This drive led me to establish and operate a fashion e-commerce company called Awesomebrand in 2011. After selling that company in 2015, I founded Mediquitous the following year, believing that my experience in fashion e-commerce could be applied to the beauty and inner beauty sectors.

Our initial business model, media commerce, faced challenges due to low barriers to entry and limited demand in our small domestic market. Tapping into global markets was the solution I found to address these challenges. We launched NUGU in 2020 targeting the Japanese market, and began exploring other global opportunities. These efforts have been successful, with

Korean E-Commerce Platform Company Takes on New Venture

Mediquitous Embarks on Global Expansion





overseas revenue reaching KRW 50 billion in 2023. Looking ahead, Mediquitous will focus more on global expansion. We anticipate that overseas revenue could reach KRW 100 billion by 2025.

🗣️ Your company turned profitable in 2022 and completed its Series C funding round this year. In a relatively short period, Mediquitous has achieved remarkable growth, consistently increasing its corporate value. What are the secrets to your successful funding rounds?

Personally, I am not fully satisfied with our achievements, despite the external recognition we've received. Mediquitous still has a long way to go. What we've accomplished so far is just a small fraction—less than 5%—of our overall vision. Therefore, I'd rather not focus on specific fundraising tips at this time. Instead, I'd like to share some personal thoughts.

What truly matters, beyond external evaluations, is the mindset and attitude of a company leader who is dedicated to persistent evolution. It's often said that a company cannot grow beyond its leader's vision and

aspirations. I believe that CEOs must learn quickly and upgrade themselves constantly to drive continuous improvement in the company.

As you know, Mediquitous began as a media commerce company and has made continued efforts to pivot or expand its business model—from domestic to international brands and then to an overseas platform. These efforts are viewed as our commitment to a larger picture and vision, and have contributed to the recognition we've received.

🗣️ Mediquitous launched NUGU in Japan and made it the number one fashion e-commerce platform. NUGU's revenue accounts for the largest portion of your overseas revenue. What are the key factors for NUGU's success in the local market, and what are its growth projections?

Many Korean platforms have ambitiously entered the Japanese market, striving for successful localization. Mediquitous is no exception. We've put significant efforts into tailoring NUGU to meet local preferences

and needs. As the result, the platform has been successfully localized and is now firmly establishing its presence in Japan. Many of the merchandising leaders at NUGU are Japanese or fluent in Japanese and familiar with the local culture. Additionally, all influencers partnering with NUGU are local. The platform currently has approximately 1 million users, with user growth accelerating.

We are also conducting offline marketing campaigns to further solidify NUGU's local presence, incorporating advanced e-commerce strategies from Korea. As part of our promotional efforts to increase NUGU's market penetration, we operate offline stores in Shinjuku, Tokyo, and Osaka.

Looking ahead, Mediquitous aims to expand NUGU into a comprehensive vertical platform that caters to the diverse needs of Japanese women in their 20s, covering both fashion and beauty. Our immediate goals are to achieve JPY 100 billion in annual gross merchandise volume (GMV), reach 10 million members and attain 10 million monthly active users (MAU) within the next five years.

🗣️ The e-commerce platform market is changing rapidly, with the rise of big data-based personalized services, enhanced live e-commerce functions, and the growing subscription economy. What are your prospects for the e-commerce market, and how will you respond to these trends?

I prefer to focus on what remains unchanged rather than what is changing. Ultimately, e-commerce boils down to three core elements: being more fun, faster, and

cheaper. I strongly believe that prioritizing fun is crucial for vertical fashion platforms.

NUGU continues to work closely with numerous influencers to ensure that rediscovering clothes is an enjoyable experience for our users. Of course, being faster and cheaper are also essential aspects that we cannot overlook. At Mediquitous, we are committed to continuously upgrading our systems to develop technologies and find solutions that enable us to deliver affordable products swiftly.

Regarding live commerce and subscription services, we believe it is not efficient to develop these capabilities in-house. Instead, we are proactively testing these services through collaborations with companies that have specialized expertise in these areas, ensuring we stay current with industry trends.

🗣️ Tell us about Mediquitous's vision, goals, and lastly, the business philosophy you cherish.

Our goal is to achieve significant growth and advance further in the global markets through our e-commerce platform, along with our fashion and beauty brands. We aim to go public in 2026, with a long-term vision of growing Mediquitous into a company valued at over KRW 10 trillion.

To achieve this, we are considering proactive bolt-on acquisitions, focusing on promising fashion and beauty brands, whether domestic or international, that can be integrated into our platform.

As for the business philosophy I cherish, Mediquitous is dedicated to providing fair compensation for our talent and fostering a culture where every team member works hustle—working hard and constantly striving for excellent results. As the head of Mediquitous, I am committed to ensuring that our employees are rewarded for their dedication and achievements.

Lastly, I want to stress the importance of repaying the trust our investors have placed in us. Some chose to support us during the financially challenging period in the second half of 2022. Despite the opportunity costs, they believed in Mediquitous and invested in our vision. Their confidence motivates me to continually improve the company and meet their expectations. I am deeply driven by the desire to prove that their decision to invest in us was the right one.





Rising Star: Novorsec's Journey Through the Rookie League and Beyond

Achieving Milestones Step by Step Towards Our Goals

Promising VC: An interview with Novorsec Investment CEO

Seungpyo Hong

Novorsec Investment is gaining attention as a promising player in the venture capital (VC) space, after being selected as one of the general partners (GPs) for the Rookie League, a VC program backed by Korea Fund of Funds (KFoF) last April. Since its founding in 2022, the firm has established three project funds and one blind fund. One project fund has already been liquidated with high returns, and the other two are expected to follow suit. CEO Seungpyo Hong said, "I am excited about our first blind fund being selected for the Rookie League, but I also feel a strong sense of responsibility to meet expectations." He emphasized that despite Novorsec's small size, its team, composed of highly skilled members, rivals those in larger VC firms. CEO Hong also shared insights into how this small firm has become a strong player in the Korean VC landscape and discussed the company's future goals.

By Hyunjun Kim · Photographs by Insoon Ko

I heard you worked at a securities company before joining the VC sector. Can you briefly introduce yourself to our readers and share a bit about your career path and your company?

It's a pleasure to speak with you. I'm Seungpyo Hong, CEO of Novorsec Investment. I studied economics at university and began my career in the IPO unit of Mirae Asset Securities, where I spent five to six years. I then transitioned into venture capital, joining Albatross Investment, where I gained valuable experience in various investment activities over three years. Later, I moved to Stonebridge Ventures, focusing on scale-up investments.

Our company, Novorsec, takes its name from the Latin phrase 'Novus Ordo Seclorum,' found on the U.S. one-dollar bill, which translates to 'A New Order of the Ages.' The name reflects our ambition, even as a new VC, to bring about a new era in the VC ecosystem. Our corporate identity (CI) also features a simplified representation of the eye atop the pyramid on the reverse side of the one-dollar bill. This symbolizes our commitment to making investments with an impartial and insightful perspective, always attuned to changes in the world. Though we are a small team, we excel in knowledge and skills.

Your career path centers around fund creation and investment. Can you share more details about your experiences?

As I mentioned earlier, my role at Stonebridge Ventures focused on fundraising and investing in companies during their growth or scale-up phase, which lies between early stage investment and private equity (PE) investment. My team and I were responsible for launching a scale-up fund with over KRW 100 billion in capital commitments and for managing investments through that fund. While VC funds of this size are relatively common today, they were quite rare at the time.

We successfully established the first and second scale-up funds for Stonebridge Ventures, securing commitments of KRW 126.5 billion and KRW 163.6 billion, respectively. These funds, collectively worth nearly KRW 290 billion, were backed by KFoF and co-managed by the Industrial Bank of Korea (IBK). Through these investments across a broad range of sectors, I gained extensive knowledge and experience in the field.



Congratulations on your fund being selected for the first round of regular investment by KFoF! What sets your fund apart from other VC funds in the selection process? Additionally, can you elaborate on your investment plans in the care-tech sector?

Thank you! This selection process was unique in that it awarded additional points for proposals targeting investment fields that KFoF had not previously explored. We carefully considered our investment focus and decided to propose the “care-tech sector,” which we have defined in our own distinctive way. Another key factor was the strong performance of our funds. While many VCs have solid track records, the exceptional results of our three project funds were also highly recognized. Furthermore, demonstrating the feasibility of successfully launching the proposed fund and submitting numerous letters of capital commitment were crucial to our selection.

We define care-tech as the intersection of care and technology. Essentially, it offers quality support to children, parents, and seniors in their daily lives, both directly and indirectly. By leveraging cutting-edge technologies, such as digital technologies, care-tech aims to boost productivity among the working-age population in an aging society and create a foundation for healthier, longer working lives. This, in turn, contributes to increasing national productivity and reducing care costs.

Wearable robots are a prime example of care-tech that

comes to mind. These robots depend on a range of foundational technologies, including ICT, AI, robotics, semiconductors, networks, and software. We plan to invest in these areas, with a particular focus on companies that are in the commercialization phase rather than those still in early technology development.

As a winner in the selection for the Rookie League, what advice would you offer to fellow VCs looking to apply for the Rookie League in the future?

Being selected by KFoF to launch a blind fund as part of the Rookie League, nearly two years after our inception, was incredibly timely for us as a new venture. We are deeply grateful for this opportunity. Before this selection, we made numerous attempts over a period of 1.5 to 2 years, and often failed to pass the preliminary document review stage.

Despite these setbacks, we never lost hope. We continued to establish and liquidate project funds to gain a competitive edge and address the challenges of being a new VC. Given the increasingly competitive and challenging fundraising environment, my advice would be: “Concentrate on what you can do now and prepare diligently, step by step. Success will follow.”

What advice would you give to early-stage startups seeking to raise funding?

Investors make decisions based on a blend of factors, including communications with the company’s management, documentation, investor relations information, and business track records. Early-stage startups often find it challenging to provide all this data. Therefore, it’s crucial to clearly communicate your business direction and highlight your team’s expertise.

I believe that making and receiving investments are actions fundamentally based on trust between people. Building trust means openly discussing your company’s strengths and weaknesses, as well as your own confidence and concerns, both before and after securing investment. I strive to be an investor who values transparency and trust, and I look for entrepreneurs who share these values.

VC investment decisions have significant impacts. In this respect, what role do you want your company to play in revitalizing venture investments? What changes do you believe are needed in VC roles within the current ecosystem?

VCs can play a part in the venture funding ecosystem by identifying promising companies and supporting their growth. VC-backed companies, in turn, contribute to the ecosystem by creating jobs, investing in other startups, or reinvesting in VC funds, thus nurturing new ventures. This circular model would be the most significant contribution to invigorating venture investments.

To enhance this process, the relationship between investors and companies should extend beyond mere investment and exit. VCs should strive to grow alongside the companies they invest in, maintaining an ongoing relationship where they share insights and information. Although this takes time, such continued engagement helps both parties gain a deeper understanding of each other’s fields, and fosters a commitment to the ecosystem’s virtuous cycle that I described earlier.

In the end, meaningful change in the VC ecosystem will occur when VCs continue to support and engage with

their portfolio companies even after exits.

Tell us about Novorsec’s future plans and goals.

I am thrilled about the launch of our first blind fund, but the initial excitement is just the beginning. Our primary goal is to manage this fund effectively and generate strong returns. To achieve this, we will focus on short-term objectives to enhance our expertise. For example, we plan to hire additional fund managers, and establish a systematic approach to networking with tech companies.

In the medium term, we aim to increase our assets under management (AUM) tenfold within three years. Growing our AUM will provide us with greater flexibility to respond to the rapidly changing market and create more opportunities for fund managers.

Lastly, our overarching goal, both short-term and long-term, is to ‘keep our momentum going without getting burned out.’ As a startup ourselves, we need to keep pushing forward. We have a range of short-term and long-term targets related to AUM, fund performance, employee satisfaction, and our role in the VC ecosystem. By navigating through important milestones with perseverance, we believe we can achieve our objectives.



Market Watch

Korea Venture Investment Corporation
Quarterly Journal