

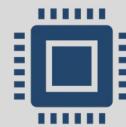


# *kcm* Lens

**Chip Series – Volume 1**

**Meet the Semiconductors!**  
The Magic Inside Your Machines

**January 2026**



## Introduction

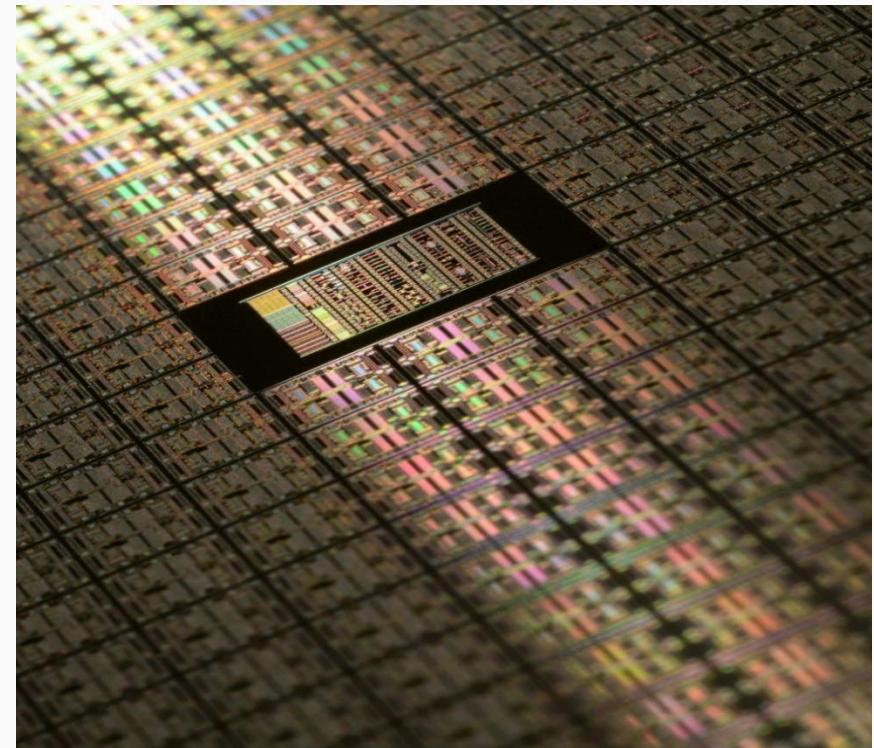


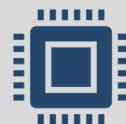
Introducing **kcmLens** - a series of publication from KCM, offering sector specific. Under this series, we shall pick one sector, outline the value chain of that sector, and offer a deep dive analysis through the Lens of each segment of the value chain. This publication helps in developing a holistic understanding of the entire sector. The idea is to not only collate insights and updates on a particular sector for the readers, but to also present important takeaways from K C Mehta & Co LLP on that sector.

Following our recent series on EVs, we're back with a deep dive into the semiconductor industry. A Semiconductor or simply chip is a tiny piece of silicon that contains millions or even billions of microscopic electronic components like transistors and resistors. These chips acts as the "brains" of modern electronic devices.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed critical semiconductor shortages, leading governments to classify chips as strategic assets. In this **kcmLens** "Chip series" we will examine how the industry functions and what will be future outlook. This three-part series spans across full semiconductor value chain - Design (Vol I), Manufacturing & Fabrication (Vol II), and Assembly, Testing & Packaging (Vol III).

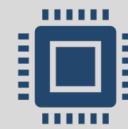
Volume I focuses on semiconductor design, covering the full design lifecycle, critical architectures and tools like EDA, IP, key innovations, global competitive landscape, and India's design ecosystem.





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- 03**  **Unveiling How Chips Power Every Industry** 
- 04**  **Decoding the Semiconductor Ecosystem** 
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- 06**  **The Silicon Battleground** 

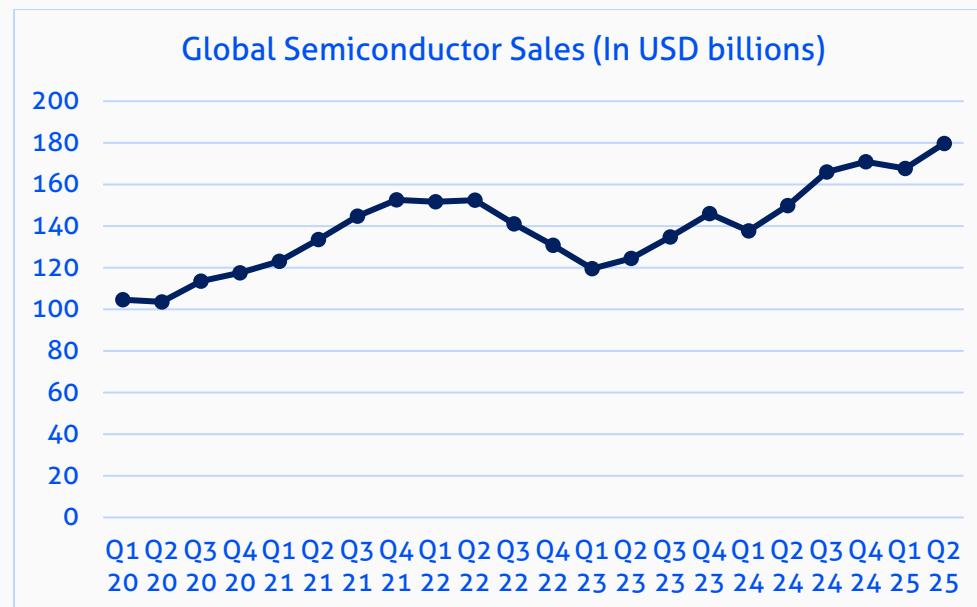


## Silicon Goldrush: Betting on the Trillion-Dollar Decade

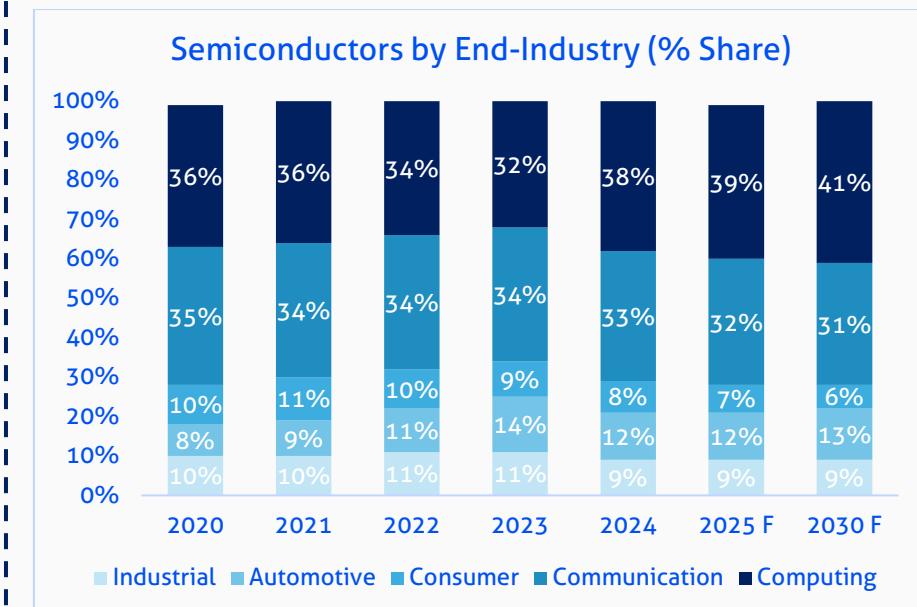
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In 2024, global semiconductor revenues hit **US\$627.6 billion** - a **19.1%** increase year-over-year, largely driven by demand from AI, data-center spending, memory and advanced logic chips and the industry is on track to top roughly **US\$700 billion** in **2025**.

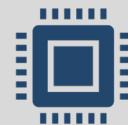
Analysts also expect the industry to **surpass US\$1 trillion by 2030** as fabs, capacity expansion and capital expenditure scale up globally - manufacturers plan roughly **US\$1 trillion of investment in new plants** through this decade to meet anticipated demand.



Source: Semiconductor Industry Association



Source: PwC

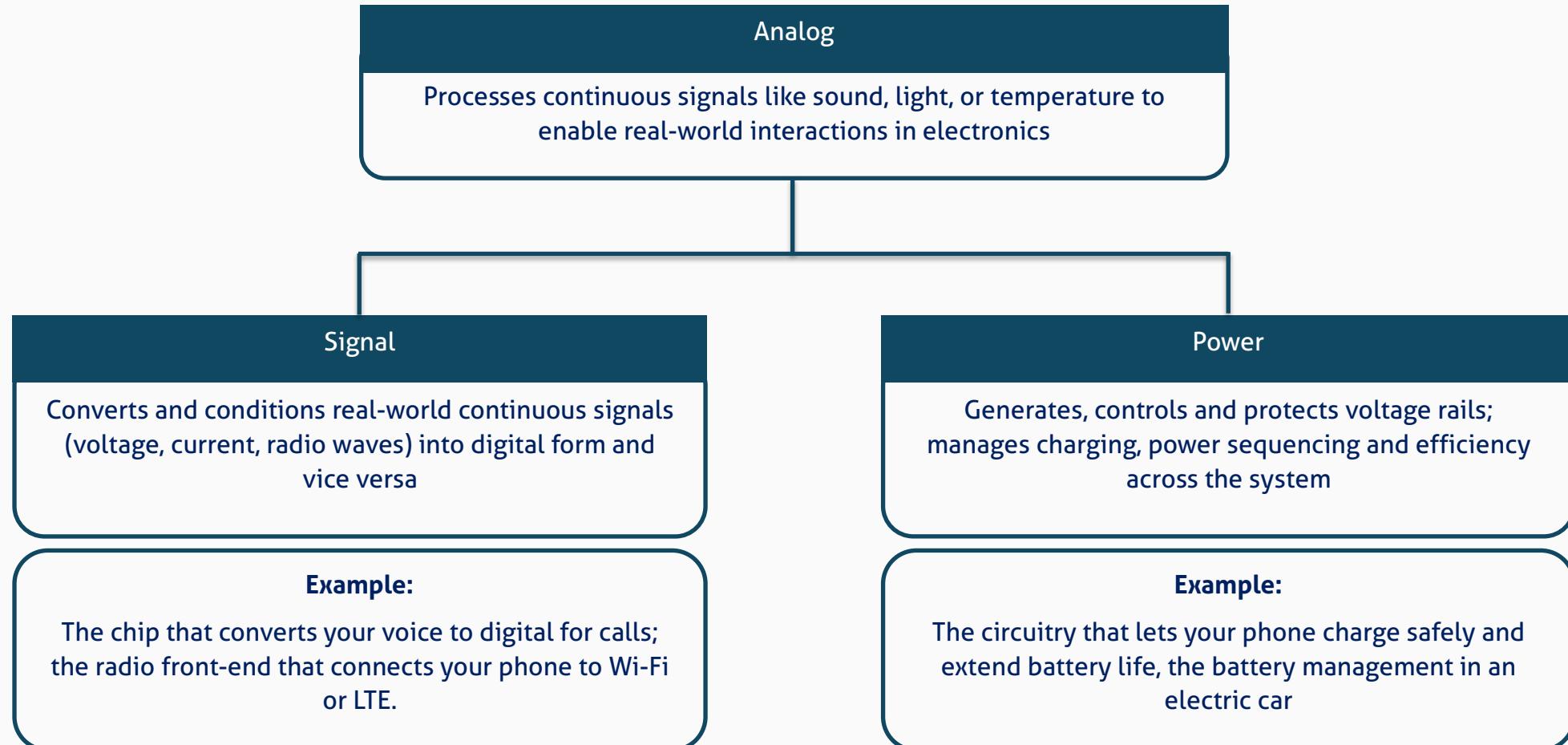


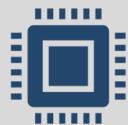
## Semiconductor Family

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### Semiconductor Family includes Analog Semiconductors and...

Based on their functions, semiconductor chips can be broadly classified in Analog and Digital.



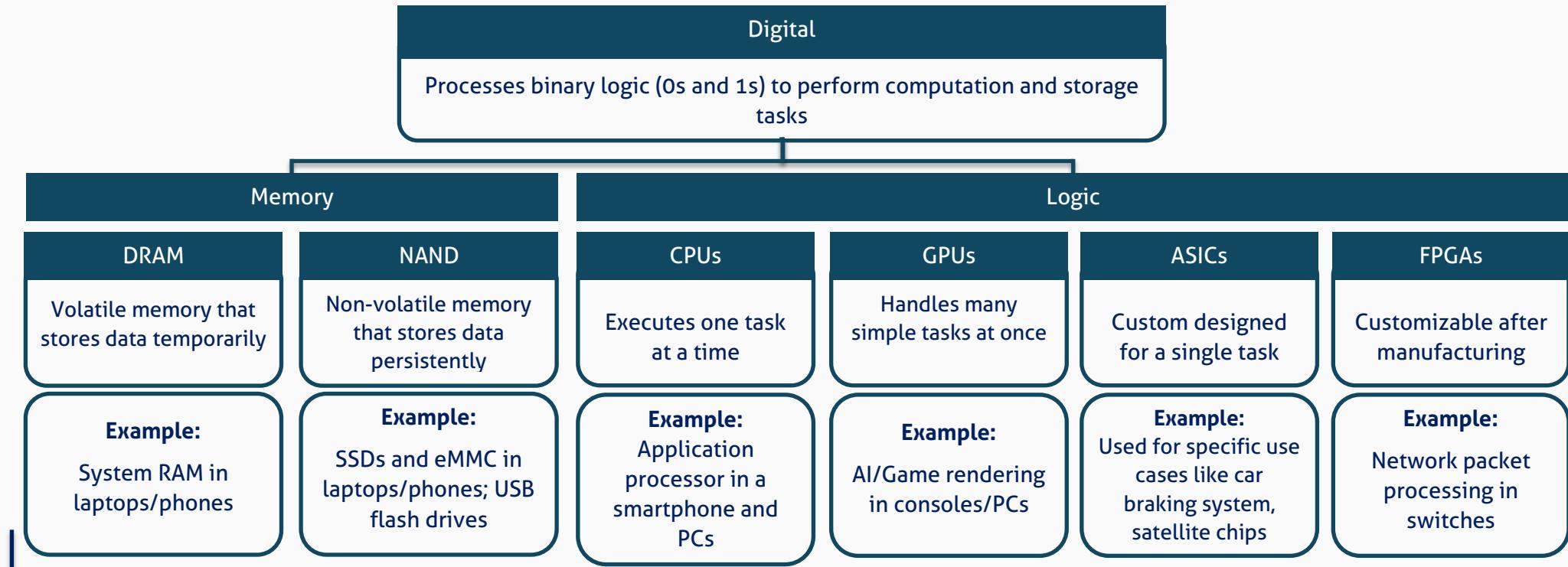


## Semiconductor Family

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## ...Digital Semiconductors

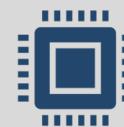


## System on a Chips (SoC)

Combines different chips into a single package for complete system functionality

**Example:**

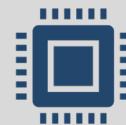
Chips used in smartphone, smartwatch, streaming devices, IoT devices, Automotives



## Unveiling How Chips Power Every Industry

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Industry	Use Cases	Where used	Features	Semiconductor Type
Automotive	Engine & powertrain control ADAS & safety Infotainment & networking	ECUs, sensor hubs, radar/LiDAR modules, dashboards	Functional safety & reliability (ISO 26262)	MCUs/MPUs, power MOSFETs, SoCs, image sensors
Consumer Electronics	Smartphones & tablets TVs & set-top boxes Gaming consoles	Mainboards, display drivers, battery PMICs, SoCs	Power efficiency & cost	SoCs (application processors), DRAM/NAND, PMICs
Data Centres & HPC	Servers & storage arrays AI training/inference Networking	CPUs, GPUs, ASICs/TPUs, NICs, FPGAs	Compute throughput & energy efficiency	High-performance CPUs/GPUs, ASIC accelerators, HBM
Telecommunications	5G/6G base stations Core routers & switches Edge gateways	RF front-ends, line cards, optical modules	Bandwidth & latency	RF-ICs (GaN/GaAs), Ethernet PHYs, optical transceivers
Industrial & Automation	PLCs & motor drives Robotics & vision systems Smart sensors	Control cabinets, robotic arms, field sensors	Ruggedness & long lifecycle	Power semiconductors (IGBTs/MOSFETs), MCUs, sensor ICs
Aerospace & Defence	Avionics & flight controls Radar & EW systems	Flight computers, radar processors, transceivers	Radiation hardness & reliability	RAD-hard ASICs/FPGAs, mixed-signal ICs



## Decoding the Semiconductor Ecosystem

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Tools needed at each step

EDA Tools for Designing Chip  
Semiconductor IP

Photolithography  
Deposition  
Etching Tools  
Ion Implantation tools

Dicing Machines  
Wire Bonders  
Encapsulation  
Testing Equipment

## Design

## Manufacturing

## Assembly, Testing and Packaging

Fabless – Focused on designing chips only



Foundry – Specialized in manufacturing chips at scale

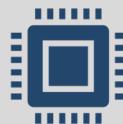


ATMP/OSAT – Specialized in Assembly, Testing and Packaging



## Integrated Device Manufacturers (IDMs)



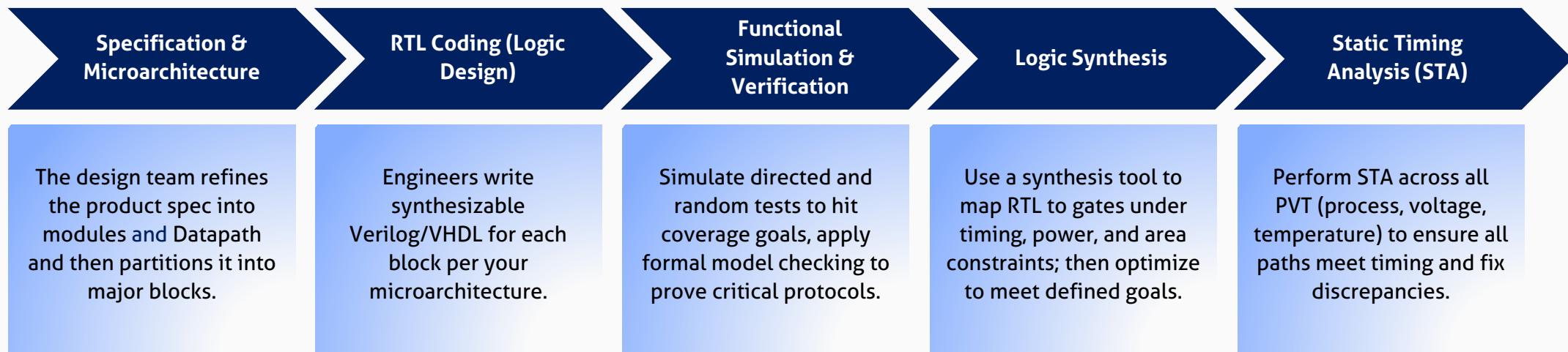


## Chip Design - Tracing every step from concept to chip

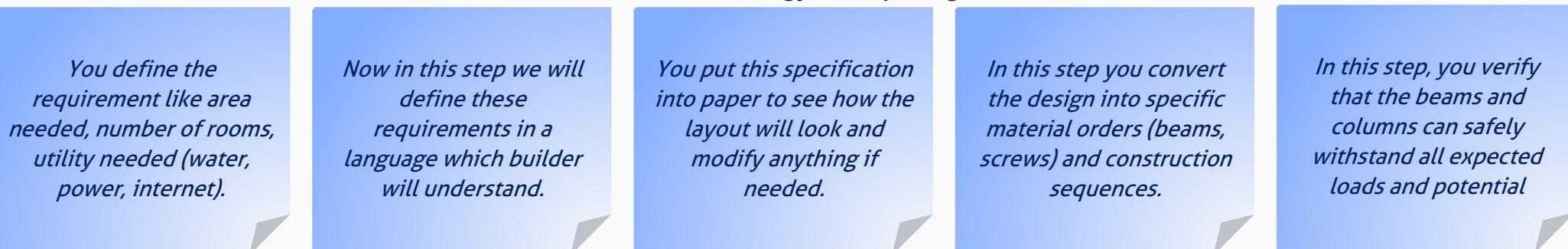
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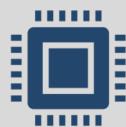

### From Concept to Code: The Front-End Design Journey

Let's pull back the curtain on chip design and explore the **front-end process** where chip's functionality is defined and verified and **back-end process** steps where this logical design is turned into physical layout which can be manufactured.



#### Real-World House Analogy for Chip Design





## Chip Design - Tracing every step from concept to chip

SSS

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### Turning Code into Circuits: Back-End Design Process

#### Floorplanning

#### Placement

#### Clock Tree Synthesis (CTS)

#### Routing

Decide where the big blocks go (memory, connectors).

*Like deciding where bedrooms, kitchen, and garage sit on the plot.*

Put the small parts inside the plan so connections stay short.

*Like placing furniture so pathways are clear and efficient.*

Make sure the timing signal reaches every part evenly.

Draw the actual wires that connect everything.

*Like running pipes and electrical wires through the walls.*

#### Mask Generation (GDSII/OASIS)

#### Timing Signoff

#### Physical Verification

#### Parasitic Extraction

Package the verified layout into the precise file format for foundry

*Like delivering the final, permit-ready blueprints to the builder so construction can start*

Run final timing tests under many conditions and fix any deviations.

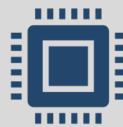
*Like testing that switches, pumps, & timers work under real conditions and fixing any that fail*

Run checks to ensure the layout follows manufacturing & design rule

*Like verifying wall thickness, window spacing, & plumbing routes meet codes*

Measure real effects of wires and metal layers (tiny resistances, delays).

*Like measuring the real plumbing or electrical behavior, not just what was on the plan.*

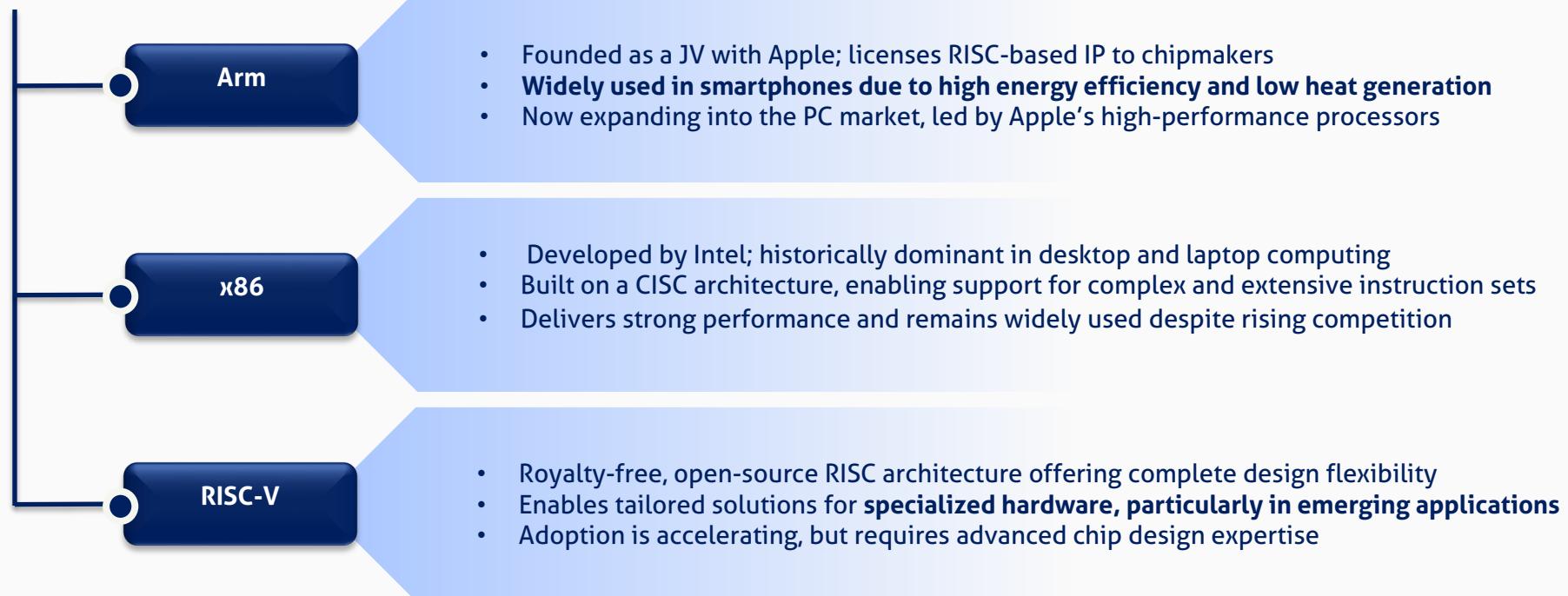


## Chip Design - Tracing every step from concept to chip

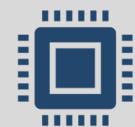
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### The Blueprint Behind Every Chip, which is put to life by...

Chip architecture is the blueprint for a chip - how it's built and the "language" it uses to work. Different chips speak different languages, so software must match the chip. These differences affect speed, battery life, and what devices they're best for. Below are three common chip "languages"



But how do these complex architectures come to life on silicon? That's where Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools step in — the invisible engine that turns chip blueprints into reality.



## Chip Design - Tracing every step from concept to chip

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### ...Electronic Design Automation (EDA)

#### What are they and why are they important?

- EDA refers to specialized software that **provides virtual environment to design, verify, and test** integrated circuits (ICs) and systems-on-chip (SoCs).
- They make advanced chip design possible, cut errors and costs, and are essential for modern CPUs, GPUs, and AI chips which operate at nanometer level.

#### Market Concentration

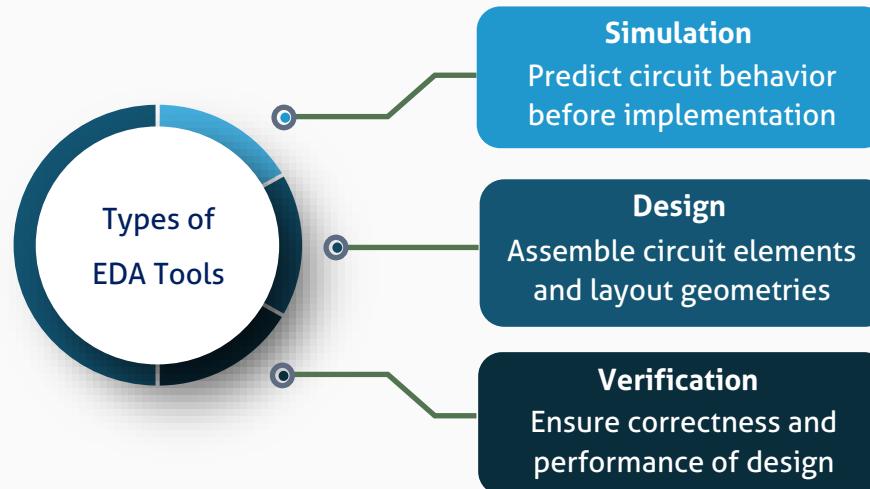
The “Big Three” - **Synopsys, Cadence, and Siemens EDA** -which holds **more than 85% in 2023**, making EDA one of the most concentrated segments in semiconductor value chain.

**SYNOPSYS® cadence SIEMENS**

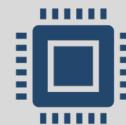
The concentration of advanced EDA tools among a few U.S. vendors has given the United States leverage to slow China’s rise in chip design.

The U.S. tightened export controls on advanced EDA tools, forcing major vendors to restrict sales and support to China and disrupting access to cutting-edge design flows.

But China has also responded swiftly it has poured “Big Fund” capital into domestic EDA and equipment, accelerated local tool development and short-term workarounds (older tool versions, trials), and pushed long-term R&D and consolidation to reduce reliance on foreign suppliers.



EDA tools make chip design possible, but creating every component from scratch is time-consuming and expensive — this is where Semiconductor IP comes to rescue.



## Chip Design - Tracing every step from concept to chip

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### Semiconductor IP: The Ready-Made Building Blocks

#### Problem

As we saw in the earlier design process, creating a semiconductor chip from scratch is an intricate, multi-stage journey. Every stage requires specialized expertise, advanced tools, and multiple iterations to achieve the desired performance, power, and area targets.

For a new chip, this cycle can easily extend over **12 to 24 months or longer**, delaying the product's market entry and driving up development costs and in fast-moving industries such as consumer electronics, automotive, and AI accelerators, such delays in **time-to-market** can lead to loss in the market share.

#### Solution

A Semiconductor Intellectual Property (IP) block is a pre-designed, pre-verified, and reusable circuit or functional module that can be seamlessly integrated into a larger chip design.

In essence, it serves as a "ready-made building block" for a System-on-Chip (SoC), eliminating the need to design these components from the ground up.

#### Benefits

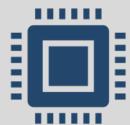
- Save development time by reusing proven designs,
- Reduce risk with pre-verified proven blocks,
- Accelerate time-to-market through faster integration
- Helps in creating differentiation by focusing engineering effort on the unique features

#### Leading Global Players



#### Leading Indian Players





## Chip Design - Tracing every step from concept to chip

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### Measuring the success of Chip Design

Measuring the design metrics is crucial for assessing the performance, especially high the amount spent on R&D and considering how fast the technology is evolving. Now let's explore the key ratios commonly used in the industry to evaluate design efficiency, performance, and assess how one company

#### Time-to-Tape-Out

The duration from project start to final design handoff ("tape-out")

#### Average Design Cycle

Average time from concept to functional design completion over several projects

#### Tap-Out Success Rate

Percentage of first pass designs that are manufactured without major

#### Re-spins per project

Number of times a chip design had to be sent for another tape-out before working

#### Schedule Adherence

Measure how closely actual production follows the planned schedule

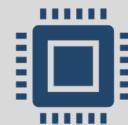
#### IP Reuse Ratio

Percentage of IP blocks reused from previous projects versus new

#### R&D Spend Ratio

How much of a company's revenue is being reinvested into research and

Next, we will see how the Moore's law affects chip technology and what it means to the performance of chips when Moore's law starts slowing.



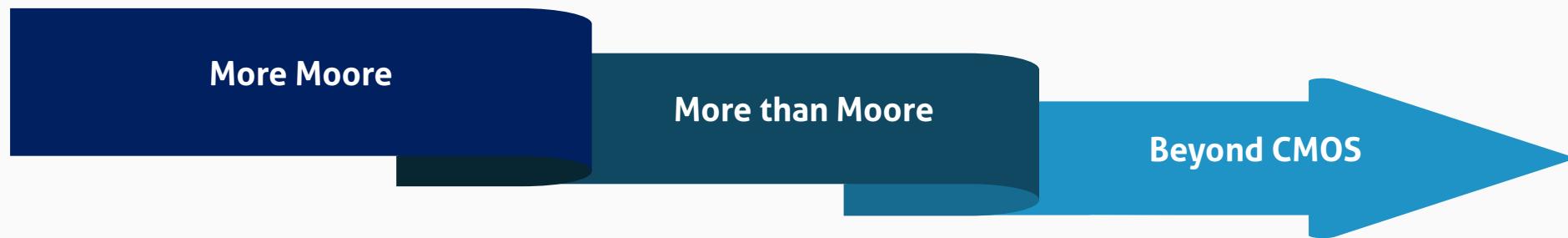
## Chip Design - Tracing every step from concept to chip

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### Moore's Law and the Future of Computing

Gordon Moore predicted in 1965 that the number of transistors on a chip would double approximately every 2 years, leading to rapid increases in **computing power, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness**.

For decades, progress followed Moore's Law - but as traditional scaling faces physical and economic limits, the industry is now advancing through three



#### What It Means:

Involves shrinking transistors to fit more on a chip, thereby increasing computational power and efficiency.

#### How It Works:

Smaller patterns via EUV lithography; using new transistor designs like Fin

#### What It Means:

Add new non-digital functions and components for better system integration.

#### How It Works:

Integrates functions like sensors, RF/analog, power circuits, and use 3D

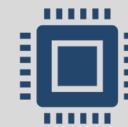
#### What It Means:

Explore entirely new computing paradigms beyond traditional transistors.

#### How It Works:

Explores quantum computing, brain-inspired chips, spintronics, light-based

If Moore's Law is no longer the map, what's the new way forward? Let's chart the innovations beyond simple scaling.

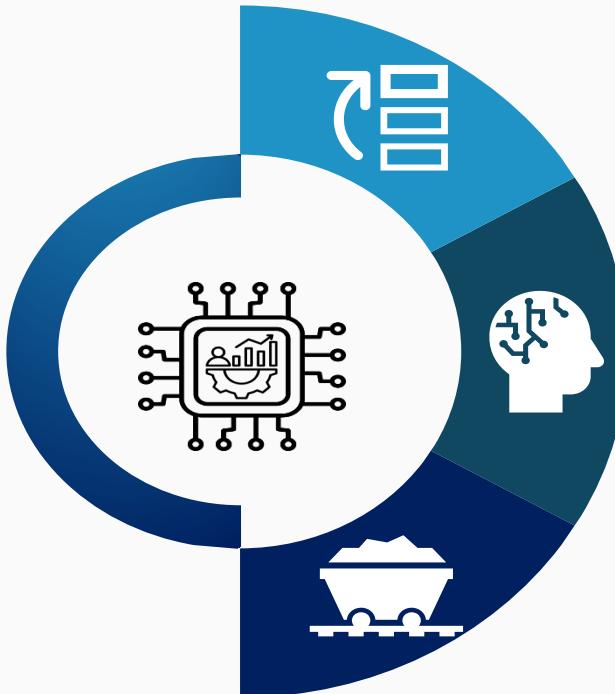


## Chip Design - Tracing every step from concept to chip

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### Smarter, Smaller, Faster: The New Era of IC Design

Semiconductor chip design is rapidly evolving to meet the demands of next-gen computing. Innovations in architecture, automation, and materials are driving higher performance, energy efficiency, and design flexibility across industries.



#### 3D Integration – Compact Design

- Vertical chip stacking improves bandwidth, lowers latency, and reduces power use.
- Enables efficient, high-density designs for AI and quantum computing.
- Reshaping chip design, demanding co-design to address layout, thermal, and interconnect challenges.

#### AI-Driven Chip Design

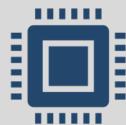
- AI enhances chip layout, defect detection, and design automation.
- Enables fast, cost-effective development of custom chips for edge, medical, and industrial use.
- Machine learning improves architecture quality and shortens design cycles.

#### Novel Materials

- SiC and GaN offer faster switching, higher power density, and compact design.
- These wide-bandgap semiconductors outperform silicon in high-speed, high-power applications and enables beyond silicon chips.

#### Our Take

By combining AI-assisted chip design with next-generation EDA tools, designing teams can produce faster, more power-efficient chips in less time offering a practical way to offset the slowing pace of Moore's law.



## The Silicon Battleground

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### Decoding Business Models in the Chip Industry

#### Fabless

**Focus:** Designing complete chips (SoC, ASIC, FPGA)  
**Manufacturing:** Outsources fabrication  
**Revenue source:** Selling finished silicon  
**Key Players:**

**Qualcomm**



#### IP Licensing & Royalty Model

**Focus:** Designing reusable IP blocks  
**Manufacturing:** Handled by licensee (Not by IP provider)  
**Revenue source:** License fees + royalties  
**Key Players:**

**SYNOPSYS®**

**arm**

#### Pure Design House

**Focus:** Designing custom chips  
**Manufacturing:** Arranged by client or via partner foundry  
**Revenue source:** Fixed price contracts  
**Key Players:**



#### Platform/Reference Design

**Focus:** providers sell a ready to use chip + system blueprint, Customer need to integrate at product level  
**Manufacturing:** Handled by Client  
**Revenue source:** From licensing/tools  
**Key Players:**



#### Open-Source Core Commercialization

**Focus:** Building commercial-grade, verified open-source cores  
**Manufacturing:** Handled by client  
**Revenue source:** Support, verification and specialization services, licensing  
**Key Players:**

**bluespec**



**SiFive**

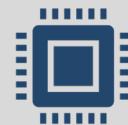
#### Joint Development

**Focus:** Co-design chips in partnership with large OEMs (e.g., Google, Amazon)  
**Manufacturing:** Handled by Foundries  
**Revenue source:** Milestone payments or shared product margins  
**Key Players:**



#### Our Take

In the near term, IP licensing and royalty streams are well positioned to benefit as chip designers prioritize faster time-to-market, generating steady, high-margin recurring revenue. At the same time, companies that provide AI infrastructure such as Nvidia, Google etc. are poised to gain as firms seek to tap the AI market and build more capable models.



## The Silicon Battleground

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### When Customer Becomes Competitor

Google, a big customer for NVIDIA's GPUs, launched its in-house designed chips

In late November 2025, a wave of reporting highlighted that Google's newest TPUs are beating Nvidia's flagship GPUs on some real world large-AI workloads - especially at price-performance for big model training and inference. There were two main reasons behind this wave of news.

#### The "Meta" Rumour

Several reports emerged that Meta, one of the biggest customers of Nvidia was in talks with Google to buy or lease TPUs for AI infrastructure.

#### Gemini 3's Success

Google announced that its latest AI model, Gemini 3, was trained exclusively on Google's TPUs. Its performance highlighted the significant scalability and efficiency advantages of TPUs.

Now let's evaluate the factors that contribute to the strengths of each chip.



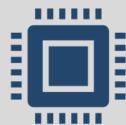
Purpose-built ASICs optimized for specific workloads, delivering high efficiency and throughput.  
Strong advantage in inference and large-scale deployments due to superior power efficiency and cost-



General-purpose accelerators with exceptional raw computational power across diverse workloads.  
Highly versatile, allowing rapid adaptation to evolving AI architectures while maintaining strong performance.

#### Our Take

Google's TPUs are set to compete more aggressively with NVIDIA's GPUs as AI companies prioritize turning profitable using its cost-efficiency and operational efficiency. However, NVIDIA will remain strong due to GPUs' suitability for high-performance training workloads and the widespread adoption of CUDA, which makes shifting to Google's JAX/TensorFlow more challenging.



## The Silicon Battleground

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### The U.S. still leads the race...

According to a 2022 study by the Semiconductor Industry Association and the Boston Consulting Group, U.S. based firms generated **46 percent of global semiconductor revenues in 2020** from design activities alone.



### Reasons for US dominance

#### Robust R&D Investment

The U.S. chip firms reinvest heavily in R&D, driven by a virtuous cycle where sales leadership boosts profits, enabling further innovation

#### Comprehensive Ecosystem

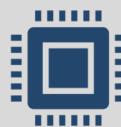
The U.S. has leading fabless companies and supporting tools infrastructure like EDA (With Synopsys, Cadence, and Siemens EDA holding ~75% of the global market) providing a key competitive edge.

#### Talent Pipeline

It is home to world-class universities and tech hubs, cultivating a large pool of highly skilled engineers and designers who directly drive innovation and growth.

#### Government Support

Policies like the CHIPS and Science Act have directed substantial public funding toward advanced semiconductor research and workforce development

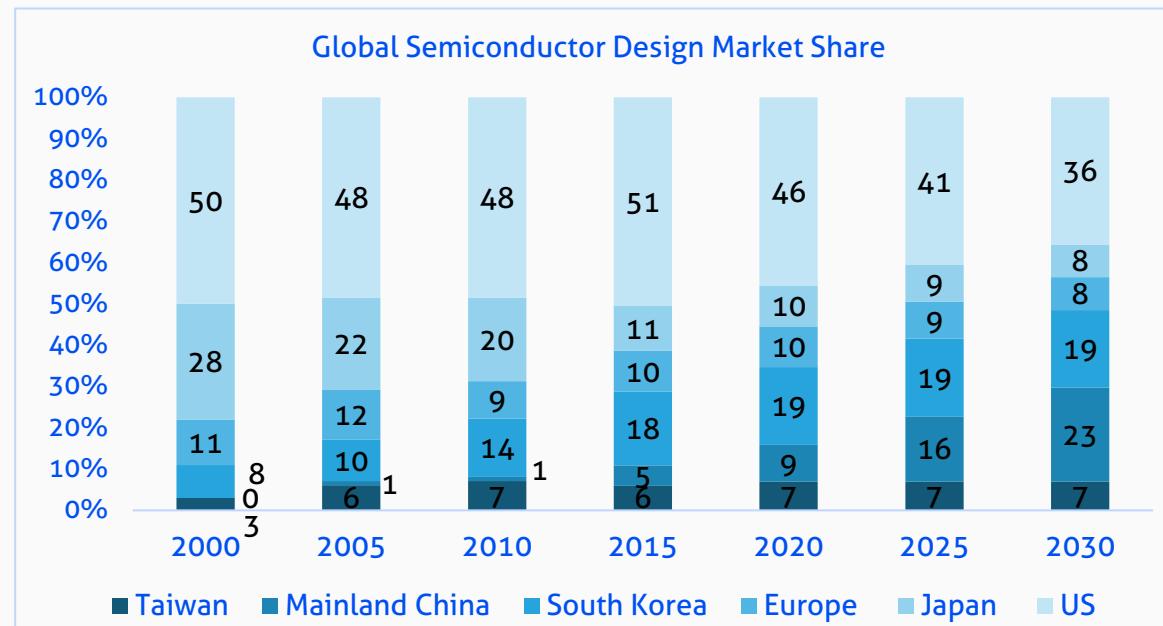


## The Silicon Battleground

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### ...but China is closing the gap

While the U.S. maintains a strong position, its leadership faces challenges, particularly from China. A 2022 SIA-BCG study found the U.S. still leads the market, but China is catching up in legacy chips, though it remains behind in cutting-edge chips.



### Factor for China's Emergence

1

Massive investment through National IC Strategy & Made in China 2025 with a goal to become self-sufficient and Global Leader in IC design and Manufacturing.

2

State-funded subsidies, tax breaks, land grants, and R&D credits allow Chinese chipmakers to operate at lower costs and sell products more cheaply than their rivals

3

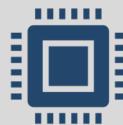
China's chip design firms grew from 2,218 in 2020 to 3,626 in 2024. While many may not survive, still this growth underscores the rapid expansion of China's chip design industry

4

China mandates all domestic IoT chips adopt RISC-V by 2027, building an open-source ecosystem that bypasses Western licensing limits and drives innovation

### Our Take

China is rapidly closing design gaps but constraints in advanced tooling, high-end EDA/IP, and U.S./allied export controls mean the U.S. is likely to keep the lead for the next 15–20 years.



## The Silicon Battleground

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### India's Chip Design Playbook

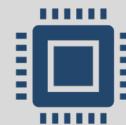
India has several companies - ranging from startups to established conglomerates and public institutions - that are actively involved in semiconductor chip design.

#### Indian Companies



#### India's major Chips and their use cases

Chip Type	Target Industries & Use-Cases
Microcontrollers & SoCs	IoT devices, edge computing, space/defence applications
Analog / Mixed-Signal / RF / MEMS	Telecommunications, IoT, consumer electronics, industrial sectors
Display & Compound Semiconductors	Mobile devices, laptops, automotive displays, medical & defence systems
Power Electronics (IGBTs/MOSFETs)	Electric vehicles (two/four-wheelers), solar energy, industrial automation
ASICs & Custom VLSI IP	Avionics, industrial control systems, telecommunications, embedded systems



## The Silicon Battleground

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### Silicon Sunrise: India's Chip Design Moment

The Government of India has made semiconductor design a strategic priority to position the country as a global tech hub. The industry, valued at **\$45–50 bn in 2024-25**, is projected to reach **\$100–110 bn in 2030**, supported by comprehensive policies to drive growth. Key initiatives include:

#### Policy Framework

**India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)** with outlay of 72,000 cr to develop the semiconductor ecosystem  
 Partnership with various countries like **India-U.S. Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology**

#### Financial Support

**Design Linked Incentive** which will reimburse 50% of eligible design cost (capped at ₹15 cr.)  
**Deployment linked incentive** with incentive of 4-6% of net sales (capped at ₹30 cr.)

#### Infrastructure Development

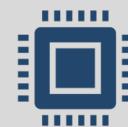
Selected **72 startup** for the EDA tools support under the Chip Design Infrastructure Support  
 Through **ChipIN centers** provided EDA tools access to **85,000 B.Tech, M.Tech and PhD** level students

#### Workforce Development

Introduced **AICTE curriculum** for **VLSI Design & IC manufacturing Centers of Excellence (CoE)** and **ChipIN centers** to give the hands-on experience and prepare a skilled workforce

#### Our Take

India contributes about **20%** of the world's semiconductor design engineers but holds only a small share of global chip-design output and IP. While the government **initially prioritized fabs and OSAT**, greater policy support is now needed for the **domestic design ecosystem**. Strong domestic chip design can create a steady pipeline of IPs, shorten development cycles, reduce dependence on foreign suppliers, and insulate the supply chain from export controls and geopolitical shocks. To build a robust semiconductor ecosystem, design is an essential part of the value chain.



## The Silicon Battleground

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After having built the architecture and verified it in the lab, the next and equally critical step is turning that design into manufacturable silicon. Turning blueprint into silicon is a distinct industry and it comes with its own challenges, risks and competitive rules.

Let's look at the reason why:



### Design = Innovation & IP

Designing focus on architectures, RTL, verification, EDA tools, and differentiation through features.



### Manufacturing = Industrialization & Scale

Manufacturing focus on process technology, yield, capital intensity, supply chain and massive operational discipline.



### Different economics & players

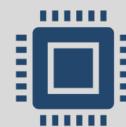
Design is talent-driven, while manufacturing is capital-intensive, scale-driven, and often concentrated in countries creating distinct risks and approaches.



### Different risks & KPIs

For designers, the key metrics are time-to-market and tape-out success; for fabs, they are yield, throughput, cost per wafer, and equipment uptime.

In the Chip Series #2, we will explore how completed chip designs are manufactured from silicon - fabrication processes and the tools and equipment that enable them, outline the principal business models that govern fabrication and supply, and analyze the competitive landscape to identify the companies and regional ecosystems that lead semiconductor manufacturing today.

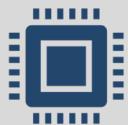


## Abbreviations

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Abbreviation	Meaning
<b>DRAM</b>	Dynamic Random Access Memory
<b>ASIC</b>	Application Specific Integrated Circuits
<b>FPGA</b>	Field Programmable Gate Array
<b>ADAS</b>	Advanced Driver Assistance Systems
<b>ECU</b>	Engine Control Unit
<b>LiDAR</b>	Light Detection and Ranging
<b>MCUs</b>	Microcontrollers
<b>MPUs</b>	Micro Processing Units
<b>MOSFETs</b>	Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor Field-Effect Transistor
<b>PMICs</b>	Power Management Integrated Circuits
<b>TPUs</b>	Tensor Processing Unit
<b>NICs</b>	Network Interface Card
<b>HBM</b>	High Bandwidth Memory
<b>RF-ICs</b>	Radio Frequency Integrated Circuits
<b>ATMP</b>	Assembly, Testing, Marking and Packaging
<b>OSAT</b>	Outsourced Assembly and Testing
<b>RTL</b>	Register-Transfer Level

Abbreviation	Meaning
<b>VHDL</b>	Very High-Speed Integrated Circuit Hardware Description Language
<b>GDSII</b>	Graphic Data System II
<b>OASIS</b>	Open Artwork System Interchange Standard
<b>CISC</b>	Complex Instruction Set Computer
<b>RISC-V</b>	Reduced Instruction Set Computer Generation 5
<b>EUV Lithography</b>	EUV Lithography - Extreme Ultraviolet Lithography
<b>FETs</b>	Field Effect Transistor
<b>GAAs</b>	Gallium Arsenide
<b>CMOS</b>	Complementary Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor
<b>SiC</b>	Silicon Carbide
<b>GaN</b>	Gallium Nitride
<b>CUDA</b>	Compute Unified Device Architecture, NVIDIA's parallel computing platform
<b>CHIPS Act</b>	Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors Act
<b>RF</b>	Radio Frequency
<b>MEMS</b>	Micro-Electro-Mechanical Systems



## About **kcm****Lens**

**kcm****Lens** is a special publication prepared by the Strategic Advisory team at K C Mehta & Co LLP. This publication is intended to provide deep dive into the value chain of a particular industry. The idea is to provide the reader an end-to-end understanding of a particular industry through the Lens of each segment of the value chain of that industry. This would act as a ready reference for professionals, who seek to understand their client's business and as an update document for business leaders for tracking recent developments in their industry.

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## Locations

### Ahmedabad

#### Arpit Jain

Level 11, Tower B,  
Ratnaakar Nine Square,  
Vastrapur,  
Ahmedabad - 380 015

Phone: + 91 79 4910 2200

[arpit.jain@kcmehta.com](mailto:arpit.jain@kcmehta.com)

### Bengaluru

#### Dhaval Trivedi

4/1, Rudra Chambers, First  
Floor, 4<sup>th</sup> Main, B/W 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup>  
Cross Road, Malleshwaram,  
Bengaluru - 560 003

Phone: +91 80 2356 1880

[dhaval.trivedi@kcmehta.com](mailto:dhaval.trivedi@kcmehta.com)

### Mumbai

#### Bhadresh Vyas

315, The Summit Business Bay,  
Nr. WEH Metro Station,  
Gundavali, Andheri East,  
Mumbai - 400 069

Phone: +91 22 2612 5834

[bhadresh.vyas@kcmehta.com](mailto:bhadresh.vyas@kcmehta.com)

### Vadodara

#### Milin Mehta

Meghdhanush,  
Race Course,  
Vadodara - 390 007

Phone: +91 265 2440 400

[milin.mehta@kcmehta.com](mailto:milin.mehta@kcmehta.com)

