

# Pokémon Go: How to Keep Catching Them All Marketing Plan

Erika Rief, Durba Samanta, Tony Tripp, “Krystofer” Dongjae Kim

## **Executive Summary**

In July 2016, the Pokémon Company and Niantic disrupted the mobile gaming industry with the release of the Pokémon Go mobile game. Within two weeks of the release, 45 million active users were aboard and playing the game, surpassing usage of any other mobile game. However, with the initial phase of excitement coming to an end, there was a drop of 15 million users, a third of its customer base. Following that, Pokémon Go broke its 74 day streak as the number one grossing app in the iPhone App Store, being replaced by “Clash Royale.”

Our overall intent was to understand what does and doesn't appeal to users about Pokémon Go and what can do better to retain users. We used an online survey to gather demographic, consumption and preferential data. Our survey had 35 respondents out of which 33 play/have played Pokémon Go. We disregarded 2 respondents that have never played the game.

The goal for our strategy is to increase our user base to 70 million active users and based on our research, we have identified the following areas for improvement and accompanying strategies. First, after exhausting the existing features, users have stopped playing the game because they feel there is nothing left to accomplish. More challenging game play is needed to re-engage this user base. Second, users most value the social aspect of the game. Pokémon Go could exploit social features since they are inherently self promoting. Last, users are craving more reality within the virtual world. One mutually beneficial strategy for Pokémon Go and its users is to introduce ads or product placement based on businesses or locations that users would come across while catching Pokémon.

Overall, the suggested marketing mix focuses heavily on Product and Promotion strategies that will benefit the the game based on our market research and user insights.

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## **Project Description and Industry Definition**

In July 2016, the Pokémon Company and Niantic disrupted the mobile gaming industry with the release of the Pokémon Go mobile game. Within two weeks of the release, 45 million active users were roaming the streets catching Pokémon, surpassing usage of any other mobile game. Not only was the volume of users unprecedented, but also the amount of time each user was spending playing the app. The usage rate exceeded not only other mobile games, but also the time spent on social media apps like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. As avid Pokémon Go players, we wanted to study Pokémon Go's recipe for success.

The Pokémon Company has had a loyal following tracing back to the release of its first handheld game console products in 1996. However, in recent years, smartphones have become the indispensable technology packed with processing powers comparable to personal computers. This led to a recent decline in usage of Pokémon products which were based on the handheld console games. Due to this trend, the Pokémon Company, in partnership with Niantic, decided to enter the smartphone-centric mobile gaming market. As smartphone technology advances, more games were developed that took advantage of new features. In 2016, the mobile gaming industry was 3.7 billion dollar market<sup>1</sup> and it is projected to grow over 6.6% by 2019.<sup>2</sup>

Instead of just creating another mobile game, Niantic leveraged the premise of catching Pokémon to build the first successful augmented reality mobile game. It wasn't just what Niantic did, but how it did it that created a recipe for utter obsession. The mix of nostalgia, augmented reality, and social interaction offered loyal fans a way back into the Pokémon world and the younger generation an enticing introduction to the Pokémon craze.

However, with the initial phase of excitement coming to an end, the question of whether this version of Pokémon Go will also be a fad is beginning to surface. Reports from August showed a drop of 15 million users, a third of its customer base. Then, on September 21, Pokémon Go broke its 74 day streak as the number one grossing app in the iPhone App Store, being replaced by "Clash Royale." What strategy will Pokémon Go devise to combat this

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<sup>1</sup> "The Global Games Market 2016 | Per Region & Segment | Newzoo." Newzoo.com. Newzoo, 21 Apr. 2016. Web. 01 Oct. 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, Paul, and Paul Sallomi. Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited 2016. Report. Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited. London: Creative Studios at Deloitte, 2016.

downturn and continue the launch's unprecedented momentum? We have developed a marketing plan to return Pokémon Go to the number one position.

### **Industry Factor**

In Mobile Gaming industry, most games are priced very low to free. Majority of monetization is from selling premium features and other incentives. Distributors consist of Android and iOS and other distributors exist but they are negligible. Mobile games are promoted in numerous ways. The most common method of promotion is on mobile web browsers on mobiles sites or social networking platforms as banner or video ads. In recent years, in line with industry growth, they have impacted bigger media such as TV ads, and movie theater previews. The three big factors are social aspect of gaming, permission marketing and VR/AR technology development.

First big industry factor is the huge influence of social media platforms for mobile game promotions. Most gamers find a new game from social networking sites, messenger apps, and word of mouth.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, games are usually integrated with social networking sites. First of all, many popular mobile games use Facebook or Google as a login. Game themselves have a functionalities built in to generate more social media contents such as sharing scores or footage of gameplay.

Another significant industry factor is permission marketing trend for advertisement revenues. As free apps are heavily dependent on the quality of app experience. Therefore, mobile gaming market is cautious about ad placement. They market market to users under their permission to forge longer term relationships; users have more control over the type of ads and frequency. They are many times asked directly about their opinion about the ads. Further, some games offer incentives within the game in exchange of such permission.<sup>4</sup>

Lastly, there have been many of significant investments in technology developments in the Augmented and Virtual Reality contents. Tech giants are investing in Strategic Business Units for VR and AR products. For example, Microsoft's Hololens, Facebook's acquisition of

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<sup>3</sup>"Game On: 5 Global Mobile Gaming Trends," Facebook IQ, accessed September 25, 2016, <http://insights.fb.com/2016/07/11/global-mobile-gaming-trends/>.

<sup>4</sup>Carroll, Justin. "10 Mobile Game Marketing Trends For 2016 | Monastery." 10 Mobile Game Marketing Trends For 2016 Comments. 2015. Accessed September 25, 2016. <http://www.monastery.io/digital-marketing/10-mobile-game-marketing-trends-for-2016/>.

VR headset leader Oculus, Apple acquired PrimeSense, Google's Cardboard and the acquisition of AR hardware, Magic Leap, Sony's Playstation VR and so on.

### **Competitive Set: SWOT**

Pokémon Go's strengths include nostalgia, an established universe, active gameplay, a social forum, intuitive gameplay, and a key location-gaming patents. With a steady release of products over the last two decades, Pokémon has built a loyal brand following.<sup>5</sup> The release of Pokémon Go not only engages a new generation of users, but also allows for the Pokémon Company to reach their previous users on a sentimental level. Over the course of 20 years, Pokémon has created a brand "universe" through console games, television shows, trading cards, and movies. These auxiliary materials can be integrated into the app, without significant creative investment. As an example, currently 148 Pokémon exist in Pokémon Go while 761 Pokémon exist across the universe<sup>6</sup>. Utilizing Augmented Reality with GPS location, the app requires users to get outside and travel in order to progress in the game. Reviews have praised Pokémon Go for encouraging an active lifestyle and improving the health of its users.<sup>7</sup> The nature of the app's gameplay creates a platform for social-bonding opportunities and serves as a conversation starter. A sense of pride and community have been developed in one's participation. The gameplay of Pokémon Go allows for users to progress through collecting Pokémon, leveling up current Pokémon, completing the Pokedex, and interacting with gyms. This intuitive gameplay has attracted users across demographics. The producers of Pokémon Go hold 3 U.S. patents that protect the integrity of "location-based parallel reality games<sup>8</sup>". Such protectionary measures could translate into entry barriers for direct competitors.

The weaknesses of Pokémon Go include the simplistic gameplay, technical issues, update glitches, active gameplay, and geographic limitations. The gameplay's limited features have driven some users to become bored with the app. One critic said, "Pokémon Go is still a very

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<sup>5</sup>DeMers, Jayson. "7 Valuable Marketing Lessons Pokémon Go Has Taught Us". July 12, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2016. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jaysondemers/2016/07/12/7-valuable-marketing-lessons-Pokémon-go-has-taught-us/#397b09973bb8>.

<sup>6</sup>Henderson, Rik. "How many Pokémon are there in Pokémon Go?". July 14, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2016. <http://www.pocket-lint.com/news/138242-how-many-Pokémon-are-there-in-Pokémon-go-151-and-here-they-all-are>.

<sup>7</sup>Krans, Brian. "Is Playing Pokémon Go Really Exercise?". July 15, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2016. <http://www.healthline.com/health-news/is-playing-Pokémon-go-really-exercise>.

<sup>8</sup>Brachmann, Steve. "Pokémon Go developer Niantic owns Three Patents on Location-based Gaming". August 10, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2016. <http://www.ipwatchdog.com/2016/08/10/Pokémon-go-patents-location-based-gaming/id=71648>.

basic video game. It uses Google Maps at its most stripped down level<sup>9</sup>.” Upon initial release, the popularity of Pokémon Go led to an overload of Niantic’s servers. Some of the initial adopters were lost during this phase due to an inability to access the app. Glitches and freezing still plague some of the users.<sup>10</sup> Updates to the game have led to users losses and poor reception. Several players complained that an update resulted in the loss of their progression in the game. In order to progress in the game, users have to constantly travel and get outside. Not all users are invested in this kind of participation for long-term. Geographic limitations can plague and discourage users who live in rural areas or have lack of cell phone coverage.<sup>11</sup>

Pokémon Go’s opportunities include optimizing business utilization of the app, integrating with the Apple Watch, mining user data, and partnering with social media platforms. Business owners have seen increased foot traffic with the rise of Pokémon Go. Consequently, businesses have been making in-game purchases to draw more users to their locations.<sup>12</sup> Apple recently announced that Pokémon Go will be integrated with the Apple Watch by late 2016. Such a move will allow for the app to be played in a new manner and on a new platform. Some experts believe the Apple Watch is better suited for gameplay than a phone and will enhance users’ experience<sup>13</sup>. With information gathered on users’ locations and travel patterns, Pokémon Go could provide user unique user data to external companies. Rather than showing a user’s browser history, Pokémon Go could demonstrate where a user frequents. Pokémon Go’s gameplay is currently isolated within the app. Integration with other social media platforms could be mutually beneficial to both for app use and popularity.

Threats currently facing Pokémon Go include safety risks, privacy risks, governmental regulations, and competition. Negative press releases about the safety risks of Pokémon Go have been surfacing. Stories detail instances of users walking off of cliffs, being mugged, crashing

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<sup>9</sup>Hobbs, Thomas. "Why Pokémon Go is A Game-Changer for Augmented Reality and Marketers". July 18, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2016. <https://www.marketingweek.com/2016/07/18/why-Pokémon-go-is-a-game-changer-for-augmented-reality-and-marketers>.

<sup>10</sup>Hanson, Matthew. "How to Fix Pokémon Go Problems". September 12, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2016. <http://www.techradar.com/how-to/gaming/how-to-fix-Pokémon-go-problems-1325007>.

<sup>11</sup> Morrow, Brandon. "Pokémon Go Fans in Rural Areas Struggle to Play Game". July 25, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2016. <http://heavy.com/games/2016/07/Pokémon-go-rural-areas-play-how-to-remote-small-towns-add-poke-stops-complaints-niantic-response-comic-c-on>.

<sup>12</sup>Maffei, Lucia. "Pokémon Go will soon get ads in the form of sponsored locations". July 13, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2016. <https://techcrunch.com/2016/07/13/Pokémon-go-will-soon-get-ads-in-the-form-of-sponsored-locations>.

<sup>13</sup>Eadicicco, Lisa. "Here’s Why Bringing Pokémon Go to Apple Watch is Brilliant". September 8, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2016. <http://fortune.com/2016/09/08/Pokémon-go-apple-watch>.

their cars, and trespassing.<sup>14</sup> Concerns have also been raised about the potential privacy violations that can occur with Pokémon Go. With constant GPS-location tracking and access to other media accounts, Pokémon Go enables the monitoring of users.<sup>15</sup> Several U.S. Lawmakers are considering legislation that would place restrictions on Pokémon Go, due to these demonstrated safety risks and privacy risks. Letters have been addressed to Niantic from a Minnesota Senator; if unanswered, these letters could result in Congressional hearings.<sup>16</sup> Direct competitors face several barriers entering the mobile gaming market as Pokémon Go has. Beyond the protectionary patents, many experts credit Pokémon Go's success to an unrivaled market following. Nevertheless, direct competition is threatening Pokémon Go through Blippar, which provides the software for brands to create AR experiences. They say that applications for its API suite have grown threefold as consumers wake up to the Pokémon Go buzz. Indirect competition threatens Pokémon Go through the rise of augmented reality. Augmented reality has been widely adopted by sectors such as the car industry. Ford and Audi are allowing users to preview cars with augmented reality apps. The retail industry has also entered the competition with House of Fraser using augmented reality tech to let consumers scan shoppable windows.<sup>17</sup> Pokémon Go has distinguished itself amongst these indirect competitors by making the augmented reality experience an everyday thing.

### **Industry Forecast**

Mobile gaming industry is expected to grow from around 30 Billion dollars in 2016 to 37.4 billion dollars by 2019.<sup>18</sup> With that growth, the scope of mobile gaming and the experience level will grow as well.

As the aforementioned investments of numerous industry leaders in technology should yield results in coming years. It is expected to become highly competitive market with diverse range of wearable gaming accessories available to enhance the virtual reality and augmented reality game-play by bridging the gap to reality even further. As a part of creating the convincing

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<sup>14</sup>LaMagna, Maria. "Should You Let Your Kids Play Pokémon Go?" July 22, 2016. Accessed September 27, 2016. <http://www.marketwatch.com/story/do-your-kids-play-Pokémon-go-what-to-watch-out-for-2016-07-11>.

<sup>15</sup>Pflaum, Nadia. "The Security Risks of Pokémon Go". July 14, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2016. <http://www.politifact.com/ohio/article/2016/jul/14/Pokémon-go-rnc-it-security-risk>.

<sup>16</sup>Zanotti, Emily. "Government Considers First Pokémon Go Regulations". July 14, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2016. <http://heatst.com/politics/government-considers-first-Pokémon-go-regulations>.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid 7.

<sup>18</sup>Lee, Paul, and Paul Sallomi. Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited 2016. Report. Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited. London: Creative Studios at Deloitte, 2016.



cyber reality, the emphasis on sound technology is projected to be significant. Designing sonic experience for virtual reality and augmented reality brings new challenges that have never been needed. As the early stages of new products are being developed and in the fundraising stage. OSSIC X headphones render sonically accurate 3D sounds to your ears based on origin of virtual sound source. And CEEKARS 4D even adds tactile vibration to maximize realism in accordance with the virtual surroundings.<sup>19</sup> To stay competitive, mobile games in the future will not rely solely on the mobile phone itself. While phones may stay as the central device, portable hardware will rise as the scale of electronics gets smaller.

Cause-marketing have been around for decades but it had huge growth in recent years with millennial generation. From the year 2011 to 2014, globally, consumers' willingness to pay more for socially conscious products have grown by 10 percent.<sup>20</sup> As the mobile gaming market volume increases and the primarily millennial demographic gains more buying power, mobile gaming market will be sure to make bigger impact in the cause-marketing in coming years. Currently, many gaming communities organize Game-a-thons to donate money to charitable causes.

Going further than the gamers donating their money, the content itself can be marketed and developed for specific humanitarian fields. Target have created a series of mobile games called "Bullseye's Playground" that donates up to 1 million dollars to St. Jude Children's hospital whenever people downloaded and played the games.<sup>21</sup> Johns Hopkins hospital have facilitated Pokémon Go games for the children's wing to improve their day to day treatment experiences.<sup>22</sup>

Further, with VR technology that completely immerses the user in a different setting is being experimented with in health care system. From as simply alleviating momentary pain of Dental procedures to having bigger emotional impact as helping an rehab patient visualize walking again and transporting a burn victim to a snowy world, altering of patients' negative

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<sup>19</sup> Phillips, Winifred. "Video Game Music Composer: Music and Sound in VR Headphones (Part One)." Gamasutra Article. September 6, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2016. [http://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/WinifredPhillips/20160906/280575/Video\\_Game\\_Music\\_Composer\\_Music\\_and\\_Sound\\_in\\_VR\\_Headphones\\_Part\\_One.php](http://www.gamasutra.com/blogs/WinifredPhillips/20160906/280575/Video_Game_Music_Composer_Music_and_Sound_in_VR_Headphones_Part_One.php).

<sup>20</sup> Neilson, Corporate Social Responsibility Survey. 2016. Web. 22 Sept. 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Megan, Strand. "Bullseye's Playground." Cause Update. December 04, 2014. Accessed September 25, 2016. <http://causeupdate.com/blog/bullseyes-playground?rq=bullseye>.

<sup>22</sup> Jimenez, Omar. "Johns Hopkins Helps Children Play 'Pokémon Go' during Stay." WBALTV.COM. July 15, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2016. <http://www.wbaltv.com/health/johns-hopkins-helps-children-play-Pokémon-go-during-stay/40729344>.

realities of their health is expected have a huge placebo effect with relatively low-cost hardwares and customizable software contents.<sup>23</sup>

Lastly, users opinions and inputs will matter more than ever. Consumer's platform to speak out publically is increasing as new social apps get launched, ad-blockers are gaining popularity and permission marketing trend will continue to demand more user-centric marketing. Therefore, users will want to see even more seamlessly integrated advertising products within each medium than currently popular captive video ads or banner ads. Also, users will require more room for involvement and agile response in forms of updates or continuous soft-releases for mobile games.

## Market Research

**Objective:** Our overall intent was to understand what does and doesn't appeal to users about Pokémon Go and what can do better to retain users.

**Methodology:** We used an online survey to gather demographic, consumption and preferential data. Our survey had 35 respondents out of which 33 play/have played Pokémon Go. We disregarded 2 respondents that have never played the game.

### Quantitative Research Findings:

- 72% of our respondents and 69% of users were women.<sup>24</sup>
- 45.7% of respondents were between the ages of 21-25, 34.3% were 26-30.<sup>25</sup>
- 78.8% of our respondents currently/in the past have played a Pokémon game or watched the TV series.<sup>26</sup>
- 28.5% of users heard about this app from the news, 40% heard of it from friends, 28.5% from Social Media.<sup>27</sup>
- 60% of the users started playing the game in a week or two after its release.<sup>28</sup>
- 36.4% play the game sometimes (1-3 hrs/ week)<sup>29</sup>
- Local neighborhoods/Pokestops/gyms are the most frequented location to play the game, followed by Other locations/Pokestops that are more than a mile away. Playing at

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<sup>23</sup> King, Ian, and Caroline Chen. "Hospitals Try Giving Patients a Dose of VR." Bloomberg.com. August 29, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2016. <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-08-29/hospitals-try-giving-patients-a-dose-of-vr>.

<sup>24</sup> Appendix G, Survey Results Part II; Graph G9, Gender

<sup>25</sup> Appendix G, Survey Results Part II; Graph G8, Histogram of Age

<sup>26</sup> Appendix G, Survey Results Part II; Graph G12, How Familiar were you with the Pokemon brand before this app

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<sup>28</sup> Appendix G, Survey Results Part II; Graph G1, When did you start playing?

<sup>29</sup> Appendix G, Survey Results Part II; Graph G3, How actively do you play the game?

work/school is 3rd in most frequented and playing at home and other locations finish last.  
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- 81.8% of respondents play the game both alone and socially, only 18.2% just play the game alone.<sup>31</sup>
- 42% of respondents are highly likely to go into a business if they provided a lure/discount.<sup>32</sup>
- 75% of users have recommended Pokémon Go to their family/friends which has led to adoption.<sup>33</sup>
- 21.2% of all users have stopped playing the game after playing it initially.<sup>34</sup>
- 71.4% of the users who stopped playing, still have the app on their phone.

### **Qualitative Analysis (See Appendix G13):**

#### **User responses about what they enjoy about the game and the experience:**

**Community + Activity:** There was an overwhelming response on really enjoying the social aspect of the game, the fact that it enabled people to meet similarly interested people that they didn't have a reason to talk to before. The fact that the game pushed people to go out and be active was also mentioned often. Several users actively play during their commute or within transit.

*"The early social bonding opportunities were amazing, as players poured out to local hotspots and shy/introverted players reached out and started conversations with people they wouldn't have otherwise"*

**Concept/Augmented Reality:** Just the idea of being able to catch Pokémon and battle them in the real world is something that resonated with several of our users and was mentioned constantly. The novelty of the concept provided a thrill in itself.

*"The motto of the game: Gotta Catch Em All! I'm obsessed with collecting, filling out my pokedex, and sharing with my friends."*

*"I like the feeling of fictional characters in the real world. & working toward goal to catchem all."*

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<sup>31</sup> Appendix G, Survey Results Part II; Graph G5, Do you play alone or socially(or both)?

<sup>32</sup> Appendix G, Survey Results Part II; Graph G6, How Likely are you to open the app if a local business was offering a discount/Lure?

<sup>33</sup> Appendix G, Survey Results Part II; Graph G7, Do you recommend Pokemon Go to your friends/family?

<sup>34</sup> Ibid 27.

**Sense of Discovery + Nostalgia:** One of the most talked about aspects of the game was the sense of nostalgia the game brought back and being able to do something that our users had wished for in their childhood. A sense of discovering aiding that combines to make the key driver for people playing the game.

*“A collector's mindset? Catch'em all. I also like social Quality. I sometimes find crowded Pokestop. And you walk in there knowing there's someone with whom you share a common interest. Strangers will talk to you. Surprises are also a factor. Not knowing what will pop up.”*

*“I just like collecting Pokémon. It's nostalgic, as I was 10 when the anime was being shown on TV... It was like a childhood dream come true. A real pokedex! Although it's kinda boring now.”*

**User responses about what they disliked about the game/experience:**

**Technical:** Battery consumption was a huge issue for most and was creating a dilemma between playing the game and using their phone for other things. Glitches and app crashes were the 2nd largest technical issues. A broken tracking system within the Maps feature of the game was also frequently mentioned as an annoyance.

*“Battery consumption. Sometimes I have to commit. Am I playing the game? Or do I need to text or use the phone for other things? It's basic right now. I wish there were more to do.”*

**Social Functionality:** Users complained about the lack of social engagement within the game, they would have liked to either battle friends/other trainers, fight friends in gym's and be able to chat in gyms with other fighters. There was also a strong dissatisfaction with the fact that people cannot trade Pokémon with each other.

*“It currently lacks different features that prevent it from being a full Pokémon experience. (Trading, battling needs overhaul, training Pokémon feels different)”*

**Game Experience:** There negative factors about the game experience mentioned were:

Levelling up and hatching process takes too long, Having to hold the phone up, having to travel to catch Pokemon, Difficulty in collecting candy, Difficulty catching rare Pokémon in local neighborhoods.

*“I wish we got more incubators. I LOVE hatching eggs and resent that I have to buy incubators to have them hatch. It's also really hard and frustrating trying to get candy. I can't afford to travel and there's some Pokémon I would LOVE to evolve or power up but I can't.”*

**Causes in Decline of Usage:** A large majority of responses were confirmed that their has usage declined since first playing the game. An insight based on recurring responses was that some people found the time to play only when they were commuting/traveling or in transit because it was easier to catch Pokémon as well as better usage of time compared to other busier hours(See Appendix A1).

**Re-engagement Criteria:** Despite security, battery, glitches and difficulty issues, when asked on what would entice users to play again, the two biggest answers were Peer-to-Peer features to make the game more interactive and having more Pokémon to catch (See Appendix A2). Knowing that ~70% of people who stopped playing still keep the app on their phone for updated/new features, we can conclude that users stop playing mainly because of disengagement and not having more updated features to keep their game engagement going.

### **Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning**

The \$35 billion<sup>35</sup> mobile gaming industry can be segmented by demographic, geographic, technological, and behavioral factors. The most prominent demographic factors include age and gender. Age can be broken down into Preschool, Lower School, Middle School, High School, 20-30 year olds, 30-40 year olds, and 40+. Reports on the breakdown of gender usage vary from between 48-58% of mobile game players being male to 42%-51% being female<sup>36,37</sup>.

Geographically, the mobile gaming market consists of: Asia Pacific (740 million, 50%), North America (152 million, 10%), Middle East and Africa (153 million, 10%), Latin America (110 million, 7%), Western Europe (148 million, 10%), and Eastern Europe (178 million, 12%)<sup>38</sup>. The technological breakdown includes type of device and operating system. The two device types for mobile games are Smartphones and Tablets which can further be broken down by Android, iOS and Windows operating systems<sup>39</sup>.

Behavioral factors can be broken down into motivations, usage rate, and spending patterns. Motivations include entertainment (serve as diversion, pass time while waiting),

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<sup>35</sup> *Mobile Games: Leading but Less Lucrative*. Issue brief. Deloitte, 2016.

<sup>36</sup> *Mobile Gaming in the U.S. - Statista Dossier*. Report. NY: Statista, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> *Mobile Gaming: Social Motivations*. Issue brief. Everyplay & Unity Technologies, 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Appendix C, Geographic Segmentation of Mobile Gaming Market

<sup>39</sup> Appendix C, Technological Segmentation of Mobile Gaming Market

relaxation, social mechanism (play with others, connect with friends or family, work collaboratively), achievement (get to next level, solve challenge, gain skill, lose weight), competition (demonstrate superiority), and creativity. Depending on the motivation, different types of games might be more suitable. The categories of games include puzzle, board games, game shows, card games, action, strategy, arcade game, casino game, and racing. Based on usage rates, mobile gamers can be segmented into very casual gamers (those who spend <1 hour, 11%), casual games (those who spend 1-4 hours, 50%), serious gamers (5-10 hours, 25%), and hardcore gamers (10+ hours, 14%). It appears that those who use mobile games to pass time tend to have shorter play intervals whereas those who use it to socialize or achieve play for longer. Length of time spent playing is also an indicator of spending patterns. Spending patterns can be broken down into those who spend \$0 per month, \$1-10 per month, and more than \$10 per month. Research has found that male gamers spend more per month than female games and iOS users spend more than those using Android<sup>40</sup>.

With a decline in handheld games, the Pokémon Company realized it needed a new product to revitalize its brand. The first Pokémon game iterations (Red, Blue, and Green) were released in 1996 and attracted 31.4 million players<sup>41</sup>. Since then, Pokémon released new versions every one to two years, with varying success of between 6.4 and 17 million players<sup>42</sup>. Since players started registering online in 2006, Pokémon noticed that its players seemed to be getting older<sup>43</sup>. While it may have been attracting younger users, it was also retaining its original fan base. This means the age range of its target market was growing, and so was the discretionary income of that market<sup>44</sup>. The decline of Pokémon was not due to a lack of user fan base, but it was in the medium that Pokémon was offered. As smartphone usage increased and game console use decreased, Pokémon needed to figure out how it was going to reignite the Pokémon phenomenon by bringing it to a medium relevant with today's gaming technology.

With that challenge, Pokémon and Niantic teamed up to build Pokémon Go which reinvigorated the nostalgia of Pokémon by offering an augmented reality mobile game that

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid 24.

<sup>41</sup>Chang, Alvin. "Pokémon Go Was Destined to Go Viral. These Charts Explain Why." Vox. July 11, 2016. Accessed September 22, 2016. <http://www.vox.com/2016/7/11/12150538/Pokémon-go-app-popular-adults>.

<sup>42</sup>Pokémon Sales from 1996 - 2014, Appendix D

<sup>43</sup>Pokémon Players by Age and Demographic, Appendix E

<sup>44</sup>Fujioka, Russ. "Why You Need to Get on Board With Pokémon Go." Inc.com. July 14, 2016. Accessed September 22, 2016. <http://www.inc.com/russ-fujioka/how-Pokémon-go-can-help-you-catch-millennials.html>.

encourages social interaction. Utilizing the original Pokémon as a point of parity, the product would immediately attract the target market. How did Pokémon Go try to differentiate itself? Its main point of differentiation lies in its approach to augmented reality. While other mobile apps, like Four Square and Waze have tried to overlay games on top of the real world, Pokémon Go takes the already familiar Pokémon world and overlays the real world on top of it<sup>45</sup>. Not only does the game facilitate interaction with the physical topography of the real world, but it also encourages in-person social interaction through teaming up with other players to catch Pokémon. If players are not in close proximity to their friends, they are also able to share their experience with screenshots of the Pokémon in the location it was caught. This added to the craze of the product during its release. The customizable avatars also helped players relate more to the character shown on the screen<sup>46</sup>. By combining the familiarity of Pokémon with an unprecedented augmented reality product which personalized the experience and encouraged physical movement, live interaction, and social media sharing, Pokémon Go captured more of the market in terms of number of users and usage rate than any other mobile gaming or social media application to date.

### **Objectives & Strategy**

While Pokémon's positioning strategy resulted in an overwhelming success initially, a month after the release, the user base had dropped by a third<sup>47</sup>. More recently, it lost the number one mobile game position in terms of grossing revenue to Clash Royale. With Pokémon Go's proven success, our objective is twofold: reverse the decline in monthly active users and regain the number one position in app grossing revenue.

Traditionally, mobile app marketing strategies have been centered around user acquisition. However, since only 25% of those who download an app use it more than once, the industry has discovered that user retention is actually more important. Therefore, mobile apps need a definitive plan to ensure user retention to capitalize on acquisition<sup>48</sup>. While Pokémon Go had no trouble in user acquisition, Pokémon Go needs to prioritize combating a decline in its

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<sup>45</sup> Chang, Alvin. "Pokémon Go Was Destined to Go Viral. These Charts Explain Why." Vox. July 11, 2016. Accessed September 22, 2016. <http://www.vox.com/2016/7/11/12150538/Pokémon-go-app-popular-adults>.

<sup>46</sup> "Why Pokémon GO Has Been a Viral Success." July 13, 2016. Accessed September 22, 2016. <http://www.businessinsider.com/why-Pokémon-go-has-been-a-viral-success-2016-7>.

<sup>47</sup> Decline in Pokémon Go Users, Appendix B

<sup>48</sup> Perro, Justina. "Mobile Apps: What's A Good Retention Rate?" March 29, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2016. <http://info.localytics.com/blog/mobile-apps-whats-a-good-retention-rate>.

monthly active users. Industry benchmarks for high performing mobile gaming apps target 32% retention for one month, 19% for two months, and 14% for three months<sup>49</sup>. As of mid September, Pokémon Go had 500 million downloads<sup>50</sup>. Therefore, short term goals should include achieving a rate of 14% active daily users within three months time. This translates to 70 million monthly active users by December.

In order to grow from 30 million to 70 million active users, we have identified the following areas for improvement and accompanying strategies. First, after exhausting the existing features, users have stopped playing the game because they feel there is nothing left to accomplish. More challenging game play is needed to re-engage this user base. Second, users most value the social aspect of the game. Pokémon Go should exploit social features since they are inherently self promoting. Third are the advertising opportunities before Pokemon Go. These opportunities could not only expand the user base, they could also re-engage users through intelligent advertising design.

The Pokemon Go Company has the ability to broaden their consumer segment by targeting their efforts towards the overlooked users - women. Increased efforts towards this demographic could prove exponentially beneficial for Pokemon Go. Users are also craving more reality within the virtual world. Another beneficial strategy for Pokémon Go and its users would be to include ads or product placement based on businesses or locations that users would come across while catching Pokémon. The app's current iteration restricts revenue generation to user in-app purchases. Users can buy premium items that enhance their experience and gameplay. While this has allowed for an average daily intake of \$10 million, a more lucrative opportunity presents itself through direct business engagement<sup>51</sup>. Currently, businesses are indirectly engaged with Pokémon Go. In order to lure customers to their doorstep, they participate through the promotion of pokestops at their location and in-app purchases<sup>52</sup>. Direct advertising promotions, under regulations from The Pokémon Company, could prove to be mutually beneficial for users,

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid 25.

<sup>50</sup> Smith, Craig. "Pokémon Go Statistics (September 2016)." Digital Stat Articles. September 21, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2016. <http://expandedramblings.com/index.php/Pokémon-go-statistics/>.

<sup>51</sup> Singh, Sameer. "Pokémon Go: An Opportunity, Not a Threat." July 28, 2016. Accessed September 25, 2016. <https://www.appannie.com/insights/mobile-strategy/Pokémon-go-an-opportunity-not-a-threat>.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid 10.



businesses, and Pokémon Go. Rather than feeling like disjointed advertising that interrupts the game, Pokémon Go's product placement could enhance the user experience.

Advertising through Pokémon Go would not only bring businesses more brand recognition, it would drive foot traffic directly to their doors. This aspect gives Pokémon Go a competitive edge in the marketing industry and an opportunity for high revenue-generation goals. Mobclix, an iOS advertising firm, completed a research study that found the monthly advertising revenue value of an app user from is \$4<sup>53</sup>. We utilized a three-tiered revenue forecasting model that estimated our monthly active users at conservative figures of 49 million, moderate figures of 59.5 million, and aggressive figures of 70 million. The projected annual advertising revenues came out to be \$10.2 billion, \$12.4 billion, and \$14.6 billion, respectively.<sup>54</sup> Moderate revenue projections would see \$34 million generated daily or more than triple than what the app is currently grossing from in-app purchases. Such a lucrative opportunity, that requires minimal investment from The Pokemon Company, cannot be passed up.

## **Marketing Mix**

### ***Product:***

#### Technical

- **Battery Usage:** Decreasing battery load per play is crucial as it is a major pain point to the consumer. It can be done so using simple turnarounds such as not having to have the app on while collecting eggs.

#### Social (Engagement)

- **Peer-to-Peer Trading:** A frequently mentioned request, peer-to-peer trading would be a feature that would evoke the classic Gameboy experience (and a sense of nostalgia) and allow users to socialize and have a social experience outside of just catching Pokémon with others.

#### Improved Gameplay

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<sup>53</sup> Weedmark, David. "The Average Revenue for an iPhone Game" Accessed September 25, 2016. <http://smallbusiness.chron.com/average-revenue-iphone-game-60261>.

<sup>54</sup> Appendix F, Ad Revenue Projections

- **Virtual Pokémon Migration Event** - A major insight we found was that not being able to travel was conflicting with the desire to find and catch new Pokémon. To combat that, this would be a Limited Time event (again evoking the Gameboy) where users will be able to temporarily virtually migrate to other locations to freshen up pool of Pokémon.

***Promotion:***

- **Partnership with Snapchat:** Snapchat's core value proposition is a sense of fun, whimsy and surprise (what Pokémon Go evokes as well) with its temporary videos, pictures and out of the box filters. Therefore, Snapchat provides an opportunity to gain more steam among younger users (under 21) by having a fun platform for them to share and discover Pokémon and perhaps a different sense of relevancy to the brand than the older users who have an immense sense of nostalgia from playing with the Gameboy.<sup>55</sup>
- **Ad strategies:** Advertising is projected to be possibly the biggest source of income for Pokémon which is already projected in staggering amounts<sup>56</sup>
  - **Target Marketing towards women:** From our user research, we found that almost 70% of the players were women. With games traditionally marketed towards teenage boys and men, targeting to women can be a great opportunity to widen the market and open doors for in-game experiences and promotion ideas to specifically engage women.
  - **PokeStop Advertising:** A huge untapped source of revenue, Pokémon can benefit from Snapchat esque temporarily filters on Pokestops sponsored by the businesses or locations themselves. To add gameplay into the mix, users can possibly collect small "real world" discounts (Ex: 10% off at that Starbucks only for that day) along with the Pokestop freebies. This opens the door for massive word to mouth marketing as users can share their "discoveries" with friends which encourages them to join/possibly play in the future.

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<sup>55</sup>Provider, By. "U.S. Snapchat User Age Group 2016 | Statistic." Statista. Accessed September 30, 2016. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/326452/snapchat-age-group-usa/>.

<sup>56</sup>Gerencer, Tom. "Pokemon GO Money: A Game Worth \$29 Billion." Money Nation. 2016. Accessed September 30, 2016. <http://moneynation.com/pokemon-go-money/>.

- **Integrated ads within Gameplay:** What made the Gameboy version of Pokémon interesting, were the random characters a user would encounter in the Pokémon World that guided them through their quest. With an advertisement twist to this already popular feature, Pokémon Go can make geolocation content relevant through Non-Playable Character Ads. Ex: An NPC could appear when a user is near a Lego Store, making the user aware of a promotion that is being offered.
- **Individual Character Licensing + In-store & In-game incentives:** Leveraging the NPC aspect of the game, Character Licensing to different businesses can be a huge source of Ad Revenue. For example a Mattress company can temporarily license and sponsor Snorlax so that every time a user passes by, they have the opportunity to catch a Snorlax while the company gains higher visibility.

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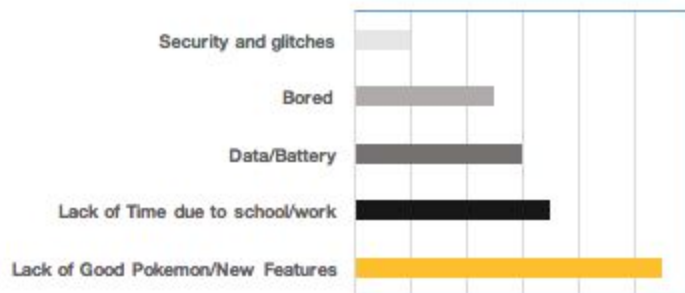
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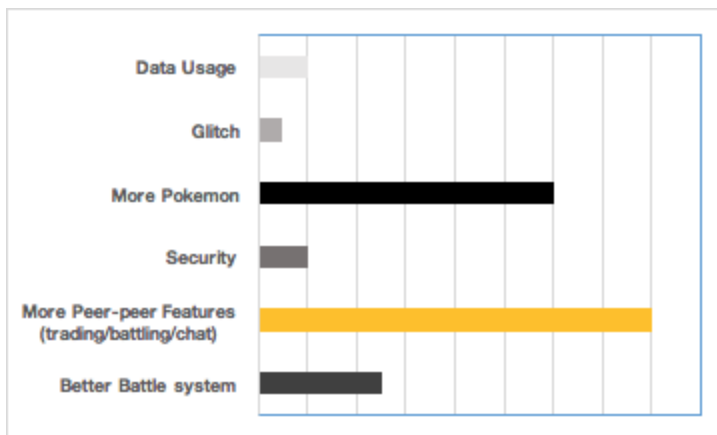
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## Appendix A: Survey Results Part I

### A1: Reasons for Usage Decline

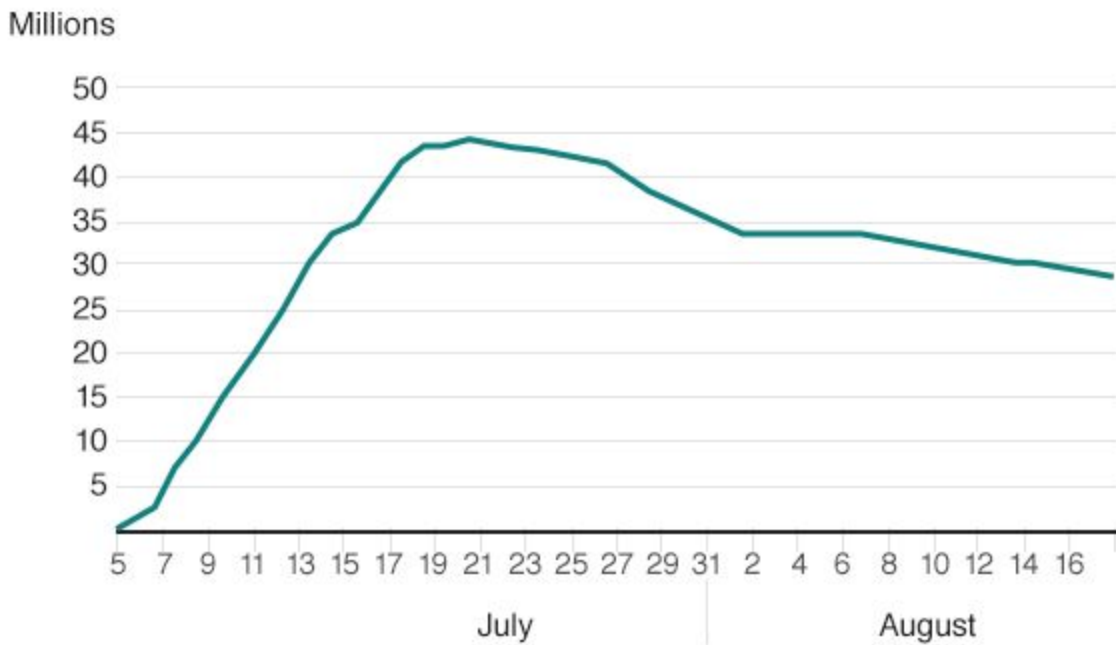


### A2: Enhancements to Help Reengage



## Appendix B: Decline in Pokémon Go Users<sup>57</sup>

### Daily users of Pokemon Go, 5 July-16 August 2016



Source: Apptopia

BBC

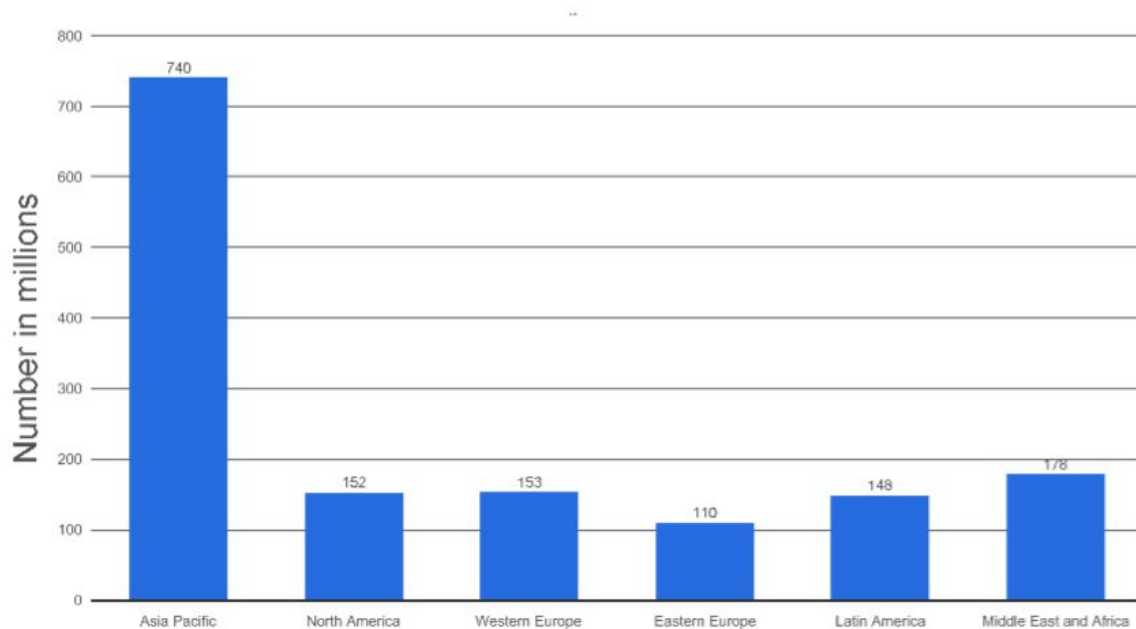
<sup>57</sup>“Why Pokémon Go may have passed its peak.” August 24, 2016. Accessed September 26, 2016. URL: <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-37176782>



## Appendix C: Geographic Segmentation of Mobile Gaming Market<sup>58</sup>

Number of mobile gamers worldwide as of June 2014, by region

**Number of mobile gamers worldwide as of June 2014, by region (in millions)**



## Technological Segmentation of Mobile Gaming Market

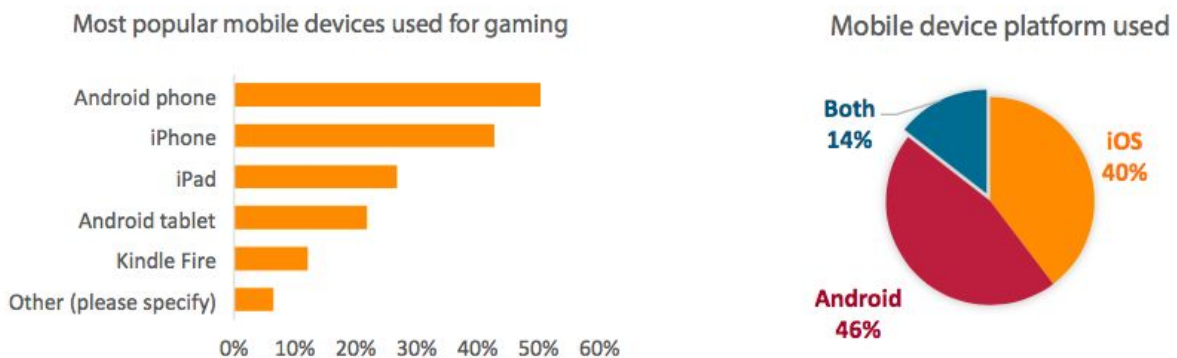
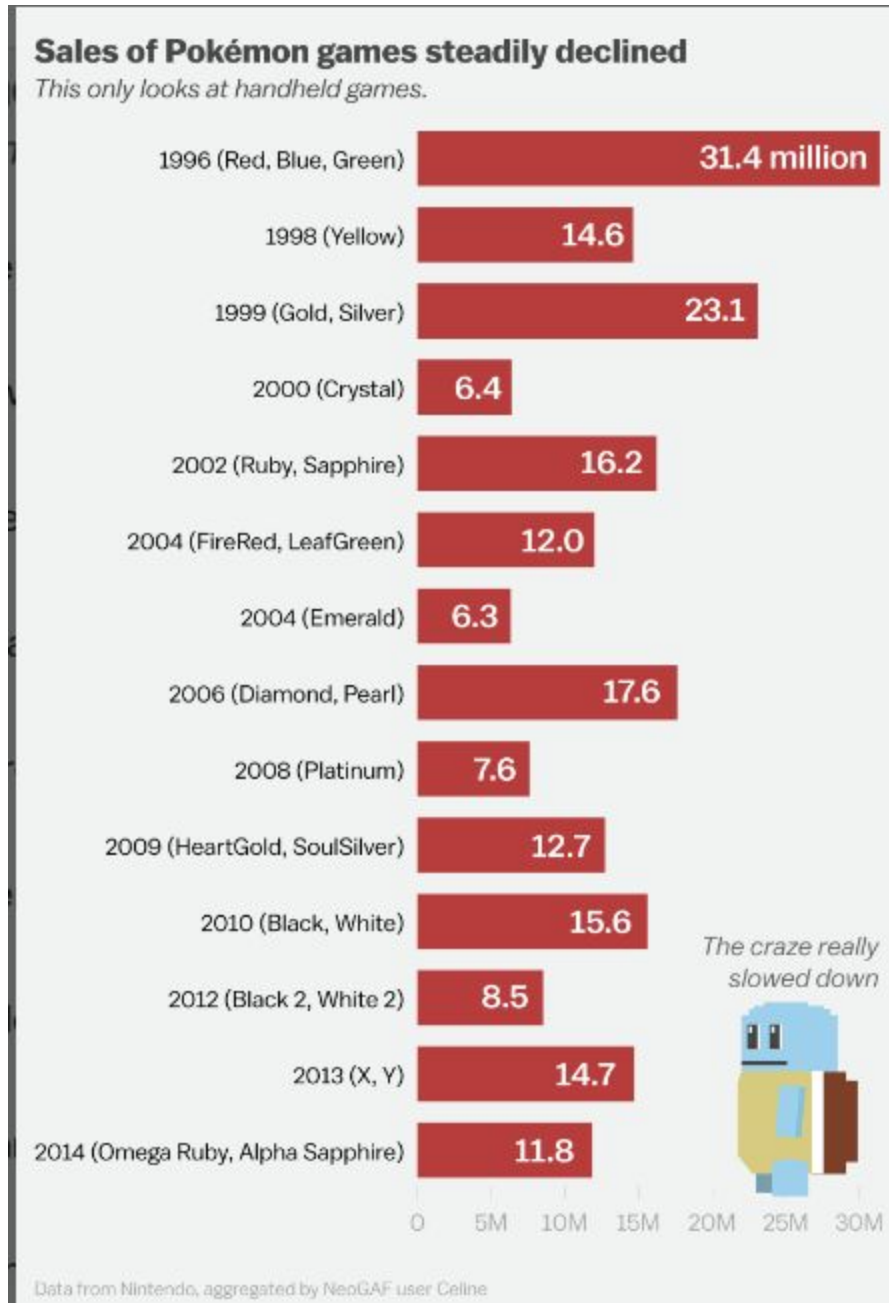


Figure 2: Most popular mobile devices for gaming and mobile platform

<sup>58</sup>Mobile Gaming in the U.S. - Statista Dossier. Report. NY: Statista, 2016.

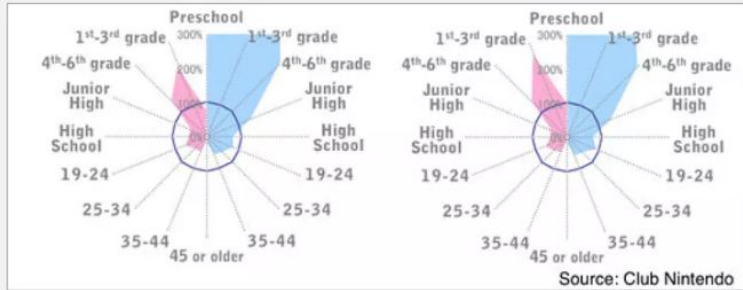
## Appendix D: Pokémon Sales from 1996 - 2014<sup>59</sup>



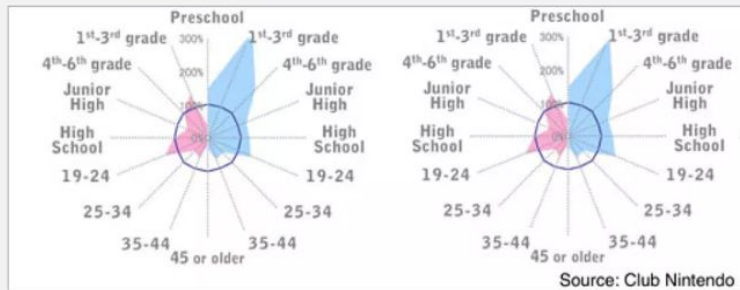
<sup>59</sup>Chang, Alvin. "Pokémon Go Was Destined to Go Viral. These Charts Explain Why." Vox. July 11, 2016. Accessed September 22, 2016. <http://www.vox.com/2016/7/11/12150538/Pokémon-go-app-popular-adults>.

## Appendix E: Pokémon Players by Age and Demographic<sup>60</sup>

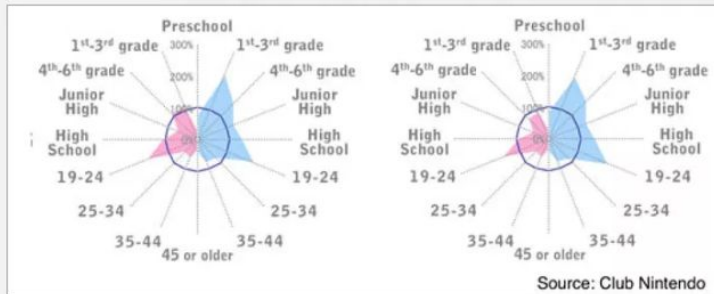
### 2006 *Diamond and Pearl*



### 2009 *HeartGold and SoulSilver*



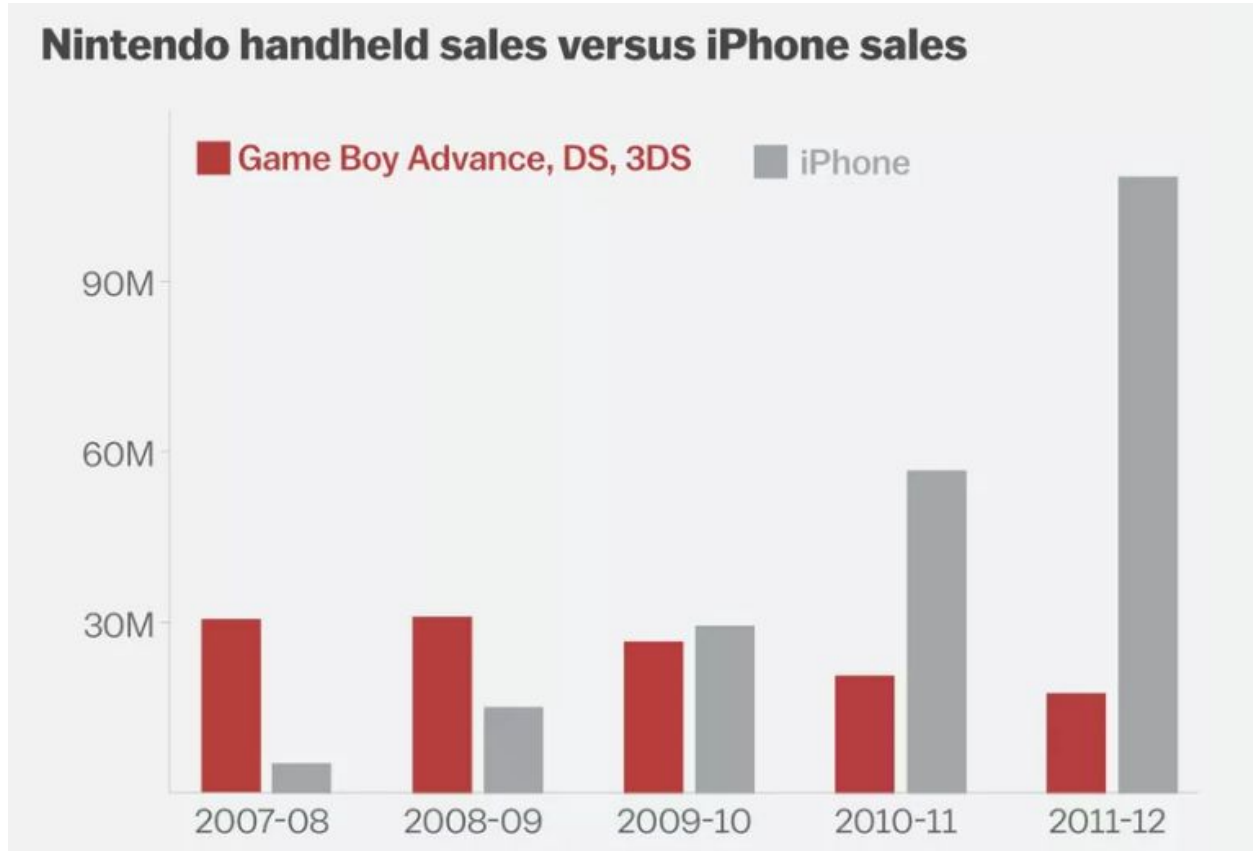
### 2012 *Black and White*



Charts from the September 29, 2010, Nintendo Conference

<sup>60</sup>Chang, Alvin. "Pokémon Go Was Destined to Go Viral. These Charts Explain Why." Vox. July 11, 2016. Accessed September 22, 2016. <http://www.vox.com/2016/7/11/12150538/Pokémon-go-app-popular-adults>.

## Appendix E: Decline in Handheld Sales as iPhone sales Rise<sup>61</sup>



<sup>61</sup> Chang, Alvin. "Pokémon Go Was Destined to Go Viral. These Charts Explain Why." Vox. July 11, 2016. Accessed September 22, 2016. <http://www.vox.com/2016/7/11/12150538/Pokémon-go-app-popular-adults>.

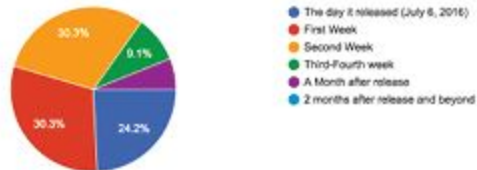
## Appendix F: Ad Revenue Projections

	Conservative	Moderate	Aggressive
<b>Monthly Active Users</b>	49,000,000	59,500,000	70,000,000
Active Users who play 4 hours played per week**	16,954,000	20,587,000	24,220,000
Active Users who play 2 hours per week**	22,540,000	27,370,000	32,200,000
Active Users who play 1 hour per week**	9,506,000	11,543,000	13,580,000.00
<b>Total Hours Played per week</b>	122,402,000	148,631,000	174,860,000
<b>Total Ads Per Week (assume 6 per hour)</b>	734,412,000	891,786,000	1,049,160,000
Revenue per Ad	\$ 0.27	\$ 0.27	\$ 0.27
<b>Total Revenue per Week</b>	\$ 196,000,000	\$ 238,000,000	\$ 280,000,000
<b>Total Revenue per Year</b>	<b>\$ 10,192,000,000</b>	<b>\$ 12,376,000,000</b>	<b>\$ 14,560,000,000</b>
*Conservative, Moderate, and Aggressive monthly active user estimates based on 70%, 85%, and 100% of retention goal respectively			
**Breakdown based on survey results (4 hours 34%, 2 hours 46%, 1 hour 19%)			

## Appendix G - Survey Results Part II

**G1**

When did you start playing it? (33 responses)



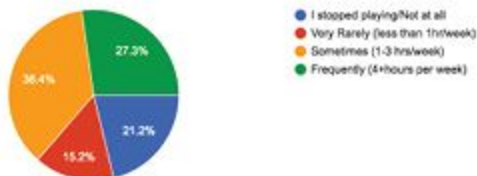
**G2**

Count of How familiar were you with the Pokémon brand before this app?



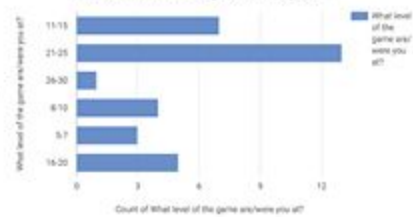
**G3**

How actively do you play the game? (33 responses)



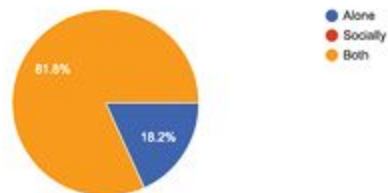
**G4**

Count of What level of the game are/were you at?



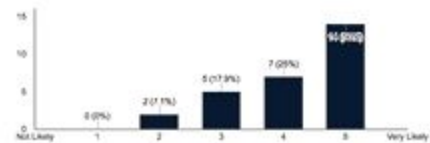
**G5**

Do you play alone or socially(or both)? (33 responses)



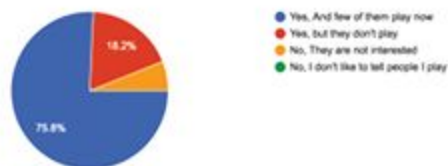
**G6**

How likely are you to open the app if a local business was offering a discount/Lure? (28 responses)

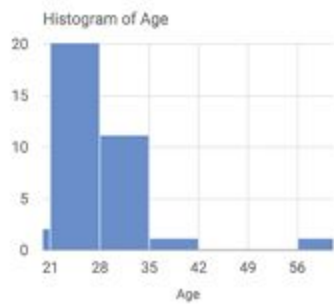


**G7**

Do you recommend Pokemon Go to your friends/family? (33 responses)

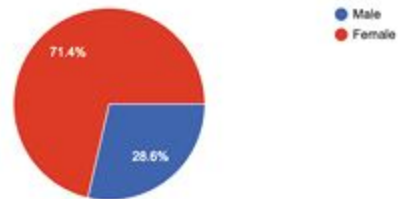


**G8**



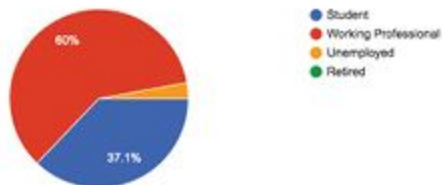
**G9**

Gender (35 responses)



**G10**

Occupation (35 responses)



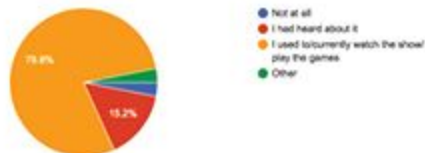
**G11**

Have you currently/or in the past played Pokémon GO? (35 responses)



**G12**

How familiar were you with the Pokémon brand before this app? (33 responses)



**G13: Qualitative (Questions asked):**

How did you discover the app? (News, Heard from friend, etc...)(33 responses)

Which aspects/features of the game excite you the most?(33 responses)

What do you enjoy most about the game overall? Describe your experience.(33 responses)

What do you like least about the game?(33 responses)

Has your usage declined since you first started playing? If it has decreased, why? (33 responses)

What would sustain or increase your usage of the game?(33 responses)