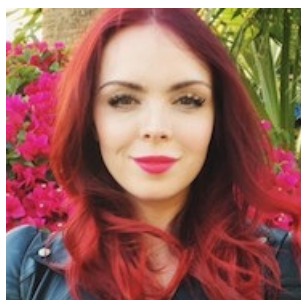


COLUMNS

What brands should know about Pokmon GO

July 13, 2016



Rachel Lowenstein is senior associate for mobile activation and strategy at Mindshare NA

By **Rachel Lowenstein**

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Pokmon GO has taken over the world. Reports from SimilarWeb emerged on July 11 morning that the application had overtaken Tinder in Android app downloads and expected to overtake Twitter in daily active users.

More surprisingly, released less than a week ago, users are spending more time in the game than on Snapchat, Instagram and WhatsApp.

Game face

Highly addictive, vigorously interactive and fiercely nostalgic, Pokmon GO takes two key digital trends that we advertising-types have lectured on, read about, and presented to our clients in recent years and marries them in to a game that is both changing behavior and culture.

At its core, Pokmon GO is a game that is singularly incredible because of how it leverages these two trends: location (signaled via GPS) and altered reality (by placing the Pokmon to catch in to the world in front of you via the camera on your smartphone).

The premise of the game itself is simple: Go to physical locations and find Pokmon. Pokmon appear in an augmented reality (AR) format on smartphone screens, giving the appearance that the Eevee you have been chasing is actually in front of you.

While the developers, Niantic Labs, actually created a similar-type of AR location-based gaming app called Ingress nearly three years ago under Google's umbrella, it is the cultural phenomenon of Pokmon that is causing this game to get so wildly popular.

Paired with the location-aware AR technology, Pokmon GO is fueling the millennials who grew up playing and watching Pokmon to indulge in a real-life game of make-believe. Think this is an exaggeration? Take a step outside and you will spot dozens of people glued to their phone, furiously swiping to catch one of the Zubats that have infested New York.

The game represents an interesting, if not exciting, moment where our culture is seeing the first true application of AR at scale.

Naysayers of virtual and augmented reality have long vocalized that the interest simply will not be there to play

games with bulky equipment, expensive investments and complex interfaces. These are valid points and surely why most people have not invested in the first wave of VR gear. The utility for the everyman simply does not outweigh the cost at least not yet.

But the incredible popularity of Pokmon GO proves that AR will become ubiquitous in modern technology, especially and most specifically with existing cultural obsessions.

Pokmon GO was built on the premise of a game that was released three years ago but the familiarity of the original 150 Pokmon is so beloved to this generation that we all want to catch 'em all. And, rather than using pricey and perhaps cumbersome equipment, the game leverages the ultimate and most accessible connected device: our smartphone.

So what is next for this medium?

Poking around

The teasers of Microsoft Hololens' interface for Minecraft and Magic Leap's secret partnership with Lucas Films to bring R2D2 in to our homes have excited us for months. Though not yet released to the public, both will undoubtedly obsess the masses if and when utility becomes as accessible as using a smartphone.

Are ease of access and cultural affinity the key to a successful AR experience? Absolutely.

Will AR be a pervasive force in our everyday lives, perhaps even as common as our smartphones, if brands and developers consider these two key requirements? Without a doubt.

And, if nothing else, Pokmon GO represents the growing distortion between the virtual and real world that we have been hearing about for years.

Finally, what does this mean for brands from an advertising perspective?

While Niantic predetermines PokStops (places of interests, such as memorials or statues, that drop items like Pokballs and medicine) and Gyms (places to strengthen your Pokmon by training and fighting), brands with bricks-and-mortar locations can leverage rare nearby Pokmon or PokStops to drive increased foot traffic.

You can set up a Lure Module in all locations, which coaxes Pokmon to a PokStop for 30 minutes, to get customers to your store or restaurant. Then, offer rewards, incentives, or even discounts for players.

Travel brands can create content around "Best Pokmon I Caught On My Vacation."

Brands can even create lists of "Best Places to Catch Pokmon On Your Trip" by linking travel booking with a recommendation widget for a fun additional touch point for customers as they book trips. Why not drive tourism to small towns with insights into where rare Pokmon are in unassuming towns?

THE POSSIBILITIES for leveraging Pokmon GO in marketing are endless, and open an exciting new world of AR at scale.

Rachel Lowenstein is senior associate for mobile activation and strategy at [Mindshare NA](#), New York. Reach her at rachel.lowenstein@mindshareworld.com.