

'Pokemon Go' or no? Fans glad Niantic addressing complaints

March 9 2017, by Marina Villeneuve



In this Wednesday, July 20, 2016, file photo "Pokemon Go" players begin a group walk along the Embarcadero in San Francisco. Die-hard players and one industry observer say the mass hysteria of the augmented reality smartphone game 'Pokemon Go' is likely over. It's a sigh of relief for some businesses who last summer complained of disrespectful crowds and trespassers and a wistful notion for players who bonded with strangers over the game on city streets and public squares. (AP Photo/Marcio Jose Sanchez, File)

Few games have enjoyed both the meteoric rise—and subsequent

fall—in popularity as "Pokemon Go."

But the [game](#) remains profitable, and people are still playing even if they aren't the same masses that roamed parks last summer with eyes glued to smartphones, looking for elusive virtual monsters from their childhood to appear right in front of them.

"It kind of brings people together to have a conversation about these little cartoon characters that we're all in love with," said Brian Swain, a sales representative for Rockstar energy drink who has stuck with "Pokemon Go" since it launched last July.

While past its heyday last summer, when some small businesses and landmarks had complained of disruptive crowds, the game has seen renewed interest after last month's addition of 80 Pokemon and in-game events set around holidays like Halloween and soon, Easter.

The updates addressed complaints about a lack of updates that contributed to a drop in monthly active users, according to app market analyst Apptopia.

"Over time, the enthusiasm has waned, but there's still quite a bit of people playing it," said Joost van Dreunen, the CEO and founder of SuperData Research in New York. "It raises the question: Was it a fad, a thing we only did one time for one game, or is it going to hold people's attention longer?"

The game had generated \$1 billion in revenue as of January, and Niantic CEO John Hanke insists "Pokemon Go" is no passing fad.

The game—whose servers had difficulty handling traffic last summer—will fulfill long-promised additions of sought-after "legendary" Pokemon and the ability for players to battle and trade with

each other, he said.

"What happened last summer was really kind of strange, where 'Pokemon Go' spiraled out of control to this level of cultural awareness that nobody expected, certainly not us," Hanke said. The "extremely successful" game now has usage "at a more normal level," he said.

The hard-to-replicate game still has an enviable following in Japan, China, Korea as well as North America, Dreunen said.

Since the game's release, Dreunen said, the \$40.6 billion worldwide mobile game industry has become flooded, and investment may shift to mobile games that rely on well-loved characters and provide frequent updates.

As spring approaches, there are signs of new life. Milwaukee County has prepared for "Pokemon Go" and future augmented-reality games by requiring game developers to obtain a permit to get players into parks.

In Maine, members of the "Pokemon Go" 207 Facebook group have noticed more screenshots from players taking up the game again.

Nick Fournier, a 21-year-old media studies student at the University of Southern Maine, said he's glad the company has finally begun listening to players' complaints. He described last summer as a phenomenon brought on by the game's nostalgia and the technology's novelty that he doesn't expect to see again.

Erin Morrison, a 23-year-old schoolteacher living in Greene, Maine, said she has kept playing through a dreary winter by driving to places she knew had multiple spots to catch Pokemon.

"With the new update, it's been so awesome," she said. "I'm seeing so

many people coming back out."

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