Scientific Exploration Into Pokémon GO: A Detailed Examination of Family Experiences and Motivations

Lisa K. Militello; Nathan Hanna; Bernadette M. Melnyk

Background
➢ Not promoted as a “health” app, Pokémon GO sparked several conversations regarding the potential for Pokémon GO/similar games to synergize healthy lifestyle behavior change efforts
➢ Little is known about the mechanisms that drive augmented reality - mHealth uptake, motivation for use, and user experience.

Purpose
➢ The purpose of this study, Pokémon GO: Family Edition, is to explore the augmented reality game from a family (adult-child) user experience as it relates to healthy lifestyle behaviors.
➢ To obtain descriptive data regarding uptake, utility, and engagement from families with children/teens who have played Pokémon GO.
➢ To gain insight regarding Identity-Based Motivation and Theory of Goal Systems as plausible dynamic theoretical explanations of family game play and healthy lifestyle behaviors.

Methods
➢ OSU Behavioral IRB approved the study after expedited review
➢ To better gauge Pokémon GO uptake by families, the primary researcher engaged in “deep hanging out” with the Pokémon GO community
  ▪ Families were observed playing Pokémon GO in local parks and on media trends related to Pokémon GO
  ▪ Gaps in use, extreme users, hacks (work arounds), and general usability were chronicled
  ▪ First hand experience (became a player)
➢ User stories and artifacts (photos, locations, social interactions) provided insight into plausible motivation and emotions guiding behaviors
➢ Jan-Feb 2017 n=162 adults (>18 years) and n=34 children (>5-17 years) were recruited from parks/libraries, social media sites, and word of mouth to complete a cross-sectional web-based survey (developed from CHERRIES checklist) and semi-structured interview

Results
➢ Adults played Pokémon GO for a child, even though the child was absent ~70% of the time; moms (17%) & sons (33%) reported the most play together
➢ The top 3 most cited family goals: exercise, having fun, spending time together; 92.5% parents reported playing Pokémon GO helped meet family goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Child/Teen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plays with the most</td>
<td>143 (92.3%)</td>
<td>29 (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloaded game within 1 month of release</td>
<td>127 (81.4%)</td>
<td>22 (64.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in within app “events”</td>
<td>No 91 (58.3%)</td>
<td>No 24 (70.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community planned app events</td>
<td>5+days 63 (40.4%)</td>
<td>1-2 days 18 (52.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play for 30+ mins in past 7 days</td>
<td>145 (92.9%)</td>
<td>28 (84.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
➢ Findings parallel recent evidence that Pokémon GO is redefining screen time for families through joint media experience
➢ Family motivation for gameplay was multifaceted; however, spending time was a family member was a key motivator for engagement/re-engagement
➢ The design of mHealth tools is critical to the user-experience and subsequent successes/failures of behavior change interventions supported with mHealth. Within app updates/events were key to overall ongoing engagement/re-engagement
➢ Behavior change strategies supplemented with mHealth tools must be theoretically robust, time varying, and interactive
➢ Future games/apps targeting behavior change may be strengthened by considering identity as a source of motivation and encompassing individual goals within a family unit
➢ Goal systems theory & Identify Based Motivation warrant testing as plausible dynamic theories for family motivation to engage with mHealth

Implications
Behavior change strategies supported by mHealth should be designed and explicated for scientific merit prior to clinical uptake.

e-Poster & References
https://www.dropbox.com/s/oum3812s0w3ryx/Militello%20Pokemon-STTI2017.pptx?dl=0