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How Did the Tamagotchi Become a Worldwide Phenomenon

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How Did the Tamagotchi Become a Worldwide Phenomenon

Abstract

The Tamagotchi is a popular Japanese toy by Bandai Co that pioneered virtual pets and led other companies to develop virtual toys and games that changed how children and consumers interacted with toys.

Keywords

Tamagotchi, Japanese toys, Bandai, Tamagotchi effect and influence, virtual pet

Disciplines

Clinical Psychology | Marketing | Technology and Innovation

Comments

This poster was created based on work completed for FYS 149-2: Japanese Pop Culture, and presented as a part of the eighth annual CAFE Symposium on February 8, 2023.

How did the Tamagotchi become a Worldwide Phenomenon

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Japanese Popular Culture FYS 149-2, Gettysburg College, Gettysburg PA

Introduction

- Toys and games play a big role in the lives of all human beings and contribute to their holistic development. Particularly, in a society composed of social creatures, games have become a medium of socialization and play for all ages.
- With the beginning of the technological revolution came the introduction of virtual pets, and it changed the play of taking care of a stuffed animal to a different level by adding the aspect of “living” to the material object.
- Tamagotchi was the first virtual pet toy and game ever, and it came into the market in 1996.

The Tamagotchi displays a small creature on the screen that can be interacted with. The main task is to take care of the pet until it reaches adulthood and returns to its home planet. The player's care for the pet affects the pet's outcome.



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"Tamagotchi" by LonelyBob is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.

Virtual Pets

- The craze of virtual pets maybe seems odd or unexplainable to some individuals.
- However, this phenomenon is common and is explained by Neil Frude, a clinical psychologist from Britain, through his theory of **The Inanimate Machine**.

“computer technology can be used, just as many other media have been used in the past, to stimulate the innate human tendency to attribute life and consciousness to non-animate objects. This tendency is known as ‘animism’ and it is very strong.” (Frude and Jandier 3).



"Tamagotchi cases.by _jennieMarie is licensed under CC BY 2.0.



"Tamagotchi keyholders" by DocChewbacca is licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0.

Factors

Theory of the Inanimate Machine

- Although the creature on the screen is very pixelated, it is still identifiable enough for consumers to perceive it as an animal.
- Each Tamagotchi pet had a life span that was influenced by its owner's actions. This gave allowed them to become attached to and treat these creatures as actual pets.

Mobility

- The added keychain feature allowed consumers to keep playing and taking care of their pet all day since they could bring the Tamagotchi around with them.
- Having the toy accompany an individual facilitates the care and engagement with the pet, and makes a statement of being “knowledgeable” enough about technology and popular trends.

Attractiveness

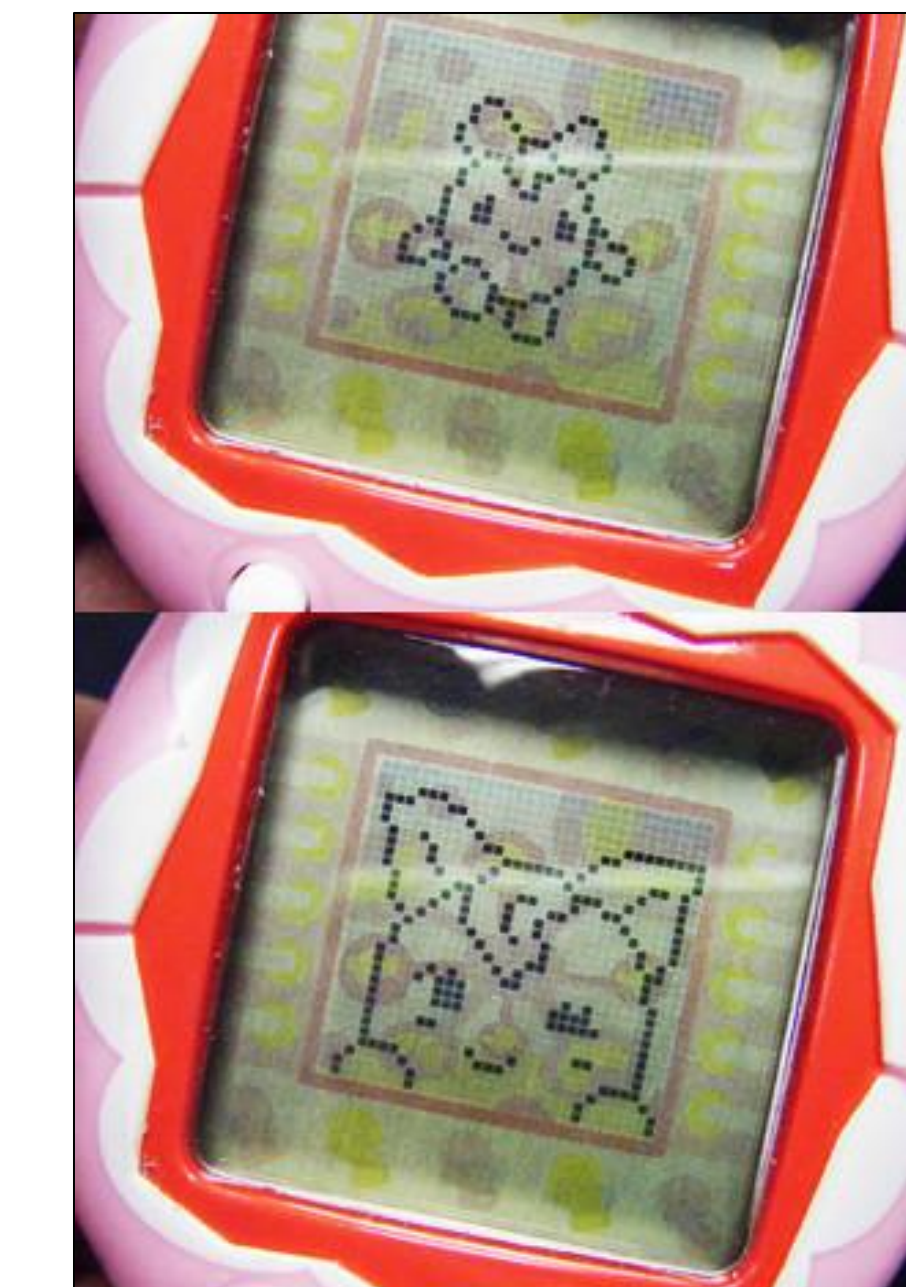
- The creators of Tamagotchi marketed the toy with the -at the time growing- Kawaii (or cute in English) culture.
- The Tamagotchi toy fits perfectly all of the characteristics of kawaii products and was released while the kawaii culture was developing.

Consumer Culture

- Having the toy appearing at every store in every country -even African nations and Middle Eastern Nations-,and having seemingly every kid owning it made those who did not have it desire it even more.
- In a consumer culture, a buyer does not have to have a logical reason to justify a purchase, in this case, the product just has to be popular enough to be wanted.

Conclusion

- Tamagotchi's success can be attributed to many different factors that the toy has and how society interacted with it and reacted to it. The Tamagotchi is a multi-faceted toy and game that came to give everyone entertainment and a lovable virtual pet.



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"Electronic toy, game (Tamagotchi Cyber Pet)" by Bandai Company Limited is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0.

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