**EconoMag — Pikachu's Power: Nostalgia as an Unstoppable Economic Force**

**by Alex Hurst — Updated Edition 2025–2026**

"Technology is a glittering lure, but there is the rare occasion when the public can be engaged on a level beyond flash, if they have a sentimental bond with the product… a deeper bond with the product. Nostalgia. It's delicate, but potent."

Some of you might recognize that as the voice of Don Draper from the series *Mad Men*. In that famous scene, Don is pitching an advertising campaign to Kodak for a rotating slide projector, and he taps into something universal:

"This device isn't a spaceship — it's a time machine. It goes backwards and forwards, taking us to a place where we ache to go again."

I'm Alex Hurst, and you're listening to EconoMag on EnglishWaves. Today we're talking about what happens when a product succeeds not just because it works well, but because it awakens childhood memories. Memories that, in July 2016, added more than 20 billion dollars to the value of Nintendo in just seven days. And nearly ten years later, those same memories continue to power one of the most profitable entertainment franchises in history.

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Pokémon Memories

"My name is Kevin. I grew up in Zurich, Switzerland, and I think the first time I discovered Pokémon must have been around 1997 or 1998…"

At the time, Pokémon hadn't yet reached Switzerland. One of Kevin's friends returned from a summer camp in Orlando with something that was already wildly popular across the Atlantic: Pokémon trading cards.

Soon after, Pokémania swept across Europe, fueled by the animated TV series. For millions of Millennials, Pokémon wasn't just a game — it was the game.

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Nintendo and the Game Boy Revolution

The name Nintendo roughly translates to *"leave luck to heaven."* The company, founded in 1889, had to wait exactly one hundred years before experiencing the stroke of luck that would turn it into one of the most valuable companies in the world.

In 1989, to celebrate its centenary, Nintendo released the Game Boy, a handheld console that would define a generation.

If I asked you to name the iconic products of different decades, you might think of the Walkman for the 1980s, or the iPhone for the 2010s. But almost any Millennial will tell you that the 1990s belonged to the Game Boy — and especially to the game released in 1995: Pokémon, short for *"pocket monsters."*

The concept was simple: travel through a virtual world capturing creatures, training them, evolving them, and battling other players' Pokémon.

To say Pokémon went viral would be an understatement. The franchise exploded into a television series, trading cards, clothing, music albums, and endless merchandise.

And it made Nintendo a staggering amount of money.

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## Pokémon GO: When Nostalgia Meets Augmented Reality

Then, like every cultural phenomenon, Pokémon eventually faded from the spotlight. Other trends took its place.

But on July 6, 2016, Nintendo and the company Niantic launched Pokémon GO, a smartphone game that allowed players to capture Pokémon in the real world using augmented reality.

The technology was revolutionary. But did millions of people download the game simply because the technology was exciting?

Or was there something else at work — that emotional "twinge" Don Draper described?

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## The Economics of Nostalgia: Ten Years and Six Billion Dollars Later

The answer lies in the numbers.

From its launch in 2016 through 2025, Pokémon GO generated more than 6 billion dollars in total revenue, making it one of the most profitable mobile game franchises of all time.

In 2024, Pokémon GO ranked among the top 10 mobile games worldwide for the eighth consecutive year since its launch, with more than 100 million unique players during the year.

By mid-2025, estimates place the number of monthly active players between 100 and 127 million — a remarkable level of engagement for a game celebrating its ninth anniversary.

In economics, this phenomenon is explained by the Subjective Theory of Value: we value things not only for their intrinsic usefulness, but also for the emotional meaning we attach to them.

The Millennials who downloaded Pokémon GO were not simply purchasing an augmented reality game — they were buying back a piece of their childhood.

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A $3.5 Billion Acquisition: Confidence in the Future

The most recent chapter of this story illustrates better than anything else the economic power of nostalgia.

In March 2025, the company Scopely — the number one mobile game publisher in the United States — announced the acquisition of Niantic's gaming division, including Pokémon GO, for $3.5 billion.

The deal signals strong confidence in the future of augmented reality gaming, driven by the loyal and passionate Pokémon GO community.

In June 2025, the Pokémon GO Fest was held at Parc de Sceaux, just south of Paris, bringing together 60,000 fans from around the world to capture new Pokémon and connect with one another.

Few digital applications can claim to have achieved something like this: turning millions of virtual interactions into real-world social connections.

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Kevin Remains Skeptical — And That's Normal

Kevin, our trainer from Zurich at the beginning of the story, says nostalgia alone wasn't enough to bring him back to the game. It drains the battery, he says, and takes too much time.

Millions of others made the opposite choice.

And that is precisely what economic theory teaches us: the value of a product is never universal. It is subjective, personal, emotional.

Nintendo — and now Scopely — may have found their own Don Draper moment: not by selling a game, but by selling a way back to something we once loved.

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I'm Alex Hurst for EnglishWaves.
You've been listening to EconoMag.

If you still play Pokémon GO, watch where you're walking.

And if you invested in the Pokémon franchise, well… you had excellent instincts.

Thanks for listening.

Vocabulary :

**Nostalgia** – Nostalgie

**Economic force** – Force économique

**Technology** – Technologie

**Sentimental bond** – Lien sentimental

**Don Draper** – Don Draper

**Mad Men** – Mad Men

**Kodak** – Kodak

**Time machine** – Machine à remonter le temps

**Childhood memories** – Souvenirs d'enfance

**Nintendo** – Nintendo

**Game Boy** – Game Boy

**Pokémon** – Pokémon

**Pokémania** – Pokémania

**Trading cards** – Cartes à collectionner

**Franchise** – Franchise

**Merchandise** – Produits dérivés

**Pokémon GO** – Pokémon GO

**Augmented reality (AR)** – Réalité augmentée

**Niantic** – Niantic

**Mobile game** – Jeu mobile

**Revenue** – Revenus

**Monthly active players** – Joueurs actifs mensuels

**Subjective Theory of Value** – Théorie subjective de la valeur

**Acquisition** – Acquisition

**Scopely** – Scopely

**Investment** – Investissement

**Engagement** – Engagement

**Virtual interactions** – Interactions virtuelles

**Community** – Communauté

**Economic behavior** – Comportement économique