

Pokémon no longer fad, industry claims

NEW YORK – 8-track tapes. The Atari. Cabbage Patch Kids. Pogs. Magic. All of which were once considered fads or phenomena, had their time in the sun and respectively wore out their welcome. Depending whom you ask, Pokémon is often grouped into this category, a fad that faded into oblivion once the hype quieted down. But to some gamers and industry bigwigs, that simply isn't so.

4Kids Entertainment, the licensing agents for Nintendo of America (NOA), recently hired Fadbusters, a new marketing team dedicated to revamping the public's perception of Pokémon.

Fadbusters, which is comprised of four kid-oriented individuals, hopes to establish Pokémon as the top animé franchise, increase viewership of the television show among two- to seven-year-olds by 10 to 15 percent, and maintain Pokémon's cool, cuddly image.

The group estimates this expenditure will cost between \$5 million and \$10 million, may extend to other age groups, and results should be evident within a year.

In addition, Fadbusters is currently designing a new Pokémon character, to be released within the next year.

Previous marketing strategies have included fast-food tie-ins, music, movies, and other merchandising. The video games are highly popular with gamers, and the trading cards have replaced Magic as *the* card to trade and collect. As Fadbusters' gameguru Jeffy said, "If you can't use the cards, what's the point in trading?"

Pokémon is characterized by the various creatures within the Pokémon world, each with their unique name and abilities. Until NOA acquired it in 1998, Pokémon was originally known as Pocket Monsters.