LEGO Story/Roleplay Theme Proposal: DeTECHtives

Why Another Product Line With a Tie-In Smartphone App?

The LEGO Group's battle to stay relevant in a technology-dominated world

When you ask a child what they want for their birthday or holiday, they are more likely to ask to receive a smart device or video game console rather than a toy. For a company like The LEGO Group, this was a growing concern for some time, as how would a plastic building brick stay relevant when a child could have hundreds of games at their disposal with a smart device or game console? But by making smart choices like creating LEGO-themed Apps and video games, and while also pushing the creativity and ingenuity of the LEGO brick, the LEGO brand has not only stayed relevant but become one of the most successful toy companies.

One of The LEGO Groups' ideas that have helped them stay relevant is to have product lines that tie in with Apps that create an immersive experience crossing over between physical and digital play. Their most successful product line with a tie-in app has been LEGO Super Mario, but they have had a fair share of flops, such as Nexo Knights, VIDIYO, Hidden Side, LEGO Fusion, and LEGO Life of George. They have shown they can make the idea of tie-in apps work, but also how they don't work. LEGO Super Mario relies heavily on the app to function as a product line, to the consumer this makes sense because the idea of Super Mario as a product had always originally been as a video game, making the toys feel like a "physical video game" with a tie-in app feels like a marriage between the physical and digital and in a sense seems to be one of the reasons why it has a decent amount of success. Where products lines like Nexo Knights, VIDIYO, and LEGO Fusion also relied on app experiences to get the full experience of the product line, making the product feel more like a digital experience rather than a physical LEGO toy, The products packaging may be confusing and hard for the consumer to understand what the purpose/point of the product line is. Consumers are coming to LEGO for LEGO products, not Apps that have toys to use to enhance the app's play experience. To make the idea of a tie-in app successful to help push sales, needs to be created in a way that does not detract from the LEGO experience, but is a secondary enhancement that is not necessary to fully experience the product.

How is DeTECHtives Different Than Other Tie-In App Product Lines?

How the product line can be fully experienced without the app and enhanced by it when used

On the surface appears as any other product that could be created by The LEGO Group, a product line revolving around two detectives using high-tech gadgets to solve mysteries in their city. The products are built and designed like any other action/storytelling product line that The LEGO Group could create (refer to Ninjago, Friends, or Bionicle as examples of this). The packaging also follows a similar style to other product lines as well, with mentions of the tie-in app not taking up much of the visual space (The opposite of Hidden Side, LEGO Fusion, and VIDIYO). The product alone must be able to tell the story itself and be a complete stand-alone experience like any other set, not partially, and then to be completed through the app or web videos. The DeTECHtives App would act as an alternate/extra way to experience the DeTECHtives LEGO products by showing the product in an AR space that comes to life and provides the consumer with alternate ways to interact with the product via web videos and/or alternative building instructions. Each set that the consumer purchases in the product line would have a different experience within the app.

Product packaging example

DeTECHtives App UI concept

Set designs that stand alone as their products separate from the App

Conclusion

The LEGO Group has proven the concept of tie-in apps can work when planned and thought out carefully and in a thoughtful manner that aligns with the average consumer's view of the LEGO brand. The product itself and the product line need to be like any other in-house LEGO product line that can stand on its own, and when the app is added in, the product is enhanced and added onto, not completed when the app is added.