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Gotta Catch 'Em All!: *Pokemon*, Environmentalism and Youth Media as Vernacular Theory

Originating in 1996, *Pokemon* (the English variant of the Japanese *Poketto Monsuta*) has become the second most successful game-based franchise in the world and arguably one of the best-known examples of transmedia storytelling in youth media today. Based around creator Satoshi Tajiri's love of insect collecting, *Pokemon* imagines a world where wild creatures exist to be collected, trained and battle with one another – an idea which has carried over to other successful franchises like *Yu-Gi-Oh* and *Digimon*.

Such an ideology, simultaneously embracing both the conservation and consumption of nature, is emblematic of the larger difficulties Japan has had to face as a nation trying to balance economic development and environmental protection. In this way this paper argues that, when subjected to textual analysis, *Pokemon* and its allied franchises can function as a vernacular theory of environmentalism and materialism, that is, as a series of popular youth media texts engaging with issues and subjects that are usually reserved for academia.