



From Playing Cards to Dominating the Gaming Industry: Nintendo Brand Story Analysis

In an industry dominated by experience and reliant on customer loyalty, Nintendo Co., Ltd., stands on top of the gaming market. In Kyoto in 1889, Fusajiro Yamauchi began manufacturing Japanese playing cards. Over the years, his company [evolved into Nintendo](#), experimenting in the gaming market and gaining success worldwide by the 70s.

Today, the world knows Nintendo as an iconic brand with a presence cemented in society through characters, software, and video games. Nintendo's specialty lies within its values and the unique techniques the presidents of the company stick with as the years pass.

- Before we get into the history, I quickly want to go over Nintendo's core values and its original goal, because I want us all to keep them in mind when I walk us through their timeline.

What Sets Nintendo Apart

From its inception, Nintendo's goal involved reaching outside Japan's local market. From producing cards and making toys to being a household name around the globe, the [brand's intent](#) never changes—Nintendo wants to create an entertaining, intuitive experience for all its customers. The goal stops there, which is one of the reasons for the ease in which the company caters to such a wide-spread audience. Nintendo does not aim to be the highest on the technology leaderboard nor the most competitive in the gaming market, instead, the company roots itself in the basic ideal of fun, appealing to more loyal fans and casual video game players alike. This [strategy](#) along with Nintendo's trend of manufacturing portable gaming consoles gives an advantage over competitors like Microsoft and Sony, companies that cater to more serious and specific gaming customers.

- There is strategy to this simplicity: "To this seemingly laid-back attitude Nintendo has. Compared to companies like Microsoft and Sony, ones that cater to more serious and specific gaming customers, Nintendo often has an advantage, and I want to take a brief look at why that is.
- But first, let me walk you through some of the brand's history

Nintendo's strong presence within a wide variety of communities and age groups keeps the company relevant. With iconic hits like Mario™, Donkey Kong™, The Legend of Zelda™, Pokémon™, and more, game-lovers, parents, and children enjoy the experience of a Nintendo game. As years passed in the industry and technology continued to advance, Nintendo stayed relevant by developing characters and stories in their games. While remaining simple, it manages to fit the brand archetypes of the Creator, the Hero, and the Magician. A person of any age, class, or culture can access the affordable consoles and games through online stores or the ever-

expanding retailers across the globe carrying the brand. Anyone from any group can play a Nintendo game, even someone with no gaming experience at all. For example: In my own experience, I witnessed my mother tackle her fear of gaming with a Nintendo Switch™. She thought games were difficult, that she could never learn to play them because the technology became too advanced. It took some convincing, but I walked her through the steps of playing *Mario Kart 8*, then *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*, and now she experiences visible joy when she gets to play video games by herself or with others in her family. This commitment Nintendo has toward making accessible games and systems for consumers gives the company a [family-friendly presence](#) while cementing its place as a commercial success, all without mentioning the brand's clear responsiveness toward any setback and its history of staying [environmentally conscious](#) in its products and offices.

Decades of Narrative

Nintendo runs through stories and its core value of fun. The brand markets its products to consumers as something a person must have to enjoy exciting, new experiences. Through commercials and teaser trailers, Nintendo invokes a sense of need in the consumer, and often put “them” in the place of a hero of the story. In 2011, Nintendo released *The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword* for the Nintendo Wii™. The excitement surrounding this game's release made marks in the gaming world—why? *Skyward Sword* utilized movement of the Wii remote to control the sword in regular gameplay instead of a typical controller with buttons. To promote it in America, they released a [commercial](#) depicting the Master Sword (a legendary artifact and weapon in The Legend of Zelda™ game series) falling from the sky into the home of an ordinary man. He proceeds to pick up the sword and raise in skyward, imitating the controls of the game. This commercial showcased Nintendo's innovative gameplay for a well-known series while showing the audience how anyone could pick up a remote and swing around the Master Sword, just like the main character of the game, Link.



Screencaps from the commercial for *Skyward Sword*, showing that players use the Wii remote as the Master Sword.

While the world knows Nintendo for producing unique experiences and games, much of the loyalty from customers comes from Nintendo's habit of revamping or continuing the storylines of dearly loved series, such as ones mentioned under the previous section. These games, made to be played on Nintendo consoles alone, guarantee to be hit with audiences already exposed to their stories, and the excitement they create for the releases of those games brings in new players to the series. This strategy targets the emotions of fans and the curiosity of new generations. Nintendo [knows the success](#) of their products, so the pressure to continuously produce stories completely new lessons. Instead, the focus on mixing the nostalgia of the past with the trends of

the present allows for nuanced characters, storylines, and a promising future of even more success and technological explorations.

An example of this success comes from Nintendo's 2020 hit *Animal Crossing: New Horizons*. Fans of this series know the Animal Crossing™ games can be as interesting to a child as to an elderly person. It has no end point, and the player may build their town until they wish otherwise; playing the game is not about winning, unlike most other games. Nintendo utilizes their values of experience with this gem of a series, instead of marketing competitive gameplay, this game thrives on aspects of stress-free, methodical activities featuring well-known characters from previous games. With the majority of the world going through lockdown during the release of *New Horizons*, sales skyrocketed due to the sudden amount of indoor free time people had to play a game that relaxed them, which not many other brands but Nintendo can provide. From March to September 2020 alone, the game sold more than [26 million units globally](#), reaching [32 million](#) by early 2021, proving that success can come from innovating what Nintendo knows already works for customers.

The Company's Quirks

Each year, Nintendo participates in E3 (**Electronic Entertainment Expo**), an event in the video game industry where companies and developers [showcase](#) upcoming games and products to consumers and retailers. In the past, Nintendo closed out the show with explosive trailers, information drops, and left fans around the world buzzing with excitement over the promise of continued stories and release dates. In 2013, Nintendo announced the long-awaited continuation of The Legend of Zelda™ series in the form of the open-world game *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*. With Nintendo releasing the Nintendo Switch™ alongside it, fans rejoiced. However, complications arose as the years passed, and [Nintendo pushed back](#) the release date multiple times, moved it forward, and repeated the process. This left fans confused and disappointed, even when it ended up releasing on time in Japan and North America. Nintendo has a [history](#) of promising a product and releasing it later than intended. This lack of communication doesn't affect the loyalty of Nintendo's intense customers, as one might think. When Nintendo delivers, the products prove their worth. *Breath of the Wild* sold well over [20 million copies](#), earned itself a 10/10 [review](#) from IGN, a 97% from [Metacritic](#), and shocked the gaming community with how enjoyable the gameplay turned out. Instead of rushing the final version, Nintendo made sure it was in its best state before release day, even if that meant mix-ups in terms of marketing.

Additionally, in terms of competitive technology, Nintendo stays comfortable behind other companies. While Sony's PlayStation™ and Microsoft's Xbox™ excel in [graphics and power](#), Nintendo uses a years-old chip to power the Nintendo Switch™ graphics, which, "aren't as impressive as game consoles that came out years before" ([Gilbert 2019](#)). However, this doesn't affect the sales of the Nintendo Switch™, because around [80 million consoles](#) sold as of March 2021. Ko Shiotu, the company's hardware director, claims Nintendo doesn't "chase trends in technology," and this ideology leads back to the company's brand values—creating products for the experience of the consumer that are affordable and playable by any group. As a loyal customer of Nintendo products, I have never been unsatisfied with the graphics or capabilities of my Nintendo consoles or games. I prefer the abstract art design of *Breath of the Wild* to the realism of the PS4's *The Last of Us Part II*, and the portable appeal of the Switch holds my attention much longer than any hefty system from another company.

Recommendation

However, this does not mean I believe the company can't improve. Everything has room to grow. In the future, Nintendo could invest in opening Nintendo stores along with its current online and in-person distribution network around the world. In Tokyo, Japan, Nintendo stores prove to be wildly popular, and while Super Nintendo World will open at [Universal Orlando](#) just like in Japan, investing in themed stores would bring in waves of fans. Similarly, if the company insists on teasing games years before they hint at a release date, it'd be to Nintendo's advantage to give annual updates on their more popular products, such as the sequel to *Breath of the Wild* no one's heard of since its announcement at Nintendo's 2019 E3 presentation and the suggestion of its [late 2020 release](#). This would appease fans and increase excitement for the release. Nintendo's brand revolves around its commitment to consumers, strong presence, and reliability, so this would strengthen the narrative of its values.

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