

Virtual animals game requires you to go out for walks

December 30 2022, by Steinar Brandslet



The game BitPet offers several different challenges with animals. This screenshot is from a competition to collect as many coins as possible. You can play against other people or AI-controlled animals you find on the map. Credit: BitPet

Are you getting fat from playing way too many computer games? If so, we have good news for you. The game of BitPet requires you to move around in order to do well.

BitPet is a [company](#) with its roots in the gaming environment at NTNU. Now BitPet is launching a game where you have to take care of virtual animals. These animals only thrive if you take them outside and are social.

Indeed, the game is reminiscent of Pokémon Go, a game that Alf Inge Wang has studied carefully.

"Pokémon Go has a positive effect on players' physical, mental and social health, but the effect only lasts as long as you keep the game going. I wanted to find a game concept that provides similar positive health effects over a longer period of time," says Wang, a professor in NTNU's Department of Computer Science.

So while your Pokémon can thrive on your list for years without you doing anything for them, BitPet requires you to actually move and actively care for your animals. This feature is the main difference between the two games—and is what can make a big difference for you.

BitPet gets you up and out

"For example, you can find and feed the animals, pet and groom them regularly, ensure that the animals' home area is well-kept and do activities with them," says Wang.

The activities may require you to move to a specific area. Maybe you want to go on a treasure hunt, or look for useful objects. Or you can meet someone else who has the game and let their animals play together or challenge each other. They do this in augmented reality (AR), where you can see the animals moving around in the [real world](#) using the camera on your mobile phone.

"AR is one of the big trends in games, and we think the timing for BitPet

is good right now," says Wang.

Professor Wang invented the well-known and popular quiz game Kahoot! in his time. This time he has teamed up with several others, including Mathias Grønstad, who completed his master's degree in entrepreneurship at NTNU in 2021. Grønstad is now general manager of BitPet. The company currently has five employees in Oslo, Trondheim and Ukraine.

"It's challenging for start-up companies to obtain qualified and skilled employees. But BitPet found a solution to the challenge in Ukraine," says Grønstad.

Since they formed the company during the pandemic, when many people had to work from home anyway, working from different places has not been a particular challenge. The greater tension was linked to the fact that Putin and his allies invaded Ukraine on February 24 this year.

"This came as a shock to all of us in the company, and we feared the worst. So far, fortunately, BitPet's employees in Ukraine haven't experienced the war up close. But they have endured power cuts, regular air raid sirens and similar incidents," says Grønstad.

Launched during major event

BitPet launched the game on November 17 and 18 during Slush 2022 in Helsinki. This is a world-renowned event for start-up companies. This year it brought together 2600 investors, 4600 representatives from various start-up companies and 400 media people.

BitPet is one of eleven companies that were specially selected to launch their product during the event. They competed against hundreds of other companies.

"Our goal is to offer a [game](#) that can be played globally by many millions of players. We hope this results in better social and [physical health](#) for the players," says Grønstad.

To achieve this goal, BitPet needs to bring in investors. Various support schemes and funds have financed the company to this point.

Provided by Norwegian University of Science and Technology

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