

Lessons for marketers from the Wordle craze

By  Sarah Britten

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If you haven't heard of [Wordle](#), the biggest viral sensation of 2022 that isn't Omicron, you've been living under a rock.

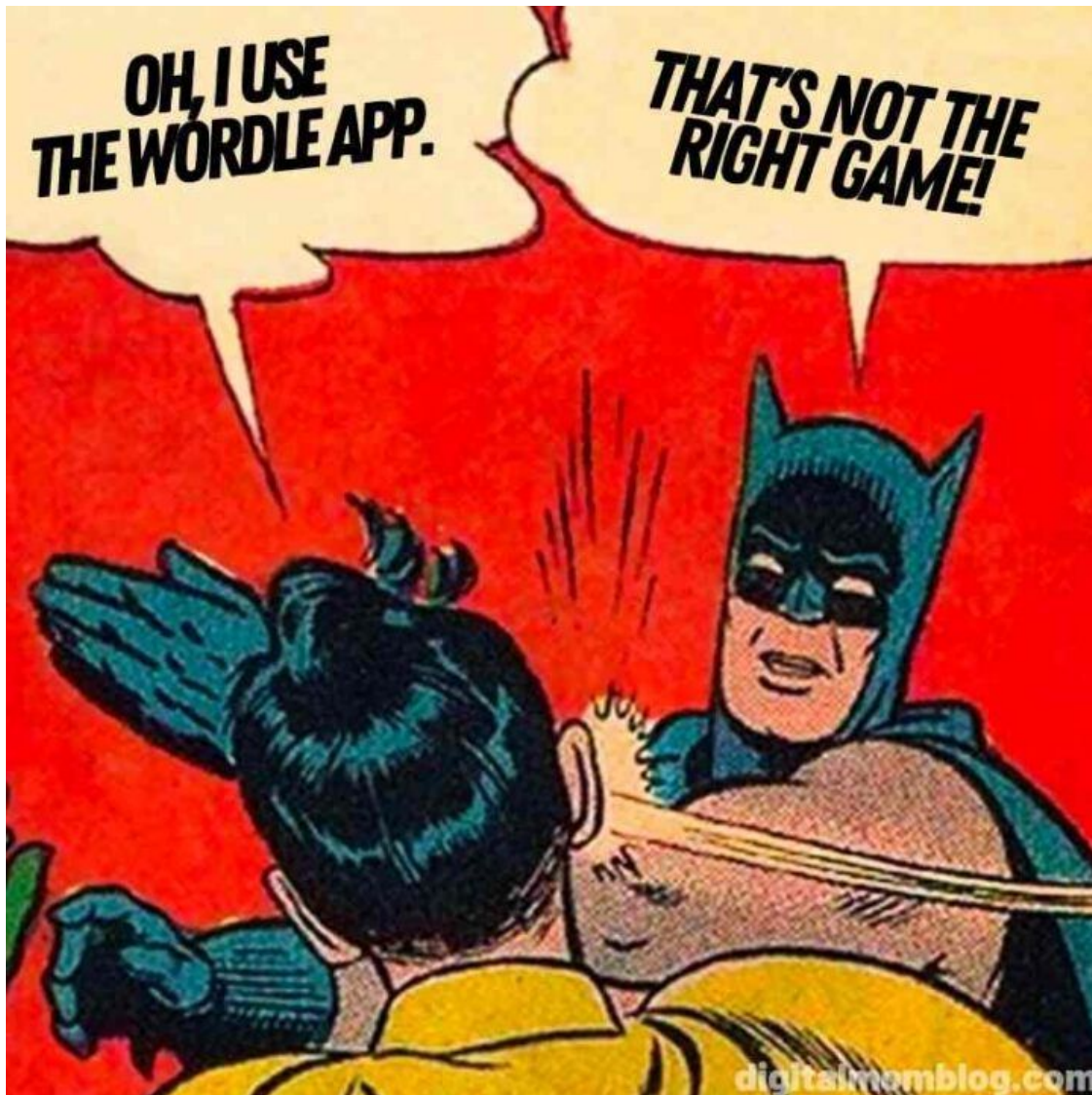


Source: © Wordle memes <https://www.digitalmarketingblog.com/wordle-memes/>

Right now, you can divide a substantial chunk of the world into people who play Wordle and people who hate people who play the five letter guessing game. I was relatively late to the Wordle party. It got to the point where half the tweets in my feed contained those distinctive green, yellow and grey blocks before I decided to find out more. The repetitive visual noise was annoying enough for me to relent and take a look... and I was hooked instantly. It's reached the point where the first thing I think about every morning is which five letter word I'm going to kick off with. No doubt marketing and communications people the world over are looking at Wordle and wondering whether they can apply its lessons to their own work. Why Wordle, why now, and what does it mean? **Wordle lessons**

- **The visuals are distinctive.** Those rows of little blocks are key to why Wordle has spread so fast. They're so simple, and so distinctive and, once you find out what they actually refer to, so meaningful. At a glance, you can compare your results to someone else's, even if I almost never share my own (if it annoyed me, it'll annoy someone else). A word guessing game has become a marker of community membership through a visual code – genius!
- **It's highly shareable.** Also, if it weren't so easy to share your results in the form of those little blocks, Wordle also wouldn't be the global craze it is right now. The interface and user journey are almost seamless, so it almost takes more effort not to share your results. (I make a point of not sharing mine because I don't want to annoy the Wordle haters out there, but it's soooo tempting to just click.)
- **It balances simplicity with just enough of a challenge.** The game itself is beautifully simple, and because there's only one word released every 24 hours, there's no danger of wasting your day on it. Instead, it's become a pleasant daily ritual for players: scarcity works for it. Difficulty varies depending on the word, but it's accessible to most English speakers, and the challenge to your vocabulary and thinking skills makes it feel educational, even virtuous. The only barriers to participation are internet access and a desire to be otherwise.
- **There's an element of ego and competition.** Social media challenges often succeed because they feed into our endemic narcissism. The Wordle results page gives players an instant analysis of the distribution of their guesses, which appeals to people who want every bit of data about themselves they can generate. Sharing your results to your social media feeds gives the opportunity to boast about how well you did, while subtly (and sometimes not so subtly) comparing yourself to everyone else.

- **It isn't trying to make money out of us.** Wordle was developed by Josh Wardle as a passion project for his partner, and he says he doesn't want to make money out of it (Wordle is a superb ad for his [services](#) though, so there's surely huge demand for his skills now). We're so used to being relentlessly retargeted, that discovering something that doesn't seem to have a hidden agenda makes a refreshing change at a time when we're at the end of our collective tethers.



Source: © Wordle memes <https://www.digitalmomblog.com/wordle-memes/>

How long will the Wordle craze last? I suspect we'll run out of new five letter words before the core fan base gets tired of it. Whatever happens, historians a hundred years from now will look at those six rows of five blocks and know that this is what the English-speaking world was doing in January 2022. Everything about this game is psychologically on point; it just gets it when it comes to human nature. If you aren't already playing Wordle, you soon will be.

ABOUT SARAH BRITTEN

Dr Sarah Britten has 21 years of experience across various clients and multiple strategic disciplines, including social media and shopper. Her client experience includes Nedbank, Investec, FNB, Bothongo Group, Sanofi, Colgate Palmolive, Aspen, Adcock Ingram, Kraft Heinz, Citroën and Land Rover.

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