



RocketOn Social MMO Launches With Six Partner Sites

[Wagner James Au](#) | Tuesday, February 3, 2009 | 5:00 AM PT



Today, the casual social MMO [RocketOn](#) is launching a beta partnership with six prominent youth-oriented consumer sites: [Comedy.com](#), [Hypster](#), [Online Flash Games](#), [Hotspot](#), [Boosh Magazine](#) and [faceDub](#). Now, visitors will find RocketOn's Flash-based virtual world overlaid on those sites, making it easy for users to create avatars and interact within them. RocketOn CEO Steve Hoffman told me by email that the new partnerships should enable the company to reach more than 2 million potential users.

It still remains to be seen whether consumers really want to explore the web together as avatars. But I'm watching this launch closely for several reasons. Of all the many "It's an MMO but played on the web itself" pitches I heard last year, RocketOn [struck me as the most compelling and likely to go mass-market](#), and the millions of eyeballs these new partnerships bring will help put that to the test. And while this sub-genre is unproven, Hoffman sent me some impressive beta user stats that suggest a vibrant and unique worldwide user community poised to grow.

Since launching last August, according to RocketOn's internal stats, it now has 114,000 active monthly unique users, and their demographics mirror those of many successful virtual worlds. 67 percent of RocketOn users are female, and that's also very promising; successful virtual worlds have a gender makeup that's about balanced or skews toward young females. (And according to a recent NPD presence, rates of female participation in virtual worlds [are likely to grow](#).)

RocketOn also has some very surprising (and, to me, exciting) user stats: Ethnically, 17 percent describe themselves as African-American, slightly more than the U.S. population share [of 13 percent](#). This may be the first MMO where African-Americans are over-represented, at least that I'm familiar with. (It's an industry truism that whites and Asians are disproportionately represented in this space.) Hoffman speculates it might be because one of RocketOn's default avatars is black. "We did this to make it clear that we're multiracial," he said. Commitment to racial diversity is admirable — but it's also good business sense: Since much of RocketOn's revenue will come from co-branding deals, a diverse user base should broaden its potential partner base, too.

RocketOn's diversity is also striking when you look at users based on national origin: Almost as many unique visitors are from India as the United States. Here again, Hoffman isn't entirely sure why this is. "It's funny how you catch on in certain countries without really trying," he said. In this case, he adds, it's a fortunate alignment, because [PayByCash](#), his company's payment gateway partner, is selling "Ultimate Game Cards" in more than 200 Indian stores. Players can use these to redeem the MMO's currency, Rocket Dollars, "so this will help us a lot in monetizing those Indian users." If these six Western partnerships launch successfully, I wouldn't be surprised if RocketOn started announcing deals with India-based web sites too.