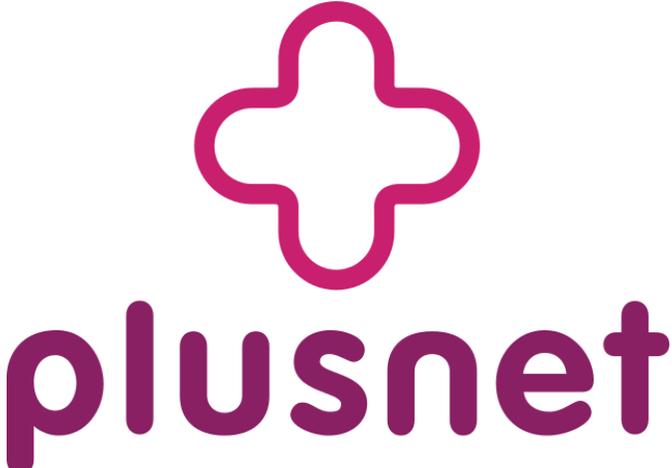


HOW BRANDS SHOULD USE EMOJIS

2016 Whitepaper



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How Brands Should Use Emojis

INTRODUCTION

Over the last 20 years, mobile technology has radically changed both the regularity and methodology with which we communicate with one another. Social media, in particular, has brought a new dimension to not only how users interact with each other, but also how brands can communicate with and influence their customers, as well as attracting new ones.

One of the most popular forms of communication in recent years is the emoji, the pictorial images most commonly used in inter-personal instant messages and social media posts. Emoji usage has skyrocketed in recent years, meaning it's important to know both what they are and how they are used, to understand how a brand can use them effectively.

This whitepaper will cover the contextual information of emojis, including what they are, how they are used and the effects they have on the messages communicated by the user. It will then demonstrate four key ways brands can use emojis in their social media marketing strategies.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EMOJIS

WHAT ARE EMOJIS?

Emojis are pictographs used in electronic messages and on web pages. They are named after the Japanese word meaning 'picture' and 'letter' (moji) and they began life on Japanese mobile phones in the late 1990s¹.

A common mistake to make is to assume that emojis and emoticons are the same thing. However, while they serve similar purposes, they have distinctly different origins. Emoticons (a portmanteau of the words 'emotions' and 'icon') were first used in 1982 by Scott E. Falham when he posted to an online bulletin board. Falham wanted a way to mark a post as being humorous, to eliminate the risk of other users taking it seriously and responding with objections or further questions. He wrote "I propose the following character sequence for joke markers : -)", and the first emoticon was born.

Emojis, however, debuted much later. They were first used on cell phones across Japan in 1999 as a means of reducing the data strain placed on mobile phone companies by a public increasingly using picture messages to communicate². Developed by engineers at the dominant Japanese mobile phone network, DoCoMo, emojis counted as a single character, meaning text messages that were often limited to 140, or even just 60 characters, could convey a greater amount of meaning than with basic text.

Both objects are used to convey meaning but do so differently. Chiefly, emoticons are user-created images made from text and symbols, whereas emojis are purposely created pictorial images. Below you can see similar emotional messages expressed differently between emoticons and emojis.

Emoticon

: -)

: - (

: - O

: - P

; -)

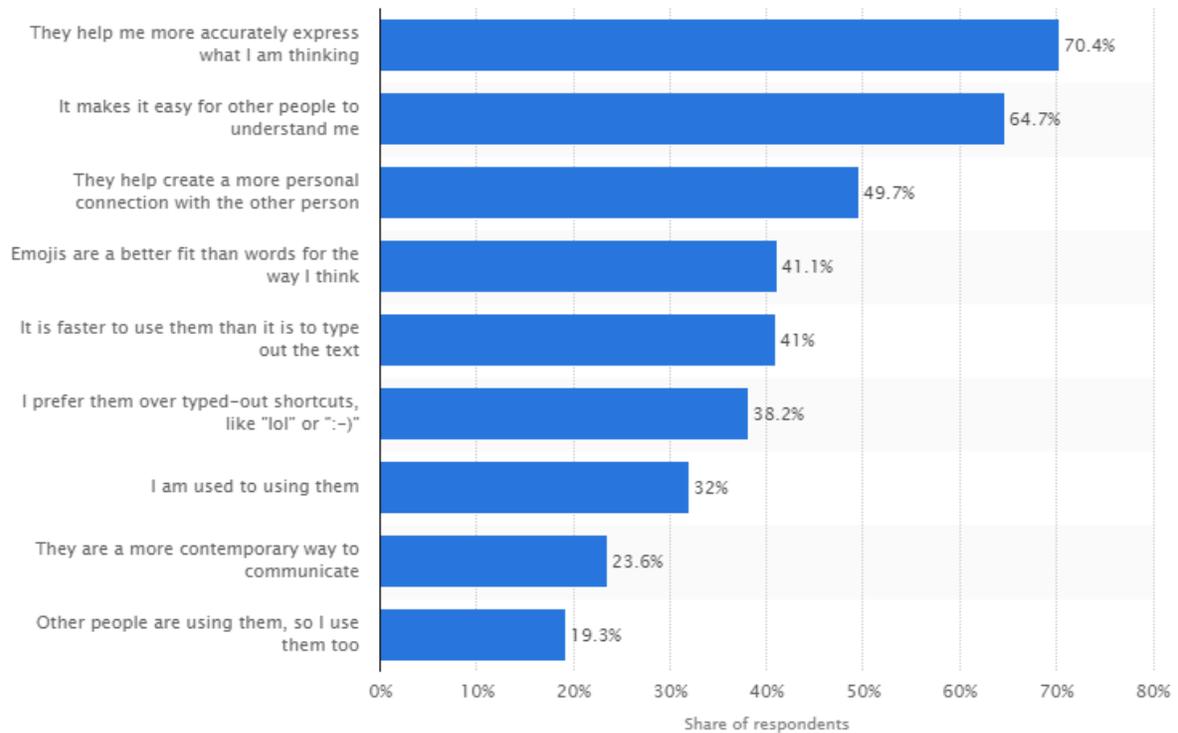
Emoji



WHY DO PEOPLE USE THEM?

To explore why people use emojis is also to explore why they choose to use emojis *instead of emoticons*.

Leading reasons for using Emojis according to U.S. internet users as of August 2015



© Statista 2016

Source: Statista³

Besides the character-saving benefit of emojis acting as a single character (rather than emoticons that use characters for each icon and space used in its construction) aiding communication over social media platforms that deliberately set character limits (such as Twitter), emojis are chiefly used to accurately express what a user is thinking to a greater degree than emoticons.

Americans are some of the most common users of emojis in the world, with 74% reporting they use emojis every day⁴. The graph above clearly shows that the primary reason for emoji usage is to aid the level of communication in their messages, rather than for convenience or simply amusement. The advantage that emojis hold over emoticons is in the wide range of emotional responses available. For example, the row of emojis pictured below can all be seen as positive expressions. They are all similar to the :-) emoticon, yet there are distinct differences in the construction of the graphics to illustrate more specific emotional responses:



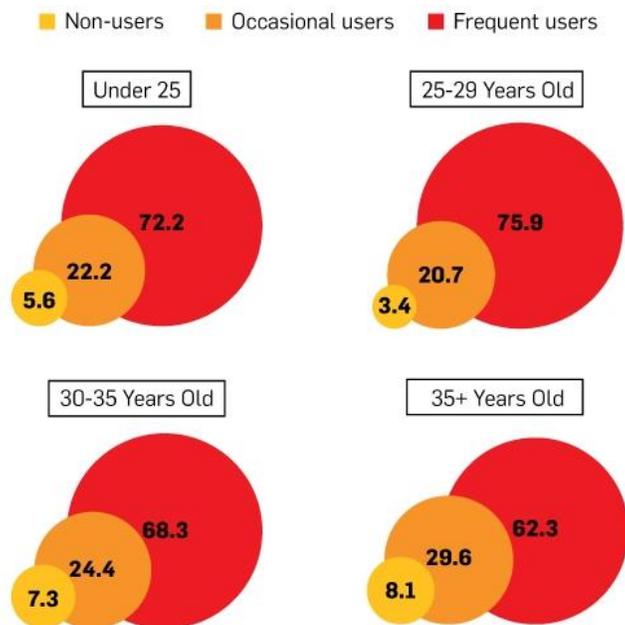
From left to right, these emojis are listed as:

- Grinning Face
- Grinning Face With Smiling Eyes
- Face With Tears Of Joy
- Smiling Face With Open Mouth
- Smiling Face With Open Mouth And Smiling Eyes
- Smiling Face With Open Mouth And Cold Sweat
- Smiling Face With Open Mouth and Tightly-Closed Eyes

Just in this short sample of emojis, you can see the potential differences in messages conveyed by their use. The grinning face with “smiling eyes” is meant to articulate more joy than the face without, the face with “tears of joy” is more appropriate for special occasions and celebrations, and the smiling face with “cold sweat” can be seen as a sigh of relief.

These are just a short selection of emojis taken for one range of positive emotional responses. These icons are also used to express annoyance, fatigue, interest, appreciation, ridicule, and almost any other emotion one user wants to communicate with another. The primary purpose of an emoji is to accurately express what users are thinking and, therefore, for other people to understand them. It’s more important then, that you understand how brands can use emojis effectively to participate in this dialogue.

WHO USES EMOJIS?



Source: 2015 Emogi Report, infographic by Carlos Monteiro

Traditionally thought to be a teen-heavy audience, research by start-up messaging platform, Emogi⁵, has shown that 92% of the total online population uses emojis and that there aren’t substantial differences in emoji use between age demographics.

25-29-year-olds are the biggest users of emojis, and even 62% of those aged 35 or above identify as 'frequent users'. The bigger discrepancy appears to be visible when looking at the genders of users. The same study found that almost 60% of women reported using emojis frequently, compared to only 41% of men.

CATEGORY LEADERS

US English	Canada English	Australia English	Spain Spanish	US Spanish	LatAm Spanish
Female-oriented Royalty Tech LGBT Meat	Violent Body parts Money Sports Raunchy Ocean creatures	Holiday Mammals Alcohol Junk food Birds Clothing Pets	Party	Sad faces Monkeys	Baby
Brazilian Portuguese	French	Turkish	Russian	Arabic	Malaysian
Cats Religious Music Moons	Hearts Wedding	Happy faces People	Romance Cold weather	Flowers Clocks Symbols Male Stars Plants Fruit	Hand gestures Female Funny Transport Farm animals

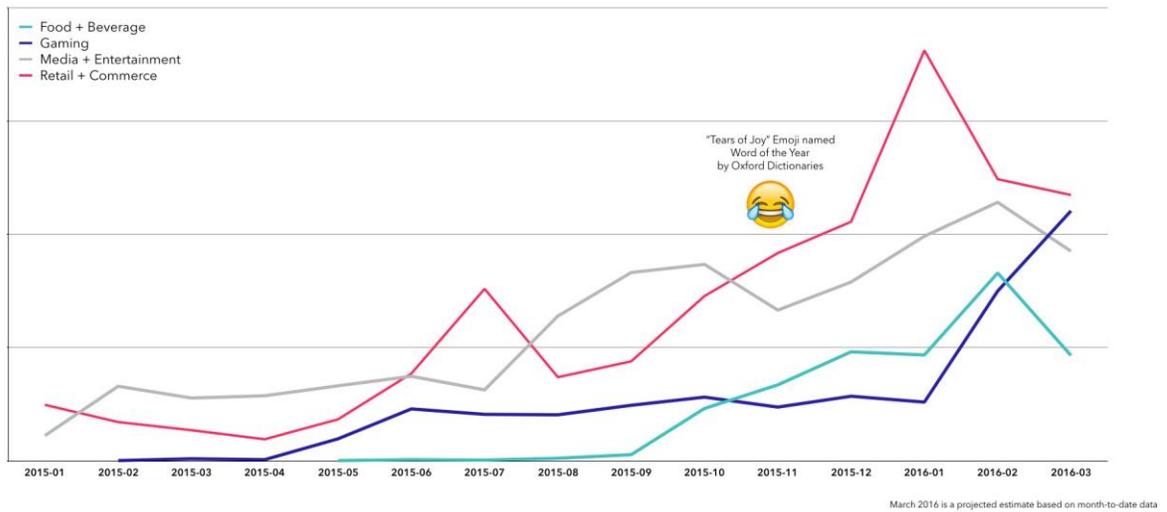
Source: SwiftKey Emoji Report April 2015

A report from [SwiftKey](#), developers for Android and iOS keyboards, also demonstrated how emojis are used across different cultures. They compiled a table displaying which category of emoji was most popular in specific languages⁶. For a brand completely new to using emojis, it is wise to play to categories their customers commonly use to become better acquainted with their use in branded content. The report also found that the use of emojis is mostly positive, with happy faces totalling 44.8% of emoji use, compared to just 14.3% for sad faces.

Dana Loberg, co-founder of MojiLala, spoke with us about the largely positive use of emojis:

“Most people are happy to receive emojis and they often leave a happy impression on people’s minds, which is great for brands who want to be associated with positive thoughts. So, for brands looking to up their social presence game, emoji sets are a great way to engage fans and allow them to organically share the brands they love with their friends, get inspired, or just think their new set is super cool and relatable.”

A TREND OF INCREASING EMOJI USAGE IS OBSERVED IN MANY VERTICALS



Source: Appboy March 2016

Brands are also using emojis much more frequently, with a 777% year-on-year usage growth in the number of marketing campaigns featuring emojis, according to mobile marketing company Appboy⁷. When analysing specific brand industries, retail and commerce have seen the biggest growth, specifically over the holidays (December to January). Media and entertainment, food and beverage, and gaming industries have also seen substantial increases. Emojis also received a major boost in popularity (and validity, against their detractors) after Oxford Dictionaries named the 'Face with Tears of Joy' its Word of the Year for 2015 in November of that year⁸.

Christian Brucculeri, CEO of Snaps, commented on the use of brand-created emojis:

“Good emojis personify the brand. As the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words – and a good emoji does just that. For example, Kevin Hart’s hyper-popular emojis portrayed his larger than life personality and iconic facial expressions to make an app that would truly resonate with his fans. Kevin was extremely involved in the process and together, we were able to create an emoji that resonated with his fans.”

FOUR WAYS YOUR BRAND CAN USE EMOJIS EFFECTIVELY

It seems that this official recognition may have been the spark needed for brands to shift their opinions of emojis from ‘social media fad’ to a new, legitimate way to communicate with their customers. But how can brands appropriately integrate emojis into their campaigns to effectively communicate with their customers?

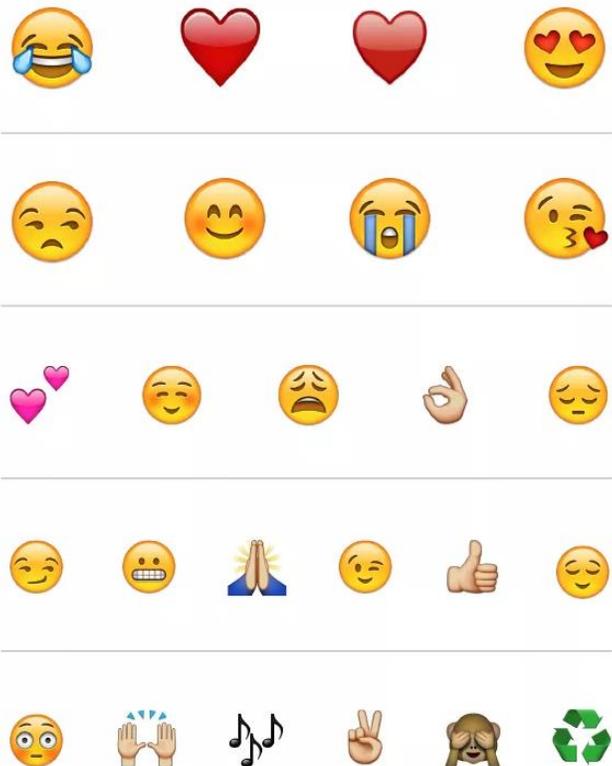
We’ve outlined four key ways you can integrate emojis into your brand’s social media so that you can continue to connect and interact with your target audience online.

#1 USE EMOJIS POPULARLY POSTED BY REAL PEOPLE

The more “human” a brand appears online, the more relatable potential customers find it and the more likely they’ll be to engage with it. Therefore, you should stay on top of not only which emojis are most popularly used, but also which are popularly used by real people, rather than those from other brands.

Appboy released the below images detailing which emoji were most commonly used by real people, and those used by branded profiles online⁹:

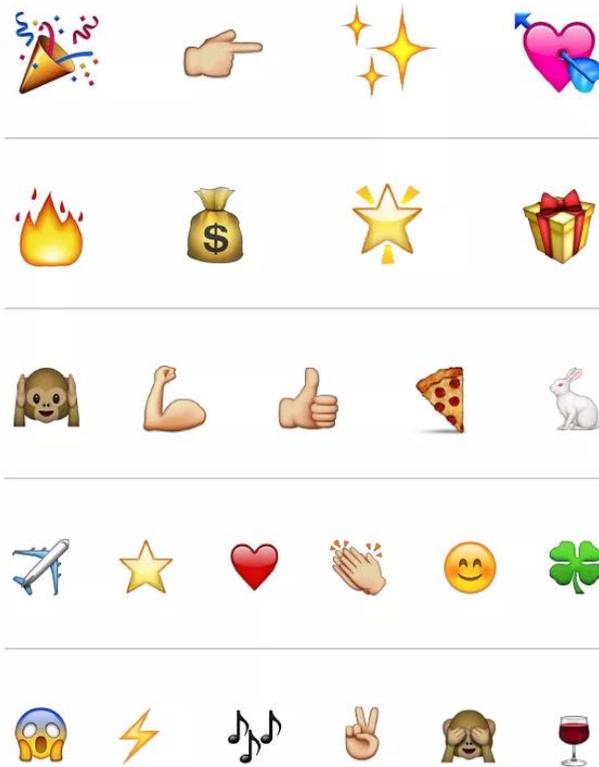
Emojis Used By People



Source: Appboy March 2016

Notice how the emojis used by real people are commonly emotional expressions using facial icons. 14 of the top 25 emojis fall under this category, which shows that people frequently use the icons for emotive self-expression, with three of the non-facial icons also being blatantly emotive, heart-based emojis.

Emojis Used By Brands



Source: Appboy March 2016

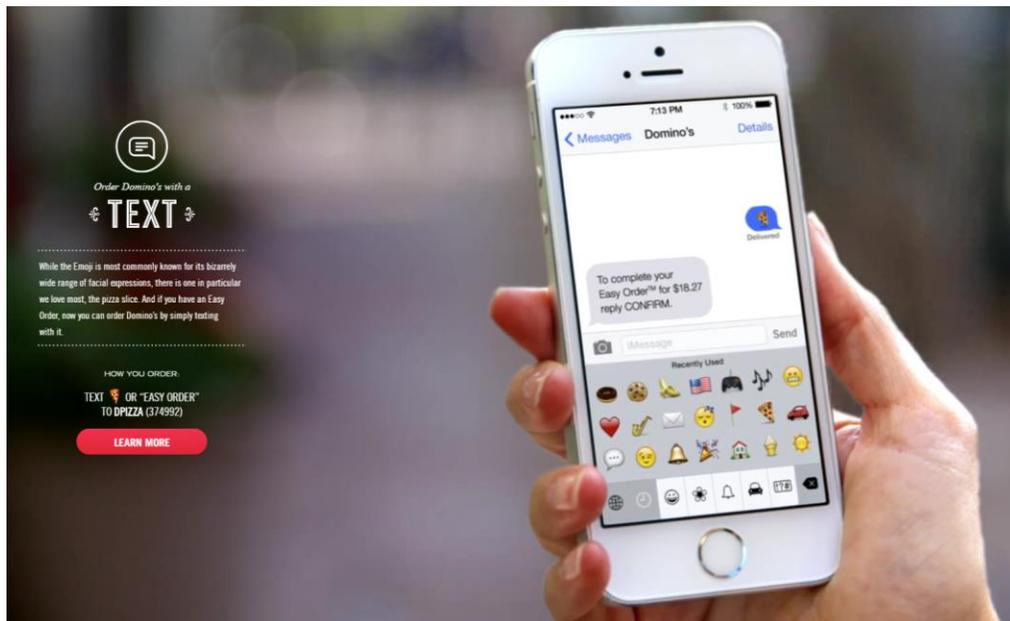
Now observe the icons most typically used by brands. Only two of these are facial emojis, with the others being bright and attractive icons meant to catch people’s attention when scrolling through newsfeeds. Symbols such as ‘Party Popper’, ‘Sparkles’, and ‘Fire’ are commonly attached to branded posts to encourage people to respond to them. For example, a brand may, when releasing a new product, use the ‘Party Popper’ emoji in social media posts as a sign of celebration. Replies to the post, however, will more likely consist of facially-based emojis from personal profiles, creating a distinct back-and-forth vocabulary of emojis used by both sides (as seen by the differing tables of most commonly used symbols).

An easy step in helping your brand to use emojis more effectively is to frequently use emojis from the ‘People’ table. Personal accounts will see your branded posts and find them similar to personal posts on their news feeds, and instant messages from other apps. This should not only encourage them to interact with your brand, but also help position your brand as a relatable one.

Keep track of popular emojis by using the site www.emojitracker.com. The site updates in real time with the frequency each icon is used on Twitter, meaning if a certain set of emojis become popular due to a news-worthy event, you know to incorporate them into your posts.

#2 BUILD A SERVICE AROUND THEIR USE

Emojis are a great resource to get your target audience communicating with your brand more often. And if one of the primary purposes of emojis is to ease communication between two parties, they can also be used to ease transactions between the two. Emoji-based services can be used to reduce the necessary steps of a customer's buying journey, allowing orders to be placed with the simple send of an icon, rather than selecting through menus and a checkout screen. A prime example of a brand pioneering this technique is Domino's Pizza.



Source: Domino's Anywhere¹⁰

Domino's 'Anywhere' platform in the US aims to remove as many steps as possible between the customer and their purchase of Domino's products, enabling orders to be placed through platforms from Twitter to Smart TVs, to their own 'Zero Clicks' app. Through both Facebook Messenger and text, customers can place their pre-set regular orders simply by sending a pizza emoji to the brand's channels. By tying their company to the universal image of a pizza slice, customers are also reminded of the service when they use the emoji in other situations.

Speaking to Ad Age, Chief Digital Officer of Domino's, Dennis Maloney, said¹¹:

"This wasn't just a marketing campaign; we're creating an ordering platform. There's definitely something about the campaign which is resonating with our consumers. The emojis are part of our collective language now. [...] We've definitely seen a lot more of our conversations incorporate emojis. Part of that is driven by the fact that we're using emojis a lot in our campaigns, so it's a little bit of chicken and egg."

Consider your brand's products and see if there are any features you can modify to become more automatic. Can your customers place regular orders? Are there slight product variations (colour, size etc.) that can be visualised into icons? Making the buying cycle easier for your existing customers presents you as a responsive brand adapting to the modern way your customers use the internet, and could lead to a boost in sales.

#3 LEARN HOW TO CREATE YOUR OWN

Don't feel restricted to only using the commonly-available emojis in your brand posts. Several companies have created their own emojis which, given their current level of popularity, can become a media story unto itself. Speaking to Adweek, Thomas Ordahl, chief strategy officer for Landor, said that "[it's] a no-brainer that brands would explore this. It will create new opportunities to communicate and relate to people that are important for you to engage as a brand."¹²

Here at Plusnet, we wanted to create our own Yorkshire-based emojis to celebrate Yorkshire Day on 1st August. We designed five emojis based around the quintessentially Yorkshire traditions and asked the public to vote for their favourite through Facebook and Twitter. Pictured below, their options were: Yorkshire White Rose, Yorkshire Pudding, Yorkshire Terrier, Flat Cap, and the Teapot and Cosy.



Source: Plusnet

The most popular Yorkshire emoji was submitted to Unicode for approval¹³. Unicode is the international encoding standard that assigns emojis their values when they are coded into smartphone and computer on-screen emoji keyboards. Put simply, a brand-created emoji must be submitted to Unicode before it starts appearing in messaging and social media apps as standard. If your brand is looking to create their own emojis, you'll have to follow the below steps:

1. Design a computer image that has dimensions of 72x72 pixels and is in PNG file format. While these images can appear in any visual style, it is best to mimic the visual style of already popular emojis.
2. Submit the images to Unicode along with "Evidence of Frequency". This must be documented evidence that your emoji will be used frequently compared to already established and commonly-used emojis. This is the integral reason that your brand must encourage an emoji's use by its audience ahead of applying for Unicode approval.
3. Supply the appropriate image licensing so that the emoji can be used by Unicode in the public domain.

The approval process of emojis means it can take upwards of 30 days before you receive news of confirmation or rejection. Therefore, it's highly recommended that your brand uses the creation of unique emojis as a campaign, rather than a one-off effort. Attach your campaign to an upcoming holiday or a new development for your brand (a product launch or event being held) and make emojis part of the overall promotion.

Dana Loberg of MojiLala, explains:

“Another advantage of emojis and brands is that they can micro-target nations that they’re looking to expand in. For example, if Nike wants to build-out their stores in Asia, they can create very local language and slang emojis that best relate with the people they are trying to attract. Brands can have a lot of fun when it comes to emojis and the amount of creativity and real-time emojis they create. The more current and relatable emojis brands create, the more virality and coolness they begin to build with their younger consumer base.”

For more information about the Plusnet Yorkshire Emoji campaign, please see our Appendix section.

#4 MAKE YOUR COMMUNITY MORE ACTIVE

The simple use of emojis by your followers will show their emotional responses to your brand, however, it is far more effective if you use the creation of your unique emojis to help encourage your community to be more active.

For the Plusnet Yorkshire emojis, posts advertising each of the emojis were promoted on social media, targeting parents, families, and people living in the Yorkshire area. The story of the emojis' creation was outreached to a wide range of media to further increase interest and engagement. Major UK news publications, including the Daily Mirror, Sky News, and Metro, covered the story and in total, the campaign achieved over one million impressions and over nine thousand post engagements from Facebook and Twitter. Once the winner (the Yorkshire White Rose) was selected, media outlets were contacted again so they could cover the results of the competition and further promote a positive brand voice from Plusnet.



Source: Taco Bell

Taco Bell also gained attention through a PR story when they created their own taco emoji¹⁴. Creating a Change.org petition for their fans to sign, they promoted potential taco emoji designs and used the 32,784 supporters of their petition as their Evidence of Frequency to submit their designs to Unicode. They

celebrated the approval of their design by creating the Taco Emoji Engine, which created animated GIFs combining the new taco emoji and previously existing designs. For example, the taco emoji and the 'Smiling Face with Glasses' icon created the below image as a shareable GIF:



Source: Taco Bell

This campaign involved an immense amount of audience interaction and wasn't simply an exercise in encouraging existing fans to use emojis more frequently. By responding to tweets that asked why a taco emoji wasn't available, Taco Bell structured a campaign that saw their fans sign a petition leading to the icon's creation and then gave them customisable collateral, in the form of the Taco Emoji Engine, that rewarded their use.

When looking to create your own emoji-based campaign, carefully consider if you can quantify their use and turn the results into a marketable story. As both the Plusnet and Taco Bell examples show, the creation of emojis, with the right context, can be worthy of a PR story itself and gain attention as people interact with it. Think of the specific niches your target audience is comprised of and promote posts towards them. You need to generate a solid amount of attention before the public and media outlets can hear and react to it, and the best way to secure this early interaction is from your core audiences.

Owen Churches, cognitive neuroscientist at Flinders University, commented on the technical limitations branded emoji content can face:

"There are technological restrictions – some operating systems won't represent non-standard Unicode. But, in general, this seems like a creative approach. The key thing with all communication is that both the sender and receiver of the message know what the symbols mean. This is typically established through association so perhaps brands need to make this association clear through advertising."

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Emoji icons taken from: <http://emojipedia.org/apple/> [Last accessed 11/11/2016]

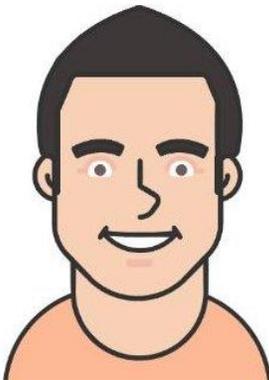
CONTRIBUTORS



Dana Loberg, *Co-Founder of MojiLala*

MojiLaLa was inspired by a group of artists, designers and engineers who believe there's a better, more dynamic way to share emotions and communicate with one another around the world. We send billions of emojis to our loves ones, family and friends, and want to send even more diverse and related emojis to better express ourselves.

<https://creator.mojilala.com>



Christian Brucculeri, *CEO of Snaps*

Snaps is the first end-to-end mobile messaging platform designed to help marketers join the 50 billion messages consumers send daily. During the first two months of its open beta, over 17 brands, including Comedy Central, Nickelodeon, and Burger King created custom emoji keyboard and sticker campaigns using the Snaps platform, which reaches over 400 million active monthly users.

<https://makesnaps.com/>



Owen Churches, *Cognitive Neuroscientist at Flinders University*

Owen is a Post-doctoral Research Fellow in the School of Psychology at Flinders University, investigating the cognitive neuroscience of new forms of social interaction including emoticons and profile pictures. He received his PhD from the University of Cambridge and his work has been covered by publications including the Telegraph and the Independent.

<http://www.flinders.edu.au/people/owen.churches>

APPENDIX: PLUSNET YORKSHIRE EMOJI CASE STUDY

The Yorkshire Emoji campaign was launched in a bid to show Plusnet's prideful and friendly personality, championing the Yorkshire region and allowing a new form of self-expression for social media users through emojis. A brief overview of each aspect of the campaign can be found below.

SOCIAL MEDIA RESULTS

Our five designs for potential Yorkshire Day emojis were conceived and promoted, with social media users asked to vote for their favourite by leaving a like or a comment on specific posts. Facebook was the primary platform used, with money placed behind seven posts throughout the campaign. Plusnet's core audience of parents, families, and people living in or having an interest in Yorkshire were targeted. All Twitter engagement was organic and the winning emoji (the white rose, with 2,587 votes) was announced on Yorkshire Day itself through the Plusnet Facebook and Twitter channels.

Below are the total votes, impressions, and engagements the campaign received through social media, as well as some highlights of brand interactions with the campaign.

Social Media Results

- ★ The campaign was well-received by the Yorkshire community across the UK, who engaged with Plusnet to help decide the winning emoji
- ★ In addition to showcasing each emoji over the week-long campaign, major national and regional brands engaged with Plusnet on social media, including Betty's, Tetley Tea, Yorkshire Tea, Capital FM, BBC Look North and Aunt Bessie's
- ★ We received over 6,000 votes across Facebook and Twitter
- ★ Overall, the campaign achieved 1,075,162 impressions and 9,285 post engagements on both Facebook and Twitter
- ★ The average cost per engagement on Facebook was an excellent 48p
- ★ The best performing Facebook post had a cost per engagement of 16p



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SOCIAL MEDIA PERFORMANCE

	Facebook (based on £6,000 spend)	Twitter	TOTAL
Total Reach	1,041,018	34,144	1,075,162
Total Engagements	8,413	872	9,285
Average cost per engagement (pence)	48	N/A	48
Total Votes	6,018	66	6,144

PUBLIC AND BRAND SOCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

The collage displays various social media highlights from the Yorkshire emoji campaign. Key elements include:

- Aunt Bessie's** tweet: "Well, it's obvious to us - the only Yorkshire emoji HAS to be the pudding! Surely? What do you think?"
- Mirror** article: "Yorkshire wants its own EMOJI to celebrate the county and its 'proud heritage'"
- Capital Breakfast Yorkshire** tweet: "Apparently we're getting our own Yorkshire emoji for #YorkshireDay! What sort of thing should we go for?"
- Metro** article: "Yorkshire now apparently wants its own emojis"
- Heart North East** tweet: "So if there's going to be Yorkshire Emoji's, surely there should be North East Emoji's right? :jk:k"
- Plusnet** tweet: "We're launching a Yorkshire emoji campaign & need your help! #VOTE for your favourite here: bit.ly/2aaNtG"
- The Star** tweet: "Take a moment to choose emoji that best symbolises county ahead of Yorkshire Day response bit.ly/2aaNtG"
- BBC Look North (Yorkshire)** tweet: "An enterprising company in south Yorkshire is marking Yorkshire Day by asking people to vote for a new emoji to represent Yorkshire. The options are a Yorkshire terrier, a white rose, a fat cat, a Yorkshire pudding or a teapot. What do you reckon? Do you have any more imaginative suggestions?"
- Sam FM Bristol** tweet: "Yorkshire folk are demanding a special emoji for their made up 'Yorkshire Day' - if Bristol had an emoji, what would it be?"

PR RESULTS

In the run-up to Yorkshire Day, the national, regional, and consumer media were contacted to generate mass awareness and encourage participation in the emoji campaign. The winning emoji was also used to re-contact media outlets and maximise the coverage earned by pitching it as a story update.

Below are the totals for pieces of coverage the campaign received through various media, how the campaign was measured against projections, and some highlights of coverage gained by the campaign.

PR Results

- ★ We achieved 138 pieces of regional, national and lifestyle coverage in print, online and broadcast titles, with all promoting our campaign for a Yorkshire emoji and encouraging votes
- ★ Total media reach of 483,939,737
- ★ Cost per thousand of £0.03
- ★ Coverage highlights included Metro, Daily Mirror, Daily Express, Daily Star and The Sun, BBC Newsround, Sky News, BBC Radio 4, BBC Radio 5 and talkRadio

PR PERFORMANCE AGAINST DELIVERABLES

Media Type	Target	Achieved
National print/online	1	8
National broadcast	0	16
Consumer online	3	4
Regional print/online	5	32
Regional broadcast	0	78
TOTAL	9	138



OVERALL RESULTS

Below is a quick overview of the entire Yorkshire Emoji campaign, key campaign highlights, and how the campaign was amplified from a social campaign into one that could earn national and regional media attention from a variety of publications.

Campaign Highlights

- ★ 138 pieces of national, lifestyle, broadcast and regional coverage
- ★ Total editorial and social reach of over 485 million (485,014,899)
- ★ Overall cost per thousand of £0.03
- ★ Paid-for Facebook reach of over 1 million (1,041,018)
- ★ Average cost per engagement on Facebook of £0.48
- ★ Organic Twitter reach of 34,144



Successes

- ★ Initially designed as a social campaign, it was amplified through PR achieving widespread national and broadcast coverage. A positive and light-hearted story, it filled the gaps between hard news and was well received by media, particularly in broadcast where it proved to be a lively topic for debate
- ★ The engaging emoji designs made perfect, shareable content
- ★ By asking the public to vote on Plusnet's social channels, we created talkability and positive brand awareness. The campaign reached thousands and encouraged other brands and influencers to spread the conversation



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Successes

- ★ Creating a campaign gave Plusnet a purpose and a share of voice on Yorkshire Day. Starting the campaign one week before Yorkshire Day ensured we could build momentum and extend coverage and awareness beyond the day itself
- ★ Including a quote from the Yorkshire Riding Society (founders of Yorkshire Day) added credibility to the campaign
- ★ By tapping into the current news agenda, we were able to generate further coverage by capitalising on another story about people from Yorkshire being the 'most British'
- ★ The campaign exemplified Plusnet's positive brand personality: giving back to the public in a cheerful, modern and distinctly Yorkshire way



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ABOUT PLUSNET

Back in 1997 Plusnet was born. Our plan was simple - to think and act differently from other providers and save you money. That's not changed since the day we launched; 19 years later we're still providing great value broadband and phone from our HQ in Yorkshire.

Our customers and industry professionals think we support them so well we've been given a stack of awards to prove it.

We've always taken pride in having a great relationship with our customers. We think it's only fair to talk openly and honestly with them. We help fix problems and talk about pretty much anything related to broadband over on our Community site, blogs, and forums. Our customers also get generous rewards for telling their friends about us. Visit: <http://www.plus.net>