

MOBILE

## Emoji word of the year reflects importance of visual communication

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*2015's Word of the Year*

By STAFF REPORTS

The Oxford Dictionary has named an emoji as the official word of the year, revealing a major shift in consumer behavior towards mobile and visual communication, which is likely to incite more marketers to incorporate imagery in their messaging.

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The highly regarded dictionary manufacturer has designated the pictograph titled Face with Tears of Joy as the word of 2015, reflecting the significance visual imagery has in today's culture. Marketers have been keen to tap into that, and must continue to do so by communicating with consumers through their language, leveraging emojis and other visual concepts.

"Oxford's choice of an emoji as its word of the year shows a lot about how we interact in 2015," said Joe Cecin, president and chief operating officer at Nervve. "When it comes to mobile, this holds even more true as we are granted an entire keyboard of images to display emotions, activities, gestures, locations, and loyalties.

"When texting and posting on social media through mobile devices, we want to communicate as quickly and accurately as possible, and we are finding we can accomplish this by incorporating images into our language," he said. "As mobile moves toward becoming consumers' most utilized device, we are also seeing a shift in how we choose to communicate with each other."

### Emergence of emojis

While emojis have been around since the mid 1990s and mobile messaging is not new either, this year is where these platforms have hit their stride. Use of the word emoji has increased dramatically on a global scale, as well as the use of the images themselves.

The Face with Tears of Joy emoji was the most used image worldwide, prompting Oxford to declare it as the word of the year. Marketers are embracing the trend to better stay connected to their demographics.



*Dove's emoji keyboard*

While these marketing pushes are fun and interesting, it makes tracking content success rates difficult, especially through social media. Marketers were able to track brand sentiment through text phrases and hashtags, but with the proliferation of emojis used for conveying emotion becoming so substantial, brands need to determine how to track it.

"For marketers, visual aspects of communication are becoming extremely important in measuring brand sentiment, specifically on social media channels," Mr. Cecin said. "In the past, social media was all about text posts and hashtags, and marketers would often look for specific keywords to get a better handle on how consumers felt about their brand.

"With the shift to communication through images, tracking sentiment across these channels has become significantly more difficult, as marketers now need to find a red angry face emoji instead of negative words like hate,' angry,' and frustrating,'" he said.

#### Visual-first strategy

Discussion surrounding brands has become based in visuals, with consumers conveying favoritism towards marketers by sharing images and emojis on social media platforms. These channels are significant for marketers' determining brand sentiment, as these are key methods of communication for consumers.

Marketers need to develop and determine the metrics in how they want to measure a brand's sentiment in today's visually focused culture while making sure to incorporate their own imagery. Consumers will feel a connection to brand that speaks a similar language as them, which is now based in emojis.

Tapping into visual recognition and image listening technology can effectively measure how a brand is being

discussed throughout social media when its logo is being incorporated.



### *Verizon's use of emojis in a contest*

"Marketers need to begin thinking visual-first," Mr. Cecin said. "We know images and video are the best way to reach and resonate with audiences, but marketers also need to understand that this is how customers are beginning to respond.

"This certainly does not end with emoji use," he said. "Customers are posting pictures with products or at locations, quickly replacing text-based reviews on Yelp or under product review pages.

"Today, if a customer really likes a new pair of shoes, they will post a picture on Instagram with a caption of the heart-eye emoji. Finding these types of reviews is becoming significantly more difficult, but increasingly important, if they want to accurately measure brand sentiment."

Final take

*Brielle Jaekel is editorial assistant at Mobile Marketer*