MERMAID EMOJI SUBMISSION

To: Unicode Consortium
From: EmojiOne (Associate Member) via Ryan Neufeld (ryan@emojione.com)
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Introduction

We are requesting the addition of a mermaid emoji for the 2017 release year. Although a mermaid is simply the combination of a human female's upper body with the tail of a fish, both of which are already represented by existing emoji characters, our informal research indicates that mermaids are unique enough for many emoji users to request that mermaids have their own specific character created.

While Disney's *The Little Mermaid* brought mermaids into the pop culture in 1989, stories and art depicting the creatures have been around for much, much longer. According to Wikipedia's main mermaid landing page, the earliest known literature on them date back to 1000 BC, and the oldest known illustrations date to the year 1078.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mermaid

Support

A. Compatibility

There is no platform that currently offers any major mermaid-specific inclusions. However, several secondary uses can be seen in the hundreds of stickers found in mobile chat apps, such as Line (178 sticker packs of up to 40 stickers each currently), plus similar/related use in temporary Snapchat filters.

B. Expected usage level

1. Frequency

As with any other similar emoji candidate submission, the expected usage is relatively high. Finding current emoji characters to use for data comparison purposes is more complicated than usual because a mermaid doesn't have a clear primary category. For the purposes of this submission, we've performed various searches for the term mermaid to be compared to the following: the dolphin (a similar sea creature), the princess (a related person), and the unicorn (the most direct comparison as a mythical creature).

Instagram hashtags

- Mermaid vs. Dolphin
  - 4,470,106 vs. 1,026,627 (**435%**)
- Mermaid vs. Princess
  - 4,470,106 vs. 21,607,610 (**20.7%**)
- Mermaid vs. Unicorn
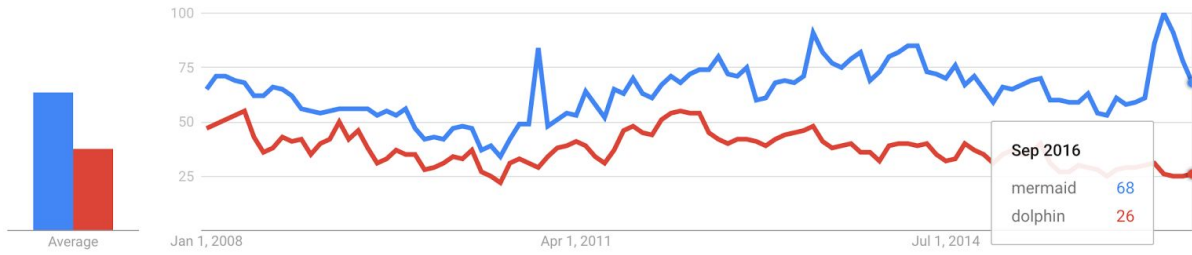 - 4,470,106 vs. 3,377,825 (**132%**)

Google web search results

- Mermaid vs. Dolphin
  - 181m vs. 127m (**142%**)
- Mermaid vs. Princess
  - 181m vs. 708m (**25.5%**)
- Mermaid vs. Unicorn
  - 181m vs. 103m (**175%**)
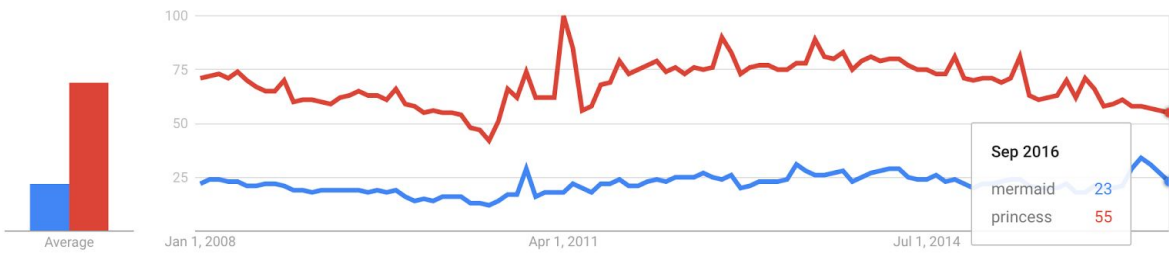
Google Trends (images)
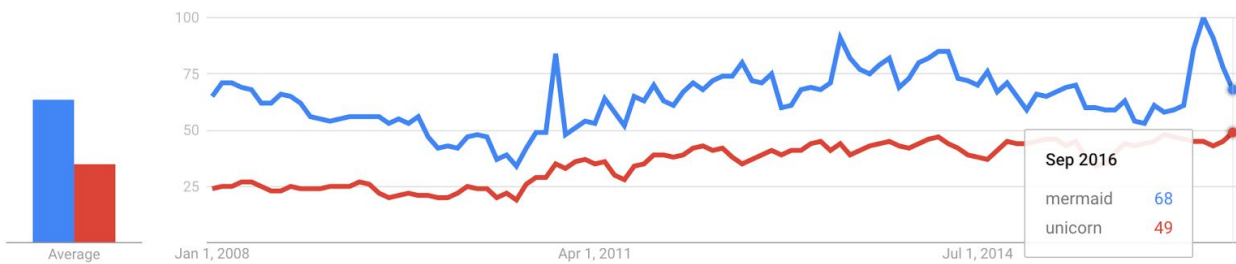
- Mermaid vs. Dolphin
    - 68 vs. 26 (**261%**)

- Mermaid vs. Princess
    - 23 vs. 55 (**41.8%**)

- Mermaid vs. Unicorn
    - 68 vs. 49 (**138%**)

2. Multiple uses

There aren't any primary, specific alternate interpretations for mermaids. However, a quick browse around the web finds people using the word mermaid to refer to swimming, to a female who has a special knack for wooing males (a siren), and to the princesses of the undersea world.

C. Image distinctiveness

Creating a mermaid image that is distinct and unique from all current emoji art is easily attainable. Though there are human faces and fish tails seen in current emoji characters, the combination of the two into a single mermaid image would not cause any added confusion.

D. Completeness

There are no groups that a mermaid emoji would belong to that need completion currently.

E. Frequently requested

We were unable to find any official record of a mermaid emoji submission/request to Unicode previously, though we're unsure whether or not any other members have received requests for them.

All of our web-based research on the subject is informal in nature. In addition to casual chats with our users to gauge their interest in new emojis (which is what gave us the idea of adding a mermaid emoji in the first place), we found the following information while doing some simple web searches:

- A Twitter search for "mermaid emoji" yields 10-15 mentions/requests on average per day. This would multiply out to 4,000+ requests per year from this single search alone.
- Model and actress Cara Delevingne started the #whyistherenomermaidemoji hashtag campaign in 2015. Her initial photo with the hashtag garnered 1.2m likes (https://www.instagram.com/p/-gEIc5DKPL/), and the hashtag is still used casually today (https://twitter.com/hashtag/whyistherenomermaidemoji).

Factors for Exclusion

F. Overly specific

There is no overlap with any other emoji characters that could be considered to represent anything similar. It is a broad enough concept that it can represent any mythical being that is part fish, part human, and that lives under the sea.

G. Open-ended

Although it has gone by several different names in various countries, mermaids are not considered to be part of any larger group of undersea creatures. There are references to mermen in literature and some pop culture, but in much smaller numbers, and they're often co-existing with mermaids in these situations (which is not necessarily the case in reverse).

H. Already representable

The only possible combinations of current emojis that would make sense to indicate a mermaid would include □□ or □□. However, there is much ambiguity in using these combinations that could present problems in interpretation. Is the woman eating a fish? Did she catch a fish? Did she buy a fish? Is she talking to the fish? The Princess emoji is slightly more suited for this application, though many of the same questions could remain.

I. Logos, brands, UI icons, signage, specific people, deities

The main concern with a mermaid representing a specific brand would come from Disney's movie, *The Little Mermaid*. In the movie, the main character, Ariel, is a mermaid who's characterized and recognized by her long red hair. Care should be taken to ensure that final mermaid depictions are generic enough so as to not be considered representative of the movie franchise. It's also worthy of note that Disney has released emoji-like digital stickers, including some from *The Little Mermaid*, in their recent *Emoji Blitz* mobile game.

A mermaid is also used in the Starbucks logo, though most mermaid illustrations seen on the web today are very far removed from this particular representation.

Finally, there is also a mythological Greek god named Triton that is often depicted as a merman; he is also seen as Ariel's father in *The Little Mermaid*. In addition to the fact that he's generally represented with a male's upper body versus a female's, he's also distinguished by the trident he carries, which would presumably not be part of any proposed mermaid emoji character attributes.

J. Transient

As evidenced earlier during the introduction, mermaids have been depicted in multiple forms of communication for over 3,000 years now. Even if you give *The Little Mermaid* a heavier weight to the current popularity, the book itself was written in 1837, and the movie was released in 1989. The popularity does not seem to be waning.

A list of movies and television shows that feature mermaids can be found on IMDB. The list was created in 2013 and lists movies and shows ranging from 1904-2013 with no discernable fads or fades in popuarity. http://www.imdb.com/list/ls008797213/

Ordering

Though a mermaid shares properties with both humans and animals, it is suggested to follow the precedent set by the unicorn and be placed in the animals category. Specific suggestions within the category would be to place it immediately following the whales, the shark, or at the end of the water-based animals.