

**UTC Document Submission: RED ENVELOPE EMOJI**

**To:** UTC

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**Date:** 1/4/2016



**Abstract:**

We propose to have the RED ENVELOPE – or *Hong Bao* (红包) – emoji added to the collection of existing holiday emojis, as it is the most iconic symbol for the most important holiday of the most popular country on the planet.

The RED ENVELOPE — which contains money are widely exchanged during Chinese New Year, birthdays, weddings and special occasions — originated in from China. However, the Chinese diaspora has also brought the tradition to Thailand, Burma, Vietnam and the Philippines.

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**Background**

The RED ENVELOPE dates back to at least the Song Dynasty of China, while its association with the Lunar New Year dates back to at least the Qing Dynasty.

During the Qing Dynasty in China, elders would have money threaded on a red string red to help them ward off evil spirits and protect from unlucky events such as sickness. Red symbolizes happiness and good fortune in Chinese culture.

Later as printing press became widely available, RED ENVELOPE with money replaced red strings, and given during special occasions from elders to the young to help protect them as well. ([Source](#)) Later that these envelopes are decorated with luck-related Chinese characters and modernized to include cartoons and personalized with family names.



*Picture 1: Example of RED ENVELOPES received today*

Today, Chinese people from around the world continue to uphold this long-observed custom of respecting elders and celebrating Chinese holidays. People with “senior” ranking give RED ENVELOPES to those junior to them, from elders to the young, married to the unmarried, boss to employees. There is also etiquettes to follow when exchanging. When you receive them you are to greet the person with lucky phrases such as “Wish you health and prosperity”, and receiving them with both hands as a sign of respect.



Picture 2: Receiving envelope with both hands a sign of respect

The money should contain lucky numbers such as “8” for “\$80” which sounds like “fa” meaning make fortune and avoid any “4” numbers such as “\$40” which sounds like “si” meaning death.



*Picture 3: Screenshot of mobile RED ENVELOPE given in WeChat*

As technology and digital payment became widely available, so did this tradition. In 2015, over 1.24 billion digital RED ENVELOPES were given during Chinese New Year. ([source](#))

#### Factors for Inclusion:

##### **A. Compatibility:**



*Picture 4: Example usage of Twitter's RED ENVELOPE emoji for Chinese New Year 2016*

RED ENVELOPE emoji-like symbols has emerged on various platforms. For example, Twitter revealed it will be releasing the first-ever Lunar New Year emoji where the RED ENVELOPE will appear during the month using special hashtags for the holiday. ([source](#)) On the Chinese social platform WeChat, RED ENVELOPES appear as a symbol where users can transmit them electronically via mobile payment.



Picture 7: Chinese New Year emoji Pepsi Cans

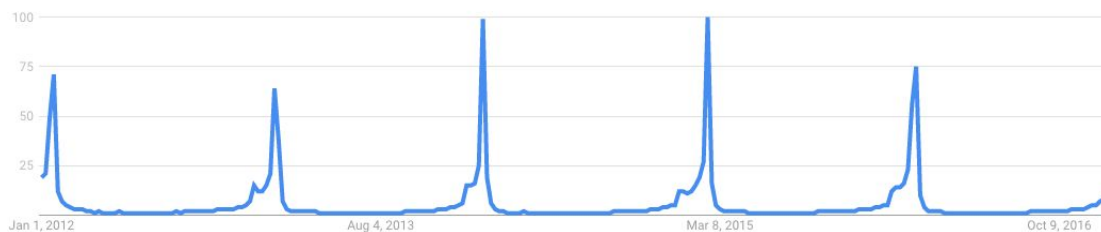
And while PepsiCo is not a platform, it is notable that creating special edition Pepsi designs that feature emojis on the theme of Chinese New Year, including a gift envelope similar to the RED ENVELOPE. ([source](#)) Given the number of people who celebrate Chinese New Year, we see this as a trend that many companies will adapt as the demand of recognition of this holiday increases.

## B. Expected Usage Level:

### i) Frequency:

We expect extremely high frequency level of the RED ENVELOPE emoji, as it is the most iconic symbol for the most important holiday for the country with the largest population in the world.

- Similar to other big holidays, Chinese New Year is celebrated every single year according to the Lunar calendar.
- As of 12/28/2016, there are over 3 million related “#ChineseNewYear” Instagram posts.
- On Google Trend, it shows the annual peaks during Chinese New Year



Picture 5: Google Trends searching “Chinese New Year”

- Today, the Chinese population represents the world’s largest population. In China alone the population is almost 1.4 billion, with an additional 50 million people of Chinese ethnicity living overseas.

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ii) Multiple Usages:

A RED ENVELOPE can be interpreted in a number of ways

- This emoji can represent Lunar New Year or any Chinese-related holiday.
- This emoji can convey luck or good fortune.
- This emoji can represent wishing for a good fortune, health or prosperity.
- It can simply mean an envelope with money.

**C. Image Distinctiveness:**

The RED ENVELOPE is instantly recognizable, and is visually iconic. There are white envelopes that represent letters and email, but none that are colored or symbol with money. The closest representation would be the money bag emoji with dollar sign to symbolize money.

**D. Completeness:**

Western and Japanese holidays are well represented among current emoji, but many holidays — including those from the populous countries of China and India — do not have a strong presence.

Thus the RED ENVELOPE would be a great addition alongside the existing holiday themed emojis such as CHRISTMAS TREE or JACK O'LANTERN or TURKEY emoji. The RED ENVELOPE will bring an internationally recognized holiday to emoji keyboards.

As part of increasing cultural completeness, we are also proposing a MOONCAKE and FIRECRACKER emojis, that would perfectly compliment the RED ENVELOPE emoji.

## E. Frequently Requested:



Picture 6: Requests of Red ENVELOPE emoji for Chinese New Year on Twitter

In addition to the requests from Twitter during Chinese New Year, there are a number of cases where people are demanding more emojis that better represent the Chinese population.

### Factors for Exclusion:

## F. Overly Specific:

The RED ENVELOPE emoji is not overly specific, as it represents a variety of Chinese holiday traditions. While there are multiple designs and varieties, the classic RED ENVELOPE is recognized as a universal image of Chinese New Year, as well as celebrations like birthdays and weddings.

## G. Open-Ended:

The addition of the RED ENVELOPE will bring diversity and recognition to this tradition celebrated by so many around the world. It represents a significant

custom of the biggest Chinese holiday, and also shows how much Chinese people value their traditions. Lastly, the Chinese community will be grateful for having an important symbol be recognized by Unicode.

#### **H. Already Representable**

Currently, there is no image of RED ENVELOPE, nor the Lunar New Year more generally. The closest emoji is related to the RED ENVELOPE is the money bag emoji, which has a completely different connotation. For any Chinese-related holidays, it is limited to being represented by the dragon emoji and the China flag emoji.

#### **I. Unsuitability?**

Our proposal of a RED ENVELOPE emoji is suitable for encoding as character. It does not contain any references to deities, logos, specific people, historical or living.

#### **J. Transient:**

The RED ENVELOPE has a long history in China and continues to be exchanged on a regular basis today. As mentioned, the Chinese population is the largest in the world, and with Chinese community around the world, traditional Chinese culture has now been globalized. More people are taking Chinese Mandarin lessons than ever before, come to China for semester abroad and more importantly are probably friends with someone who is of a Chinese descent. As an integral part of Chinese custom, this emoji will be relevant and relatable to people around the world.

#### **Note**

In addition to the RED ENVELOPE emoji, we have recommended the addition of two other Chinese-holiday related emojis (the MOONCAKE and FIRECRACKER).

About the submitters:

Facemoji Keyboard ([linjiahong@baidu.com](mailto:linjiahong@baidu.com)) is a global keyboard mobile app under Baidu's Global Business Unit, together with its international Simeji Keyboard has over 20 million download from around the world. Baidu is the largest Chinese Search Engine in China and the first Chinese company included in the NASDAQ 100 Index.

Jennifer 8. Lee ([jenny@jennifer8lee.com](mailto:jenny@jennifer8lee.com)) is a founder of Emojination, whose motto is "emoji by the people, for the people." She is also an organizer of Emojicon, a conference that celebrates emoji that will take place in November 4-6 in San Francisco.