

# Proposal for BANJO Emoji

**Submitter:** Sheng Wu <shengwu34@gmail.com>

**Date:** March 31, 2018



*Credit: Luc Mahler*

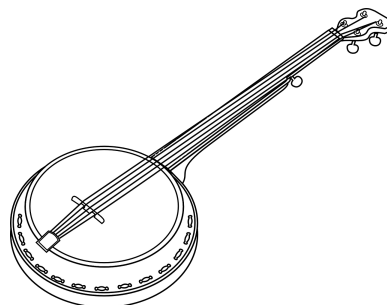
## Abstract

I am proposing the addition of a BANJO emoji, or more generally an emoji representing a stringed instrument with a stretched membrane body.

## Images



*Credit: Luc Mahler*  
*License: CC0 Creative Commons*



*Credit: OpenClipart-Vectors on pixabay*  
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## Introduction

The BANJO is one of the most representative symbols of the folk and bluegrass genres of music. It has been played in North America, starting with West African slaves in the Caribbean, for over five centuries. Other stringed folk instruments with round bodies such as the sitar (India), ruan (China), and cittern (various European countries) have also been played for centuries.

The sitar was popularized by Ravi Shankar all over the world. Similarly, BANJOs are played all over the world and continue to appear in pop culture.



*A flyer for the Japanese bluegrass band Hatomasamune. Rocky Top is a bluegrass bar in Tokyo that has been hosting shows for decades.*

## Names

Suggested short name: **banjo**

## Selection Factors - Inclusion

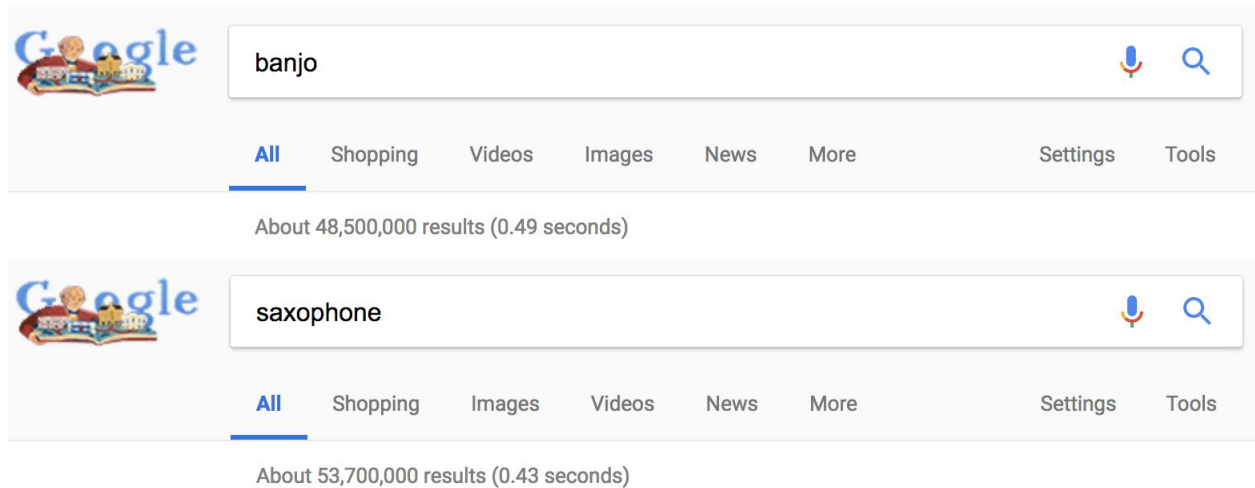
### A. Compatibility

Unfortunately there is not already a banjo emoji on Whatsapp or Skype.



### B. Expected Usage Level

- Frequency

Google Search results for BANJO vs SAXOPHONE:



Bing results for BANJO vs SAXOPHONE:



All

Images

Videos

Maps

News



Shop

|

My saves

31,600,000 Results

Any time ▾



All

Images

Videos

Maps

News

Shop




|

My saves




29,600,000 Results

Any time ▾

YouTube results for BANJO vs SAXOPHONE:

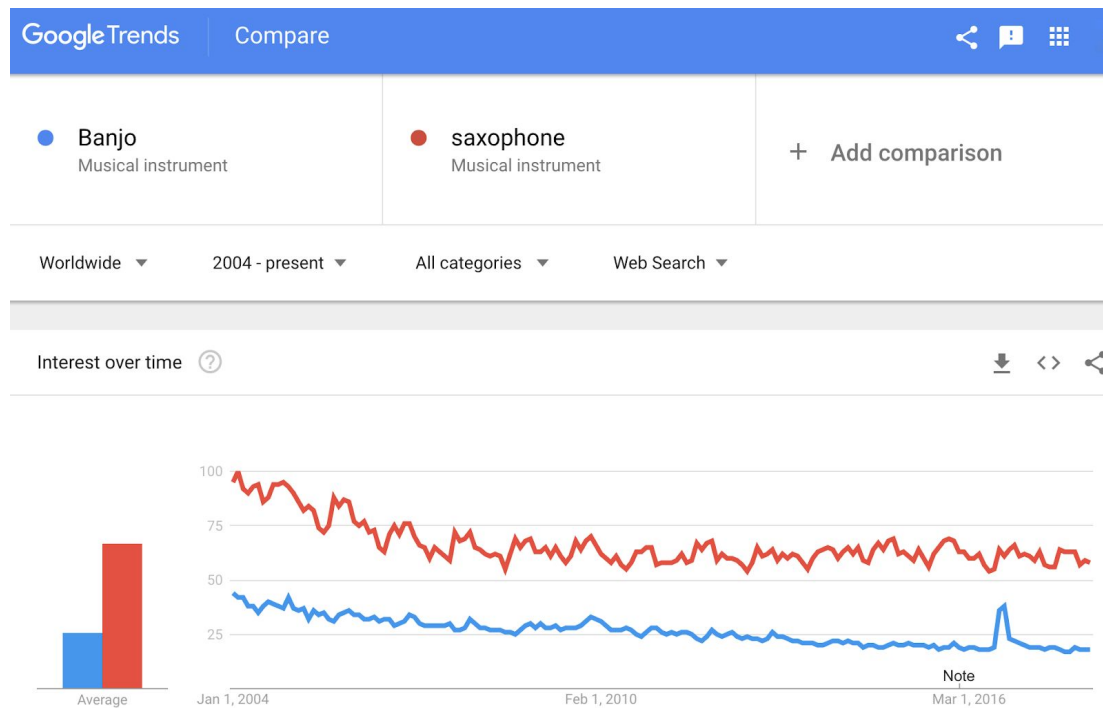


About 3,810,000 results

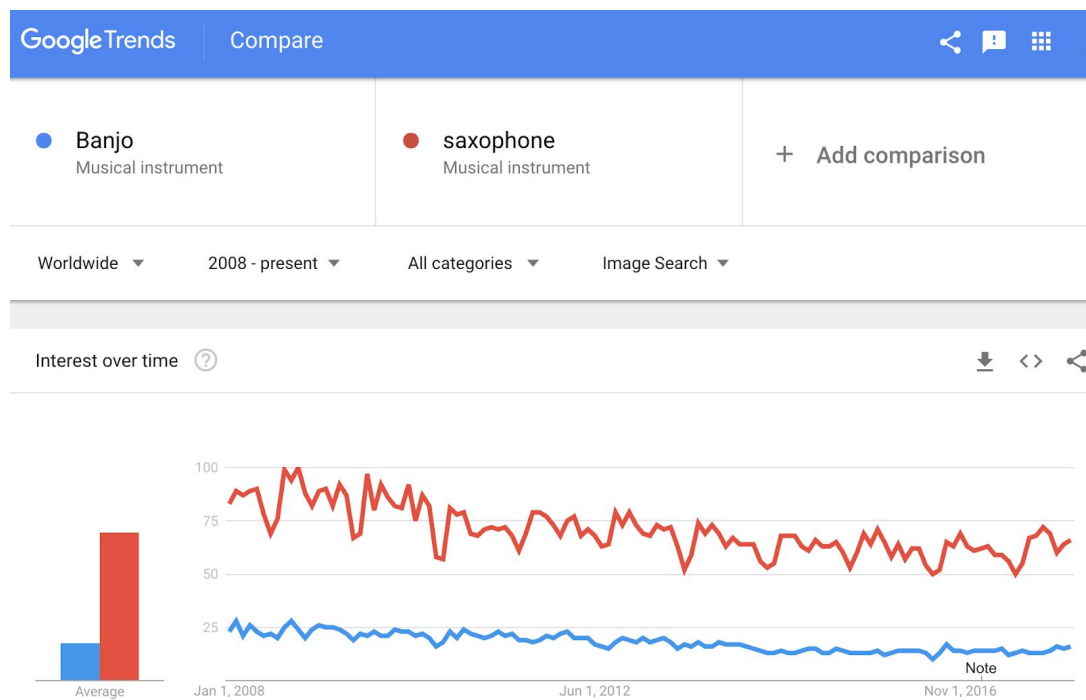


About 6,090,000 results

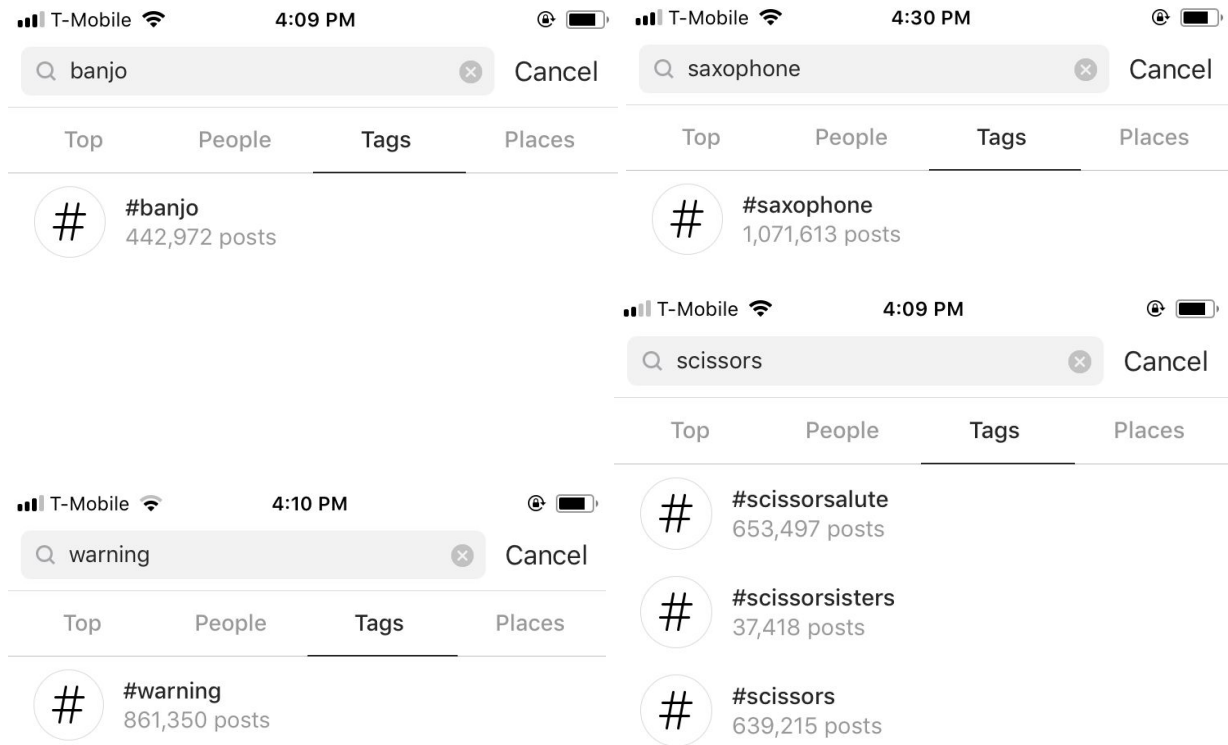
## Google Trends web search, BANJO vs SAXOPHONE:



## Google Trends image search, BANJO vs SAXOPHONE:

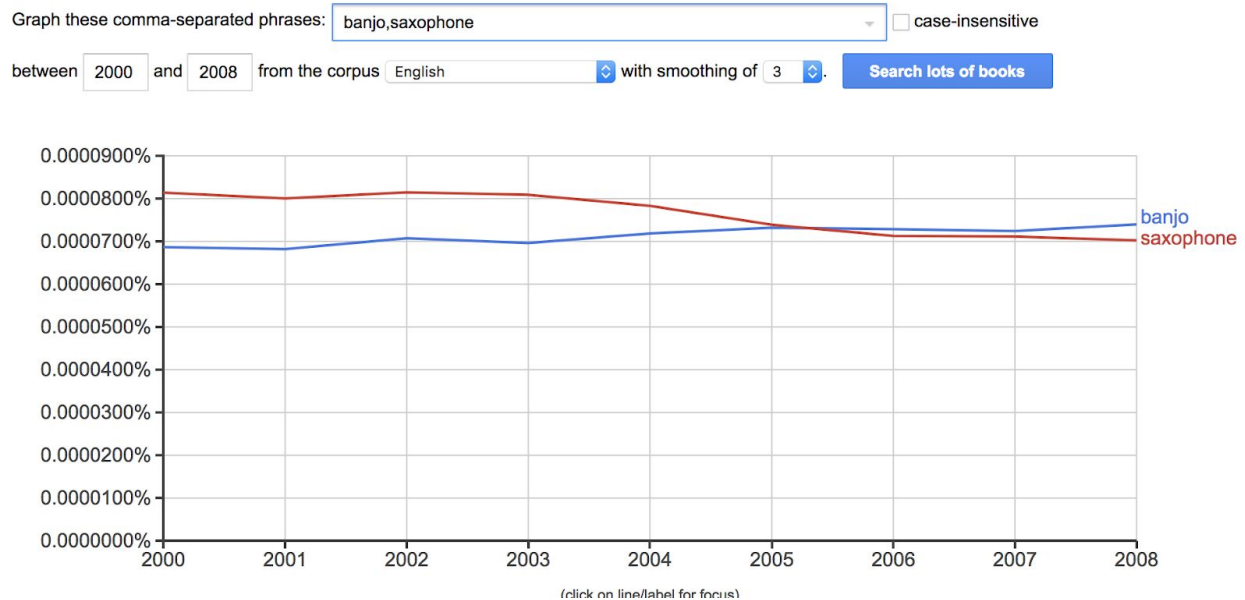


On Instagram, BANJO vs SAXOPHONE,  
as well as existing emoji in other categories WARNING and SCISSORS:



Google Ngram viewer, BANJO vs SAXOPHONE:

## Google Books Ngram Viewer



### - Multiple Usages

BANJOs do not only represent American folk music, but also Irish old time music.

The rustic nature and simplicity of the BANJO as a stretched hide over a piece of wood also lets it represent homemade stringed instruments like the cigar box guitar.

BANJOs can stand in for the concept of “hillbillies” (distinct from cowboys).

A BANJO emoji could also represent a number of round-bodied or long-necked folk instruments. For instance, the Ruan or Sitar (both pictured below).



The Chinese RUAN. Source:

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dalian\\_Liaoning\\_China\\_Ruan-Player-in-Dalian-Labour-Park-01.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dalian_Liaoning_China_Ruan-Player-in-Dalian-Labour-Park-01.jpg)



The Indian SITAR. Source: <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sitar.png>



- Use in sequences

n/a

- Breaking new ground

Currently, there is no great way to represent the concept of “folk music.” American country music is representable with the existing sequence of GUITAR + COWBOY HAT FACE, but folk music is a separate concept that applies to many countries, not just the United States.

Including a BANJO emoji would be a step forward in making folk music representable.

### C. Image Distinctiveness

The BANJO’s round body and long neck visually distinguishes it from the guitar, even at small sizes.

### D. Completeness

The BANJO would be a useful addition to the musical instrument category. Together with VIOLIN and GUITAR, it could represent a folk or bluegrass band.

E. Frequently requested

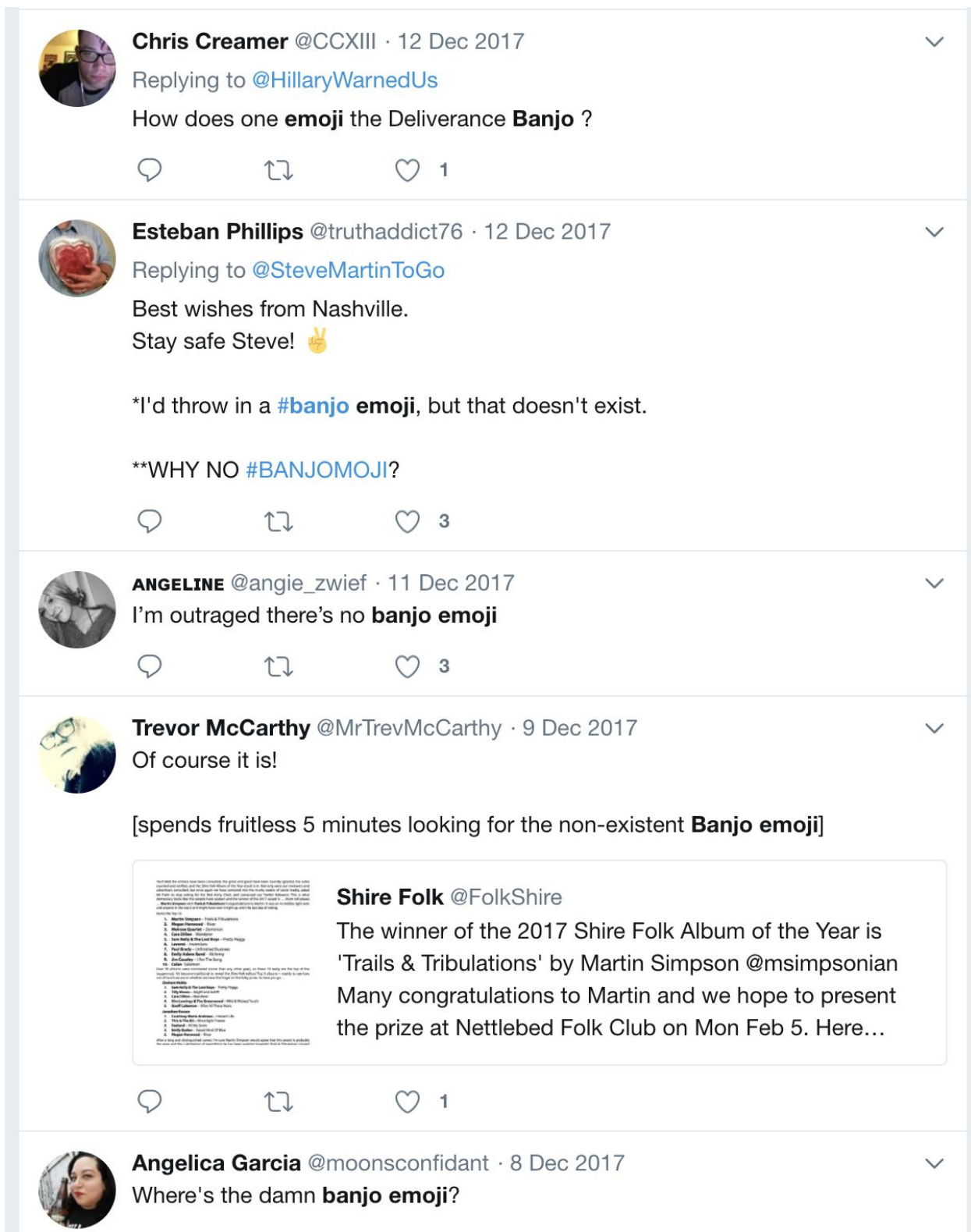
Elle King thinks we need a banjo emoji.



BuzzFeed

Source: "11 Emojis That Need To Exist In 2016" posted on December 31, 2015, at 7:10 a.m.  
<https://www.buzzfeed.com/kristinharris/11-emojis-that-need-to-exist-in-2016>

There is a constant stream of people on Twitter complaining about the lack of a BANJO emoji. Sample from a few days in December 2017:



Taken from a twitter.com search for “banjo emoji” on March 24, 2018.

## Selection Factors - Exclusion

### F. Overly Specific

There is no concept for “stretched hide instrument” more specific than MUSICAL INSTRUMENT and also more generic than BANJO.

### G. Open Ended

There are many instruments and many stringed instruments. GUITAR and VIOLIN emoji have already been created. The VIOLIN can symbolize classical music. GUITARS are used in many genres of music. However, the GUITAR emoji is most commonly depicted as an electric guitar, for example in Apple’s, Google’s, Microsoft’s, and Samsung’s emoji sets.

Most of the top genres of music are clearly representable with existing MUSICAL-INSTRUMENTs and other emoji e.g. metal and rock with GUITAR, classical music with VIOLIN, and jazz and blues with SAXOPHONE. Folk is a genre of music that is hard to represent and introducing a BANJO emoji would help address that.

### H. Already Representable

It may be possible to represent the concept of Folk or Americana music with combinations of other emoji:

*VIOLIN and SHEAF OF RICE (as a stand in for wheat)*



*GUITAR and COWBOY HAT FACE are fairly good at representing country music*



*BLUE CIRCLE and SEEDLING could represent the “blue grass” concept literally*



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

*n/a*

J. Transient

The first banjos were discovered in the Caribbean in the 1600s. Banjos have only become more recognizable since then. Even though the first generation of bluegrass music was from the 1940s through the 1960s, banjos have continued to regularly appear in pop culture (e.g. Mumford and Sons, “dueling banjos” in the film Deliverance) and bluegrass festivals such as Telluride and Grey Fox are still held every year with attendance in the tens of thousands.

K. Faulty Comparison

BANJO is not piggybacking onto an existing emoji.

## **Sort location**

Proposed sort location:

- Category: MUSICAL-INSTRUMENT
- After GUITAR