

Why Messaging App Stickers Are Serious Business

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Why are messaging apps using “stickers”?

... Aren't they just emoji?



Source: MuckyMind.com

And why should my brand care?

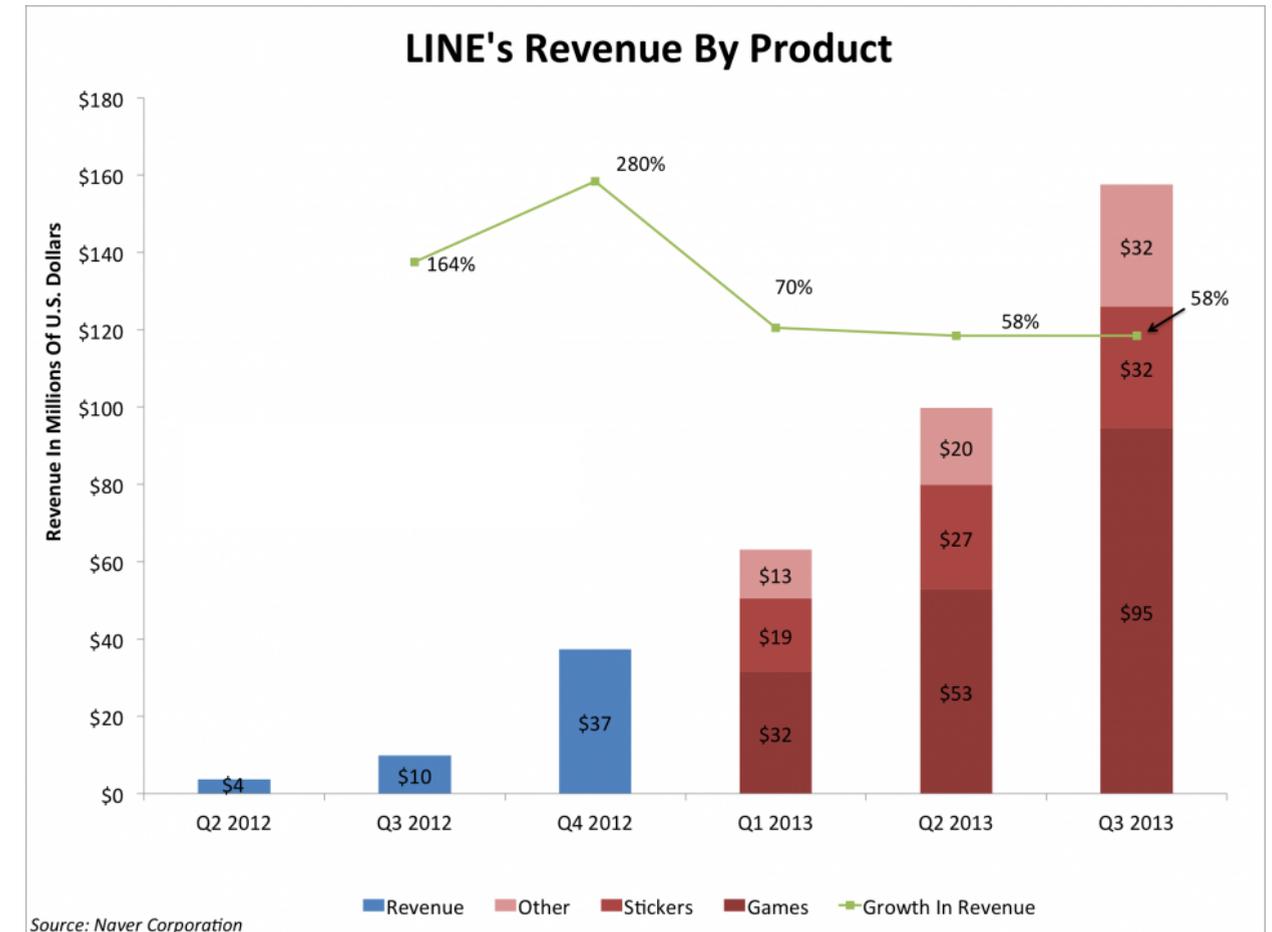
Maybe you've read our [“Messaging Apps: the New Face of Social Media and What It Means for Brands.”](#) so you know you should be creating a strategy for interacting with fans on these platforms. But maybe you still think stickers are irrelevant to your brand, or that they're juvenile and, well, silly.

Stickers are serious business:

1. They create a revenue stream that is easily integrated into mobile campaigns
2. They are social currency that increase brand awareness

LINE made \$32M in Q3 2013 on stickers alone

Japanese messaging app LINE makes \$10M in revenue per month on stickers, making it almost as lucrative as gaming.



Sources: "[Why Stickers in Apps Are a Big Deal](#)," Business Insider, October 2013; "[LINE Is Not Just about Sticker Revenue](#)," Business Insider, December 2013.

Path's redesign resulted in a revenue bonanza

Path 3.0 redesigned its products to emphasize stickers and selling stickers. Within 24 hours of its launch, they made more money than at any point in the company's prior existence

Source: ["In First 24 Hours of 3.0 Launch, Path Made More Money Than Ever,"](#) TechCrunch, October 2013.

Image: ["Path 3.0 Adds Private Messaging and The Shop,"](#) TheNextWeb, March 2013.



Paul McCartney capitalizes on popularity

Sir Paul released stickers of himself on LINE to promote his new album, and now claims over 8M followers on the app, as compared to 1.85M on Twitter. LINE also provided the former Beatle with a direct messaging feature to his followers, giving him the ability to interact with them directly.



Source: "[How 4 Brands Are Using Japan's Popular Messaging App.](#)" Likeable, March 2014."
Image: [PaulMcCartney.com](#)

In other words, stickers create value

Give consumers what they want, and they will reward you with their interest and money. But why are stickers in particular so effective?

Stickers are so successful because people respond to them emotionally

People react to emojis and stickers as if they're actual human faces making the emotion, creating an emotional bond. When app users branded stickers, they transfer the emotions they associate with the stickers to the brand. In other words, consumers think it's a valuable exchange, which makes it a very powerful and non-intrusive way for brands to connect.



Source: "[Facebook Animated Stickers](#)," TechCrunch, April 2013.

And they appeal to all ages

While stickers may seem juvenile, they can appeal to all demographics, and their use can be expected to increase as more age groups move onto messaging platforms—already, [70% of Tango's audience ranges between 18-44](#). The design of the stickers themselves can be tailored to appeal to a wider or narrower audience; note the “inverse eye” design of Skullington, left, that is “teenage-oriented.” Other stickers have fan bases that can easily cross age groups, such as sports teams and musicians: Paul McCartney’s popularity on LINE is clearly not limited to teens.



Image source:

[“Design that sticks: Meet the designers behind the mobile messaging sticker craze,”](#) The Next Web, September 2013.

So how can your brand bond with messaging app users?

1. Integrate into the fan community
2. Identify a visual identity that works across messaging apps and other media
3. Define the emotional experience
4. Adapt stickers to their environment when appropriate

1. Integrate into the fan community

Stickers (and messaging apps) aren't appropriate for every brand; they're most successful for brands that have a built-in community, like sports team or bands. When the Media Lab created the Kik card for [One Direction](#), we tapped into fans' existing desire to virtually meet and share their passion for the band. Before entering the messaging space, make sure that you have something valuable to contribute to the conversation, rather than being a distraction or interruption.

For your consideration:

- What conversations are your users already having about the brand?
- Do fans want to interact directly with the brand, with each other, or both?
- What extra value will your presence bring to the app experience?

Identify a visual identity that works across messaging apps and other media

Stickers are just one element of a messaging app strategy, let alone a marketing strategy, so it's important to identify content or images that are consistent with the rest of the brand. Whenever possible, use existing visuals that people already recognize, and adapt them for use within the app. If you need to create new visuals, make sure people will connect them with the brand outside of the app, or the emotional connection will be lost.

For your consideration:

- What elements of your brand can be recognized independently of the medium?
- Do you have a character or a voice that can be the face of the brand?
- What images from your category are people already sharing?

Define the emotional experience

Once you've identified the right visuals for the stickers, consider what emotions they should convey, and how users should incorporate them into messages. For instance, snarky, sarcastic stickers may be appropriate for teens, while more positive or cute characters may appeal to a wider audience.

For your consideration:

- What emotions do you want users to associate with your brand?
- How might emotions be conveyed with your brand's visual elements?
- What contextual emotional value can you add to a SMS conversation?

Adapt stickers to their environment when appropriate

Be sensitive to how cultural preferences affect the design and use of stickers. LINE's Paul McCartney stickers, for instance, were designed primarily for a Japanese audience, as most of LINE's users are found in Japan. But don't assume that stickers are exclusively popular in Asia—Facebook launched a sticker store in [June 2013](#), reaching a truly global audience. The best stickers are those that appeal to their intended target, while also promoting the brand.

For your consideration:

- Is your campaign regional or global?
- What, if any, preferences do your users have in regards to stickers?
- What value do your stickers add to a conversation?

Thanks!

We hope you've found this POV interesting and provocative. If you have questions or want to talk more about the future of media, please contact us:

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