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## WHY 20 MILLION YOUNG USERS ARE SHARING THESE MUSICAL GIFS

REMIX CULTURE IS CREATING NEW COMMUNICATION FORMS AS YOUNG DEMOS COMBINE GIFS AND MUSIC TO EXPRESS THEMSELVES IN A NEW WAY. BRANDS LOOKING TO SPEAK THEIR LANGUAGE SHOULD LISTEN UP...

Communication is quickly changing, and the youngest demos are leading the way. According to our [Talk the Talk](#) trend, eight in ten Gen Z & Millennials use GIFs and memes, up from six in ten in 2015. But companies just looking at the communication tools we already know—GIFs, emojis, memes, and text—will be behind the curve. Emoticast is looking ahead with TuneMoji, a standalone app as well as in-app keyboard integration (think of how emoji work) that combines GIFs and music because, in the founder's own words, if "a picture is worth a thousand words...a moving picture is maybe worth ten thousand words, and a moving picture with sound and music is worth a million words." Not only is music one of Millennials & Gen Z's top [interests/passions](#), but turning the audio on in general is becoming more common. We can thank Shapchat Stories, and now Instagram Stories, for some of the switch since users want to hear what their friends are saying in their videos. And as wireless earphones like AirPods get more popular, leaving the audio on at all times is more natural than ever.

TuneMoji's idea to bring music and social together has been building buzz, with [Variety](#) reporting that industry icons like will.i.am and David Guetta have invested in the company and [Mashable](#) calling it a "can't-miss app." We even called the platform out in 2017 as a potential [next big thing](#) in social media. Now, TuneMoji can be natively used across major platforms like Snapchat and Skype, and [Billboard](#) reports the TuneMoji audience has grown 20 times since the beginning of last year to a current total of 20 million.

The brain behind TuneMoji, James Fabricant, has been eyeing the integration of music into social since the early days of adding playlists to your MySpace page (he was a founder of MySpace International). So we asked him all about the up-and-coming communication form, how brands can use it to reach young demos, and more about how communication is changing and how to keep up:

### **Ypulse: Who is the core audience that uses TuneMoji?**

**James Fabricant:** The demographics are basically 14-25-years-old. Amazingly, we have 51% females and 49% males. They're all around the world, they're creative, and they're not just extroverts. There are a lot of introverts, and they're a demographic that a lot of people don't talk about. Some of our top users aren't on Instagram or TikTok; they're more likely to have a huge following on Twitch. Not everyone in the world is an extrovert, but they might be really creative and want to express their feelings. That's what TuneMoji is about. It's a safe place to express your feelings and be creative. And you don't have to have your face in front of the camera because you can take popular culture on the visual side and on the audio side.

### **YP: Why does adding music make a difference for young users?**

**JF:** Because music is the language of emotion, and I think there is a broader trend of sound making a comeback. A few years ago, people were like, "Who cares if there's music on this GIF

because most people are going to be viewing it with their audio switched off?”—which has been fairly true because people don’t want to be disturbed in the library, meetings, or wherever else. But that has been shifting a lot, and sound and audio are making a big comeback. In Facebook’s Q1 Earnings Report in the last year, you can see that about 60% of Instagram users now have their audio switched on. That’s a massive shift, and it’s a lot bigger now.

We did some digging and spoke to people and found that there are two drivers. One was Snapchat stories, because you had 190 million kids sending Snapchats back and forth with audio all day and not wanting to switch their audio on and off. Then Facebook cloned that product and rolled it out, so now it’s going directly to three billion users. Now that trend that had Gen Z leading the way is going directionally to everyone, and so people have just become more comfortable having their audio on. And the second driver for older people is the adoption of wireless earbuds. People are buying wireless earbuds which means it doesn’t really matter if the audio’s on because you have your wireless earbuds in and you’re keeping [the audio] private.

**YP: What platforms is TuneMoji the most popular on?**

**JF:** The obvious ones are WhatsApp and Messenger but also for us, Viber is really big. It’s one of the places where we are one of only eight native integrations. And what we see also is that we outperform everyone else when it comes to life moments where people really want to express their feelings. And that’s the power of music. So we had massive spikes on Valentine’s Day, International Women’s Day, and Christmas. Because if I want to say “I love you,” I can say it with a cute cat waving, but then I can add the favorite music or artist of the person I’m sending it to and it’s that much more powerful.

**YP: Can you tell us about some branded partnerships and how you create branded TuneMoji?**

**JF:** We did one [branded partnership] with a telco in Malaysia called XOX, we did one with an Italian chocolate brand called Bacci, and we have something right now with a very big drinks brand that is putting us on nine million cans with a little QR code.

There’s a number of different ways we do them. One is that we create bespoke content together with a brand that we think is going to resonate with our audience. We also do things where we just put it out to our community because we’re essentially a remix platform. I think pop culture and meme culture is essentially a remix culture where everything is getting remixed, so that’s what we’re doing. We’re taking a GIF (which is basically a remix of a piece of entertainment), turning it into a looping five-second visual, and then users are putting a caption or music on it. We can get assets from the brand, put them out to our community, and then have them sync it with music and add captions and things on it. We can get the community to essentially create thousands of ads for the brand.

**YP: Do you have any industries in particular that have shown the most interest in this ad format?**

**JF:** We’ve seen a lot of interest from movie studios and TV networks. Because, imagine now you’ve got a movie, and someone can take an iconic scene from for instance *Alien Vs. Predator* and then someone could put a Kanye track over it and put a message on it and suddenly you’ve remixed it into something funny. One of the things that got remixed the most was “Winter is Coming” from *Game of Thrones*. People for instance would put a Rihanna track on it and write “Summer is Here.” Humor drives the internet to a large degree, so the remixing of those things gives them new meaning and makes them fun.

**YP: Do the ad-blocking generations engage with branded TuneMoji?**

**JF:** They do because they're creating them, and we wouldn't do something that's overtly branded. We're not going to do something with a big logo and have them put music on that. It's more organic. It has to stand on its own two feet as content. That's why it makes a lot more sense at the moment that we are mainly enabling brands that have great content. We're in the position where we're being approached a lot; we're still not a huge company, so we can be very selective about who we work with. And so essentially, our criteria is that [branded content] has to make sense to the audience on a content basis alone. The audience already wants to remix movies, like *The Minions* movie, or *Deadpool*, or from the NBA and sports—things that they find to be great content anyway.

**James Fabricant, CEO & Founder**

James was the founder & CEO of IdeaPlane, an enterprise social networking platform, acquired in November 2012. Prior to IdeaPlane, James was one of the four founders of MySpace International, playing an integral role in its global expansion. James is a qualified attorney. He holds a B.A. and M.A. in Law from Cambridge University.

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