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Sauna Emojis Submission

To: Unicode Consortium

From: Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (co-ordinator Petra Theman, Director of Public Diplomacy)

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Abstract

We are requesting the addition of the sauna emojis, both male and female person going into sauna. The sauna emojis would fill a notable gap in the current emoji set and serve as an important addition to activity, people and location emojis. The formal names could be SAUNA MAN and SAUNA WOMAN.

Introduction

Sauna is a small room or a building designed as a place to experience dry or wet heat sessions which make one to perspire and to clean their skin.¹ Sauna is practically a holy place in Finland where there exists around 3,2 million saunas for 5,4 million people.² Finns often go to the sauna naked and often together with a family or friends. Every person has their own way of going to the sauna but one's mind and body will always be cleaned.

¹ Dictionary.com search result for "sauna": <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/sauna?s=t>; Merriam-Webster search result for "sauna": <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sauna>; Cambridge Dictionaries Online search result for "sauna": <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sauna> (All accessed May 9th, 2016).

² BBC article "Why Finland loves saunas". <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-24328773> (Accessed May 9th, 2016).

According to some estimates, the Finns have been using saunas for 2000 years³ while different types of saunas have also been used by the Romans.⁴ The term sauna is ancient Finnish word but it was borrowed from the early Proto-Germanic word "stakna". Saunas are also used in Mexico and Central America where there are similar versions for indigenous people called the sweat lodge. In addition, many cultures have sweat baths which are used more for spiritual uses rather than social, relaxation or cleaning purposes. Such example of sweat baths are the *sifutu* in Africa, *hammam* in Turkey and Arab countries, *thermae* in Ancient Rome, *nahuati* in the Americas and *oukup* in Indonesia.

Nowadays in Europe all of the Nordic countries have a sauna tradition, though the Finnish sauna culture is the most well established and known worldwide. Nevertheless, the evolution of sauna happened around the same time both in Finland and the Baltic countries which share the same meaning and importance of sauna in daily life. Moreover, some North American, Western European, Asian, Russian and South African public sport centres and gyms include sauna facilities nowadays leading to global awareness of the sauna concept.

Saunas feature a fireplace where stones are heated to a high temperature. Thereafter, water is thrown over the hot stones to produce steam and to give a sensation of increased heat. As a result of technology progress many present-day saunas may have an electric sauna stove or even be *far infrared* saunas.

Going into sauna is most often a social affair including relaxation and cleaning. For example, the Finns use a bundle of birch twigs with fresh leaves to gently slap the skin and create even greater stimulation of pores and cells. In contrast, during the winter time it is common to run outdoors for either ice swimming or just roll around in the snow and then go back to sauna as this is considered to have health benefits.⁵

Sauna also alleviates symptoms of the common cold, increases the heat tolerance threshold, may improve performance in endurance sports, and reduces several symptoms in different medical conditions.

The fact that sauna, as a concept with slight variables in uses, is well-known worldwide in many countries and different cultures attest to its popularity.

However, to this day no presentation for sauna or people in sauna exists as an emoji, nor has one been suggested according to our information. We hereby propose adding the sauna emojis, both male and female person in sauna, in the next Unicode update.

Support

A. Compatibility

Prior to the Finnish national emoji project, we do not know of sauna or people in sauna or any similar emojis currently used in the major platforms (Apple, Yahoo, Google, Facebook). Furthermore, there are no characters which could be used to describe sauna or people in sauna.

³ Example websites concerning the history of sauna.

<http://www.cyberbohemia.com/Pages/historyofnordic.htm> (Accessed May 9th, 2016);

<http://www.lymebook.com/history-of-sauna-therapy> (Accessed May 9th, 2016).

⁴ BBC article "The origins of bathhouse culture around the world".

<http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20121129-the-origins-of-bathhouse-culture-around-the-world> (Accessed May 9th, 2016).

⁵ Sauna-article on Wikipedia. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sauna> (Accessed May 9th, 2016).

After an intensive media attention the sauna emojis have been included in the iTunes shop and application designed for both iPhone and iPad.⁶ In addition, GooglePlay has included the sauna emojis into its app selection.⁷

As a result, the sauna emojis have become available and highly used in existing systems and, thus, both emojis should be included into the Unicode system.

B. Expected Usage

1. Frequency

The expected usage of the sauna emojis is incredibly high, in part because of the popularity and usage of it in many countries and different cultures worldwide. For example, this is evidenced by the frequent use of hashtag #sauna⁸ or hashtag #saunaemoji⁹ on Twitter and on Instagram¹⁰.

Several comparisons of Google trends of "sauna" versus the benchmark of the very popular emojis "stadium", "tent", "hot springs" and "skier" over time show a comparable and sometimes larger demand.

⁶ Official website of iTunes. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/finland-emojis/id1061373303?mt=8> (Accessed May 9th, 2016).

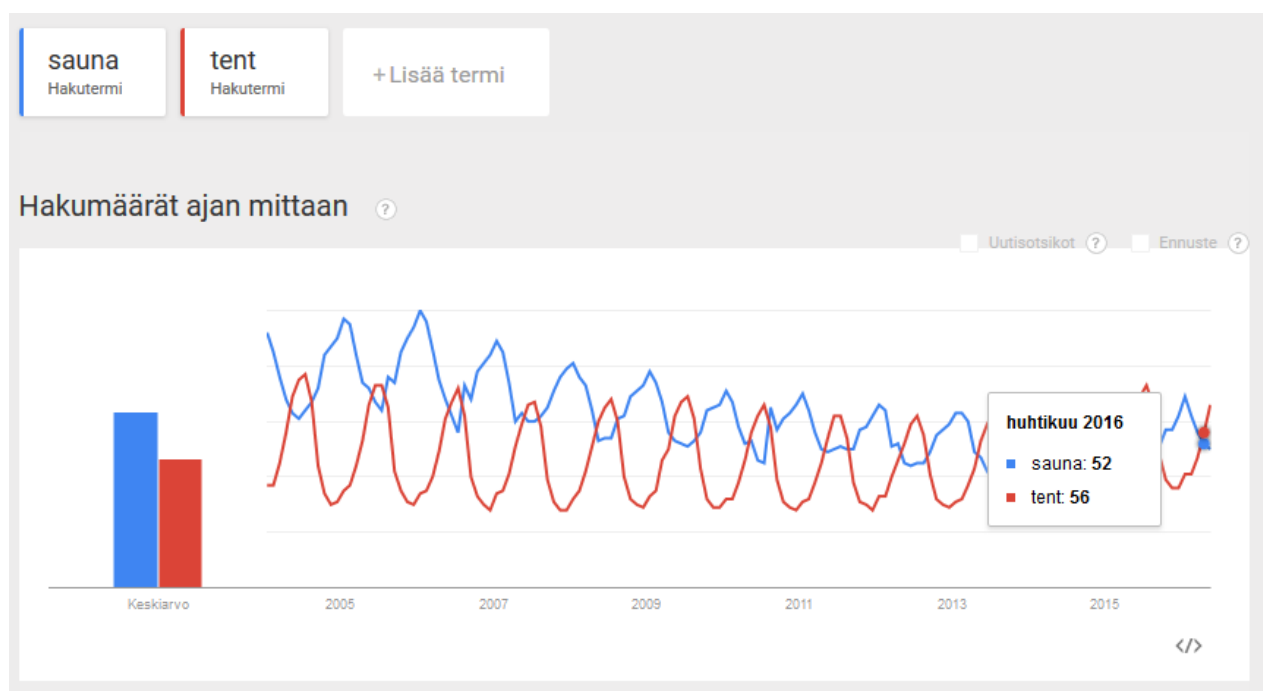
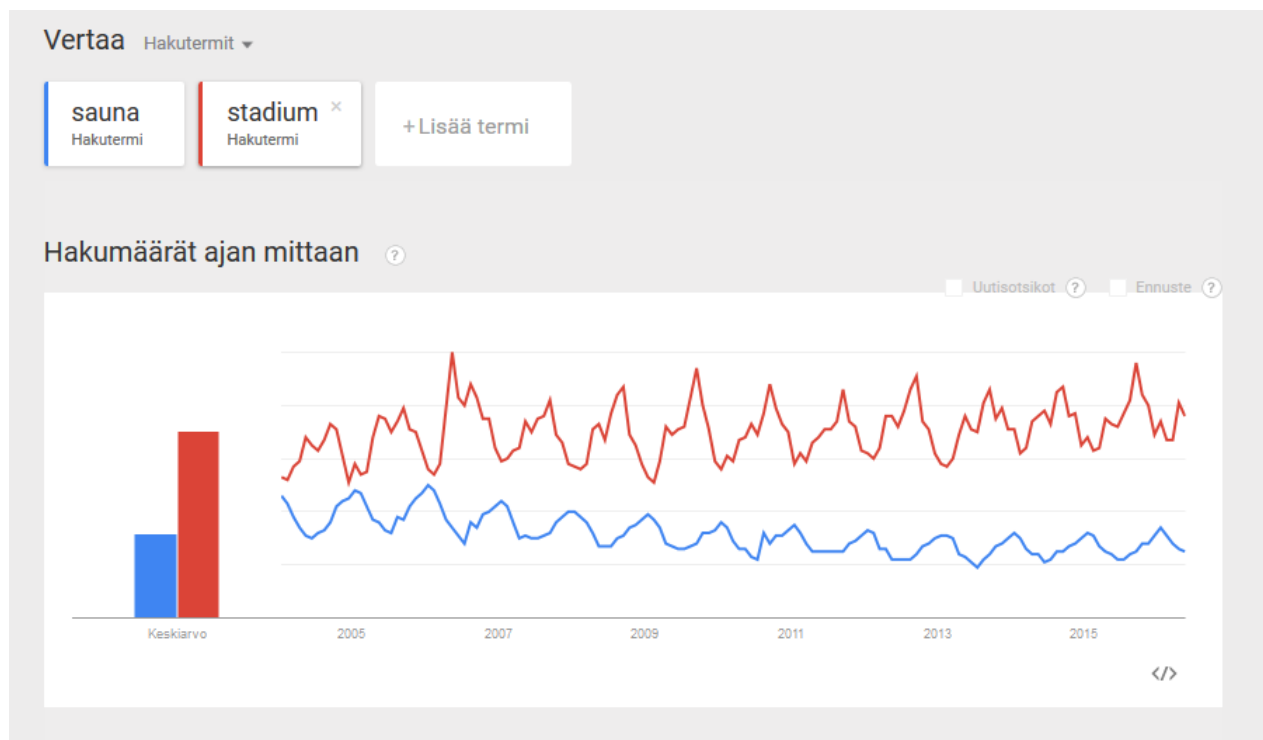
⁷ Official website of GooglePlay.

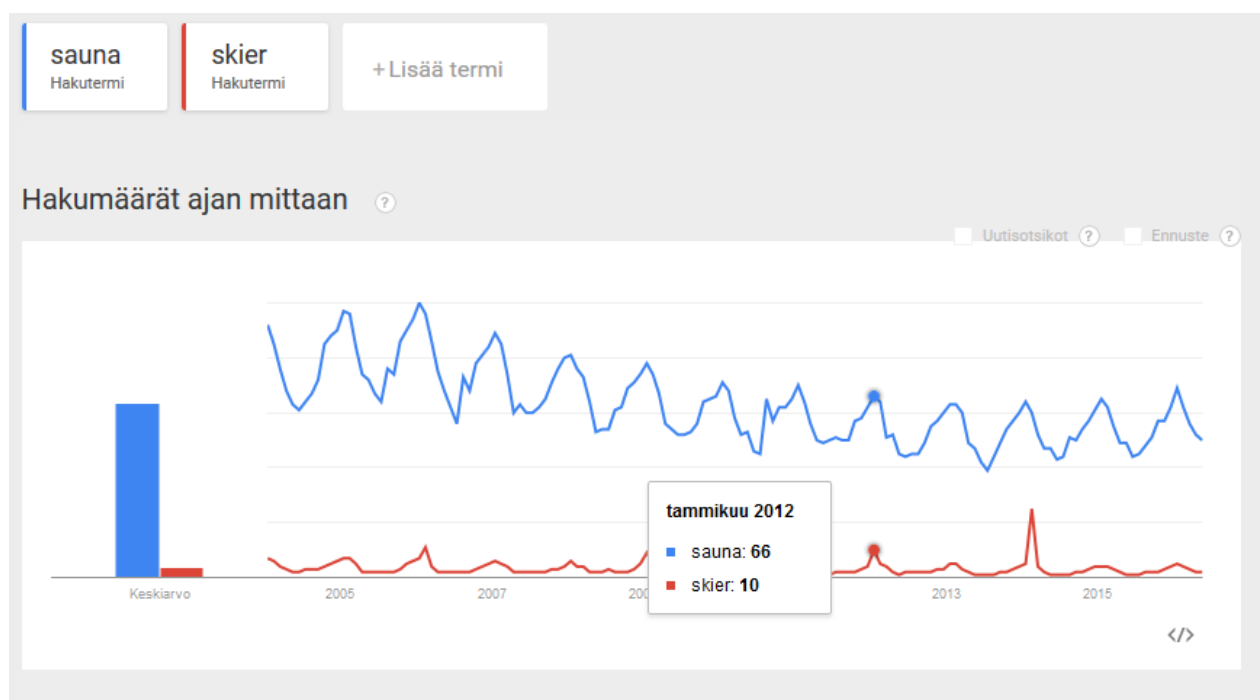
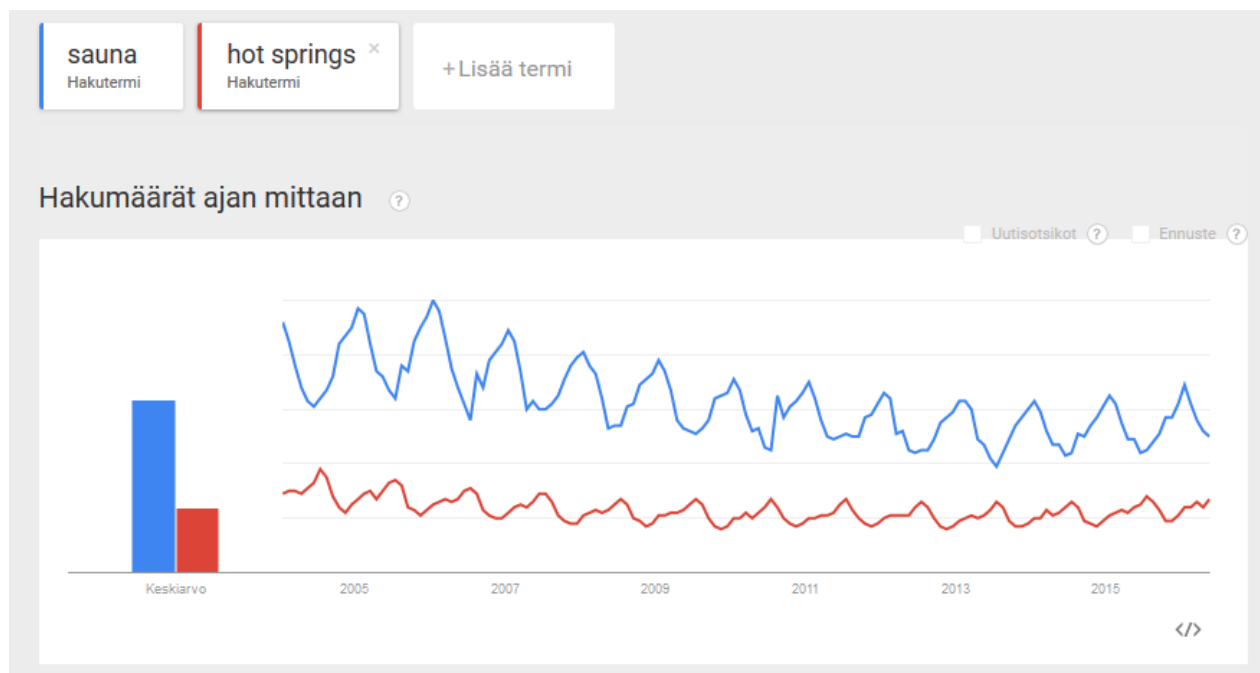
<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.reaktor.finlandemojis> (Accessed May 9th, 2016).

⁸ Twitter-page of #sauna. <https://twitter.com/hashtag/sauna> (Accessed May 9th, 2016).

⁹ Twitter-page of #saunaemoji. <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23saunaemoji&src=typd> (Accessed May 9th, 2016).

¹⁰ Instagram search result for "sauna". <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/sauna/> (Accessed May 9th, 2016).





2. Multiples uses

As delineated in this proposal, the sauna emojis can be used to describe sauna as a place, activity as going into sauna or a state of mind where mind and body are cleaned and relaxation achieved.

However, the sauna emoji need not be restricted to these traditional meanings. Both the male and female sauna emojis could be used to signal anything “hot”, like that girl/boy you went on a date with yesterday.¹¹

3. Emotional Content

As its emotional connotation the reference to sauna is generally understood to evoke positive feelings, such as social affair, relaxation and cleaning mind and body.

4. Persistence

We believe that the sauna emojis will be persistent in large part because sauna is well-known globally and has remained in popular use especially in Finland but also in other countries with certain national variations on them. Considering that saunas origins date back to several thousand years but they are still being used is a testament that the sauna emojis would stand the test of time and persist in the future.

The use of #sauna and #saunaemoji hashtags on Twitter as well as the Finnish national emoji project which has received global attention are likely to even increase the huge, upcoming popularity of the sauna emojis. For example, the sauna emojis especially have received wide recognition and media attention as a part of the Finnish national emoji project in the world leading newspapers and websites, such as BBC, CNN, Wired, CBS, Metro, Bangkok Post and Huffington Post to name a few.¹²

C. Image distinctiveness

The sauna emojis would be visually clearly distinct from all the current emojis. The closest in spirit could be HOT SPRINGS or BATH (person taking bath). However, the HOT SPRINGS emoji does not picture person at all, while BATH is a completely separate activity and visually entirely different.

Accordingly, the sauna emojis would be clearly symbolizing the sauna as a location or activity or people going into or in sauna and, thus, be highly distinct from all other existing emojis.

The sauna emojis have also been designed in a decent manner and appropriate to be used by all people regardless of age but still taking into account that it is common to go to sauna naked.

¹¹ Facebook-post and Yahoo! News article:

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=405502746315226&id=236120693253433; <https://uk.news.yahoo.com/steamy-saunas-headbangers-finland-launches-national-emoji-210950042.html#rXNcK6E> (Both accessed May 9th, 2016).

¹² Examples of the intense media attention to the Finnish emojis, including the sauna emojis: <http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-news-from-elsewhere-34720765>; <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/11/06/travel/finland-national-emojis/>; <http://www.wired.com/2015/11/finland-national-emoji/>; <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/finland-is-launching-a-new-series-of-national-emojis/>; <http://metro.co.uk/2015/11/05/finland-is-launching-its-very-own-emoji-5481956/>; <http://www.bangkokpost.com/print/756488/>; http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2015/11/04/finland-national-emojis_n_8472770.html (All accessed May 9th, 2016).

D. Completeness

The sauna emojis would also be important addition towards completing the extensive selection of activity, people and place emojis.

The sauna emojis would also serve as a useful addition for emojis describing feelings of persons: feeling relaxed or considering someone attractive.

E. Frequency Requested

There is a clear demand for the sauna emojis. Even a cursory search on the Internet for the phrase "sauna emoji" reveals a number of quotes lamenting the lack of sauna emojis or where a message has been communicated by a verbal reference to "sauna emoji".¹³

Factors for Exclusion

F. Overly Specific

The sauna emojis would not be overly specific, and in fact continuously veers towards the general, as it can be used to describe all kinds of saunas or going into saunas rather than being limited only to Finnish traditional sauna, steam sauna or Turkish sauna.

G. Open-Ended

The sauna emojis are unique in that they are native to so many cultures worldwide as common type of activity and place. Moreover, there are no any other emojis or symbols which would connote the same meaning since the HOT SPRINGS and BATH emojis are visually and conceptually clearly different.

According, the sauna emojis deserve to be acknowledged as an emoji among activity, people and place emojis.

H. Already Representable

One cannot create the sauna emojis using existing emoji or any sequence of them. The closest are HOT SPRINGS emoji, which could be coupled by a person emoji, or BATH emoji. However, these would represent merely going to bath or bath as a place.

Accordingly, no other emoji connotes going to sauna or feeling of purifying the mind and body or sauna as a place to the same extent as the sauna emojis would be able to.

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

Not applicable as the sauna emojis do not picture any specific person, either historic or living.

¹³ Twitter-page of "saunaemoji". <https://twitter.com/search?q=saunaemoji&src=typd> (Accessed May 9th, 2016); Twitter-page of #saunaemoji; <https://twitter.com/search?q=%23saunaemoji&src=typd> (Accessed May 9th, 2016).

J. Transient

The sauna emojis are definitely continue to be in use in the future as the need for such emojis and continuing sauna tradition do not show any signs of being diminishing despite its origins date back a couple of thousand years.

Disclaimer

The images we are submitting do not have any significant that would make it unsuitable for encoding as a character. There are no copyright, religious, or issues that reference anyone historic or living.

This document is a proposal whose contents are subject to UTC and Unicode Emoji Subcommittee review, and any and all details are therefore subject to change.

Other Character Properties

The sauna emojis *in situ* on Apple's emoji keyboard

