

The next hot digital playgrounds for brands to explore in 2016

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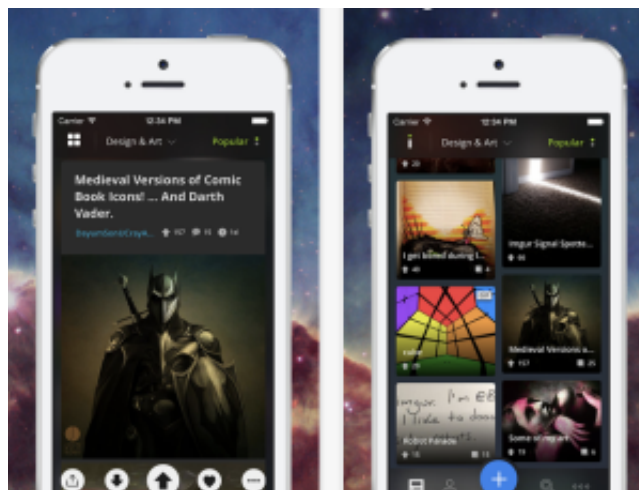
If you're a **brand** looking for Web cred, you can't go wrong with money, memes and messaging. That's why marketers will be looking at a few apps and sites that remain under the mainstream radar, places like **Imgur**, **Kik** and Venmo.

These are highly trafficked **digital** domains but have not quite reached the level of **Instagram**, **Snapchat** or **Pinterest**.

Brands want to play in these kinds of places for two main reasons. One, campaigns on hot apps or websites provide a first-mover publicity bounce — they stand out for their uniqueness on the platforms and outside. Second, the platforms have big fanbases of often hard-to-reach audiences of teens and young people.

"When you're trying to go after those millennials in their early 20s, the apps that usually pop up are **Instagram**, Snapchat," said **Chris Tuff**, evp and director business development at 22squared. "Now, **Kik** comes up, and Yik Yak comes up in the conversations, too."

So, as marketers look for that next hot platform to experiment, here are a few that could be the next big thing.



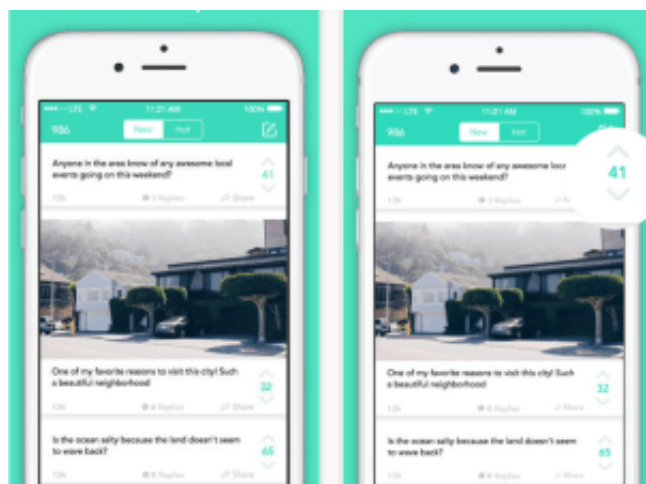
Imgur

This is a meme machine for Internet savvy males. **Imgur** is a site that lets users upload any kind of media file and share it seamlessly with places like Reddit. **Imgur** itself hosts content, where the best stuff gets voted to the top. These are GIFs, photos, videos and other user-generated **digitalia** that ultimately bubble into mainstream Web culture. [Brands like eBay and Old Spice already have started experimenting](#) with the potential of **advertising** there, and both campaigns successfully speak the language of **Imgur**. They have to if users are going to accept **marketing** to them in place they're not used to it. **Imgur** claims it's a kind of **Pinterest** for young men. It has 150 million users, mostly millennial men, and most of its mobile users spend 3 hours or more a week on the app, **Imgur** says.



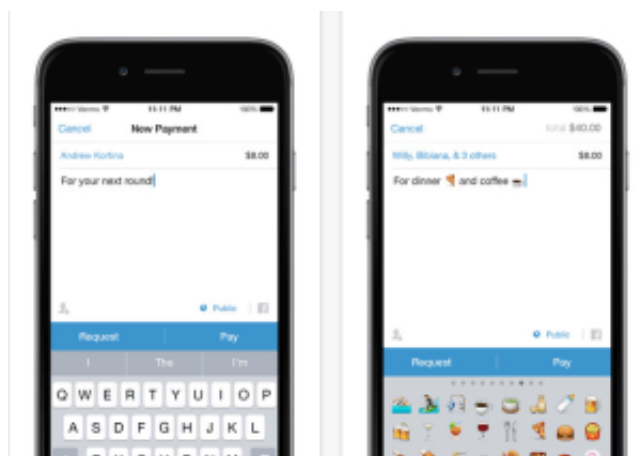
Kik

Kik, which claims it has 200 million users, is benefitting from the mobile messaging craze, and claims it has 200 million users. Its fanbase is among the youngest online, the majority of its core users are under 25. The app is all about sending texts and “**Kiking**” content like [videos and GIFs to friends](#). “Marketers are desperate to reach that audience,” says Sean O’Neal, president of Adaptly, a close **Kik** ad tech partner. **Brands** like Funny or Die and MTV already are **marketing** there to build a fanbase, and it has a growing list of advertisers from movie studios to electronics makers like Skullcandy.



YikYak

YikYak is an anonymous posting board, mostly [popular on college campuses](#), where anyone can say just about anything they want without repercussions. When you think of unsafe **brand** spaces, **YikYak** could be the poster app, but no **digital** site is without its bad actors. So, keeping that in mind, **brands** could do worse than an app with a huge youth following like **YikYak**. Advertisers aren't there yet, but "it's just a matter of time," Tuff said.



Venmo

The personal finance site lets users, who again skew young, send money easily over the Internet — to split bills, and chip in on concert tickets or that Spring Break hotel. Venmo is the most popular money-management app on college campuses, according to a recent survey from WayUp, and is mentioned by students five times more frequently than PayPal. **Brands** already are finding some uses for its money sharing capabilities. This year, [ads for the Mayweather-Pacquiao fight](#) were used to let people know they could split the cost of the pay-per-view event through Venmo.

Other Apps

There are a few other up-and-comers that deserve mention, as well. Soundcloud is the site for sharing audio files, and continues to grow in popularity. Also, Timehop, which delivers daily **social** media nostalgia to users, and VSCO Cam, an **Instagram** rival, were named hot apps by WayUp. Lastly, Lyft could be the **Uber** for young kids, or at least it's viable a second option, WayUp said.

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