Commodifying Sadness: The Role of Women as Emotional Laborers on Instagram

Niswatin Nurul Hidayati*

Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Tuban, Jawa Timur, Indonesia

article information	Abstract
           	Postmodern commodification refers to the process by which various aspects of life, including art, culture, and individual identity, are transformed into tradable commodities. This study uses a netnographic approach to analyze Instagram users' responses to sad songs. Data collection was conducted in two stages: first, selecting Instagram posts with high engagement, and second, collecting comments from these posts with a diverse sample. Analysis was conducted through a thematic approach to identify key patterns and themes in the comments. The results show that the commodification of emotions in music, especially sad songs, is reinforced by platforms such as Instagram through algorithms designed to increase user engagement. User comments, especially from women, reflect gender roles in emotional expression that are often exploited for the platform's economic gain. In addition, Instagram plays a central role in digital music consumption through the influence of influencers, personalization algorithms, and marketing strategies. Although effective in promoting music, reliance on advertising can affect the perception of authenticity of the content. The platform continues to be a leader in the transformation of music consumption and promotion in the digital era. Therefore, Instagram needs to adopt a more ethical approach, increase algorithm transparency, and reduce the exploitation of user emotions. Diversification of marketing strategies and further research on the role of gender in emotional expression on social media is important to create a more inclusive and sustainable digital ecosystem.

Introduction

Social media, especially Instagram, has transformed the music industry by integrating visual and auditory experiences that allow artists to deepen their interactions with fans. The platform supports artists in building personal brands and developing communities through direct interactions such as likes, comments, and direct messages, which increases fan loyalty (Helal & Ozuem, 2019; Prey, 2020; de-Miguel-Molina et al., 2021; Nwagwu & Akintoye, 2024). Instagram also facilitates music discovery by removing traditional barriers once managed by industry gatekeepers, using hashtags and algorithmic promotion to reach a wider audience (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2019; Arrieta, 2020; Demyen, 2024). The visual factor of Instagram plays a significant role in promotion, allowing artists to create compelling visual identities that attract new listeners and retain old ones (Chen et al., 2022; Murphy & Hume, 2023; Carpio-Jimenez et al., 2024; Zhang, 2024). Additionally, the commodification of emotions in music, mainly through sad songs, demonstrates how social media can influence and transform the experience of music consumption. These songs tap into universal emotions such as heartbreak and sadness, making them highly marketable. Music, as a technology

of the self, allows users to manage and express their emotions, integrating these songs into their emotional lives and demonstrating the crucial role of social media in shaping the contemporary cultural and economic landscape (DeNora, 2000; Terranova, 2000; Arcy, 2016).

Preliminary studies have shown that Instagram has significantly changed user interactions with music, combining visual and audio elements to increase engagement. Highfield & Leaver (2016) and Pearce et al. (2018) suggest that the platform facilitates active user participation in music consumption through features such as sharing, liking, and commenting on posts, which broadens the reach and supports the commodification of music. Features like Stories and IGTV allow artists to share music footage and behind-the-scenes content, deepening connections with their audiences (Leaver, Highfield, & Abidin, 2020). This engagement fosters the formation of communities around music, where fans feel a direct connection to the artist and can provide support through interactive elements such as polls and live streams. The comment section becomes an important area for emotional expression, with users often sharing personal experiences that resonate with the themes of the music, creating a collective experience that underscores the therapeutic side of music (Weisser, 2012; Wayne, 2011; Krause et al., 2020). These interactions provide artists with insight into the emotional impact of their music and influence their creative process. Arrieta (2020) and Harry & Muthusamy (2024) emphasizes that Instagram forms a participatory culture where fans become active contributors to music's cultural and emotional value, reflecting the evolution of the digital era's relationship between artists and audiences.

This study aims to explore the commodification of emotions through music, specifically Indonesian sad songs on Instagram, by exploring the theme of emotions in user comments and how these emotions are marketed. This study will analyze the work of emotions on Instagram, the influence of cultural context on user engagement, and their emotional responses to music content. In addition, the study will assess the impact of Instagram on music consumption, considering the role of influencers, algorithms, and digital marketing strategies. The aim is to provide a deeper understanding of how social media changes music consumption and promotion, making emotions and personal experiences an important aspect of music marketing in the digital age. The benefits of this study include increasing academic understanding of the commodification of emotions in music and its influence on consumer behavior, more effective user engagement strategies, and support for policies that ethically encourage creative industries' growth. These results will support the music industry and digital marketing in designing effective campaigns to increase fan engagement and loyalty.

This study proposes the primary hypothesis that commodified emotions through Indonesian sad songs on Instagram increase user engagement, with users more actively expressing emotions and personal experiences through comments. As a secondary hypothesis, it is assumed that digital marketing strategies, including influencers and Instagram algorithms, amplify the effects of emotional commodification, thereby increasing the reach and consumption of Indonesian sad music. An additional hypothesis proposes that cultural context influences user responses and interactions to sad music content in Indonesia, with different variations in user engagement based on their cultural background. Exploratively, it is hypothesized that authentic interactions between artists and fans through direct comments on Instagram strengthen fan loyalty and support the formation of a closer community. This hypothesis aims to examine the influence of emotions in music commodification on user interactions and marketing effectiveness on Instagram and to understand the cultural dynamics that influence these interactions in the Indonesian social and cultural context.

Method

The method chosen for this study was ethnography, an online research method adapted from ethnography, designed by Kozinets (2015) and Kerley (2024) to analyze the behavior and interactions of individuals in digital communities. This approach is particularly relevant for research on social and cultural dynamics in online spaces. It is an effective tool for understanding how Instagram users in Indonesia respond to sad songs through their comments. The data collection process for this ethnography was divided into two main stages. The first stage was identifying and selecting Instagram posts related to popular sad songs in Indonesia. The researcher used Instagram's search and discovery tools to find posts with high engagement levels, namely those with many comments, likes, and shares. This ensured that the data collected reflected broad and significant reactions from the user community (Gobo, 2008; Bengtsson, 2016).

In the study's second phase, the researcher focused on collecting comments from pre-selected Instagram posts. The researcher ensured that the sample collected included various comments from posts featuring diverse artists, song themes, and user demographics. This approach aimed to ensure that the analysis could include a broader perspective and capture the diversity of user reactions to sad songs (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2021; Darvish & Bick, 2023). After the comment data was collected, the analysis was conducted using thematic analysis methods. The researcher began by categorizing and coding the comment data to identify recurring themes and patterns. This process involves grouping comments based on similarities in content or sentiment expressed, such as positive, negative, or neutral comments. In this way, the researcher could understand users' general reactions to sad songs and how the emotions expressed in the comments became part of the broader online discussion (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2021). In addition, this analysis helped the researcher uncover the process of commodification of emotions in the context of sad music on Instagram. The emotions expressed by users, both explicitly and implicitly, are analyzed to understand how these emotional expressions are used in online discussions and leveraged by platforms to increase engagement (Darvish & Bick, 2023). This approach provides deep insights into how digital environments construct, articulate, and commoditize user emotions.

Ethically, ethnographic research, including ethnography, generally uses publicly available data. However, this requires special attention to the privacy and consent of the individuals involved. In the context of this study, all data collected came from public profiles and posts on Instagram, thus not involving an explicit privacy violation. However, researchers need to maintain ethics by ensuring that this public data does not indirectly violate the rights of the individuals involved. The researchers anonymized all user information in the analysis to protect participants' identities. This step ensured that the study complied with established research ethics standards, as Kozinets (2015) and Kerley (2024) suggested. With this approach, the study not only met scientific standards but also respected the rights and privacy of the platform users, ensuring that the research was conducted responsibly and ethically.

Result and Discussion

Result

Emotional Commodification: Themes Identified in Comments on Indonesian Sad Songs

Quoting data from goodstats.id, it was stated that the music preferences of Indonesian society were primarily towards pop music, followed by dangdut, K-pop, religious music, jazz, R&B and hip-hop, rock, classical, indie, and J-pop or J-rock. Furthermore, according to katadata.co.id, it was mentioned that music listeners in Indonesia had a preference for sad, melancholic, or angry songs. Data from Spotify, a Stockholm-based audio streaming platform, indicated this preference. Spotify used an algorithm to determine how positive or happy a song was on a scale between 0 and 1. This perception measure was called valence. The lower the valence, the sadder the song was considered.

For instance, the song "Apalah (Arti Menunggu)" by Raisa had a valence as low as 0.29, whereas "Mobil Balap" by Naif scored 0.84. The top playlist or the 50 most popular songs over the past week on Spotify reflected that users in Indonesia tended to listen to sad music. The average valence of the top playlist in Indonesia was estimated to be only 0.38. This valence data, as of May 13, 2022, was the lowest among similar playlists for other countries or regions on Spotify.
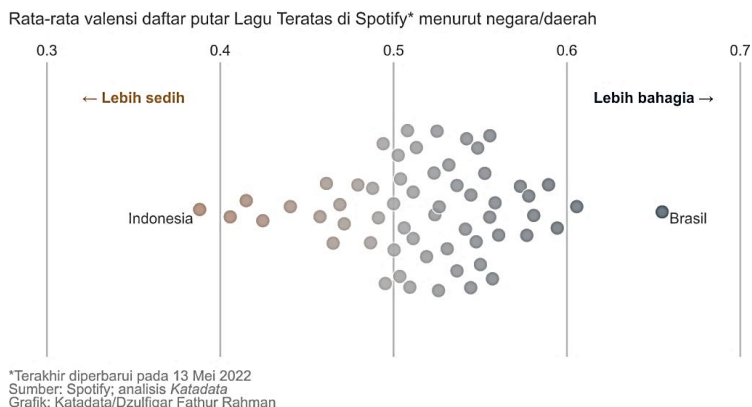

Figure 1. Indonesian listeners' preference for sad songs is greater

Many Indonesian singers sing sad songs, including Mahalini, Lyodra, Tiara Andini, and Meiska. Mahalini is famous for several songs, such as "Mati-Matian," "Sial," "Remaining Feelings," and "Melawan Restu." Lyodra sang several songs such as "Tak Selalu Memiliki," "Pesan Terakhir," "Tak Dianggap," "Dibanding Dia," and "Jika Bored." Tiara Andini sang the songs "Menyesal," "Merasa Indah," "Usai," and "Masih Hatiku." Meanwhile, Meiska has a song titled "Hilang tanpa Bilang."The author randomly selected sad songs featured on Instagram, including original clips from Meiska and covers by various singers.

The author also identified several pieces of content that used the songs as background music. A search on Instagram using the hashtag #hilangtanpabilang showed more than 1,000 posts. One of the accounts that used Meiska's song is @storymusik082, which has been viewed 1.6 million times, received 200,000 likes, 382 comments, and was shared 15,000 times. The song excerpt in this post is "I Already Love You. If only I knew it would hurt this much. I would never have loved you this deeply." Comments on this post vary, showing a variety of negative, positive, and neutral tendencies.

Table 1. Comments on Indonesian Sad Song on Instagram

Comments	Category		
	Positif	**Negative**	**Neutral**
(Tagging someone's account)			√
Ayo balik dong ak gk tau btapa hncur ny ak ktika kmu pergi		√	
Terlalu bodoh sampai lupa klo kamu suman temn		√	
Terlanjur mencintaimu 😊	√		
Yah maap terlanjur jatuh cinta sedalam iniii	√		
Jangan pernah berharap kepada manusia karena manusia hati dan pikiran nya bisa berubah	√		
Iya aku tau yg km mau bukan aku tpi ya seenganya km ngehargai aku gitu ato kmu bilang aja deh gausah berharap lagi sama aku gituu biarr aku ga berharap terus. Tau ngasij betapa sakitnya aku nangisin kmu smpe sesegukanartinya apa? Aku tulus kann. Ya aku emng gasecantik cewe yg kmu suka tpii dia tulus ga sm kamu? Dia pernah gk berjuang buat kmu? Dia pernah ga nangiss in kmu? Ga kan. Maksihh selama ini udah bikin aku berharap sm kmu.		√	
Peka lah anjggggggg :'(		√	
Kapan lu balik gw masih nunggu kok selama apapun kamu masih		√	

aku tunggu.		
Iri dengan org yang kau gandeng sekarang!!	√	
Bingung mau bilang siapaa kek ngerasa mati rasa ya engga juga gitu, mati rasanya tuh ga pengen suka sama orang tapi org lewat aja dikatain ganteng	√	
Asing – kenalan – ttm- lost contact + bonusnya asing haha	√	
Gk nyangka bakal sehancur ini	√	
Sakit wkwkw	√	
AKU BODOH BANGETTT!!!!	√	
Jadi sekrang biarin aku tenang okey 😊	√	
Cinta gue abis di masalalu hh ga ngotak banget jadi cwok anj malah balik ke mantan nyaa	√	
Anjrr ngeliat dia dengan cewe lain tuh nyesek bngt katanya teman TPI ko GK bisa berkata-kata lgii	√	
Andai ku tau kan sesakit ini	√	
Kau telah melihat bukan tuan? Kau tau berapa ku mencintai mu, kau tau seberapa hancur nya jika ku kehilangan mu, kau tau seberapa sakit yang akan ku lalui jkika tidak bersama mu. Namun akhir nya? Kau melakukan semua yg membuatku sakit. Berawal dari rasa yang tak pernah ku duga akan jatuh cinta pd dirimu seda;am ini. Hingga akhirnya kau memilih pergi dengan alasan yang tak pernah ku duga. Seharusnya sedari awl kau tak pernah membuatku merasakan kasih syg yang ternyata itu palsu.	√	
Wirrr		√
KORBAN PRIA LUCU BERHATI ASU	√	
Berharap sama manusia emang sesakit ini	√	
Harus kah aku jujur gw kangen lu gw kangen senyum mu ko malah gini yah	√	
Aku ga pernah nyesel pernah mencintai org kek kmu, cma aku kaget aja sih kok bisa endingnya gini	√	
Donlot		√
Salah aku naro perasaan sama teman sendiri :'(	√	
Klo dia baca inii, aku Cuma mau bilang semua yg kamu pikir ttg aku selama ini itu salah	√	
Sakitt banget nyampe ngga ada yang jual obat sakiit	√	
Sama (versi cowok)	√	
Selalu bersyukur kenal sama kamu tapi kalau bisa diputar ulang waktu mungkin lebih baik tidak	√	

Comments on Indonesian sad songs on Instagram can be categorized into positive, negative, and neutral. Most negative comments reflect regret, heartbreak, and unresolved emotions, suggesting that social media has become a space for sharing emotional grievances. These negative emotions contribute to the commodification of sadness, turning it into monetizable content. In contrast, positive comments highlight resilience and emotional growth, where users share experiences to support and inspire the community. Neutral comments are functional, such as tagging accounts or sharing content without deep emotional expression. This study reveals how Instagram facilitates a variety of user interaction patterns, from passive consumption to active engagement, while monetizing emotional expression as part of the dynamics of digital culture and emotional labor.

User Engagement and Interaction on Instagram

Most comments on sad songs on Instagram show a broad spectrum of emotions, from deep regret to positive self-awareness. The study reveals that sad songs are entertainment and a medium

for users to build a supportive emotional community. Through comments and interactions, users express their personal feelings and create a digital space that allows empathy and inspiration to flourish. Instagram's algorithm plays a key role in amplifying this engagement, prioritizing content with high engagement, thus triggering a broader visibility cycle. Furthermore, the findings highlight how the platform indirectly exploits users' emotional expressions as a digital commodity, turning them into assets that drive engagement and profitability. With features such as Stories and Reels, Instagram also facilitates the creation of dynamic user-generated content, fostering a participatory culture and strengthening emotional connections among online communities.

Table 2. User Engagement and Interaction on Instagram

No	Result	Explanatory Description
1	Categorization of Comments Depicting the Spectrum of Emotions	Comments on sad songs fall into three main categories: negative (regret and pain), positive (self-awareness and growth), and neutral (interactions without emotional weight). This pattern reflects the range of emotions users feel while showing that sad songs serve as a medium for channeling and discussing emotional experiences.
2	An Emotional Community Built from Sad Songs	Sad songs on Instagram create a digital space for sharing emotional journeys. Negative comments receive empathy and support, while positive comments inspire the community. This shows that sad songs are not only entertainment but also a means of building emotional solidarity in cyberspace.
3	Increasing Engagement Through Algorithms	Instagram's algorithm prioritizes content with high engagement, such as comments and likes on sad songs, thereby increasing its visibility. This creates a cycle of engagement, where sad songs continue to gain wider attention.
4	The Commodification of Emotions in Digital Engagement	The platform transforms users' expressions of sadness into consumable and monetizable content. This process shows how Instagram leverages users' emotions to drive engagement and platform profits.
5	User Generated Content (UGC) as a Driver of Engagement	Instagram features like Stories, Reels, and IGTV empower users to create creative visual content, which drives personal engagement and builds social trends. This UGC strengthens the participatory culture and drives widespread social engagement on the platform.

This table provides a comprehensive overview of the various aspects of user engagement and interaction on Instagram in the context of sad songs but also raises several critical questions. The categorization of comments into three emotional spectrums, namely negative, positive, and neutral, shows the flexibility of Instagram as a space for channeling emotional experiences. However, this simplification can obscure the depth and complexity of users' genuine emotions. The findings on emotional communities show how sad songs can create digital solidarity, where support and empathy develop among users. However, the authenticity of these interactions is questionable, whether they genuinely promote emotional healing or provide a temporary illusion of connection.

In addition, the role of algorithms in increasing the visibility of content with high engagement creates an effective engagement cycle. It reinforces users' dependence on a system that prioritizes popularity over quality. This can lead to homogenization of experiences and a lack of content diversity. The transformation of user emotions into commodity platforms can raise ethical concerns, where users' personal experiences are exploited for economic gain. Meanwhile, user-generated content (UGC) becomes a key driver of engagement, encouraging a participatory culture. However, the pressure to continuously create interesting content can trigger digital fatigue and an imbalance between personal needs and social expectations. Therefore, while this table provides in-depth insights, a critical approach is needed to understand the impact of digital platforms on user emotions, interactions, and communities.

Culture Influences User Engagement and Emotional Responses on Instagram

The Indonesian cultural context plays a significant role in shaping users' engagement and emotional responses on Instagram. Social norms emphasizing harmony, traditional musical

heritage, and the influence of Islamic spirituality encourage users to share emotions collectively and profoundly manage grief. The use of local languages and the role of celebrities and influencers also reinforce unique patterns of interaction on the digital platform, reflecting the close relationship between culture and emotional expression on social media.

Table 3. The Influence of Culture on User Engagement on Instagram

No	Result	Description
1	Social Norms and Collective Emotional Expression	Indonesia's harmony and togetherness culture encourages users to share emotions on Instagram collectively. Comments on sad songs often reflect solidarity and empathy, demonstrating the strong influence of collectivist values in shaping online interactions.
2	The Influence of Music as a Cultural Expression	Music, especially sorrowful songs, has a deep emotional resonance for Indonesian users. This is driven by the cultural heritage of traditional music, which carries emotional and spiritual meaning and still influences engagement with modern songs on social media.
3	Spirituality as a Framework for Emotional Management	The influence of religion, especially Islam, shapes how users manage and express emotions. Religious teachings about patience and comfort in faith often influence positive comments that focus on self-awareness and resilience.
4	The Role of Language in Emotional Expression	Using Indonesian and local dialects in comments provides a unique cultural dimension to users' emotional responses. The choice of words, phrases, and metaphors reflects the distinctive ways Indonesians express and understand emotions.
5	The Impact of Media and Popular Culture	Local celebrities and influencers play a significant role in increasing emotional engagement with sad songs. Fan loyalty and cultural resonance to an artist or song message strengthen user interaction and engagement patterns on Instagram.

This table illustrates how Indonesian culture influences user engagement patterns on Instagram, particularly in the context of sad songs. Social norms and collectivist values significantly shape online interactions, encouraging users to express their emotions collectively. However, this approach can also limit individual freedom to express emotions personally due to cultural pressures to maintain group harmony. In this context, culture serves as a foundation for interactions and presents challenges in balancing individual expression and social norms.

In addition, music as a cultural expression shows the relevance of traditional heritage in influencing emotional responses to modern content. While spirituality provides a positive framework for managing emotions, this approach may be less inclusive for those who do not share a similar religious background. The role of language also enriches interactions through local idioms and dialects but poses a barrier to reaching a global audience. On the other hand, local celebrities and influencers contribute to user engagement. However, this is often influenced by the popularity of the artist rather than just the quality or intrinsic message of the song. These findings reflect the complex dynamics between culture, media, and digital interactions, which require further analysis to avoid bias and exploitation of cultural commodification.

Discussion
Emotional Labor on Instagram: The Commodification of Emotions in Music as Merchandise

The commodification of emotions in music, especially those conveyed through sad songs, transforms emotions into marketable products (Wayne, 2011). This process allows music to become a form of artistic expression and a consumable commodity that appeals to and resonates with audiences (Graham, 2018; Rosamond, 2020). Strong emotions, such as sadness, are packaged and sold through songs that touch on universal human experiences, making them highly desirable. According to DeNora (2000), music acts as a technology of the self that helps individuals manage and express their emotions, thus making music a commodity that not only reflects but also shapes the emotional lives of its listeners. The music industry has long recognized the commercial value of

emotional songs, where sad songs are created to evoke feelings of introspection and melancholy, deepening the emotional connection between music and listener that enhances its commercial success (Rubin, 2002).

Modern media technology also supports the commercialization of emotions in music. Digital platforms and social media, such as Spotify and Apple Music, utilize algorithms to recommend songs based on the user's emotional state, further modifying emotions by tailoring music consumption to individual preferences (MacAulay, 2015; Prey, 2020; de-Miguel-Molina et al., 2021). This approach increases user engagement and maximizes the commercial potential of music that evokes emotions.

On platforms like Instagram, comments on sad Indonesian songs provide additional insight into how emotions are exploited and processed into commodities. Analysis of these comments shows how the platform commodifies users' negative and positive emotional expressions to increase activity and attract advertisers, as Fuchs (2013) described. Negative comments often reflect an outpouring of emotion toward the situation or individual that caused the sadness, while positive comments typically relate to self-awareness and personal growth. Even neutral comments, which may involve tagging others or using everyday language, contribute to the social function of the platform by supporting social interaction and the spread of content. Each of these types of comments demonstrates how emotional and functional labor on social media can be exploited for economic gain by digital platforms (Highfield & Leaver 2016; Pearce et al., 2018).
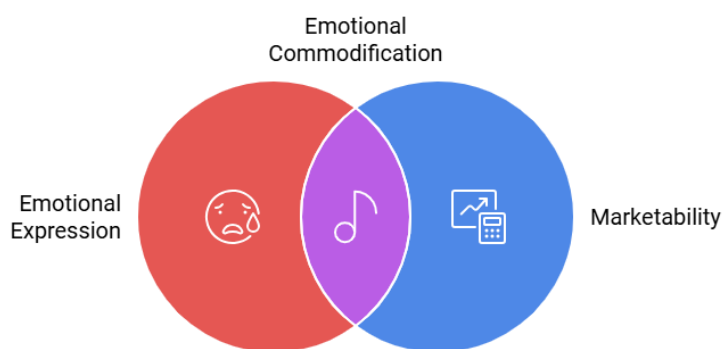

Figure 2. Emotional Commodification in Music

This figure illustrates the relationship between emotional expression, marketability, and the commoditization of emotions in music on Instagram. The Venn diagram shows that the commoditization of emotions lies at the intersection of authentic emotional expression and its transformation into marketable merchandise. Emotional expression, depicted on the red side, highlights how music, sorrowful songs, becomes a means for users to express feelings such as pain, loss, or nostalgia. However, this process often risks simplifying or manipulating emotions for commercial gain. The blue side of the diagram reflects the marketability of emotions through music, where universal emotional appeals are used to increase engagement and generate profit. However, this focus on profitability often comes at the expense of the authenticity of the art and profound emotional experiences (Fia & Murray, 2023; Foster, 2019). The middle area of the diagram highlights the core of the commoditization of emotions, where personal emotional expressions are transformed into mass-consumable merchandise on platforms like Instagram. This process opens up substantial economic opportunities but raises concerns about exploiting users' emotions to increase platform engagement and financial gain without considering the impact on individuals' emotional well-being. Therefore, it is important to take an ethical approach in managing this commoditization of emotions to continue respecting emotions as part of authentic human expression and not simply as merchandise.

The Impact of Culture on Gender Perspectives in Emotional Responses on Instagram

The dominance of female comments on sad songs on Instagram, with little participation from male users, highlights the influence of gender dynamics in online emotional expression. This phenomenon reflects broader social norms and expectations regarding emotional communication and engagement on social media platforms. The study findings suggest that female users are more likely to engage emotionally with content, such as sorrowful songs, through comments on Instagram. This gendered pattern is consistent with socialization processes, encouraging women to express and share emotions more openly than men (Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2008). As Eagly and Wood (1999) explain, social expectations shape gender roles, with women often socialized to prioritize emotional expression and empathy in interpersonal interactions.

The dominance of female comments on sad songs on Instagram can be analyzed through the concept of emotional labor. According to Hochschild (2012) and Feng et al. (2022), emotional labor is defined as the management of feelings to create a publicly observable appearance that meets organizational or social expectations. In the context of Instagram, emotional labor manifests in the voluntary expression of emotions through comments, which contributes to the emotional atmosphere of the platform and user engagement (Featherstone, 2007). From a critical perspective, this concept questions whether platforms such as Instagram indirectly exploit users' emotions for their benefit by exploiting the emotional labor of users, especially women, to increase engagement and interaction on the platform (Chakraborty & Jain, 2022; Pellegrino et al., 2022). This raises questions about the emotional burden that users who actively participate in discussions that contain high emotional content may experience and how this may affect their mental health in the long term.

In addition, the dominance of female comments on sad songs also shows how gender norms and social expectations shape how emotions are expressed in the digital public space. This emphasizes that women are often expected to be more emotionally open, which can reinforce certain gender stereotypes and strengthen existing power dynamics in social structures. In this context, platforms and users must know how these power dynamics operate and their potential impact on the individuals involved (Jameson, 1991).

In Indonesian culture, as in many other places, women may feel more comfortable expressing vulnerability and emotional depth in public forums such as social media. This cultural context encourages women to connect emotionally with music that resonates with their experiences of grief and personal reflection (Fischer & Manstead, 2000; van Dijck, 2013). Cultural norms and social expectations about gender roles shape how online spaces perceive and encourage emotional responses. The differences in commenting behavior between female and male users on sad song posts on Instagram highlight the complex interplay between gender, social expectations, and emotional expression in digital environments. Understanding these dynamics contributes to broader discourse on gendered communication patterns and emotional labor in online contexts (Jin et al., 2024; Judijanto et al., 2024).
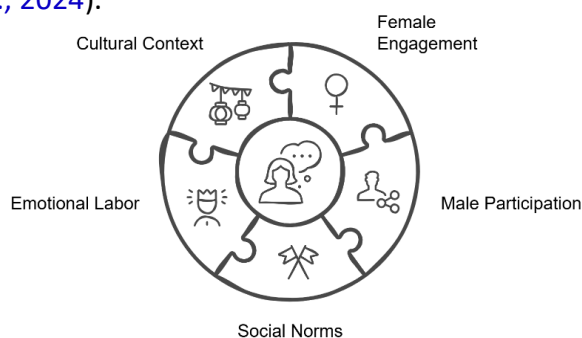

Figure 3. Gender Dynamics in Online Emotional Expression

The dominance of female commenters on sad songs on Instagram suggests a profound reflection on gender dynamics in digital interactions. This phenomenon reflects social norms and socialization processes that require women to be more open in expressing emotions but also highlights how the structure and function of social media platforms can reinforce traditional gender roles. While platforms such as Instagram provide space for a broad range of emotional expression, this tendency can also reinforce gender stereotypes that women are inherently more emotional than men (Baudrillard, 1994; de Zoysa, 1998). This raises critical questions about how digital platforms facilitate or even manipulate gendered emotional expression and the impact this has on user perceptions and behaviors. Furthermore, the lack of open emotional participation from male users may indicate cultural barriers or stigma against men expressing vulnerability, highlighting the need for a more inclusive and diverse approach to designing social media interactions that support the emotional well-being of all users without being tied to rigid gender norms.

Instagram's Influence on Music Consumption: The Role of Influencers, Algorithms, and Digital Marketing Strategies

Instagram has significantly changed how music is consumed and promoted in the digital age, leveraging influencers, algorithms, and digital marketing strategies to reshape the music industry landscape. This impact is seen in various aspects of user engagement and behavior, as well as in the commercial dynamics of the music market tersebut (Prey, 2020; de-Miguel-Molina et al., 2021). Influencers on Instagram have a significant influence on their followers, influencing music consumption patterns through endorsements and recommendations. Research has shown that influencer marketing campaigns effectively drive music discovery and engagement among their audiences (Casalo et al., 2020). Influencers frequently share music content, attend concerts, and collaborate with artists, expanding their reach and influencing their followers' music preferences.

Instagram's algorithm has a huge influence on shaping music consumption behavior by curating a personalized content feed based on users' preferences, interactions, and demographics. The algorithm's adjustments ensure that users are exposed to music content that aligns with their interests. This increases the chances of discovering and interacting with new artists and different music genres, which ultimately enriches their music listening experience on the platform (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Digital marketing techniques on Instagram, including sponsored posts, paid advertising, and strategic content partnerships, play a crucial role in promoting music releases and events. These strategies leverage the platform's visual appeal and interactive features to create immersive brand experiences and increase user engagement (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019; Rehman et al., 2022; Khanom, 2023). Research shows that effective digital marketing campaigns can significantly increase music sales and streams by leveraging Instagram's vast user base and engagement metrics. However, it should be noted that while these techniques are effective in increasing visibility and sales, they also raise questions about authenticity and artistic integrity. Marketing that relies too heavily on paid advertising and sponsorships can lead to the perception that music success is driven more by financial investment than the quality of the music itself (Leaver, Highfield, & Abidin, 2020). Additionally, there is the potential for market saturation, where users may become fatigued by too much advertising, which can ultimately reduce the effectiveness of these strategies. Therefore, music industry players need to balance utilizing digital marketing techniques and maintaining their art's authenticity so as not to lose fans' trust and support.

Instagram's impact on music consumption can be attributed to research findings that analyze user behavior and interactions with music-related content on the platform. For example, research shows that users often discover new music through influencer endorsements and algorithm-driven recommendations (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Comments and engagement metrics on music posts

reflect users' preferences and emotional responses, influencing trends and popularity (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). Furthermore, the visibility and accessibility of music content on Instagram contribute to its role as a leading platform for music discovery and promotion in the digital age.
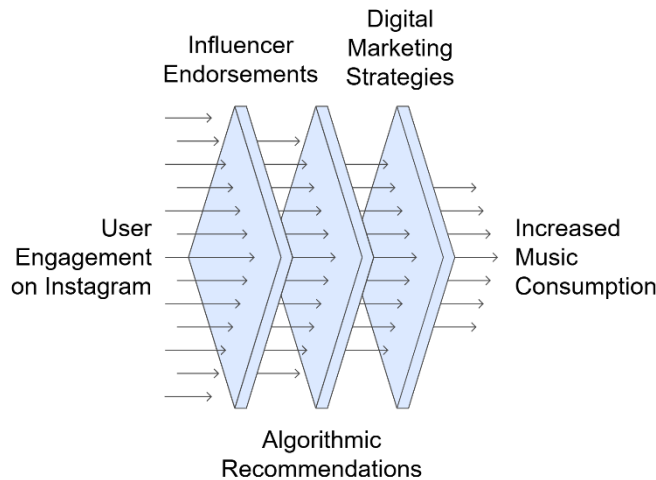

Figure 4. Instagram's Influence on Music Consumption

Instagram's impact on music consumption represents a significant evolution in how music content is promoted and accessed by consumers through influencers, personalized algorithms, and efficient digital marketing strategies. However, this approach carries critical challenges and implications. Reliance on influencers and algorithmic recommendations can create homogeneity in users' music experiences, reinforcing existing preferences and reducing musical diversity and exploration (Fuchs, 2013). This may limit exposure to lesser-known genres or artists who do not receive the same promotion on the platform. Furthermore, algorithms' influence on music consumption raises questions about transparency and user control over the content they receive, often promoting the repetition of similar content that does not fully reflect the user's preferences.

While effective, aggressive digital marketing strategies on Instagram can also commercialize the music listening experience in a less authentic way, reducing music to a mere marketing tool rather than an art form. This overly sales- and visual-focused approach can diminish music's artistic value and authentic expression. Furthermore, this approach also has significant social implications. While the platform can allow artists to reach a wider audience, it can also increase the gap between big and small artists, with the former dominating users' feeds due to algorithms and well-marketed campaigns. This analysis suggests the need for a more balanced and critical approach to the use of Instagram in music promotion, where consideration is given not only to marketing effectiveness but also to musical integrity and the diversity of listener experiences.

Conclusion

The commodification of emotions in music, sorrowful songs, has transformed emotions into marketable products, with platforms like Spotify and Instagram reinforcing this process through algorithms that increase user engagement. This phenomenon is evident on Instagram in user comments that reflect the exploitation of emotions for the platform's economic gain. The dominance of female comments on sad songs also reveals the role of gender in emotional expression on social media, where social and cultural norms encourage women to be more open. At the same time, men tend to be less engaged. This shows how women's emotional labor is exploited to increase engagement in the digital space. Furthermore, Instagram has become a significant platform for digital music consumption through the influence of influencers, personalization algorithms, and digital marketing strategies. While effective in promoting music,

these strategies can affect perceptions of authenticity if they rely too heavily on advertising. With features that support engagement and promotion, Instagram strengthens its position as a leading platform in transforming music consumption and promotion in the digital era.

Theoretically, the commodification of emotions in music and the exploitation of emotional labor, especially for women, provide important insights into the dynamics of power and social norms formed in digital spaces. This highlights the role of platforms such as Instagram in shaping emotional communication patterns influenced by algorithms, gender, and cultural norms. These findings add to the literature on emotional labor theory, digital commodification, and gender in social media and open up opportunities for further research on their impact on users' emotional well-being. Practically, these implications are important for platform developers, marketers, and music industry players to understand the ethics of exploiting users' emotions. A more balanced marketing strategy between profitability and authenticity can maintain audience trust while maximizing the promotional potential of music. Furthermore, there is a need for an inclusive and ethical approach to reducing the exploitation of emotional labor, especially related to gender roles, in order to create a healthier and more sustainable digital environment.

The limitations of this study lie in its limited focus on the Instagram platform and the context of sad songs, so it has not covered other digital platforms or different music genres that may have unique user engagement patterns. In addition, gender analysis in emotional labor is still descriptive and has not explored in more depth the influence of intersectionality, such as age, cultural background, or socioeconomic status, on emotional interaction patterns. Further research is recommended to expand the scope of platforms and music genres to understand emotional commodification dynamics more comprehensively. Future research should also use mixed methods, such as in-depth interviews or user surveys, to explore the emotional and psychological impacts on individuals involved in emotional labor on social media. This will provide a more holistic picture of the social and cultural impacts of emotional commodification in digital spaces.

Acknowledgments

Reference

Anglada-Tort, M., Masters, N., Steffens, J., North, A., & Müllensiefen, D. (2023). The Behavioural Economics Of Music: Systematic Review And Future Directions. *Quarterly Journal of Experimental Psychology, 76(5)*, 1177-1194. https://doi.org/10.1177/17470218221113761

Arcy, J. (2016). Emotion Work: Considering Gender In Digital Labor. *Feminist Media Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2016.1138609

Arrieta, A. (2020). Nancy Baym, Playing to the Crowd: Musicians, Audiences, and the Intimate Work of Connection. *International Journal Of Communication, 14, 3*. Retrieved from https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/15935

Baudrillard, J. (1994). *Simulacra and Simulation*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press. https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9904

Bengtsson, M. (2016). How To Plan And Perform A Qualitative Study Using Content Analysis. *NursingPlus Open, 2,* 8-14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001

Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social Network Sites: Definition, History, And Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 13(1),* 210–230. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x

Brescoll, V. L., & Uhlmann, E. L. (2008). Can An Angry Woman Get Ahead? Status Conferral, Gender, And Expression Of Emotion In The Workplace. *Psychological Science, 19(3)*, 268–275. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2008.02079.x

Carpio-Jimenez, L., Suing, A., & Ordonez, K. (2024). Visual Design in Brand Communication on Instagram. VISUAL REVIEW. *International Visual Culture Review Revista Internacional De Cultura Visual, 16(8)*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.62161/revvisual.v16.5317

Casalo, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibanez-Sanchez, S. (2020). Influencers On Instagram: Antecedents And Consequences Of Opinion Leadership. *Journal of Business Research, 117*, 510-519. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.005

Chaffey, D. & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital Marketing.* (7th ed.). Pearson International. https://elibrary.pearson.de/book/99.150005/9781292241586

Chakraborty, A., & Jain, V. (2022). Leveraging Digital Marketing and Integrated Marketing Communications for Brand Building in Emerging Markets. In: Adeola, O., Hinson, R.E., Sakkthivel, A.M. (eds) *Marketing Communications and Brand Development in Emerging Economies Volume I*. Palgrave Studies of Marketing in Emerging Economies. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88678-3_13

Chen, Y., Tsai, C., & Tsai, H. (2022). Visual Marketing: Exploring Influences on the Continuous Use of Instagram. *International Journal of E-Adoption (IJEA), 14(1)*, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.4018/IJEA.297927

Darvish, M., & Bick, M. (2023). The Role of Digital Technologies in the Music Industry—A Qualitative Trend Analysis. *Information Systems Management, 41(2)*, 181–200. https://doi.org/10.1080/10580530.2023.2225129

de Zoysa, D. A. (1998). [Review of Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization, by A. Appadurai]. *The International Migration Review, 32(4)*, 1073–1074. https://doi.org/10.2307/2547675

de-Miguel-Molina, B., Boix-Doménech, R., Rausell-Köster, P. (2021). The Impact of the Music Industry in Europe and the Business Models Involved in Its Value Chain. In: de-Miguel-Molina, B., Santamarina-Campos, V., de-Miguel-Molina, M., Boix-Doménech, R. (eds) Music as Intangible Cultural Heritage. *SpringerBriefs in Economics. Springer*, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-76882-9_2

Demyen, S. (2024). The Online Shopping Experience During the Pandemic and After—A Turning Point for Sustainable Fashion Business Management? *Journal of Theoretical and Applied Electronic Commerce Research, 19(4)*, 3632-3658. https://doi.org/10.3390/jtaer19040176

DeNora, T. (2000). *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511489433

Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (1999). The Origins Of Sex Differences In Human Behavior: Evolved

Dispositions Versus Social Roles. *American Psychologist, 54(6)*, 408–423. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.54.6.408

Featherstone, M. (2007). *Consumer Culture And Postmodernism*. SAGE Publications Ltd, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446212424

Feng, R., Feng, Y., & Ivanov, A. (2022). Social Media as Online Shelter: Psychological Relief in COVID-19 Pandemic Diaries. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.882264

Fia, T., & Murray, I. J. (2023). Commodification And EU Law: A Genealogy. *European Law Open, 2(2)*, 372–385. https://doi.org/10.1017/elo.2023.42

Fischer, A. H., & Manstead, A. S. R. (2000). *The Relation Between Gender And Emotion In Different Cultures*. In A. H. Fischer (Ed.), Gender And Emotion: Social Psychological Perspectives (pp. 71–94). Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511628191.005

Foster, S. L. (2019). Commodifying And Giving. In Valuing Dance: Commodities And Gifts In Motion (New York). Oxford Academic. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190933975.003.0003

Fuchs, C. (2013). *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315880075

Gaunt, K. D. (2000). [Review of Music Grooves: Essays and Dialogues, by C. Keil & S. Feld]. *Yearbook for Traditional Music, 32*, 178–181. https://doi.org/10.2307/3185251

Gobo, G. (2008). 2 Method Or Methodology? Locating Ethnography In The Methodological Landscape. *In Doing Ethnography* (pp. 15-32). SAGE Publications Ltd, https://doi.org/10.4135/9780857028976

Graham, T. (2018). Platforms And Hyper-Choice On The World Wide Web. *Big Data & Society, 5(1)*. https://doi.org/10.1177/2053951718765878

Harry, B. & Muthusamy, V. (2024). *Instagram's Role in the Rise and Success of Over-the-Top (OTT) Media*. In N. Kalorth (Ed.), The Rise of Over-the-Top (OTT) Media and Implications for Media Consumption and Production (pp. 56-74). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-0116-6.ch005

Helal, G. & Ozuem, W. (2019). *Social Media and Social Identity in the Millennial Generation*. In G. Bowen & W. Ozuem (Eds.), Leveraging Computer-Mediated Marketing Environments (pp. 43-82). IGI Global Scientific Publishing. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-7344-9.ch003

Hesmondhalgh, D., Jones, E., & Rauh, A. (2019). SoundCloud and Bandcamp as Alternative Music Platforms. *Social Media + Society, 5(4)*. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305119883429

Hesmondhalgh, D., Osborne, R., Sun, H., & Barr, K. (2021). Music Creators' Earnings In The Digital Era. *Intellectual Property Office Research Paper*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4089749

Highfield, T., & Leaver, T. (2016). Instagrammatics And Digital Methods: Studying Visual Social Media, From Selfies And Gifs To Memes And Emoji. *Communication Research and Practice, 2(1)*, 47–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/22041451.2016.1155332

Hochschild, A. (2012). *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling*. Berkeley: University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520951853

Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions, and*

Organizations Across Nations, 2nd ed. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0005-7967(02)00184-5

Jameson, F. (1991). *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9780822378419

Jin, Y., Chen, C., & Liu, B. (2024). Benefits Of Managerial Overconfidence For Corporate Digital Transformation: Evidence From China. *PLoS ONE 19(11)*: e0314231. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0314231

Johnson, B. (2015). Directions In Popular Music Studies. *Perfect Beat, 2(4)*, 98-105. https://doi.org/10.1558/prbt.v2i4.28773

Judijanto, L., Yusniar, Y., Nurrohman, R., Sudarmanto, E., & Supriatna, E. (2024). Bibliometric Review on Digital Economy and Industry Convergence: The Impact of Digitalization on Business Adaptation and Innovation. *West Science Interdisciplinary Studies, 2(10)*, 1963–1974. https://doi.org/10.58812/wsis.v2i10.1340

Kerley, T. (2024). Digital Influencers' Visual Narratives and Algorithmic Power: Identity Construction and Impulsive Consumption on Social Networks. *International Journal of Scientific Management and Tourism, 10(6)*, e1196. https://doi.org/10.55905/ijsmtv10n6-012

Khanom, M. T. (2023). Using Social Media Marketing In The Digital Era: A Necessity Or A Choice. *International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147- 4478), 12(3)*, 88–98. https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v12i3.2507

Kozinets, R.V. (2015). *Netnography*. In The International Encyclopedia of Digital Communication and Society (eds P.H. Ang and R. Mansell). https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118767771.wbiedcs067

Krause, A. E., Maurer, S., & Davidson, J. W. (2020). Characteristics of Self-reported Favorite Musical Experiences. *Music & Science, 3*. https://doi.org/10.1177/2059204320941320

Leaver, T., Highfield, T., & Abidin, C. (2020). *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures*. Cambridge: Polity Press. 264 pp. *Communications, 46(4)*, 613-615. https://doi.org/10.1515/commun-2020-0029

MacAulay, M. (2015). Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age. *Canadian Journal of Communication, 40*. https://doi.org/10.22230/cjc.2015v40n1a2885

Murphy, S., & Hume, M. (2023). The New Digital Music Marketing Ecosystem: Artist Direct. *Creative Industries Journal*, 1–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/17510694.2023.2214492

Nwagwu, W. E., & Akintoye, A. (2024). Influence Of Social Media On The Uptake Of Emerging Musicians And Entertainment Events. *Information Development, 40(4)*, 667-692. https://doi.org/10.1177/02666669221151162

Pearce, W., Ozkula, S. M., Greene, A. K., Teeling, L., Bansard, J. S., Omena, J. J., & Rabello, E. T. (2018). Visual Cross-Platform Analysis: Digital Methods To Research Social Media Images. *Information, Communication & Society, 23(2)*, 161–180. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1486871

Pellegrino, A., Abe, M., & Shannon, R. (2022). The Dark Side of Social Media: Content Effects on the Relationship Between Materialism and Consumption Behaviors. *Frontiers in psychology, 13*, 870614. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.870614

Prey, R. (2020). Locating Power in Platformization: Music Streaming Playlists and Curatorial Power.

Social Media + Society, 6(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120933291

Rehman, S. U., Gulzar, R., & Aslam, W. (2022). Developing The Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Through Social Media (SM): The Modern Marketing Communication Approach. *Sage Open, 12(2)*. https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221099936

Rosamond, E. (2020). From Reputation Capital to Reputation Warfare: Online Ratings, Trolling, and the Logic of Volatility. *Theory, Culture & Society, 37(2)*, 105-129. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276419872530

Rubin, A. M. (2002). The Uses-And-Gratifications Perspective Of Media Effects. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), Media effects: Advances in theory and research (2nd ed., pp. 525–548). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Tarakeshwar, N., Pargament, K. I., & Mahoney, A. (2003). Initial Development of a Measure of Religious Coping Among Hindus. *Journal of Community Psychology, 31(6)*, 607–628. https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.10071

Terranova, T. (2000). Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy. *Social Text 18(2)*, 33-58. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/31873

Ting-Toomey, S. (1999). Communicating Across Cultures. Guilford Press.

van Dijck, J. (2013). *The Culture of Connectivity: A Critical History of Social Media*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199970773.001.0001

Wayne, M. (2011). Personal Connections in the Digital Age, by Baym, N. K.: (2010). Malden, MA: Polity Press, 196 pp., 19.25 (paperback). *The Communication Review, 14(2),* 149–151. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714421.2011.573442

Weisser, S. (2012). Emotion and music: The Ethiopian lyre bagana. *Musicae Scientiae, 16(1)*, 3-18. https://doi.org/10.1177/1029864911416493

Zhang, Y. (2024). Research on the Development of New Media Has Brought to Popular Music Industry*. Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences, 43*, 80-86. https://doi.org/10.54097/1v1m4v41