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

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| article information | Abstract |
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| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> | Commodification in the postmodern era refers to the process where everything, including art, culture, and even individual identities, becomes a commodity that can be bought and sold. The purpose of this research was to describe and analyze the forms of commodification of sadness visible in the comments on Instagram posts of sad songs from various Indonesian titles. This research used the netnography method. The results showed that, based on the findings, comments on Indonesian sad songs on Instagram were categorized into three distinct groups: positive, negative, and neutral. This categorization aligned with the emotional tone and content of the comments, reflecting how users (mostly women) interact with and express their emotions through social media. The majority of the comments fall into the negative category, which includes expressions of regret and venting directed at individuals who have left or caused emotional pain. Based on these findings, the researcher conducted an analysis linking it to several points: emotional commodification themes identified in comments on Indonesian sad songs, emotional labour on Instagram, user engagement and interaction on Instagram, how cultural context influences user engagement and emotional responses, gender dynamics in emotional responses on Instagram, and the impact of Instagram on music consumption: the role of influencers, algorithms, and digital marketing. |

## 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

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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 second stage, the researcher collected comments from the selected posts. In this stage, the researcher attempted to obtain a diverse sample of comments covering various artists, song themes, and user demographics. This was important to ensure the analysis could capture a broad and diverse perspective on song reactions. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis (Hesmondhalgh et al., 2021; Darvish & Bick, 2023). The researcher categorized and coded the comment data to identify recurring themes and patterns. This involved grouping comments based on similar content or sentiment, allowing the researcher to draw conclusions about common reactions to sad songs and how these emotions are commodified in online discussions.

Ethically, because ethnography typically uses publicly available data, researchers must be primarily concerned with the privacy and consent of the individuals involved. In this study, all data collected came from public profiles and posts. Researchers also anonymized user information to protect the identity of individuals in the analysis by ethical research standards set out (Kozinets, 2015; Kerley, 2024). This involvement ensures that the research meets scientific standards and respects participants' rights and privacy.

**Finding and Discussion**
**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.
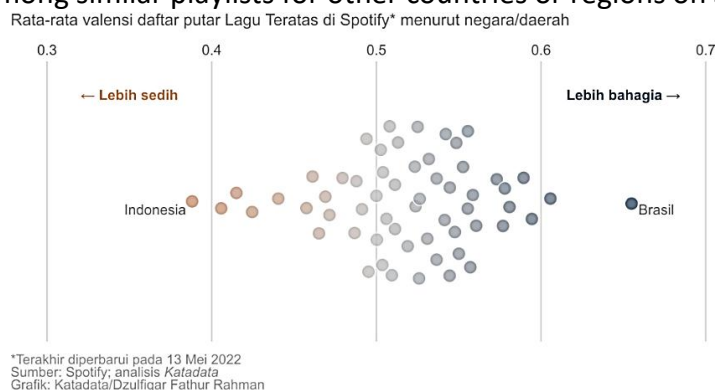
**Figure 1. Indonesian listeners' preference for sad songs is greater**

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 | √ | |

Based on the findings, the comments on Indonesian sad songs on Instagram were categorized into three distinct groups: positive, negative, and neutral. This categorization aligned with the emotional tone and content of the comments, reflecting how users engage with and express their emotions through social media.

The majority of the comments fell under the negative category, which included expressions of regret and venting directed at individuals who have left or caused emotional pain. These comments often contained sentiments of heartbreak, longing, and unresolved emotions. This pattern of negative commentary supported previous research indicating that social media provided a platform for users to express and share their emotional struggles and grievances publicly (Wayne, 2011). The commodification theory in social media context suggested that these expressions of negative emotions were amplified and circulated, contributing to the commodification of sadness as users collectively engage in emotional discourse (Graham, 2018; Rosamond, 2020).

In contrast, positive comments focused on themes of self-awareness and growth. These comments often reflected a sense of resilience and learning from emotional experiences. Users shared insights and personal growth stories, often encouraging others to view their struggles as opportunities for personal development. This aligned with the uses and gratifications theory, which posits that individuals use media to fulfill specific needs, including the need for emotional support and validation (Rubin, 2002). The positive comments indicated that some users found solace and empowerment through their engagement with sad songs on Instagram, using the platform as a tool for emotional processing and communal support.

Neutral comments were characterized by mentions of other accounts or the use of neutral language, such as tagging friends or using standard expressions without emotional weight. These comments were primarily functional, aimed at sharing content or interacting with other users without conveying strong emotional undertones. This finding was consistent with studies that highlight the diverse ways users interact on social media, from passive consumption to active engagement and sharing (Highfield & Leaver 2016; Pearce et al., 2018). Neutral comments serve as a reminder that not all interactions on social media were emotionally charged, and some users engaged with content for social or practical reasons rather than emotional expression.

The findings underscored the relevance of commodification theory in understanding how social media platforms like Instagram facilitate the commodification of emotions. As users engaged with sad songs by posting emotionally laden comments, their personal expressions of sadness are

transformed into a form of content that can be consumed, shared, and monetized. This aligns with Graham (2018) and Rosamond (2020) analysis of how emotional expressions on social media became commodities that drive user engagement and platform profitability. Additionally, the findings contributed to the broader discourse on digital culture and emotional labor, highlighting the ways in which emotional expression is shaped and exploited in online environments.

Commodification referred to the process by which goods, services, ideas, and even people are transformed into commodities, or items of trade, to be bought and sold. In the postmodern era, this concept extends beyond traditional economic transactions to include cultural and social aspects of life (Fia & Murray, 2023). Cultural products, identities, and even personal experiences are commodified, reflecting the pervasive influence of capitalist market dynamics in contemporary society. One of the defining characteristics of postmodern commodification is the treatment of culture as a commodity. Popular culture, including music, movies, and art, is produced and packaged for mass consumption (Foster, 2019). This trend often blurs the lines between high art and low culture, as elite artistic forms are commercialized and marketed alongside mainstream entertainment. As a result, cultural products are no longer valued solely for their intrinsic artistic or intellectual worth but for their market potential and profitability (Jameson, 1991).

Identity fragmentation is another significant aspect of commodification in the postmodern era. Unlike the modernist view of identity as stable and coherent, postmodernism sees identity as fluid and subject to constant change. This fluidity allows identities to be marketed and consumed. For instance, fashion and lifestyle choices become expressions of personal identity that are readily commodified and sold to consumers. Individuals are encouraged to continually reshape their identities to align with the latest trends and products, illustrating how personal and social identities are entangled with market forces (Featherstone, 2007).

Jean Baudrillard's concepts of simulacra and hyperreality are central to understanding postmodern commodification. Baudrillard argues that in a hyperreal world, representations and reality become indistinguishable, as mediated images and signs take precedence over the actual. This situation leads to a reality where commodities are not just physical goods but include images, brands, and experiences that are consumed as if they were real. For example, branded lifestyles promoted through advertising create a sense of hyperreality where the distinction between authentic life experiences and marketed images is blurred (Baudrillard, 1994).

Globalization further intensifies the reach of commodification by facilitating the worldwide distribution and consumption of products and ideas. This global market integration allows cultural products from one part of the world to be rapidly commodified and sold in another, creating a global culture of consumption. The rapid spread of information and media through technological advancements also means that cultural and social trends can be commodified almost instantaneously on a global scale (de Zoysa, 1998).

Finally, the advent of digital technology and new media has accelerated the process of commodification. Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok enable individuals to commodify their personas and content, often generating income through advertising and sponsorships. This phenomenon highlights how personal expression and social interaction are increasingly shaped by market imperatives, as users curate their online presence to attract followers and monetize their activities (van Dijck, 2013).

**Emotional Labour on Instagram: Emotional Commodification in Music, Emotions as Marketable Goods**

The commodification of emotions in music, especially those conveyed through sad songs, transforms emotions into marketable products. This process allows music to become a form of artistic expression and a consumable commodity that appeals to and resonates with audiences.

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.

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.

**User Engagement and Interaction on Instagram**

Based on the findings, categorizing comments on Indonesian sad songs into negative, positive, and neutral is closely related to various aspects of user engagement and social interaction on Instagram. There are various types of engagement on Instagram, such as likes or loves, comments, shares, saves, and others. Posts about sad songs usually receive many likes, indicating user appreciation and resonance with the content. This aligns with the significant number of users who engage with these posts by liking them, which can be seen as an initial level of emotional engagement with the content (Prey, 2020; de-Miguel-Molina et al., 2021). Furthermore, categorizing comments into negative, positive, and neutral directly corresponds to these types of engagement. Negative comments expressing regret and pain, positive comments focusing on awareness and growth, and neutral comments tagging friends or using neutral language all show the diversity of user interaction through comments. Sharing sad songs or related posts helps to expand their reach. Users who share these posts may do so to spread emotional impact or involve their social circle in an emotional experience, reflecting the viral nature of emotionally charged content. In terms of save engagement, users who save posts about sad songs demonstrate more profound levels of engagement, indicating that the content has significant emotional or aesthetic value that users want to revisit (Leaver, Highfield, & Abidin, 2020).

Regarding the impact of engagement on user experience, comments on sad songs help build a community of users who share their emotional journeys. Negative comments often find support and empathy from other users, while positive comments may inspire and uplift the community. Users who engage with sad songs often create content that reflects their emotional state. The creation and curation of this content can further spread themes of sadness and emotional growth, contributing to the overall engagement ecosystem on Instagram. Influencers or popular accounts sharing sad songs can also drive significant engagement. Their followers may leave comments that fall into the negative, positive, or neutral categories, indicating these figures' broad influence on emotional engagement. Then, Instagram's algorithm prioritizes posts with high engagement,

meaning that posts about sad songs with a lot of comments (negative, positive, or neutral) are more likely to be promoted, thus increasing visibility and further engagement (Fuchs, 2013).

The findings on emotional responses to Indonesian sad songs on Instagram are closely connected to broader patterns of user engagement and interaction on the platform. By engaging in various forms of digital labor, users contribute to commodifying their emotions, reflecting the complexity of emotional expression and community building in the digital age. This comprehensive understanding of user engagement provides a richer context for analyzing the emotional impact of sad songs and how users interact with such content on Instagram.

**How cultural context influences user engagement and emotional responses**

Cultural context significantly shapes how users engage with content and express emotions on social media platforms like Instagram. Users' cultural backgrounds influence their behavior, interaction styles, and how they process and respond to emotional stimuli. This is particularly evident in the context of Indonesian sad songs on Instagram.

In many cultures, including Indonesia, social norms dictate acceptable ways to express emotions. Indonesian culture, which values harmony and the common good, often encourages people to express their emotions in ways that maintain social cohesion. This cultural emphasis can be seen in the comments on sad songs, where users may share their emotional struggles in a supportive community environment. This collective sharing reflects cultural practices of mutual support and empathy. As Hofstede (2001) notes, highly collectivist cultures foster strong community ties and emphasize group harmony over individual expression.

The cultural significance of music in Indonesia also shapes user engagement. Traditional Indonesian music often carries deep emotional and spiritual significance, and this cultural heritage influences how modern sad songs are perceived and interacted with. Users may engage more deeply with songs that resonate with their cultural and emotional experiences, leading to higher interaction and emotional responses. According to Johnson (2015) and Gaunt (2000), music is a form of cultural expression that reflects and strengthens social and emotional bonds within a community.

Indonesia's predominantly Muslim population also impacts how emotions are expressed and shared. Religious teachings often emphasize patience, resilience, and seeking solace in faith when faced with grief. This spiritual context can lead to positive comments that reflect self-awareness and personal growth, as users rely on their faith to cope with emotional pain. Studies have shown that religion can provide a framework for understanding and managing emotions, reflected in social media interactions (Tarakeshwar et al., 2003).

Language plays a crucial role in how emotions are articulated and understood. Using Bahasa Indonesia and local dialects in comments adds layers of meaning and cultural nuance to emotional expressions. The choice of words, phrases, and metaphors in comments on sad songs may reflect cultural idioms and communication styles unique to Indonesian culture. According to Ting-Toomey (1999), language is a critical component of cultural identity and influences how individuals express and understand emotions.

The influence of Indonesian media and popular culture also shapes user engagement on Instagram. Local celebrities, influencers, and media narratives can reinforce specific emotional responses and engagement patterns. For example, if a popular artist releases a sad song, the artist's cultural impact can lead to a spike in emotional engagement driven by fan loyalty and cultural resonance with the artist's message. This phenomenon is supported by Boyd and Ellison (2007), who note that social networks and media play a significant role in shaping online interactions and cultural expressions.

**Gender Dynamics 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. 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.

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). 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).
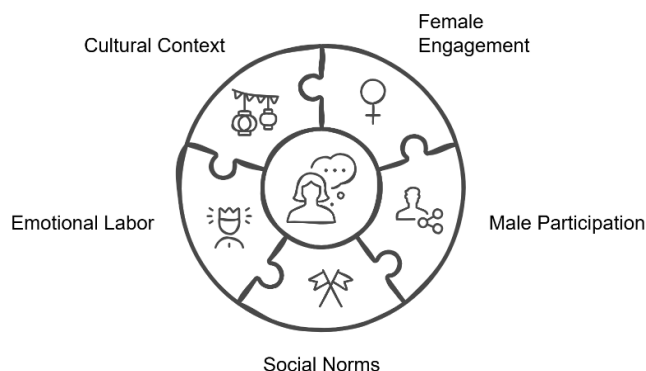


**Figure 2. Gender Dynamics in Online Emotional Expression**

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. 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.

**The Impact of Instagram on Music Consumption: Role of influencers, algorithms, and digital marketing**

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. 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. 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.
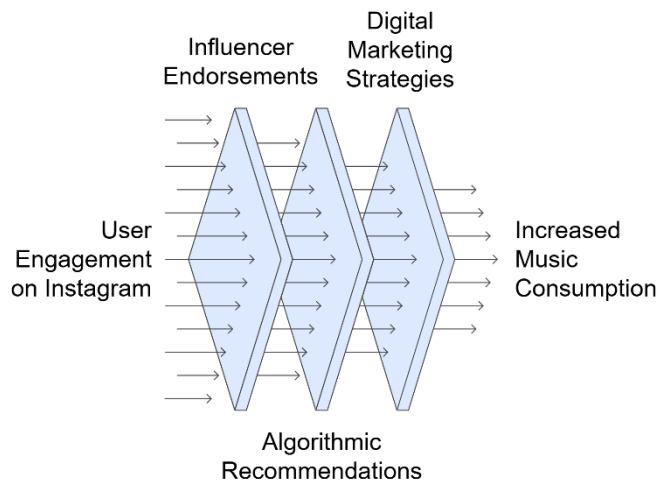


**Figure 3. Instagram's Influence on Music Consumption**

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. 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**

Analysis of comments on Indonesian sad songs on Instagram shows how users express and share emotions in a community context, using the platform for emotional labor. Negative comments often reflect regret and pain, providing space for shared catharsis and empathy, while positive comments highlight personal growth and resilience. Neutral comments, while less emotionally charged, play a role in increasing social connectivity and content dissemination. This pattern reflects the commodification of emotion, where user comments are treated as valuable data that increases platform visibility. The findings also reveal how cultural and gender norms influence interactions on social media, with female users more dominant in emotional discussions on Instagram, reflecting social expectations for emotional expression. This research highlights Instagram as a dynamic terrain

for cultural exchange and emotional expression through music, providing important insights into how sadness is commodified in digital spaces and how this resonates with users' cultural and emotional contexts.

This study reveals important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it highlights how emotions on Instagram are commodified, with the dominance of female users in emotional discussions reflecting gender norms. It adds to understanding social interactions and emotional expression on social media. Practically, the findings suggest the importance of designing social media platforms that support positive emotional expression, demonstrate the need for music marketing strategies that leverage emotions, and consider the ethics and privacy of the commodification of emotions. This study proposes a more ethical and inclusive approach to harnessing digital interactions and emotional data. It provides insights for platform developers, the music industry, and policymakers to improve user experiences while protecting privacy.

Based on the analysis of engagement on sad songs on Instagram, some recommendations for further research include cross-cultural comparative studies to understand the influence of cultural differences in online emotional expression, deeper analysis of the impact of gender norms on online participation, and longitudinal research to track changes in user engagement trends towards music. It is also important to examine the influence of the economics of emotional engagement on the music industry, the effectiveness of personalization algorithms in music discovery, and the role of influencers in shaping the emotions and culture of their followers. This study is expected to provide new insights into developing more inclusive and effective music marketing strategies in the digital era.

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