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## FROM SCROLL TO MOOD: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF EMOTIONAL CONTAGION MECHANISMS ON TIKTOK AND INSTAGRAM

Azlyantiny Mohammad<sup>1\*</sup>, Nurliyana Abas<sup>2</sup>, Shamsinar Ibrahim<sup>3</sup>, Hanani Hussin<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

 [azlyantiny@uitm.edu.my](mailto:azlyantiny@uitm.edu.my)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3291-4523>

<sup>2</sup>Department of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

 [liyana322@uitm.edu.my](mailto:liyana322@uitm.edu.my)


 <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3073-1338>

<sup>3</sup>Department of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

 [shamsinar508@uitm.edu.my](mailto:shamsinar508@uitm.edu.my)

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1243-1636>

<sup>4</sup>Department of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia

 [hanani12@uitm.edu.my](mailto:hanani12@uitm.edu.my)

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0007-2314-2828>

\*Corresponding Author

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### Abstract:

Emotions have evolved significantly because of the fast development of TikTok and Instagram. Both are social media platforms, which are highly visual, algorithm-driven and can cause emotional contagion through emotional content, interaction and recommender systems. Although the area has gained some attention from the research community, more scholarly research is scattered throughout various disciplines and is lacking in synthesis of how the mechanisms of emotional contagion work in these platforms. The study aims to systematically review and synthesize the literature on emotional contagion mechanisms on TikTok and Instagram, which covers key concepts, thematic relationships, influential scholarly work, and emerging research trends. The literature retrieval was carried out using Scopus AI as a supporting analytical tool in literature retrieval, literature exploration, concept mapping and identification of experts in a systematic literature review approach. To understand the emotional contagion in social media environment, summary and expanded summary analysis, concept map analysis, topic experts' analysis, and emerging themes analysis were performed. To ensure a rigorous analysis and transparency in the interpretation and synthesis of findings, the authors have undertaken this work. The results show that emotional contagion in TikTok and Instagram is influenced by emotional mimicry, emotional synchronisation, social influence, algorithmic amplification,

social comparison, and network-based interaction. In Instagram, users engage with their emotions through immersive visual curation and self-presentation, as well as through algorithmic acceleration, whereas on TikTok, users engage with their emotions through immersive short video exposure and algorithmic acceleration. Themes that emerge show that digital well-being issues, influencers and emotional contagion, algorithmic influence, and collective emotional climates are now increasingly becoming a central concern in online communities. This review makes a significant contribution to the scholarship of emotional contagion by combining a behavioural, communication and technological approach and offering recommendations for researchers, platform developers, policy makers and educators interested in creating healthier and more responsible digital spaces.

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Emotional Contagion, TikTok, Instagram, Social Media, Digital Well-Being, Algorithmic Amplification



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## Introduction

The advent of social media has revolutionized the way people communicate, share experiences and express emotions in virtual settings. TikTok and Instagram have become key platforms in today's social media landscape, offering formats that are both highly visual and engaging, and emotionally rich. Whereas traditional social networks are more about communicating with text, these sites focus on short-form, visual content, algorithmic recommendations and user-generated media that can foster environments where emotions can be quickly shared, amplified, and disseminated through large online communities. The spread of emotions within the constructed world of these platforms is an important field of research, as users are consuming and reacting to emotionally charged content more.

Emotional contagion is the phenomenon of people unconsciously mimicking, synchronising, and internalising the emotions of others, leading to common feelings and affective resonances (Wróbel & Olszanowski, 2019). In social media contexts, emotional contagion can happen in various ways besides direct interpersonal influence, including via visual cues, verbal stories, user-generated content, and digitally mediated communication. The results of recent research indicate that emotional contagion has a significant impact on various user outcomes, such as attitudes, behavioral intentions, engagement behavior, social participation, and psychological well-being (Zhu et al., 2025). Thus, the study of emotional contagion is an emerging area of research in communication, psychology, information systems, and digital media.

The unique technological features of TikTok and Instagram have been a key driver of the surge in scholarly interest in emotional contagion, as the two platforms are rapidly gaining traction among consumers. Because of TikTok's recommendation system, users are constantly served their own home-curated short videos and can easily spread emotionally relevant content by simply "liking" and "sharing" it over time. Instagram, on the other hand, is a platform where visual storytelling and self-presentation merge with socially curated, emotionally and relationally engaged interactions with others, including interactions through images, reels, stories, and feedback mechanisms (Choi & Kim, 2020). Emotional contagion is possible on both platforms, but the technological mechanisms and interaction dynamics along which emotional contagion takes place can vary significantly. These differences underscore the importance of investigating the processes of emotional contagion in a context-specific manner, rather than as a unified communication environment.

Emotional contagion in social media has been shown to be affected by various factors, such as emotional mimicry, social influence, algorithmic amplification, social comparison, and network-based interaction (Zhao et al., 2025; Jiao et al., 2023). Studies have demonstrated that emotionally expressive content can enhance empathy, social connection and community engagement, as well as inducing emotional fatigue, anxiety and affective overload when produced more than emotionally intense or distressful material (Chi et al., 2025; Block & Heyes, 2020). Moreover, algorithmic recommendation systems might reinforce emotional exposure by favoring content that evokes emotion which leads to emotional content being made more visible, and spreadable, within digital communities (Cosmann et al., 2022; Klug et al., 2021). The results indicate that emotional contagion is the result of a complex interaction between psychological mechanisms, user behaviour and technological structures.

While the emergence of research on emotional contagion in social media has been evident, there are some notable gaps. First, there are many studies that are fragmented across disciplines (psychology, communication, computer science, and information systems) and findings are not integrated across the disciplines. Second, many studies address only a single facet of emotional contagion, such as emotional mimicry, sentiment propagation, or social influence, and offer no overall synthesis of the interactions between these processes in today's social media environment. Thirdly, although TikTok and Instagram are among the most powerful platforms of visual social media in the world, there is relatively little review-based research that has systematically investigated the emotional contagion mechanisms that exist in the two platforms and how the technological affordances of each platform influence emotional transmission. Lastly, while the positive and negative emotional effects have been explored, there has been less attention paid to more comprehensive concerns of emotional vulnerability, algorithmic reinforcement, and digital well-being in the context of 'short form' social media.

It is crucial to address these gaps, as emotional contagion plays an increasing role in shaping user perceptions of information, in user participation in online communities, and in user experience of digital environments. Further understanding of emotional contagion mechanisms can help researchers, platform designers, policy makers, and mental health practitioners devise strategies to increase healthy digital interactions and reduce the potential for emotional harm. In addition, studying emotional contagion from a behavioural, technological, and communication approach could help to capture the complexity of how emotions are created, magnified, and maintained in the current social media landscape.

Thus, the goal of this study is to review and synthesize previous research on the emotional contagion mechanisms on TikTok and Instagram. This review aims to comprehensively understand the phenomenon of emotional contagion in the context of short-context social media by analysing themes, conceptual relationships, influential scholarly work, and new research directions. The study is also a valuable addition to the understanding of emotional contagion, articulating the theoretical, methodological and computational approaches of the field and showcasing the implications of emotional contagion in the digital context for well-being, platform management and future research.

## Methodology

The study employed systematic literature review (SLR) and studied the ways in which emotional contagion occurs on TikTok and Instagram. It was judged that a systematic review was an appropriate approach to identifying, evaluating and synthesizing existing knowledge in a specific research field in a systematic and structured way. The multidisciplinary character of the research on emotional contagion, ranging from psychology and communication to behavioural sciences, information systems and digital media studies, makes it possible to conduct a systematic review as a way to synthesize all the theoretical and empirical aspects of the phenomenon. In addition, this strategy aids in the discovery of key concepts, conceptual connections, important scholarly works, and new research areas regarding emotional contagion in short-form social media contexts.

Literature search was performed on 25 September 2025 from Scopus AI. Scopus was chosen as it is one of the largest and most well-known abstract citation databases, covering high quality peer-reviewed publications spanning many disciplines. Beyond basic literature retrieval, Scopus AI provides powerful analytical tools for exploring themes and synthesizing knowledge. The search strategy was developed based on the recommendations of Page et al. (2021) on transparent review procedures by identifying studies that explored the emotional contagion as a psychological, behavioural and digitally mediated phenomenon within social media environments.

The search strategy used the following keywords: emotional contagion, emotion spread, affective transfer, mood contagion, social media, online platforms, digital networks, social networks, mechanism, process, dynamics, function, user interaction, participation, communication, sharing, psychological impact, behavioral influence, social influence and emotional impact. This search string was designed to get as much literature as possible on emotional contagion mechanisms, emotional transmission processes, emotional consequences of behaviours, and influences from the platforms in social media contexts. Studies pertaining to TikTok and Instagram were given special mention because of their visibility as a visually immersive and algorithm-driven social media platform.

Studies were screened for relevance and quality and according to predetermined inclusion criteria. Publications were included only if they discussed mechanisms of emotional contagion, transmission processes of emotions, dynamics of emotion, social influence, behavioural consequences, or emotional interactions within platforms in digital environments. Empiricism and conceptual research were considered as a way of gaining complete knowledge of the field. Not all publications reviewed were relevant to emotional contagion, non-digital context or context, or no social media context. The screening process was conceptual, rather than disciplinary, and thus literature from a variety of academic disciplines was included.

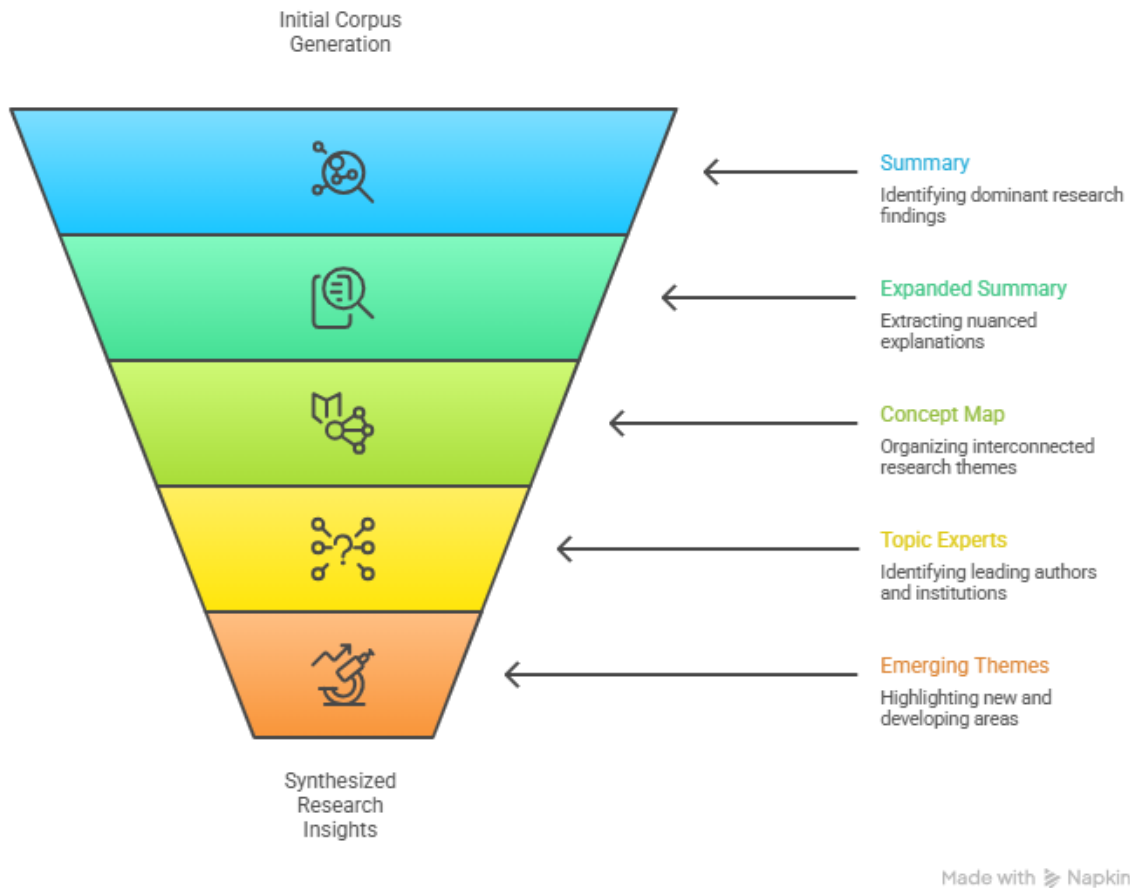
Research relevant to the studies was identified, and the analytical capabilities of Scopus AI were used to help organize and explore the theme of the studies. Using the Summary and Expanded Summary function, a broad overview of the key findings, repeated ideas, and research streams in the literature was created. These outputs helped to identify several emotional contagion mechanisms such as emotional mimicry, emotional synchronisation, social influence, algorithmic amplification, and social comparison processes. To gain further insight into the relationships between concepts, the Concept Map function was used to see the thematic relationships and group related fields of research. This mapping process is in line with the well-established bibliometric principles that highlight the identification of conceptual structures and thematic relations in a research field (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

Moreover, the Topic Experts function, focused on identifying influential scholars and prominent research contributions in the emotional contagion literature, was used. This aspect allowed the exploration of intellectual frameworks and new academic trends that have influenced the evolution of the field. The Emerging Themes function was then used to further uncover some of the areas of new inquiry such as 'digital well-being, algorithmic influence', 'transmission of emotion through influencers' and 'the emotional dynamics of specific platforms. The analytical outputs were combined and represented a structured framework for comprehending both existing and developing aspects of the emotional contagion literature.

This research employed the analytical functions provided by Scopus AI to find and summarize the prevailing themes, conceptual connections, key scholars, and emerging trends in the research. The platform is based on the AI-powered literature retrieval and thematic aggregation, and researchers were not provided with detailed statistics on screening, including the number of records retrieved, excluded, and retained. Therefore, this research focused on interpreting and summarizing the analytical results that were produced by Scopus AI and not on the screening procedures in the articles. This is in line with the exploratory and knowledge synthesis aims of the current review.

It should also be noted that the Scopus AI was not used as an independent interpretation tool; it was a supporting analytical tool. The platform helped with the organisation, clustering and summarisation of the literature, and the interpretation of findings, comparative analysis, thematic synthesis and development of conclusions were performed by the authors. This way, the analytical process was transparent, and the review benefited from the efficiency of AI exploration of literature. The analytical framework applied in this study is shown in Figure 1, which depicts how the literature search, thematic organisation, conceptual mapping and incorporation of the synthesis procedures are integrated to analyse emotional contagion mechanisms on TikTok and Instagram.

## Scopus AI Analytical Framework



**Figure 1: Analytical Framework for Literature Synthesis**

### Discussion

The findings of this review are organised through a structured synthesis guided by analytical framework adopted in this review namely the Summary, Expanded Summary, Concept Map, Topic Experts, and Emerging Themes. The outputs served as facilitating analytical tools for organizing the literature, but thematic interpretation, comparative analysis and conceptualization were done by hand by the authors to achieve critical depth, transparency and scholarly rigor. This method will enable the conversation to go beyond a descriptive mapping to a more critical discussion about the mechanisms of emotional contagion on TikTok and Instagram.

It is discussed in four interrelated parts. The first section is based on the Summary and Expanded Summary, and explores the dominant patterns, behavioural implications, and emotional tensions found in emotional contagion scholarship. In the second section, the Concept Map will be presented to highlight important thematic clusters that drive emotional contagion mechanisms through short-form social media. The third section explores seminal

scholarly work that was discovered through Topic Experts and situates such research among the larger intellectual frameworks of emotional contagion research. Finally, the Emerging Themes section identifies contradictions to address, avenues for further research and implications for digital well-being, emotional vulnerability and responsible platform governance. This sequence allows the review to move from structured synthesis to comparative interpretation and theoretical integration, further reinforcing the conceptual contribution of this study (Snyder, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### Summary and Expanded Summary

The literature synthesis shows that emotional contagion on TikTok and Instagram is a multi-faceted phenomenon that involves psychological processes, user-generated content, algorithmic systems, and social influences. The process of emotional contagion has been consistently reported in the literature as the unconscious imitation and synchronisation of others' emotions, including mimicking, affective alignment and emotional appraisal (Wróbel & Olszanowski, 2019; Zhu et al., 2025). Traditionally, emotional contagion has been studied as a phenomenon in interpersonal settings, but the advent of highly visual, algorithm-driven social media has increased the scope and velocity of emotional contagion in an online community. Therefore, the study of emotional experiences on TikTok and Instagram has gained significance as key settings for the analysis of their production, amplification, and sustainability in the present online context.

Emotional mimicry and synchronisation is a pattern that has been repeatedly observed in emotional contagion studies. Past research indicates that users tend to mimic emotional expressions that are unintentionally integrated into the digital contents, such as facial expressions, voice expression, and gestures, as well as emotion-laden stories (Wróbel & Olszanowski, 2019; Zhu et al., 2025). As far as TikTok is concerned, the popularity of short videos with close-ups of facial expressions, music, jokes and stories seems to reinforce the emotional moments and affect responses of viewers in the moment. The same goes for Instagram, which provides the user with images, reels, and stories that are curated for them, and which prompts them to read and process the emotions expressed in the images. The results presented here confirm the idea that emotional contagion is still related to psychological processes even though taking place within technologically mediated settings.

In addition to individual psychological processes, the literature is replete with evidence that algorithmic amplification plays an important role in determining the effects of emotional contagion. The "cognitive, emotional, and affective" nature of the algorithms in TikTok's recommendation system can favour the consumption of content that strengthens such experiences, leading to affective sensationalization that can intensify emotional responses (Cosmann et al., 2022; Klug et al., 2021). By the same token, Instagram uses engagement-based ranking systems that prioritize emotionally relevant content that can lead to greater user interactions. Research suggests that emotionally provocative content tends to attract more likes, comments, shares, and reposts, elevating its reach and spread within online communities (Zhao et al., 2025). The findings indicate that algorithms do not only operate as a means of distributing content, but also as an active amplifier of emotional exposures and emotional transmission.

The role of user generated content also came into the picture as one of the important contributors of emotional contagion. Previous studies have shown that highly emotional videos, images and stories often engender greater engagement and wider reach than stories that

are more neutral (Wahid et al., 2022). The nature of TikTok's video-centric platform platform can cause viewers to react emotionally to content in a short period of time, often through humor, inspiration, outrage and empathy, whereas Instagram's photo-centric ecosystem lends itself more to contemplative emotional response, via aesthetic presentation and personal story (Ramadan et al., 2025). This separation implies that the emotional pathway of emotional contagion on both platforms may be different. The nature of TikTok's emotional response seems to promote immediate and high excitement responses, while Instagram seems to prompt more emotional interpretation and evaluation.

A second key theme is on emotional contagion and social comparison. Emotional responses in social media settings have been found to be not only a result of direct emotional exposure, but also a reaction to users' self-comparisons with others (Choi & Kim, 2020). The visual emphasis, self-presentation, curated lives, and construction of visual identity have been linked to comparison-based emotional experiences on Instagram. Exposure to idealisation can be interpreted as an expression of admiration, inspiration, envy or discontent. The trend-driven nature of content and participation and the fast pace of content on TikTok seems to enable more immediate emotional engagement than extended comparison. Such differences highlight the need for platform-specific contexts in the study of emotional contagion mechanisms.

Numerous studies have shown emotional contagion can have positive and negative effects. Positive emotional contagion is frequently linked to social bonding, emotional support, inspiration, humour, and community involvement, which enable them to build better ties with peers and shared emotions (Chi et al., 2025; Zhu et al., 2025). However, repeated encounters with negative emotional content could also lead to stress amplification, anxiety reinforcement, emotional fatigue, and collective distress (Block & Heyes, 2020). This result presents an interesting paradox in emotional contagion studies. The power of emotional contagion facilitates empathy and social connection, but it can also lead to heightened emotional vulnerability if users are repeatedly exposed to emotionally charged or psychologically upsetting content.

There is ample evidence from a variety of studies that the effects of emotional contagion are influenced by demographic and contextual variables. Despite possessing substantial proportion of TikTok users, younger users seem to be especially vulnerable to emotional diffusion, as their social engagement and identity development process are more intense (Ren & Zhang, 2023). Additional norms from the culture also influence the perception, expression, and transmission of emotions in digital communities (Zhao et al., 2025). Likewise, contextual information affects emotional interpretation, since the emotional content may trigger different emotions from the user depending on the context information, such as explanations, social norms, and situation cues (Zhang et al., 2023). The results show the emotional contagion process should not be considered generalizable but rather as a process that depends on the user's characteristics and social context.

In general, the insights of the Summary and Expanded Summary analyses show that emotional contagion on TikTok and Instagram is a complex phenomenon that is mediated by emotional mimicry, algorithmic reinforcement of content and emotionality, user-generated content, social comparison, and situational factors. Most crucially, the results show that there is a tension in literature about the double edge of emotional contagion, as a force for social connection and a force for emotional vulnerability. This implies that emotional contagion must be treated not just as a psychological phenomenon but as a platform-mediated phenomenon that is affected

by both technological structures and social interaction as well as user interpretation. They offer useful context to the conceptual connections, important scholarly work, and new research trends which are described in the following chapters.

## Concept Map

The concept mapping analysis offers a visual and structured way to present the primary thematic areas in current studies on emotional contagion in TikTok and Instagram. The concept map is not a monodimensional entity that captures emotional contagion as a single psychological phenomenon, but rather a multidimensional research space in which each of a set of behavioural processes, emotional mechanisms and platform-specific characteristics can impact the ways emotions are transmitted and experienced in digital environments. The concept map is structured in three interrelated areas: Behavioural Research, Emotional Dynamics, and Social Media Platforms as illustrated in Figure 2. The clusters collectively form a holistic framework to better elucidate the multifaceted and complex mechanisms behind emotional contagion in short-form social media.

The first area of focus is on Behavioural Research, which focuses on the actions and interactions that manifest emotional contagion in digital environments. Computational and behavioural methods are increasingly used in existing studies to measure how users react to emotionally expressive content, such as studying facial expression through facial analytical methods, engagement by observing when users are watching content, and cross-recurrence quantification to analyze reactions in the visual domain. The increasing focus on behavioural analysis is also indicative of a general trend in emotional contagion research to include an empirical study of emotional reactions, rather than only relying on self-reported emotional experiences. The size of this cluster indicates that emotional contagion is not just a psychological phenomenon that happens inside people's heads, and that it can be measurable in behaviour, such as emotional mimicry, engagement behaviour, content sharing and participation in platform-specific interaction.

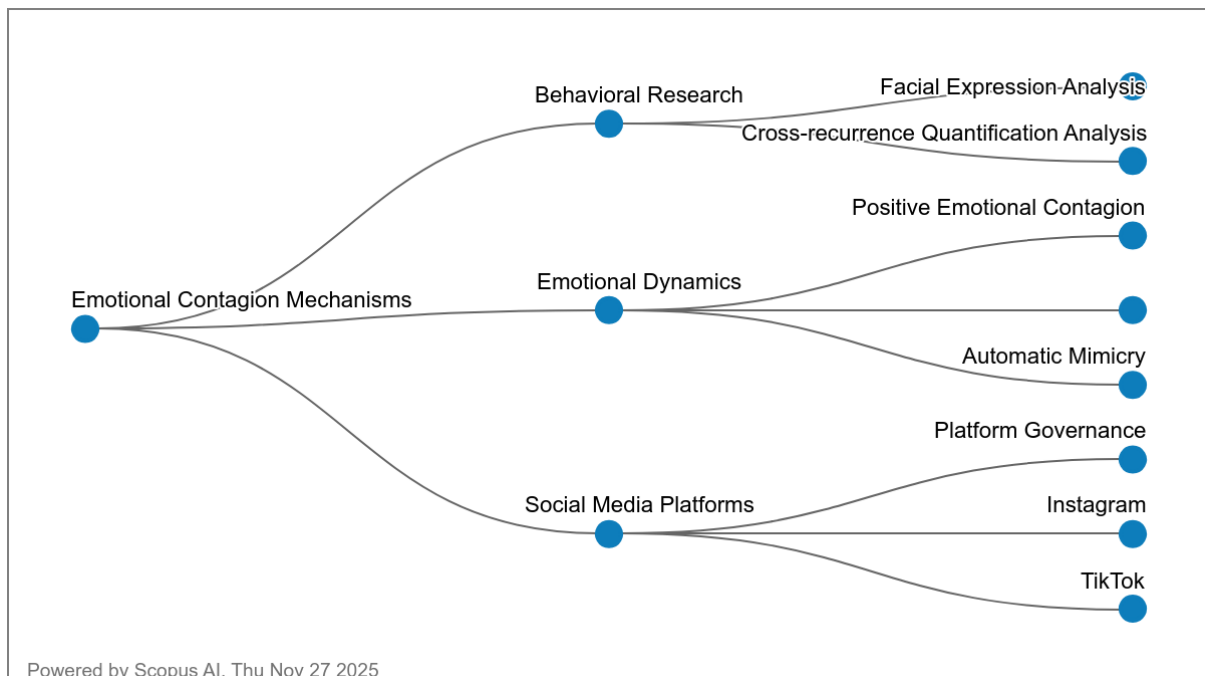
The second cluster, Emotional Dynamics, is the psychological underpinning of the research in emotional contagion. This cluster covers topics like emotional mimicry, affective synchronisation, emotional appraisal and positive emotional contagion, which explore how emotions are created, understood, and shared among users. Previous research has shown that emotional contagion is often a process of unconscious contagion where an individual unconsciously mimics another person's emotion, leading to shared emotional experiences (Zhu et al., 2025). The literature also indicates that emotional transmission is not necessarily a replicative process. Emotional responses can change depending on the interpretation of the situation, social norms, and personal traits, suggesting that processes of emotional contagion work not just by automatic emotional duplication, but by dynamic, evolving emotional processes. This shows the importance of a more sophisticated understanding of the emotional experiences that arise in highly interactive social media environments.

Social Media Platforms is the third cluster, which focuses on the technological and environmental factors that can enable emotional contagion. Unlike traditional emotional contagion studies which mostly look at interpersonal transmission, current research increasingly acknowledges the influence of platform features, algorithmic recommendation systems, content visibility structures, and social interaction tools on the transmission processes of emotions. Platform design affects how the platform shows emotional content, as well as how

often, how intensely, and for how long users are exposed to emotional content in TikTok and Instagram. Emotional contagion thus appears to be explicitly linked to platform affordances and technological mediation and the thesis of this work – that emotional experiences in digital environments are mediated by humans and systems – seems to be supported.

Importantly, these three clusters are not separate clusters. Rather, emotional contagion is the result of ongoing interaction among behavioral reactions, emotional processes, and platforms' structures. User behaviours affect emotional exposure, emotional responses can affect engagement patterns, and platform algorithms can affect the types of emotional interaction that occur via the visibility and recommendation process. The interconnectedness is evidence of the need to consider emotional contagion as a process of multiple dimensions, and not as a linear chain of emotional transmission.

In a wider sense, the concept map also captures a significant change in the field of emotional contagion studies. Previous research primarily focused on emotional contagion as an interpersonal psychological process, while recent research has increasingly added computational frameworks, behavioral analysis and platform-related approaches. The development is a sign of the realisation that emotional contagion in TikTok and Instagram is not entirely psychological. Rather, it is necessary to think of behavioural participation, technological mediation and social interaction in tandem to have a comprehensive understanding. The concept map thus serves as a conceptual basis to further explore the relationships among the mechanisms of emotional contagion, behavioural research, emotional dynamics, and platform-specific influences detailed in the next sections.



**Figure 2: Concept Map for Emotional Contagion Mechanisms on TikTok and Instagram**

## Relationship Between Emotional Contagion Mechanisms and Behavioral Research

Emotional contagion mechanisms and behavioural research are related with each other, which offers insight into how emotional experiences are manifested in observable behaviour in the TikTok and Instagram context. Emotional contagion is not only about how emotions are passed-on, synced and internalised between users, it's also about the measurable dimensions of emotional reactions. From the literature review, there is a clear connection between emotional contagion, and the outcomes of behavior as emotional experiences often shape engagement behavior, participation, the production of content and social interaction on digital platforms. As such, behavioural research can provide insight into how emotional contagion works in real life, not just as a psychological theory.

Emotional mimicry and behavioural synchronisation is one of the most discussed relationships. Previous research has shown that people may unconsciously mimic emotional expressions of other people, resulting in shared emotional experiences and emotional responses (Zhu et al., 2025). This connection can be seen within the TikTok platform as creators duplicate the emotional expression, storytelling technique, and behavior of others using features like duets, stitches, reaction videos, and participation in trends. Instagram also works on the principle of behavioural synchronisation with features such as reels, stories, and interaction options that prompt users to connect with the content and mimic others' actions. The results indicate that emotional contagion does not only manifest in emotional alignment but often in imitation of behavior as well, thereby further enhancing the visibility and spread of emotional information within digital communities.

The literature also suggests that emotional contagion is exacerbated when people are actively involved in emotionally expressive communication. Research on social interaction experiences and cooperative engagement has revealed that when people participate together, their emotional congruence, psychological proximity, and behaviours tend to align to a greater extent (Wang et al., 2025). The discovery is especially significant in the highly participatory environment of TikTok, where shared challenges, trend participation, and user-generated reactions foster collective emotional experiences. While Instagram also has other types of engagement, social feedback mechanisms are often used for emotional engagement, including comments, reactions and story interactions. These differences across platforms indicate that behavioral participation is both a consequence and a reinforcer of emotional contagion. Another significant aspect is the neurological basis of behavioural reactions. Indeed, previous studies have revealed neural mechanisms related to emotional perception, interpretation, and emotional synchronisation are linked to emotional contagion (Zhang et al., 2023). Neurological reactions may be expressed behaviorally as spontaneous emotional responses, imitation of observed emotional cues, and greater involvement with emotionally stimulating material. For highly visual platforms like TikTok and Instagram, continued encounters with expressive videos could make the emotional processing- behavioural response connection stronger, leading to more emotional engagement and video interactions. This relationship is an example of emotional contagion that is supported by both psychological, neurological and behavioural processes.

There was also a focus in the literature reviewed on social norms and the expectations of local communities in influencing the ways that a message's emotional component is accepted as a basis for behaviour. Emotional contagion is not a standalone phenomenon but shaped by common social practices, cultural norms, and platform-specific behavioural rules and

conventions. It has been proposed that users change their emotional expression and behavioral reactions depending on their community norms, especially in highly interactive online settings (Herrando & Constantinides, 2021). TikTok users might engage with emotionally charged trends as part of the collective behavioural norms, and Instagram users might attempt to enact self-expression emotionally in ways that make them look good in a socially desirable way. These are norms of behavior that help to strengthen and maintain emotional contagion in digital communities.

Overall, there is a growing body of literature that acknowledges emotional contagion as a basic social phenomenon that goes beyond the individual emotion. The evolutionary and behavioural theories propose that emotional synchronisation plays a role in social cohesion, the development of a collective identity, and in interpersonal relationships, which should help people to deal more effectively with complex social situations. Evolutionary and behavioural theories suggest that emotional synchronisation helps to create social cohesion, the formation of a collective identity, and interpersonal connection, allowing individuals to function better in complex social environments. These processes are amplified at TikTok and Instagram, through platform affordances that enable large-scale emotional interaction and quick emotional diffusion. Thus, emotional contagion and behavioural research can be considered as complementary fields that can help clarify emotions' role in the participation, engagement and social interaction of users in today's digital contexts.

The emotional contagion mechanisms and the behavioural studies have shown that emotional transmission is psychologically anchored and behaviorally implemented on TikTok and Instagram. Emotional responses influence user reactions, interactions and participation in online communities and behavioural responses, in turn, consolidate the spread and visibility of emotional content. The mutual dependence between these two aspects underscores the need for a combined approach of emotional and behavioral perspectives in the study of the impact of digital platforms on user experiences and social interaction.

### **Relationship Between Emotional Contagion Mechanisms and Emotional Dynamics**

The dynamics of emotions in TikTok and Instagram are closely linked to emotional contagion mechanisms. Emotional contagion is the phenomenon of individuals taking on or matching the emotions expressed by others, whereas emotional dynamics are the description of the patterns, intensity and change of emotions over time. The literature reviewed indicates that emotional contagion is a major factor in the emotional dynamics that exist in social media environments and affects how people feel, understand and react to emotionally expressive content. Therefore, emotional contagion and emotional dynamics should be understood as two interdependent processes that influence each other and contribute to emotional experiences in digital ecosystems.

One of the most prominent mechanisms linking emotional contagion and emotional dynamics is emotional mimicry and synchronisation. Previous research shows that individuals tend to mimic the emotions expressed by others, leading to convergence in emotional experiences and emotions (Zhu et al., 2025). In TikTok, short video formats which use facial expressions, music, humor, and storytelling establish an instant emotional connection with the audience and are conducive to quick emotional sync between large audiences. Instagram's visual emphasis on curating images and contemplating posts also facilitates emotional connection but can take longer to produce since the site focuses more on the visual. The results indicate that the spread

of emotions is an important ingredient in the direction and magnitude of emotional dynamics in both platforms, seeing how it involves not only the fostering of positive emotions but also the spreading of negative ones.

It is also important to note that the literature also emphasizes the significance of social evaluation procedures in creating emotional dynamics. Emotional contagion not only depends on automatic emotional responses but also on users' interpretation and evaluation of emotional information in particular social environments (Zhang et al., 2023). In TikTok, users often encounter emotionally expressive videos lacking in contextual detail, which fosters their dependence on the visible emotional cues and overwhelming immediate affective responses. Instagram, on the other hand, offers more contextual pieces of information in captions, hashtags, stories, and curated presentation, giving the opportunity to more considerably evaluate emotions. Such differences show that emotional exposure influences emotional dynamics in ways beyond just emotional exposure itself, but also through the cognitive and social processes in which an emotional content is interpreted.

Other significant aspects are the difference between explicit (direct) and implicit (indirect) emotional contagion mechanisms. Studies indicate that direct disclosures of emotion (direct storytelling, captions, and explicit emotional disclosures) elicit more enduring or stable emotional reactions because they offer emotional cues to audiences (Rhee et al., 2020). In contrast, implicit processes, such as mimicry and passive emotional exposure, might result in more immediate emotional responses, but less enduring. This is especially true when it comes to TikTok vs. Instagram. The emotional context of TikTok's content can be more subtle and lead to quicker emotional reactions, while Instagram's visual, textual, and social nature can help foster emotional engagement at both the immediate and longer term. These are different routes that demonstrate the complexity of emotional dynamics in today's social media.

The literature reviewed also indicates that the emotional contagion plays a role in the cyclical pattern of emotional experiences in online settings. The emotional reactions that occur because of contagion can also shape the subsequent engagement behaviours, and these can further reinforce emotional exposure and transmission. A positive emotional content might encourage reoccurring interactions, social cohesion and community engagement, while a negative emotional content might lead to emotional exhaustion, anxiety or distress after repeated exposures. This is a dynamic process, and emotional dynamics never stand still, they evolve through interactions between users, content and platform systems. Emotions can become ingrained in larger patterns of user interaction and behaviour when emotional experiences are repeated and reinforced.

In a more general theoretical sense, emotional contagion is a basic social process that is implicated in the process of emotional adaptation and collective emotional experiencing. The evolutionary idea is that emotional synchronisation helps to facilitate social cohesion, understanding of the social and interpersonal environment, and coordination of collective behavior, leading to more effective responses to social contexts (Liu et al., 2025). These processes gain additional momentum within TikTok and Instagram, mediated by technological affordances that accentuate the emotional visibility, speed up the spread of emotion, and allow for emotional interaction on a massive scale. Thus, psychological, social and platform-mediated communication aspects affect the emotional dynamics in digital environments.

Overall, emotional transmission is not limited to single emotional reactions but can affect the overall dynamics of emotional progress in the digital community, as presented in the relationship between emotional contagion mechanisms and emotional dynamics. Emotional contagion starts and fuels emotional experiences, and emotional dynamics shape the nature and intensity of these experiences, and how they unfold over time. This knowledge is crucial for comprehending the emotional impact, social dynamics, and psychological effects of TikTok and Instagram in the evolving digital landscape.

### **Relationship Between Emotional Contagion Mechanisms and Social Media Platforms**

The emotional contagion mechanisms and social media platforms relationship underscores the importance of technological contexts in the spread, magnification, and maintenance of emotions in digital communities. Emotional contagion is an effect of psychological and social phenomena, but in the current social media landscape, platform designs, recommendation algorithms, mechanisms of content visibility and interaction characteristics play an increasing role in how it can be experienced. The literature reviewed indicates that TikTok and Instagram are not simple channels of communication but active technological ecosystems that impact the transmission of emotions in terms of speed, intensity and reach. To understand emotional contagion in these platforms, therefore, emotional processes and platform-level technological effects must be considered.

Algorithmic content distribution is one of the most important factors in emotional contagion. Previous research has shown that platform recommendation systems can affect how content is promoted, viewed, interacted with, and re-experienced, impacting the spread of emotional moments across digital communities (Zhao et al., 2025). TikTok's recommendation algorithm is very individualistic, constantly adjusting to each user's behavior to present them with a stream of emotionally relevant content that matches their preferences and prior interactions. This could amplify emotional contagion by boosting the likelihood that users will become exposed to comparable emotional stories. Instagram also uses algorithmic-ranking systems to prioritize content that's likely to engage users, but this is also influenced by social networks, followers to follow, and content streams to choose from. The variations indicate that whilst emotional contagion in TikTok could be more strongly algorithmically driven, Instagram could be more socially driven regarding emotional exposure.

The literature also points to the significance of the network structure and community formation for the spread of emotional contagion. Studies on digital communities have shown that the density of social interactions, the frequency of interaction, and how often users use the social network affect emotional transmission (Xiong et al., 2017). In TikTok, viral videos can quickly spread to people outside their social circles, via algorithmically triggered recommendations, allowing emotions to spread far and wide. Conversely, Instagram can often be used to diffuse emotions that exist within social networks, influencer communities, and interest-based groups. These differences indicate that the emotional dynamics of the platform-specific networks affect the way emotions are transmitted, as well as the social contexts in which emotional experiences are understood and validated.

Another consideration is platform affordances in emotional expression and emotional engagement. Platform affordances are the features and interaction mechanisms that are available to allow users to create, share, and react to content. TikTok features a duet, stitch, remix and short video features that foster instant engagement and emotional emulation, where

users can directly interact with emotional content by reproducing and responding creatively. Instagram, for its part, provides a wider mix of photos, stories, reels, captions and social response mechanisms that can convey emotional expression and emotional reflection. The various affordances produce different emotional spaces where users interact in platform-specific ways to experience and express emotions. Emotional contagion can therefore take place via various behavioural routes, depending on the technological features found in the platforms.

The literature also indicates that the outcomes of emotional contagion depend on the interaction between the platform structure and user characteristics. Demographic characteristics like age, social identity, digital literacy, and emotional sensitivity can impact emotional responses and emotional vulnerability to emotional transmission in online settings (Lu & Hong, 2022). Younger users form a large portion of TikTok's user base and could be especially affected by the speed at which emotions diffuse, as they are more engaged with the platform and actively participate in social interaction. People who use Instagram could have varying emotional reactions as a function of their participation in self-presentations, social comparisons, and identity-related interactions. The results reveal that platform design is not the only factor affecting emotional contagion, but also the nature of platform users.

Furthermore, the explicit and implicit emotional contagion processes are shaped by platform environments. Emotional transmission has been shown to happen via direct emotional communication, as well as more subtle emotional exposure and behavioural observation (Rhee et al., 2020). TikTok's rapid feed often leads to subliminal emotional contagion as individuals consume emotional cues in videos, music, and visual narratives repeatedly. Instagram allows both implicit and explicit emotional transmission via visual content, written captions and interaction that is noticeable in the social realm. This distinction points to a possible difference in emotional contagion processes across digital platforms.

In general, the correlation between emotional contagion mechanisms and social media platforms indicates that the nature of emotional contagion is heavily dependent on the characteristics of the technology, the structure of the social network, and the properties of the platform. TikTok and Instagram provide different emotional landscapes, changing the ways in which users experience, understand, and react to emotional content. Although this emotional contagion is a product of psychological and social processes, the spread and maintenance of these emotions is increasingly regulated by technological processes in platforms. The results confirm that the understanding of the complex interaction between technology, emotion, and social interaction in today's digital ecosystems must be based on examining emotional contagion in platform contexts instead of treating social media as a single communication environment.

### **Platform-Specific Emotional Contagion Mechanisms on TikTok and Instagram**

While emotional contagion can occur on both TikTok and Instagram, the literature reviewed indicates that the mechanisms of emotional contagion are different between the platforms. The technological architecture, content delivery systems, and engagement structures of both platforms result in different emotional contagion pathways because they are all based on two types of communication: visual communication, user interaction, and socially mediated visibility. It is essential to make this distinction, as emotional contagion in short-form social

media isn't only the result of emotional exposure; it also is the result of how the platform design influences the speed, strength, and nature of emotional diffusion.

Emotional contagion in TikTok seems to be mediated by emotional exposure that is quick and immersive, owing to the repetition of short videos, algorithmic personalisation, and a culture shaped by trends that encourages participation. Existing research indicates that TikTok's recommendation algorithm heavily prioritises behavioural engagement to constantly present content that resonates emotionally with users, resulting in greater repeated exposures to emotionally salient content and faster emotional diffusion (Zhao et al., 2025). The emotional expression of the short video content, its viral dissemination, the audio effect and the imitation effect in the process of participation may amplify the instantaneous emotional contagion. This mechanism fosters a quick feedback loop that can amplify emotions in large virtual communities via repeated observations, modeling, and engagement, resulting in the rapid spread of emotions.

But the literature also indicates that the emotionally fast-paced format of TikTok can create emotional vulnerability with emotional involvement. Emotionally expressive material can contribute to the generation of shared humour, empathy, collective identity, and emotional connection, but repeated viewing of very emotional/coping content can also exacerbate emotional fatigue, sense of stress, and affective overload (Block & Heyes, 2020; Zhang et al., 2023). This paradox suggests that TikTok's emotional contagion process is not just quick and immersive, but also has increased emotionality, which can lead to positive and negative emotional effects.

But Instagram seems to promote emotional contagion by means of more lasting emotional evaluation that is mediated by visual curation, self-presentation and social comparison processes. Prior studies reveal that Instagram's visual platform biases users toward interpreting and reacting to emotionally charged content, illustrating their identities, and comparing or critiquing others through visual means (Choi & Kim, 2020). Emotional contagion can happen as multiple comparisons with curated representations, multiple times of exposure to influencers, reading multiple times through the social evaluation process of likes, comments, and seeing the number of likes, for example. Whereas TikTok's immersion takes place almost instantaneously, emotional contagion on Instagram typically unfolds over time through multiple comparisons to curated representations as well as multiple exposures to influencers and the social evaluation process that follows likes, comments, and visible metrics. This establishes an alternative emotional contagion route where emotional responses can be more delayed, longer lasting, and psychologically reflective or evaluative.

Instagram's emotional contagion features are also indicative of unresolved tensions in the literature. Emotional content can enhance inspiration, admiration, belonging and community involvement, but if accessed on a regular basis, idealised online self-presentation can also increase emotional dissatisfaction, envy, pressure on comparison and affective sensitivity (Choi & Kim, 2020). The results indicate that emotional interpretation and self-evaluative appraisal, rather than only fast and involuntary emotional transmission, are important factors to consider in emotional contagion in Instagram.

One of the main differences between the two platforms, then, is the contagious speed and emotional route. Instagram seems to facilitate more long-term emotional contagion through visual curation, self-presentation and comparison-based emotional interpretation, while TikTok

seems to facilitate more immediate, repetitive and high-arousal emotional contagion by increasing emotional speed and exposure to short videos and participating in trends (Choi & Kim, 2020; Zhao et al., 2025). The difference is important in further reinforcing the conceptual contribution of the current review as it highlights that emotional contagion through short-form social media is not necessarily uniform but is instead a platform-contingent process that is influenced by varying technology affordances and user interactions.

In sum, the literature reviewed suggests that emotional contagion mechanisms are distinct on platforms and are mediated by distinct sets of emotional pathways, techno architectures and behavioural engagements. In contrast, TikTok encourages live rapid emotional diffusion through repetitive and algorithmic speed, while Instagram encourages extended emotional contagion through visual evaluations and socialized comparisons. These differences are relevant as emotional contagion in short-form social media needs to be explored not only as a behavioural phenomenon but also as a socio-technical phenomenon unique to platforms, with varying implications for emotional well-being, digital vulnerability, and emotionally responsible platform governance.

### **Topic Experts – Influential Scholars and Intellectual Contributions**

The Topic Experts analysis identifies influential scholars who have made a significant impact on the field of emotional contagion in digital and social media environments. Of the experts identified, the work of Gu, Yin and Tang complements each other and contributes to the advancement of knowledge in the area of emotion generation, transmission, amplification and transformation within online communities. Their findings show that emotional contagion is a psychological phenomenon observed between individuals but also depends on the characteristics of the information and the behavioural interaction, as well as sentiment changes and network topology. These contributions provide a snapshot of growing interdisciplinary research on emotional contagion, involving behavioural science, computational analysis, communication studies, and social network perspectives.

Gu et al. (2024) study is important because it provides significant insights into the connection between emotional contagion and behaviour in digitally mediated environments. Gu's research focuses on the understanding of emotional responses based on the nature of information users come across, especially when it comes to persuasion, environmental communication and pro-social behaviour. This study uses machine learning methods and a large-scale text analysis to show how emotional signals in the digital content can impact users' perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural intentions. These findings highlight how emotionally resonant storytelling, influencer engagement, and visually engaging media can serve as tools for influencing user interactions and emotional engagement within TikTok and Instagram. Gu's work does, however, bring up more questions about the ethical considerations of emotionally manipulative content. Emotional signalling can be a positive behavioral effect but can also be used to manipulate emotions and experience selective exposure and reinforcement of behavior when channelled through algorithmic systems. It underscores the importance of studying emotional contagion as a means of engagement and a means of impacting user autonomy and emotional health.

In addition, the research done by Yin (2024) is about sentiment propagation and emotional mutation in social media networks. In contrast to the traditional theory that views emotional contagion as a straightforward process of emotional transfer from person to person, the research

by Yin shows that emotions are often modified and changed as they flow in digital communities. Depending on the interpretation of the user, the frame in which the information is embedded, some patterns of engagement and interaction with the network, emotional expressions can be amplified, weakened or modified. This is especially important in the context of TikTok and Instagram, where comments, re-posts, trending, and user-generated posts can rapidly reinterpret posts, especially when they are emotionally charged. Emotional contagion is not a merely replicative process, then, but rather a dynamic one that has processes of emotional adaptation and transformation going on all the time. Yin's contribution thus reinforces the understanding that the process of interpreting and reconstructing emotions, as well as emotional exposure, matters to the dynamics of emotional contagion.

In this regard, Tang et al. (2021) adds a layer of emotional contagion research by adding a network-level perspective and a community-level perspective. In Tang's research on public opinion modelling and emotional diffusion, it is shown that in certain instances, emotional contagion takes place in more interwoven social networks in which emotional experiences are reiterated through repeated social interaction and collective participation. Studies of online communities, including mental health and emotional wellbeing communities, suggest that emotions can become a part of the community story and contribute to a community emotional climate, which impacts the behaviour of users and community interactions. The results indicated that emotional contagion in TikTok and Instagram is influenced not just by personal emotional reactions but also by network density, connectivity of users, and the collective emotional reactions. Social dynamics and interactions from viral trends, community engagement, and influencers can then amplify emotional resonance, reinforcing users to experience similar emotions repeatedly. Meanwhile, Tang's work suggests that emotional clustering (frequent reinforcement of dominant emotional narratives) can be a source of collective distress, emotional polarisation, or continued exposure to negative emotional content.

Overall, the work of Gu, Yin, and Tang demonstrates how multifaceted emotional contagion is on TikTok and Instagram, influenced by the characteristics of content, the emotional transformation processes, and the structures of the social network. Their work shows that emotional contagion is not solely about emotional synchronisation between individuals but instead is multidimensional and involves a complex interplay between information systems, user behaviour and community dynamics. The use of machine learning techniques, sentiment propagation algorithms, and network analysis demonstrates the evolving nature of emotional contagion studies and underscores the need for interdisciplinary research. The contributions, more than anything else, suggest there should be an understanding of emotional contagion as a dynamic and ongoing process in social media environments, shaped by social interaction, technological systems and collective emotional experiences. These findings offer a valuable basis for the identification of emerging themes and avenues for future research in the field of emotional contagion.

### **Emerging Themes**

The Emerging Themes analysis identifies a number of emerging trends that are influencing the study of emotional contagion in TikTok and Instagram. The themes highlight a developing shift from interpersonal to more comprehensive themes of digital wellbeing, influencer communication, emotional vulnerability, algorithmic amplification, and emotional community dynamics. Emotional contagion studies are currently expanding beyond the scope of only

studying emotional transmission to examine the broader implications of emotional contagion for user behaviour, psychological well-being and the governance of social media platforms.

One of the major themes that has been emerging is the connection between emotional contagion and digital wellbeing. Traditionally, emotional contagion has been linked to empathy, social bonding, and collective emotional experiences, but recent research is increasingly pointing to its impact on psychological outcomes in online environments. Exposure to emotionally charged, polarizing, or distressing content can lead to feelings of anxiety, emotional fatigue, and negative affective experiences for users, potentially over time (Keles et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2025). This issue is more important in the context of immersive social media platforms, where the algorithmic recommendations encourage audience to become more emotionally engaged. Now, emotional contagion is being studied in the context of mental health and digital well-being, which stems from the greater awareness of its potential long-term impact on mental health from social media use.

Another new trend has to do with the importance of social comparison and identity building in emotionally oriented online spaces. Previous studies indicated that social media users often measure themselves against the content they observe and experience emotion when doing so, such as admiration, envy, inspiration and dissatisfaction (Chou & Edge, 2011). Emotional contagion might be tightly linked with comparison-based emotional experiences, particularly in the context of Instagram – a social platform where self-presentation and visual curation are integral. Social comparison exists on TikTok as well, but its participatory element in response to trends and its entertainment content often evokes more immediate emotional responses. The difference indicates that further studies of the interaction between emotional contagion and the formation of identity, self-perception, and social comparison dynamics in various platform settings are recommended.

Another key area of research is the growing significance of emotion as a medium of communication, transmitted through influencers. The emotional stories, user engagement, and collective responses of social media communities can be influenced by influencers. Previous research shows that influencers often build perceived authenticity, trust and emotional relationship with followers which in turn boosts their power in shaping followers' emotions and behaviours (Abidin, 2016; Lou and Yuan, 2018). Emotionally expressive forms of influencers in TikTok and Instagram could lead to emotional diffusion across the platform through story, product promotion, personal experience and life communication. Today, with the rising trend of influencer marketing, the study of emotional contagion has begun to focus on the influence of emotions on consumer behavior, community activation and digital engagement.

The other theme that has emerged relates to the creation of collective emotional climates in online communities. Based on the theory of emotional contagion, recent studies have shown that emotions can spread beyond person-to-person interactions and contribute to social environments that have collective emotional atmospheres across digital communities such as online communities (Hatfield et al., 1994; Zhu et al., 2025). It could be possible that online communities could create a collective emotional pattern that affects the actions of users and social norms through repeated interaction, emotional reinforcement, and community involvement. Viral trends, community challenges, and big-game participation can help shape such collective emotional climates within TikTok and Instagram. These dynamics can enhance feelings of belonging and social cohesion, but they can also contribute to emotional polarization or to the continuation of prevailing emotional narratives.

The literature reviewed also emphasizes the growing interest in scholarly literature on algorithmic influence and emotional amplification. With the increasing complexity of recommendation systems, the impact of the algorithm on content exposure and frequency of exposure is growing more significant as it influences how people feel about the material (Zhao et al., 2025). This poses interesting issues about the design of platforms and how that relates to emotional experiences. Algorithms can enable content discovery and engagement, but can also lead to emotional reinforcement loops, emotional exposure, and heightened emotional reactions. Future research efforts should consider the possibility of emotional contagion as an effect triggered by the technological system and algorithmic decision-making processes as well as an experience shaped by the user.

The Emerging Themes analysis overall shows that the field of emotional contagion studies is expanding from psychological science to more interdisciplinary topics related to mental health, social comparison, influencers' communication, algorithmic systems, and digital governance. The developments reveal how emotional experiences are becoming more complex in today's social media context and the need for further research to bring together the behavioural, technological and societal perspectives. This paper aims to deepen the understanding of emotional contagion's potential impact on user experiences, social interaction, and digital well-being within the TikTok and Instagram ecosystems, by identifying these developing directions.

### **Practical Implications**

The results of this review have several important implications for platform developers, policymakers, educators, mental health practitioners, and researchers who want to better understand emotional contagion in TikTok and Instagram. The implications of emotional contagion are not limited to user interaction but also extend to user engagement and user experience in the context of broader issues of digital well-being, platform governance, and responsible social media design.

First, the review emphasizes the need to integrate emotional well-being aspects in the design of platforms and content recommendation systems. Repeated exposure to emotionally charged content has been reported to cause emotional fatigue, anxiety, and affectual overload, especially for highly engaged users (Block & Heyes, 2020; Keles et al., 2019). This could make platforms more attractive to developers by introducing systems to manage high exposure to emotional content and increase content diversity. These measures may help to break emotional reinforcement cycles and improve user experiences.

Second, the results highlight the importance of further awareness of the impact of algorithmic systems on emotional experiences. The visibility and repeated exposure of emotional content in digital communities is shaped by recommendation algorithms, which have a significant impact on the diffusion and amplification of emotions (Zhao et al., 2025). These systems can promote greater interactions and content reach but can also inadvertently perpetuate emotionally charged stories. In this regard, platform designers need to take care of user well-being factors when designing platforms with engagement goals.

Third, the review emphasized the need for digital literacy and emotional awareness in this context. By understanding the dynamics of emotional contagion, users can better understand how emotionally charged content can impact them and make informed choices about their online behavior. Schools, community groups and policy makers can thus have a significant role

to play in supporting digital literacy programmes that foster a critical perspective on emotionally persuasive content and increased awareness of emotional impact in online spaces. Fourth, with the rise of influencers and content creators, it is recommended that emotional responsibility be considered in digital communication practices. Ethical communication practices and responsible content creation can also aid in reducing negative emotional impacts and fostering positive engagement, as influencers often play a role in evoking emotional reactions and narratives among their audience. This is especially crucial in the realm of TikTok and Instagram, where emotionally expressive videos can achieve immense reach and engagement in a brief amount of time.

Finally, the review makes an important contribution to the academic field by proving that the study of emotional contagion needs to be conducted by interdisciplinary approaches that combine the ideas and disciplines of psychology, communication studies, information systems, behavioural science, and digital media. This integration is essential to gain a more holistic understanding of the mechanisms of emotional contagion in the growing complex social media.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This review has a few limitations to be noted, although it has added to the cause. The first limitation of the study was that it only used the Scopus database as its primary source of literature. Scopus is considered one of the most complete databases for peer-reviewed research, but research that is not included in Scopus may have been included in other databases. Future reviews could benefit from integrating more databases for wider coverage of the research on emotional contagion.

Secondly, the search was targeted mainly toward publications in English. Findings from the study may be limited for generalisability if non-English studies are excluded, as there is emotional contagion across a range of cultural and linguistic contexts. To gain a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms of emotional contagion, future studies could examine multilingual literature.

Third, emotional contagion that occurs in social media is an emerging field of study. As the features of platforms like TikTok and Instagram keep evolving, as do the behavior of users and their interactions, so can the mechanism of emotional contagion. The mechanism of emotional contagion could change as these platforms are continually updated with new features, along with the way users interact with them and their behavior. As new technological features and engagement options are added to platforms, some of the findings reported in this review could change.

Fourth, the authors interpret, synthesize, and discuss their results, whereas Scopus AI is used in the identification of the theme, concept mapping, and literature exploration. While the efficiency and transparency were improved, future research could further bolster the analytical rigor by incorporating other qualitative or bibliometric methods alongside AI-supported reviews.

Last, most of the literature is limited to short-term emotional reactions and cross-sectional observations. Long-term studies of the effects of emotional contagion on users are comparatively small. Emotional contagion's long-term emotional, behavioral, and psychological effects, however, should be explored further in digital environments.

## Conclusion

This review aims to deliver a thorough synthesis of the mechanisms of emotional contagion on TikTok and Instagram, exploring the interplay of emotional processes, behavioural involvement and platform features that influence emotional experiences in social media contexts. The results show that emotional contagion is a multi-dimensional process, which is determined by emotional mimicry, social influence, appraisal of emotion, algorithmic amplification, social comparison and network-based interaction. Emotional contagion is not just a psychological phenomenon, but a part of the technological and social landscape in which emotions are communicated, understood, and shaped in digital communities.

The review also shows that TikTok and Instagram act as different mechanisms to propagate emotional contagion. While TikTok's algorithmic atmosphere facilitates quick emotional diffusion by allowing users to watch videos that are short and easy to digest, to participate in trends and to view videos over a period, Instagram allows for more prolonged emotional involvement through visual curation, self-presentation, and comparing videos. These findings emphasize that social media should not be considered as a single communication space but should be analysed in the context of the platforms in which it is being used.

The results also highlight significant points of contention in literature. Emotional contagion could be beneficial for creating a sense of empathy, social connectedness, community participation and good emotional experiences, but could also lead to emotional fatigue, anxiety, social comparison stress, and emotional vulnerability to repeated exposure to emotionally charged material. The contrasting results highlight the complexity of emotional contagion and the importance of having balanced views that take into account the positive and negative aspects of such phenomena.

In conclusion, this review enriches the existing knowledge on emotional contagion, by synthesizing findings from psychology, communication studies, behavioral science, information systems and digital media research. The study combines the most important mechanisms, conceptual relationships, influential scholarly work, and emerging themes, thus deepening the understanding of the role of emotional contagion in TikTok and Instagram. Most significantly, it reminds us that platforms must be designed responsibly, that there is a need for digital literacy, and for further interdisciplinary research into how social media environments can help to create meaningful connections and promote the well-being of the user in an increasingly connected digital world.

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