

EMOTIONS IN ONLINE DIGITAL MEDIA (EMODIM)

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Motivation

In both the academic community and public discourse, we have recently seen heated discussions on the dark side of social media and how various services have detrimentally affected the communication culture. Issues like hate speech and increased polarisation of the opinions could be considered as side effects of using digital media as the channel for public discourse and opinion exchange.

We suggest that the debated symptoms result from psychological processes related to emotions and emotion regulation in technology-mediated textual communication. The ability to regulate one's emotions and mood is a necessity practically for every area of life. As this ability seems to deteriorate in digital media, we should better understand how emotions actually function in such communication and develop mechanisms that help individuals better regulate their behaviour in digital media discussions.

Objectives and methods

We will study how emotions function and what their behavioural effects are in digital media environments. We will design an array of intervening user interface mechanisms that could facilitate understanding of other people's emotions and regulation of one's own emotions while interacting in social media. Selected designs will be implemented based on machine learning approaches (e.g. automatic labelling of emotional flavours in messages) and experimented with regard to their capability to trigger as well as help regulate emotional states.

Our central premises are that

- 1) *emotions play a central role* in how people create messages and other new digital content as well as in how these are interpreted by the audience
- 2) design of the *communication mechanisms* in digital media significantly shape the communication practices and people's online behaviour.

Our research follows an iterative-constructive research approach that combines methods of experimental research, constructive design research and machine-learning-based computation.

Consortium

The project is headed and coordinated by Professor Veikko Surakka and his research group Emotions, Sociality and Computing at the Faculty of Information Technology and Communication Sciences, Tampere University. The other partner is Associate Professor Thomas Olsson's group Technology × Social Interaction, which is part of the cross-faculty New Social Research programme at Tampere University.



Image: Pond5

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