

## **EMOJI, A BREAKTHROUGH IN CONTEMPORARY COMMUNICATION**

### **(A Literature Review)**

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#### **Abstract**

It is a fact that emojis are a growing phenomenon in the last few years. They have gained their popularity with their typical varieties in the digital era across countries in the world. The emojis are used among people as a way to assist the process of conveying emotions in textual communication that lacks nonlinguistic cues. Emojis were created and developed as visual mixed expressions of sentiments, attitudes, or moods for use in modern communication technologies. Then, in more broad perspective and context, in term usages, they are also generally perceived that they do not only have unique semantic and emotional features, but also are closely related to many areas such as marketing, law, education, health, etc. This paper reviews the nature of emoji, the developmental history of emojis, the functions of emojis in communication, and the usages of emojis in a real-digital world interaction and communication.

*Key words: emoji, function of emojis in communication, and the usages of emoji in digital world.*

#### **Introduction**

Recently, it is a fact that the rapid, massive, and sophisticated rise of the internet in particular and the development of information communication technology (ICT) in general has given birth to the method of communication. The affluent development also has changed the human way of interaction and communication among others across the globe. The communication mode now does not only merely use linguistics features as usual to convey the meaning, but it also uses non-linguistics features which is now currently known as emojis.

Simply, the emojis are defined as a two-dimensional pictograph used in modern communication technologies to assist expressive messages. In communication context, then an emoji is defined as a graphic symbol, ideogram that represents not only facial expressions, but also concepts and ideas . . . emotions, feelings, and activities (R. Kelly and L. Watts.2015). Then, experts also state that emojis are text-based representations of feelings :-)) to express satisfaction or by using emoji like smiley faces 😊, and clapping hands 🙌 fool you.

Since its birth by the 1990s, the emojis and emoticons, has changed and developed their own varieties in terms of patterns, design, and characters as well. For examples, in total there are 3,633 emojis in the Unicode Standard (<https://emojipedia.org/stats/2/2/2022>). This includes sequences for gender or skin tone, flags, and the components that are used to create keycap, flag, and other sequences. The changes and development of emojis are made and designed in order to create and express idea and emotion to be more properly and meaningful in communication context.

The emojis then have gained their popularity as a new way and path for communication and interaction among people. The number of people in terms of country, sex, professions, generation and the like always increases year by year. For example, data from Adobe's 2019 trend report indicates that 72% of the survey respondents stated they used emojis in the workplace. <https://pumble.com/learn/communication/emoji-statistics-internal-communication/4/4/2022>.

In short, it can be predicted that this way of communication in the future will increase more and more. It seems that it will make sense because experts argue that the communication by emojis be more personal and psychologically and can make the communitor and communicatee be friendlier and emotionally closely related. Also, emojis can enrich our digital conversations and emojis and emoticons reduce the risk of ambiguity in message, emojis are a more dynamic and fun way to express thought as well.

## Discussion

### The Nature of Emoji

Originally, the word *Emoji* is from Japanese language (Japanese: <sup>えもじ</sup>絵文字), which is in English it is pronounced as /i'moudʒi/ while in Japanese, it is pronounced [emodʒi]. The singular form is emoji and the plural form of emoji are emojis. Generally, Emojis are ideograms and smileys in electronic messages and web pages. Then, Hern, February 6, 2015) accessed /2/2/2020 states that an emoji (/i'moudʒi:/ *i-MOH-jee*; plural emoji or emojis is a pictogram, logogram, ideogram or smiley embedded in text and used in electronic messages and web pages. Similarly, he then stats that emojis are much like emoticons, except emoji are pictures rather than typographic approximations. Actually, the term "emoji" in the strict sense refers to such pictures which can be represented as encoded characters, but it is sometimes applied to messaging stickers by extension.

Historically, emojis were created in the late 1990's exactly in 1999 by Shiegetaka Kurita who was working in web development company NTT Docomo, a telecommunication firm in Japan. To realize the emojis, Shiegetaka basically uses Japanese social condition, street marker, weather. Since its emergence, then emoji then, exists and develops in various genres, including facial expressions, common objects, places and types of weather, and animals. Hern, (2015) adds that actually emoji exist in various genres, including facial expressions, common objects, places and types of weather, and animals. They are much like emoticons, except emoji are pictures rather than typographic approximations. Then, the term "emoji" in the strict sense refers to such pictures which can be represented as encoded characters, but it is sometimes applied to messaging stickers by extension.

As a matter of fact, etymologically, the word *emoji* comes from Japanese e (絵, "picture") and moji (文字, "character"). So it can be said that emojis use pictures. Similarly, then, another literature shows that emoji" is



a kind of transliteration of the Japanese word 絵 (e=picture) 文 (mo=write) 字 (ji=character). In short, it contains three elements binding together to be one, to be a unique pattern.

In terms of communication, then an emoji is defined as a two-dimensional pictograph used in modern communication technologies to assist expressive messages. In communication context, then an emoji is defined as a graphic symbol, ideogram that represents not only facial expressions, but also concepts and ideas . . . emotions, feelings, and activities (R. Kelly and L. Watts.2015). As a matter of fact, it can be said that emoji is a world of symbols that can have multiple meanings but still convey more than words for examples, ‘Love’ is represented by ‘❤’ or ‘hate’ by ‘💔.’ Emojis are everywhere, spreading through our texts, social media posts, and emails. They're in our inboxes, on the big screen 📺, and even being used as evidence 🗣️ in courtrooms or Smiley faces 😊, and clapping hands 🙌 fool you.

As a type of communication using signs or symbols to communicate with each other, it is a fact that these images convey a complexity of emotions that cannot translated easily into word. Dated back teens years ago, it can be said that Paul Ekman has done it. He was one of the first psychologists to study the grammar of facial expressions, authoring an “atlas of emotions” that is currently used largely by semioticians and scientists. He observed that the basic emotions of “disgust, fear, anger, contempt, sadness, surprise, happiness” actuate the same microexpression patterns in a statistically predictable variation around the globe.

### **The Developmental History of Emojis**

Because of its massive frequency and popularity, the emojis usages have increased in recent years. For example, the Oxford Dictionaries officially announced this type of pictograph as “Word of the Year” in 2015. The “face

with tears of joy” emoji 🥳 was chosen by Oxford Dictionaries to best reflect “the ethos, mood, and preoccupations of 2015” (Oxford University Press. (2016).

Historically, if it is traced back yearly, actually before emoji gets its popularity as we see and use nowadays, the similar symbol used in communication was known as a “*smiley*.” Or it can be said that the origin of emoji is “*smiley*” or the “*smiley*” at least as it becomes the inspiration of the rise of the emoji itself. Actually, the “*smiley*” firstly appeared in the 1960s and was regarded as the first expression symbols. “*Smiley*” is a yellow face with two dots for eyes and a wide grin which is printed on buttons, brooches, and t-shirts. By the early 1980s, the studies showed that this symbol had become widespread, emerging as a permanent feature of western popular culture.

On the other hand, some experts argue slightly different among others. They state that actually, the rise of the emoji is not directly developed from smiley, but there is another symbol of communication used before known as emoticon ^\_^ . The word ‘*emoticon*’ is pronounced as as /ɪˈmoʊtɪkən/, or *i-MOHT-i-kon*, but it is also rarely pronounced /ɪˈmɒtɪkən/, short for “*emotion icon*.” It is also known simply as an emote, is a pictorial representation of a facial expression using characters—usually punctuation marks, numbers, and letters—to express a person's feelings or mood, or as a time-saving method.

In line with emoticon, the Merriam Webster dictionary describes emoticons as a “group of keyboards characters” which illustrates facial expressions in the absence of other cues. It further claims that like non-verbal cues, emoticons help people to interpret more easily the meaning of the message, the mood of the conversational partner, and the emotion which cannot be detected by the words alone.


If so, it can be probably said that emoji was originated from smiley, which first evolved into emoticons. Emoticons were introduced in 1982 and used ordinary punctuation marks from a standard computer keyboard to build up a representation of a face with a particular expression (Zhou et al., 2017). They

are a paralinguistic element (Lee and Wagner, 2002) and they are often used at the end of a sentence (Sakai, 2013).

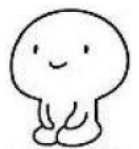
Finally, when this paper is written, the last symbol of communication (after emoji) is in the form of stickers. It is known as the 21<sup>st</sup> century symbol of communication. It is categorized static and dynamic in their outlook. In recent years, in order to realize the interpretability of information transmission and better express in terms of meaning, stickers came into being (Zhou et al., 2017). Stickers can help users strategically and dynamically choose the best way to express their emotions, opinions, and intentions and to achieve communicative fluidity. At the same time, stickers can be used for strategic motives such as self-presentation, impression management, establishing social existence and maintaining social status (Lee et al., 2016). Besides, it is assumed that responding to a partner with a combination of text and stickers can establish a high level of intimacy.

Empirically, the smiley, emoticons, emoji, and stickers are different in forms and contents, and have been favored by users in different periods. In line with their differences and similarities and developmental history as well, table 1 shows the summary of the differences and similarities among them.

Table 1 the differences among smiley, emoticons, emoji and stickers.

| Name     | Years of<br>occurrence | Form   | Content                       | Usages                | Unicode            | Examples  |
|----------|------------------------|--------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---|
| Smiley   | 1960s                  | Static | Single smiley face            | Daily<br>life         | Without<br>unicode |  |
| Emoticon | 1982                   | Static | Various facial<br>expressions | Daily<br>life<br>/CMC | Without<br>unicode | ^_^   |

|              |                                      |                         |   |                       |                            |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|---|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Emoji        | 1999                                 | Static                  | Facial expressions,<br>abstract concepts,<br>emotions/feelings,<br>animals, plants,<br>activities,<br>gestures/body parts,<br>and objects           | Daily<br>life<br>/CMC | Own<br>unicod<br>e         |
| Sticker<br>s | After<br>21 <sup>st</sup><br>century | Static/<br>Animat<br>ed | Texts, facial<br>expressions, abstract<br>concepts,<br>emotions/feelings,<br>animals, plants,<br>activities,<br>gestures/body parts,<br>and objects | Daily<br>life<br>/CMC | Withou<br>t<br>unicod<br>e |



### The Functions of Emojis in Communication

Experts argue that, as a matter of fact, emoji as a kinesics digital nonverbal codes. They further claim that human body movements have meaning, and that nonverbal behavior has grammar structures that can possibly be analyzed like the spoken language. The experts argue that the nonverbal codes are “clusters of behaviors that are used to convey meaning.” The term “digital nonverbal codes” refers to textual messaging used in mobile mediated communication. Then, they also state that that kinesics codes or emojis are digital substitutions for “facial expression, body language, gestures, and eye behavior.

In line the communication and emoji, communication practitioners and linguists propose some of the goods and benefits of emoji when communication wittingly such as emojis add personality to a text and generate empathy among users and emojis add personality to the text and generate empathy among users." .A text message lacks the emotional



context present when you're communicating face to face, or even writing something more long form where you can be more expressive using language.

Similarly, other experts argue that the emojis can be benefits to some points in communication such as a) emojis enrich our digital conversations, b) emojis and emoticons reduce the risk of ambiguity in message, c) emojis will serve well to answer quick questions i.e *"How do you feel?"* *"What do you want for dinner?"* and *"What do you want to do tonight?"* could all be responded to with emojis, d) there's more user interaction when you use emojis, e) The new language of the internet, is improving the way we communicate online, f) Emoji have become an extension of the English language particularly among young people and have improved the way we converse online significantly, and g) They are efficient and less time consuming.

In addition, as it is generally known that communication is not only a matter of changing information but it is also a matter of psychological process. That's why using emojis for communication and interaction will bring benefits in terms of psychological perspectives. In line with this perspective, the experts argue that the usages of emojis in communication can a) make communication to be more personal, b) make the communitor and communicatee to be friendlier and emotionally closely related, c) emojis are a more dynamic and fun way to express thought, d) emoji can foster human communication skills. e) recent research suggests that our mood changes when we see certain emoticons, and we physically match our emotion of the emoticon, f) emojis humanize and add color to digital interactions, and g) so the next time you catch yourself smiling at your phone, it could be because someone sent you a smiling emoji (<https://www.spiceworks.com/marketing/content-marketing/articles/emoji-marketing-in-2020/4/4/2022>).

### **The Usages of Emojis in Digital World**



Unconsciously, people avoid information that is difficult to understand, so the easier your communications are to comprehend, the more effective your messages will be. By nature, the humans easily understand images and often emojis can communicate emotions and meaning more effectively and succinctly than words can. For example, people remember and understand 80% of what they see. In the digital age of limited attention spans, using emojis is an ideal way to enhance your online communications and leave a lasting impression on consumers. In terms of emojis and language, researches have shown there are five ways of using emojis to effectively communicate with your audience and or clients or customers in the digital world.

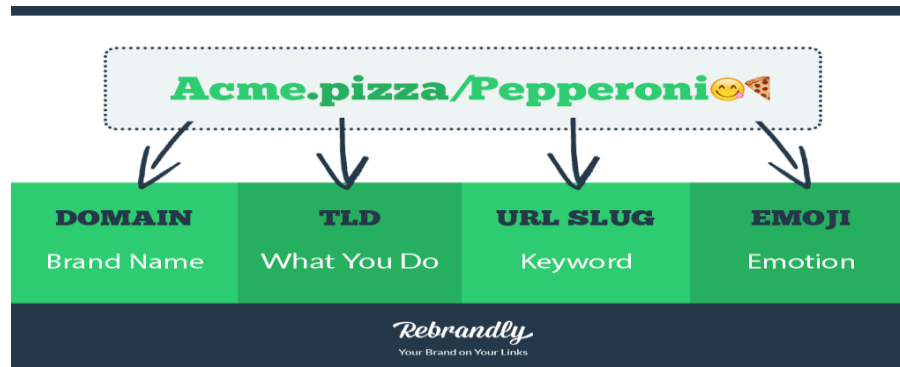
1. Social Media message

The rapid and massive growth of social media, such as twitter, WhatsApp (WA), line, etc makes the use of emoji become more frequent and intensive. This happens because the emojis allow user to express so much with a single symbol. This makes them ideal for use on social media where character limits are often imposed on marketing messages. In this situation, the use of emoji is beneficial because they are colorful and eye-catching, which can help grab a follower's attention in a busy newsfeed. In general, visuals have a significant impact on whether or not people engage with your posts on social media. For instance, tweets with images attached receive 150% more retweets than those without.

2. As a part of your short links

Another spot where emojis is in short links. In digital era, business activities now tend to use short link to communicate with the costumers. Often they need to keep their links short to prevent them from being truncated or auto-shortened when posting them online. Besides, the shorter they are, the neater they look. But this doesn't mean there isn't room to express some emotion and communicate your brand's personality.

Take a look in custom URL shortened, for example, Rebrandly. It allows marketers to completely customize their links to meet their needs. They can feature your brand's name, a meaningful TLD, a keyword or CTA after the slash and even an emoji as show in picture 1 below.

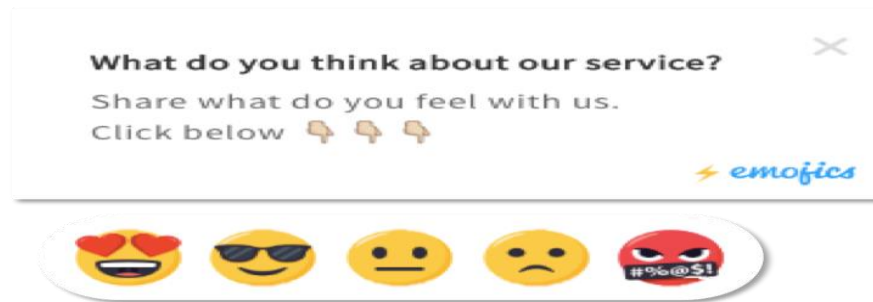


Picture 1 the example of the short link

In this case, the emojis are a fun way to communicate your brand voice and stand out online. They're a great way to make your links more enticing too. URLs are normally neutral so an emojiified hyperlink will definitely make people stop and take notice. Branded links have a CTR which is 39% higher than generic short links, so they make for an effective way to communicate with your audience online.

### 3. To quickly collect feedback

In high speed and massive use of information and communication technology (ICT) in business world world wide, the use of digital mechanism in business can be not avoided. It is a fact that nowadays, more companies realize how appealing and simple to understand emojis are, they've been used to increase customer interaction and feedback. Tools like emojis encourage visitors to share feedback through the simple click of an emoji. Take a look a question as shown in picture 2.



Picture 2 the example of the question

In line with quick feedback from the customers is also shown in the researches. Research shows that using emojis increases engagement by 15%. This knowledge can be applied to boost social media metrics and link click through – but also to collect more user insights. This means that emojis are psychologically and mentally are important for human being. According to scientists, when people see an emoji their brain lights up the same way it does when seeing a human face. Our brains register emojis as non-verbal information and, for this reason, process them as emotions. Here is the example of quick response as shown in picture 3 below.



Picture 3 the example of quick response or feedback

#### 4. In email subject lines

In the same way that newsfeeds are busy and chock-full of posts, inboxes can get crowded too. Marketers can have a tough time making their emails appealing and clickable. In their subject lines, they can't use color, fonts, or visuals to make their emails stand out – unless they use emojis.

For instance, here are three emails in your inbox. Which one of the following does capture your attention most?

|                            |                       |  |         |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ☆ | Chris Makara   Bulkly | Are You Struggling with Social Media Customer Service??? - H | 4:00 pm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ☆ | Quartz Obsession      | ☀️+🌑=🌑 Eclipses: How a terrifying celestial event became fu  | 3:47 pm |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ☆ | WordStream            | 8 AdWords Mistakes to Absolutely Avoid - ws_logo.png 8 Simp  | 3:18 pm |

The above example from Quartz is a great template to follow when using emojis to stand out in inboxes. Firstly, the emojis used are relevant to the content of the email. Secondly, they are unusual and attention grabbing. And finally, by consistently using emojis in its daily newsletter subject line, Quartz has created a visual cue that I associate with the brand and its emails.

In line with email subject line and emojiis, the data increases significantly year by year. For examples, in 2012, Swiftpage ran an A/B test sending half of its users an email with an emoji in the subject line – and the other half one without. The click-through rate of the emoji emails was 93% higher. And, a more recent report by consumer data specialists Experian also showed positive results with emails featuring emojis in the subject line receiving 56% more unique opens.

## 5. In mobile marketing message

As with email subject lines, there is only so much you can do to spice up your SMS marketing messages. Emojis are a fantastic way to add some color to your messages, using the platform they were originally created for. In this case, the studies show that the open rate of mobile push notifications with emojis is higher than those without. There is no doubt that using emojis makes for more effective marketing messages as shown in picture 4 below.



Picture 4 the example of mobile marketing message

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### Conclusion

In conclusion, it is a fact that emojis are a widely used as a part of human communication on digital mediums. They are effective in communicating the 'right' emotion to an otherwise bland and emotionless text. Emojis actually are able to humanize and add color of interaction and communication to digital world. This also can be stated that emojis are psychologically and mentally are important for human being, for example when people see an emoji their brain lights up the same way it does when seeing a human face.

Empirically, emoji are now used more and more frequently in network communication, and the way they are used is becoming more and more diversified as well. They not only have unique semantic and emotional features, but are also closely related to real life such as marketing, computer, law, health care and many other areas. In addition, the emojis also become a hot topic in the academic field such language, communication, social study, marketing, behavior science and so on. In short, nowadays, the emojis does not only reaches their popularity and intensive usages in human interaction and communication but they also become a kind of a breakthrough in contemporary-digital world communication across the globe.

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