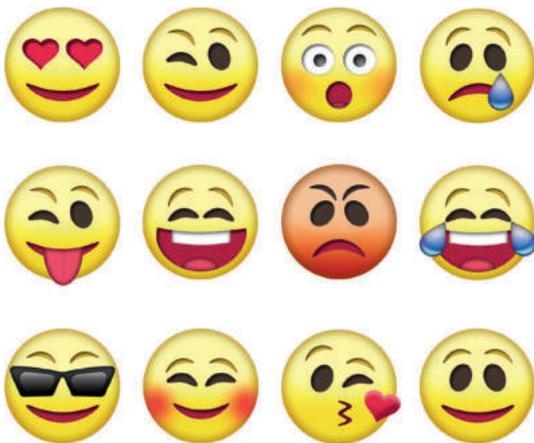
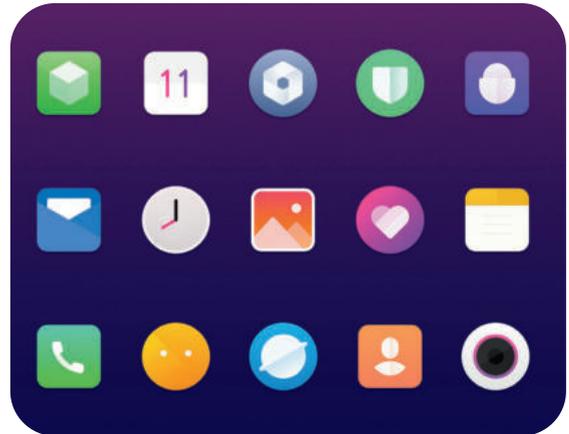


Great icons

■ The birth of icons

Icons are simple images or symbols which are easy to remember and to associate to a concept without involving language: they indicate something and are easily and universally recognisable. Icons are parts of the graphical user interface of the computer system, together with windows, menus, and a pointing device. They were first introduced in the digital world by D. Canfield Smith who imagined icons as visual entities which could execute lines of a computer program; this is why the first icons were representations of objects which were familiar to users, such as office objects. Their user-friendliness and intuitiveness made icons very popular and their use soon spread.



■ The evolution of icons

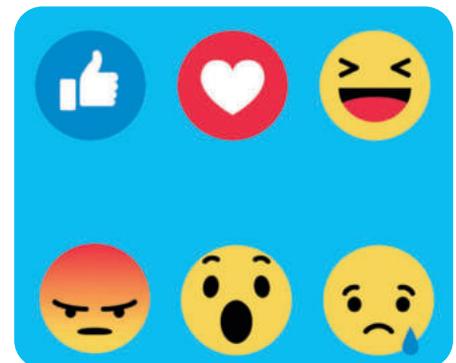
In the 1990s, some **emoticons** started being used in chatroom conversations. When the Internet was entirely text-based, emoticons were rendered in characters, and were read sideways, as the “smiley” :-:) shows. The word emoticon came from a contraction of the words *emotional* and *icon*.

In 1998, in Japan, emoticons took a step further and evolved into **emoji**, universal icons which compensate the **lack** of non-verbal communication in written messages by adding symbols representing emotions.

Emojis reached their fullest potential thanks to the use of mobile communication and the touchscreen and this system currently includes over 2,700 official characters recognised by the Unicode Standard, the coding system which makes them visible on the various platforms.

■ A further step

However, social networks evolved, too, and, besides being able to express one’s state of mind or opinion, there came the chance to share and comment on other users’ ideas and experiences. In this context, emojis further “evolved” and took on a new role, that of expressing some sort of feedback or **assessment**, or – as they are called – **reactions**. From being simple manifestations of one’s opinions, they started to include a judgment on someone else’s opinions, thus making asynchronous ‘conversation’ even more interactive.



lack: *manca*
assessment: *valutazione*

1 Read this text and answer the questions.

Reactions

Reactions are not emojis or individual icons, they are an extension of the Like Button to give people more ways to share their reaction to a post in a quick and easy way. The collection of Reactions includes Like, Love, Haha, Wow, Sad, and Angry. In February 2016, Facebook added emoji "Reactions" to the News Feed after the trademark "Like" button. And recently, Facebook has confirmed that using emoji "Reactions" actually influences the way your News Feed appears. In fact, Facebook weighs the emoji "Reactions" more than "Likes" to determine which content should appear towards the top of your News Feed. Soon afterward, Instagram has rolled out the ability to react to Stories on its platform. The 6 reactions include clapping hands, laughing, love eyes, shocked, crying and fire.

Though Facebook reactions are mainly emotional (e.g., angry, sad, surprised), LinkedIn's options are more professional in nature. Some of these reaction icons are: "like", which gives a simple way to show interest in or support for your content, "love", which lets demonstrate a deeper connection to your company's content; "celebrate", which is the ideal response to exciting accomplishments, and "curious", to start conversations or ask thought-provoking questions.

Given the availability of similar tools on other messaging platforms, recently Twitter has announced the launch of its new Reactions-like option in direct messages, which enables users to allocate a quick emoji response to any message within a thread.

Adapted from: <https://en.facebookbrand.com/facebookapp/assets/reactions/>



1. What are reactions?
2. What is the relationship between reactions and the news feed?
3. How many reactions do Facebook and Instagram use?
4. How are LinkedIn's reactions different from Facebook's?
5. What is the function of a reaction according to Twitter?