

Behind the Pixels:

# True success often hinges on deeper understanding.

Have you wondered...

What makes one product **POP** and another **FLOP**?

The answer lies not just in functionality, but in a human-centered approach that delves into the psychology and sociology of user behaviour. Alongside some forward-thinking designers, we are diving into these fields complementing the typical Computer Science curriculum, building a foundation for products that not only function beautifully, but truly connect with the needs and desires of the people who use them. This path may seem unconventional, but it holds the key to unlocking the magic that transforms a product from simply good to undeniably great.

Let's take two very different examples, analyse them from a human-centered design perspective and find which are the common factors that made them so successful.

Number one, the Amazon Echo. A smart speaker that can perform various tasks like playing music, setting alarms, and controlling other smart devices in your home. But what made it stand out? Sure, being offered by Amazon, a big company that people know and trust is a big advantage. But colossal companies have launched unsuccessful products in the past and some have even disappeared from the radar.

So, let's explore the psychology and sociology behind Echo's success.

1. **The Emotional Connection:** Amazon's friendly voice assistant Alexa, "living" inside the stylish little speaker, creates an emotional connection with the users by being both informative and playful. People can engage in conversations with their digital household butler, and feeling like Marvel's Avenger - Tony Stark, ask their personal J.A.R.V.I.S. to perform simple tasks such as play their favourite songs, inform them about the time / weather, tell dad jokes, etc. This form of social interaction triggers a dopamine release, making users feel happy and engaged.
2. **Convenience:** Echo's ability to perform various tasks hands-free is a major convenience factor. Users no longer need to get up from their couch to turn off the lights or adjust the thermostat. This reduces frustration and increases overall satisfaction with the product.
3. **Social Norms:** The Echo has become a status symbol of sorts, as more and more people are purchasing them for their homes. This creates a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out) among those who don't yet have one. Social norms dictate that having an Echo is a

desirable thing, making users more likely to adopt the technology.

4. **Storytelling:** Amazon's marketing campaign for the Echo emphasises in the device's ability to make life easier and more enjoyable. The company provides stories about how the Echo has helped families with busy schedules or people with disabilities. This narrative creates an emotional connection between users and the product, making them more likely to engage with it.

Now, let's take a very different example. Airbnb, the popular platform that allows people to rent out their homes or apartments to travellers. What makes it successful? Let's dive again into the human-centered design factors behind its success.

1. **Emotional Connection:** Airbnb's founders recognised that travel is often about creating memories and experiences, not just checking popular tourist attractions off a list. They designed the platform to facilitate these connections by allowing hosts to share their unique spaces and stories with travellers.
2. **Convenience:** Airbnb simplified the process of finding and booking accommodations, making it easier for travellers to find a place that fits their needs and budget.
3. **Social Norms:** The sharing economy, which includes such platforms, has normalised the idea of sharing resources and spaces. This social norm encourages people to participate in the sharing economy and use these services.
4. **Storytelling:** Airbnb's marketing campaign focuses on telling stories about the unique experiences and connections travellers have when using the platform. They share stories about hosts who've found new business opportunities or made lasting friendships through their listings. This narrative creates an emotional connection between users and the brand.

By understanding the psychology, sociology, and storytelling behind Amazon Echo's and Airbnb's success, we can see that their popularity is not just a result to their technical features, but also their ability to create emotional connections, provide convenience, align with social norms and tell compelling stories. This human-centered design approach has helped Amazon and Airbnb create products that truly resonate with users.

As seen, the four common factors you need to consider, to increase your chances of creating successful products are:

- Apart from their functionality and technical features, products that manage to create an **emotional connection** with users are more likely to resonate with them.
- A very important role in a product's success is offering **convenience**. The ease with which a product simplifies or streamlines one or more processes, tasks or services for its users, increases substantially its success.
- The alignment of a product with prevailing **social norms and trends** can drive product adoption.
- **Storytelling**, the ability of a product to be part of a compelling narrative that creates an emotional connection with its users, can have a powerful effect too.

These 4 important pillars create products that offer users something valuable, while building a connection with their hearts and minds.