

Does user engagement == “addiction”?

I think that user engagement does encourage addiction. Many business models promote increased customer engagement by incorporating repetitive behavior like likes or scrolls into the app. These repetitive behaviors drive surges of dopamine in the brain creating addiction.

Definitions:

User engagement is the interaction between users and a product, service, or content. It measures how actively and frequently users participate, showing their interest and involvement. High user engagement indicates that users find value and relevance, leading to actions like clicks, shares, comments, and prolonged usage. <https://www.storyly.io/glossary/user-engagement>

According to the American Society of Addiction Medicine, addiction is defined as “primary, chronic disease of the brain, reward, memory, motivation, and related circuits usually because of the use of substances.”

Incentive:

The user is the product “If you’re not paying for the product, the product is you.”

<https://www.investopedia.com/stock-analysis/032114/how-facebook-twitter-social-media-make-money-you-twtr-lnkd-fb-goog.aspx>

- Meta’s ARPU at the end of 2022 was \$39.63

“...many designers were driven to create addictive app features by the business models of the big companies that employed them.”

- "In order to get the next round of funding, in order to get your stock price up, the amount of time that people spend on your app has to go up," he said.
- "So, when you put that much pressure on that one number, you're going to start trying to invent new ways of getting people to stay hooked."

Addictive aspects are always in play when the user is engaging

- In 2006 Mr Raskin, a leading technology engineer himself, designed infinite scroll, one of the features of many apps that is now seen as highly habit forming.
- Leah Pearlman, co-inventor of Facebook's Like button, said she had become hooked on Facebook because she had begun basing her sense of self-worth on the number of "likes" she had. <https://www.bbc.com/news/technology-44640959>

Social Media is naturally addictive:

- “Social media platforms drive surges of dopamine to the brain to keep consumers coming back over and over again. The shares, likes and comments on these platforms trigger the brain’s reward center, resulting in a high similar to the one people feel when gambling or using drugs.” Sherman LE, Payton AA, Hernandez LM, Greenfield PM, Dapretto M. The Power of the Like in Adolescence: Effects of Peer Influence on Neural and Behavioral Responses to Social Media. Psychol Sci. 2016 Jul;27(7):1027-35. doi: 10.1177/0956797616645673. Epub 2016 May 31. PMID: 27247125; PMCID: PMC5387999.
- Social Media is built on repetitive behavior : Our brains can become addicted to the internet when scrolling through social media or watching another YouTube video that lights up the reward system in your brain. Once repetitive behavior is enforced, it creates a positive feedback loop that forms the basis of an addiction. Brain Injury Association of America (BIAA)
<https://www.brainfacts.org/diseases-and-disorders/addiction/2023/how-do-we-develop-an-internet-addiction-120523#:~:text=Our%20brains%20can%20become%20addicted,the%20basis%20of%20an%20addiction.>