

Does User Engagement == Addiction???

True: Aanya Khanna
False: Suhana Kumar

Social Media Engagement DOES equal addiction

- **User Engagement:** Interaction that measures how actively users participate (using likes, shares, comments)
- **Addiction:** “primary, chronic disease of the brain, reward, memory, motivation, and related circuits usually because of the use of substances.”
ASAM
- Social media engagement mirrors addiction as it exploits brain circuits responsible for reward and motivation

Social Media is Designed to be Addictive

- Social media features like the infinite scroll (Raskin) and the like button (Pearlman) are engineered to release dopamine surges, similar to addictive substances
 - Just because people are getting short term pleasure from using social media doesn't mean they aren't being taken advantage of.
- **Repetitive behaviors** are triggered by endless content to keep users hooked, reinforcing people to use (Brain Injury Association of America)
- Reels, TikTok, and infinite scrolling encourage repetitive behaviors.

Engagement == Addiction

- **Incentive:** Platforms like Meta generate revenue through user time spent on apps, through advertisement. Their ARPU was \$39.63 in 2022
 - When the user isn't paying for the product, the product is the user
- Platforms use addictive design to maximize engagement, blurring the line between participation and dependency
- Social media engagement meets the behavioral patterns and neurological triggers of addiction

User engagement is NOT business speak for addiction

Customers are vital to all businesses and so a tool that measures it is not outrageous.

Defined as:

- Interaction between **user** and **product/service**
- Measures how frequently users interact
 - Every business model relies on customers, a buyer.
Therefore having user engagement to gain customers is not unconventional or outrageous, it's simply a non-expendable part of a business model and without active business there is no economy
- User engagement is something that even, Warby Parker, a glasses company implements. Does buying a pair of glasses because you saw an advertisement mean that your addicted?
- Can't use such a strong word for varying situations

Even quick presence on (ex) social media brings ample profit to businesses

Especially these days, ADs are populated across all sites, in every form. When you open instagram for 10 seconds, you can go through 2 ads on your “posts” feed and 3 ads while scrolling through “stories”. Yes or no?

- Those 10 seconds immediately bring revenue to instagram and the companies themselves. AKA: businesses don't need you to be “addicted” to make money.

Addiction implies that businesses are trying to take advantage of **your** lack of self-control, but even if they did, you are still getting something in return.

Everytime you surf a website, or make a purchase that gives money to businesses, you are still getting a product, whether a tangible product or some form of entertainment/service and benefitting from that experience.

- AKA you are not being taken advantage of because you still received what you want.

The word addiction is not applicable because, not all “addiction” is conceived as bad.

- A person who reads 40 hours (a week) of the NYT and CNN news is often viewed as knowledgeable, curious minded, intelligent.
- A person who watches 40 hours (a week) of TikTok is often view as someone with little passion, ambitions, discipline
- Are both people not addicted to a form of media? We don't view one of them as addiction and so using such a undefined-in-social-context word is not fair

Even if I were to agree with the word addiction, which I don't, this addiction has likely not just sprung up.

- Playing a board game can be addictive (ex: D&D) but not until games are shifted online and are only then considered “addiction”. The addiction was not just created, it always existed
- Similarly, people have always been interested in media and entertainment. Now, because clips are shorter, it is easier to digest a larger amount of information and amount of videos so people spend longer , it's not necessarily that addiction was just introduced, it's always been there.
- So the question we should be really asking ourselves, is how do we reduce our populations usage of technology and electronics?