

HOW YOUR PHONE IS DESIGNED TO GRAB YOUR ATTENTION

Should we be blaming ourselves for not being able to put down our phones?

Smartphones are fun and useful. But they're powerful tools of seduction. Every feature, colour and sound has been 'optimised' by teams of designers and psychologists to keep you hooked and coming back for more. And these persuasive designs are not only

found in your smartphone, but also tablets, computers, gaming consoles, smart home appliances – you name it. Check out some of the persuasive design strategies below. How many of them look familiar?

It rewards you for everything

We all know that warm, fuzzy feeling when someone likes your post. Simple design tactics can feed into this sense of validation, even if it's knowing that someone is typing a response.

-  **The Typing Bubble**
An animated bubble that indicates someone is typing in real time, building anticipation.
-  **The Read Receipt**
Sent/Delivered/Read. Visual cues to show the status of a message.
-  **The Loot Box**
Gaming currency or money that can be traded for a randomised, possibly rare, return.
-  **The Like**
Whether it's a thumbs up or a love heart, these features are the ultimate dopamine boost.

Can you think of an app where one of these design tricks is used?

It makes you feel emotional

Content that makes you feel fearful, disgusted, in awe, angry or anxious gets clicks and is most likely to become viral – whether it's true or false. Be it product reviews, news about celebrity break-ups or a life hack, the internet is made for these bite-sized chunks of information.

-  **The Click Bait**
The use of over-hyped, sensationalist, dishonest or made up headlines designed to make you click and share.
-  **The A/B Test**
Different content can have different effects on readers. A/B tests track engagement and feature tweaks to headlines, layouts, designs and content based on what gets the most attention.
-  **The Viral Meme**
A combination of image and text, designed for quick re-shares. Catchy, hilarious, outrageous or cute, they provoke a reaction and hold your attention.

Can you remember the last time you shared something because it made you think "Wow!"?

It makes you feel like you're getting ahead

Do you want to be more popular? Quantifying friends and interactions means that you will naturally spend more time online to try to expand your social circle.

-  **The Follower Count**
A simple way to display popularity within a platform. Little is done to differentiate between real people you know and care about and people you won't remember tomorrow.
-  **The Experience Meter**
A progress count on social apps and role-playing games that shows a dedication to the platform.
-  **The Boosted Post**
Viral or not, reblogging, retweeting or otherwise having your content shared by others is one of the strongest ways to indicate social acceptance.

Do you remember the last time you shared something that went viral?

It gives you FOMO (fear of missing out)

Whether hanging out with friends, online or in a game, you want to feel like you belong. Designing apps as social hubs, with all of the trends and challenges of everyday life, means you will want to get involved.

-  **The New Trend**
Setting new trends with an app, such as stickers, filters or rewards, generates higher sign-up rates and boosts popularity.
-  **The Online Indicator**
A visual cue to show others are available, ready and active online – even if that might not be the case.
-  **The Streak**
A tool that measures ongoing engagement and loyalty. Longer streaks are rewarded with visibility and generate pressure to compete with others. Lose your streak and you have to start over.

Have you ever stayed on your phone too long because you didn't want to lose your streak?

It makes it easy to keep going

There is no dead end on the internet. Frictionless design combined with bottomless content means that you can stay online for hours even without thinking about it.

-  **The Autoplay**
An automatic, tailored content generator that serves you something new before you have a chance to turn away.
-  **The Checkpoint**
Milestones in games and apps (such as a usage streak or level) create an urge to keep going.
-  **The Infinite Scroll**
Popular among social media apps, the never-ending feed of content that ensures trance-like engagement.
-  **Pull to Refresh**
A pull and release technique used in slot machine games that translates perfectly onto the smartphone screen.

When was the last time you swiped and scrolled without thinking?

It makes everything seem urgent

Sounds and movements can create a strong sense of urgency. You may find yourself especially sensitive to alerts, vibrations and visuals.

-  **The Sound Alert**
A ring, a quack or a loud vibrate; sonic nudges demand attention.
-  **The Smart Notification**
An alert that responds directly to your needs and schedules, trained by machine learning and artificial intelligence, maximises the chances that you will respond.
-  **The Smartwatch**
Spreading notifications across devices, such as a wearable smartwatch, means notifications are never far away and always in the back of your mind.

When was the last time you checked your phone because you felt it buzz?

How many of these compelling designs have you encountered today?