



Unboxing Tech Toolkit

By Pranava Institute

With Tactical Tech

Welcome to the Unboxing Tech Toolkit!

This toolkit belongs to and I describe myself as : x

To play with this toolkit, you will need:

What you need v



- A Printer
- A pen/pencil
- Your smartphone to play with
- Friends, if you feel like sharing!

Let's get started

Let's start with getting to know each other. Let's see, how many hours do you spend on your smartphone?

Now let's open our phone and check :

Settings > Digital wellbeing >

Let's fill out our screen time

What activity do you mostly do? Fill out the app and time you spend below:

| | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| Surf social media v | Play video games v |
| Chat with friends v | Learn through apps v |
| Watch videos v | Learn through videos v |



Is there a difference in the screen time you anticipated and you discovered through this exercise?

- Less than expected
- Same as expected
- More than expected

People experience time spent on their phones differently for several reasons. Sometimes we experience less time because we get immersed in the digital world. Conversely, we feel we spend more time than we actually do because we have our phones on us all the time!



Find the fact and fill in :

About Unboxing Tech Toolkit

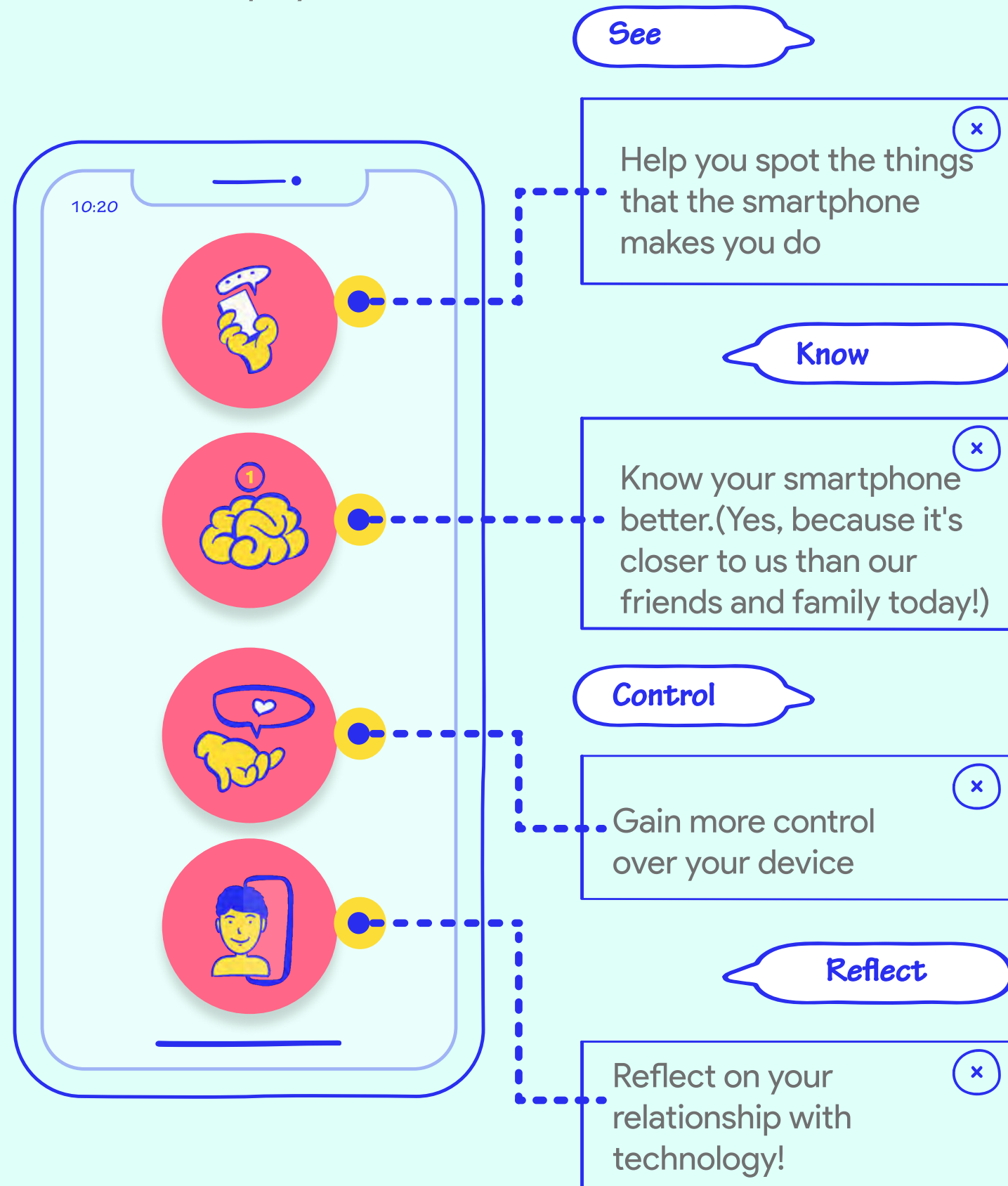
The Unboxing Tech toolkit is a guide to understanding your smartphone better. The smartphone was invented only 30 years ago, and today it impacts almost all parts of our life. It has transformed how we connect, work, make friends, entertain ourselves, and how we sleep and eat! This is why it is important to understand their design and technology.

The average number of hours a young teen spends on their phone is ____ in the US, ____ in the Philippines and ____ in India! These numbers have steadily increased in the last few years, showing us how important phones have become to young people across the globe.

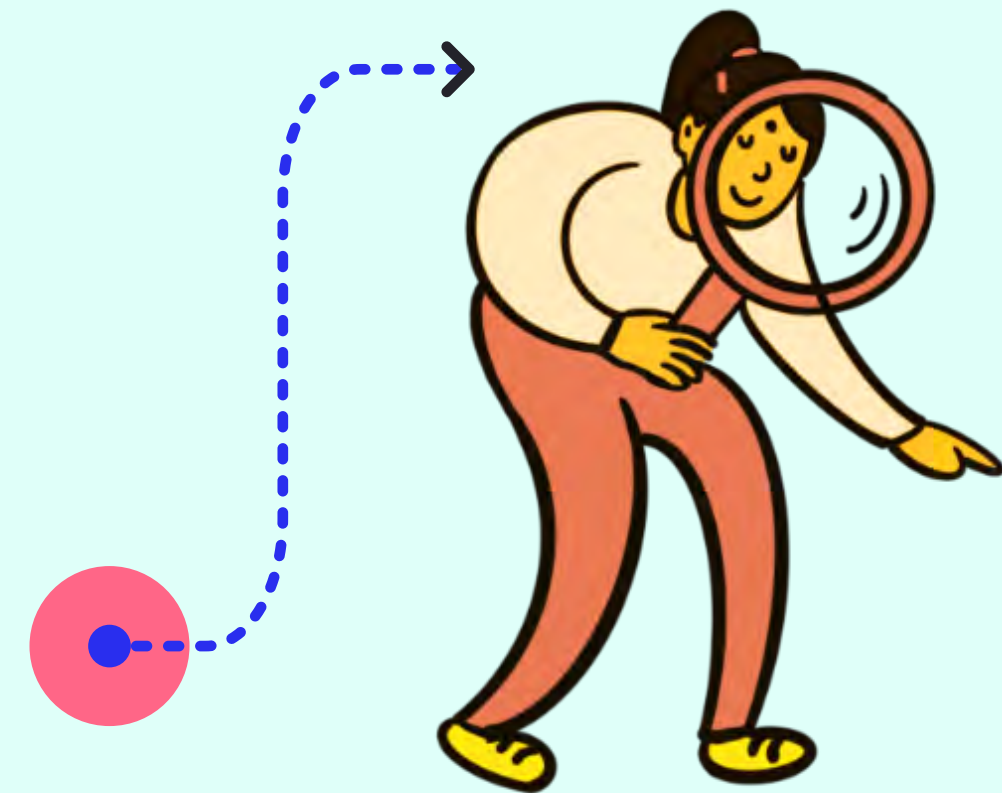
Answers: 7 hours and 22 minutes, 9 hours and 29 minutes, 6 hours 56 minutes

Let's learn the basics

This toolkit helps you to:



This toolkit uses concepts which will help us understand our smartphones, design, and ourselves better. Let's read and remember these! You'll find these icons across the toolkit as you go.



PERSUASIVE DESIGN
Design which influences human behaviour to achieve certain goals

Find the fact and fill in :

BIO-MEMORY
Muscle memory is our ability to reproduce a movement without conscious thought

INTRUSIVE
Apps and settings which take more data from us than necessary

1 SURVEILLANCE
.....
.....
.....

AGENCY
The capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices

INFO BYTES
This toolkit has titbits of information which may help you

3 ADS
.....
.....
.....

2 DARK PATTERN
.....
.....
.....

STICKINESS
This implies tech design which makes us repeatedly use an app or function

ANSWERS:

- 1) SURVEILLANCE: When apps and companies want more data from you than what you consent to, because they often benefit from it. This involves a breach of privacy.
- 2) ADS: Advertisements are now a part of social media and other content websites. These are aimed at using your attention to persuade you to make purchases online.
- 3) DARK PATTERNS: Dark Patterns are tricks used in websites and apps that make you do things that you didn't mean to, like buying or signing up for something

It's not you, it's designed that way!

This toolkit was designed by young people like you who wanted to know more about their phones, and stumbled into the fascinating world of design. Design means how something is created. Once they entered this world, they understood how big a role it played in their life. Here are a few ways how.

The Infinite Scroll

“One of my lessons from infinite scroll: that optimizing something for ease-of-use does not mean best for the user or humanity.”-Aza Raskin, Designer of the Infinite Scroll

Designed to give users a responsive experience, where they do not have to click buttons to load more information, the infinite scroll was supposed to be a design tool for good. It was believed that the infinite scroll would give a user the most information possible on any platform. However, there are the bad and ugly which exist alongside the good of the feature. Infinite scroll leaves many people feeling disoriented, lose focus and track of their activity or goal, and loss of control.



The user and the used

We often wonder why we are addicted to our phones, and particular apps on it. While we often think that "It's me!" or "My life is on here, this is how I connect with my friends". But its not always you. Phones and apps have something called Dark Patterns which are designed to make you stay longer, often against your will. Here is how...



Changing your defaults is harder

Phones often make it hard for us to change our default apps by designing for complexity. This means that when you perform an action on your phone- listening to music, playing a video, picking a social media app, or simply browsing the internet- your phone uses a default OS app to make it happen.

Fill in the blanks :

Can you think of three ways in which we can replace the infinite scroll and display information differently?

1

2

3

Pop! Goes the notification



1,534

Notifications are a big way in which our phones and apps get our attention, and make us spend more time on the platform. The function of the notification is achieved through : colour, pop-up, and corresponding icon. Notification colours are usually red, because it is the most attention-grabbing palette. Icons signal to our need for social validation and interaction. Using icons such as that of a heart, a bell, or people, tugs at our deepest psychological drives and the need for social approval and community. The need for being seen by others makes us return to the app to reassess our social relevance.

1 Welcome to the world of persuasive design



Design plays a huge part in what we do because we want to, and what we are made to do. Let's see an example. Often you may pick up your phone to look up some facts on the internet, but end up on social media, often for longer than what you anticipated.

Things I mostly want to do on my phone (Let's call this our "TO" box) ✕

Things I end up doing often/Catch myself doing (Let's call this our "FOR" box) ✕

.....

.....

.....

.....

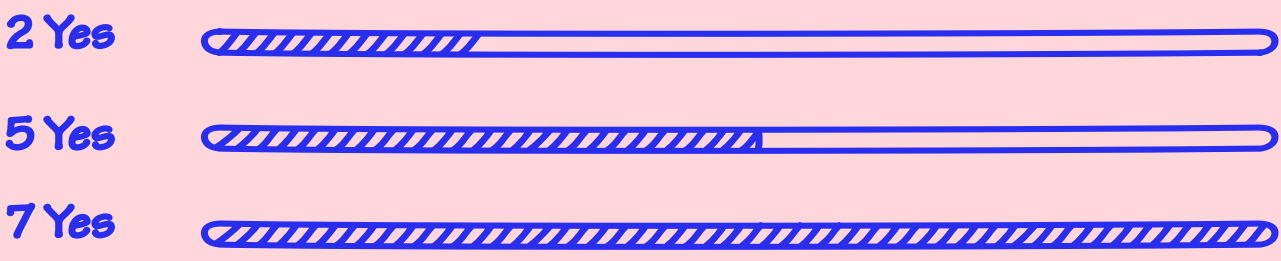
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.....

2 Together, these design decisions make us...

Tick the box if you find yourself doing any of these activities unconsciously:

| | Doomscroll | Gaming | Chat | Shop | Socialize | Surfing | Learn |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| No | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



- Yay! You control your phone use
- The design is getting to you!
- You need to re-evaluate your relationship with your device.

3 When I use my phone I feel..... >

Positive Emotions:

Negative Emotions:

✕

✕

✕

✕

✕

✕

✕

✕

4 These design decisions also make us feel a certain way in our interactions with our smartphones. Let's see how our phones make us feel by filling out the columns below:

- 1 Rarely
- 2 Sometimes
- 3 Often
- 4 All the time

(Fill a number below)

Compulsive Behaviour

Distraction

Tiredness

Feel Anxiety

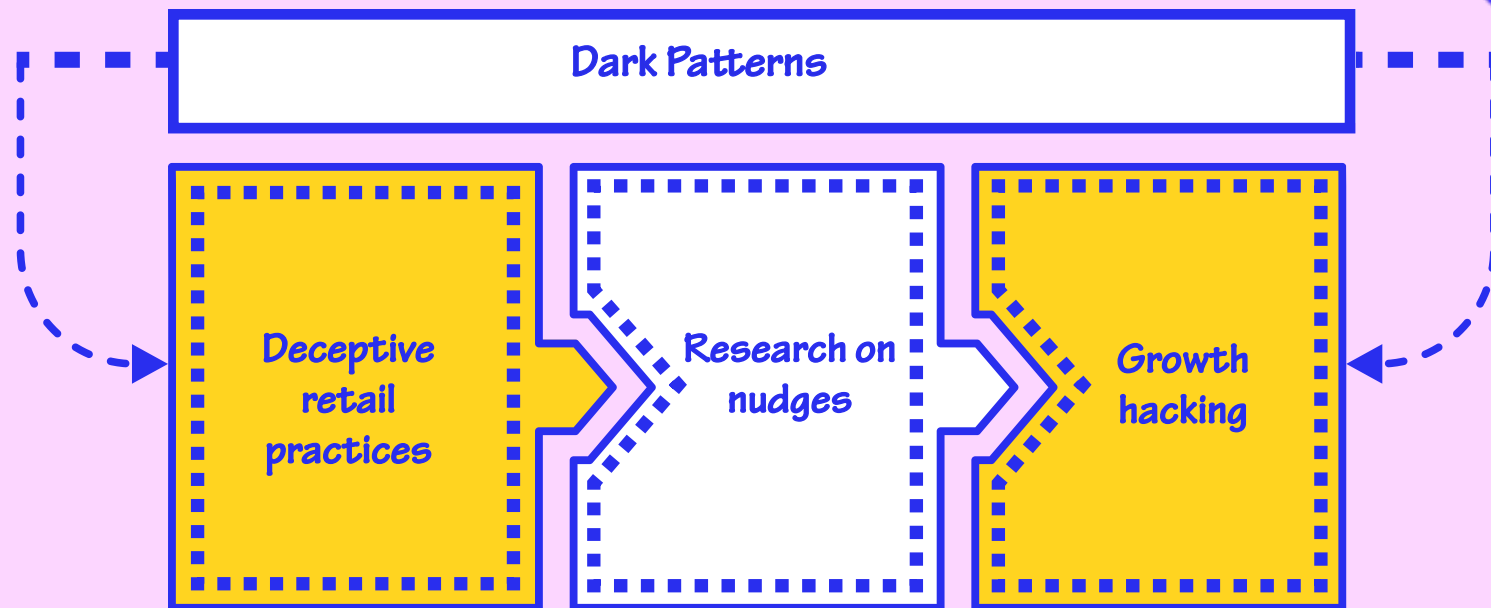
Lonliness

Sad

FOMO

But why design this way?

The reason why such design choices have been ubiquitous on the internet is because these have come to be understood as best practices to increase metrics like engagement and user retention. Such UX and UI decisions are a result of the long history of three things:



Apps and websites in silicon valley have been deeply influenced by three kinds of movements. These lead to designers, especially UX designers following certain industry practices to keep users engaged, hooked or addicted. One of the major ways in which this was thought of is the **Fogg's Behavior Model**.



The Scroll Game

Infinite scrolls are in almost every app we use. Let's observe: Open an app which has the infinite scroll feature and observe how you feel when you use it. ✕

- 1
- 2

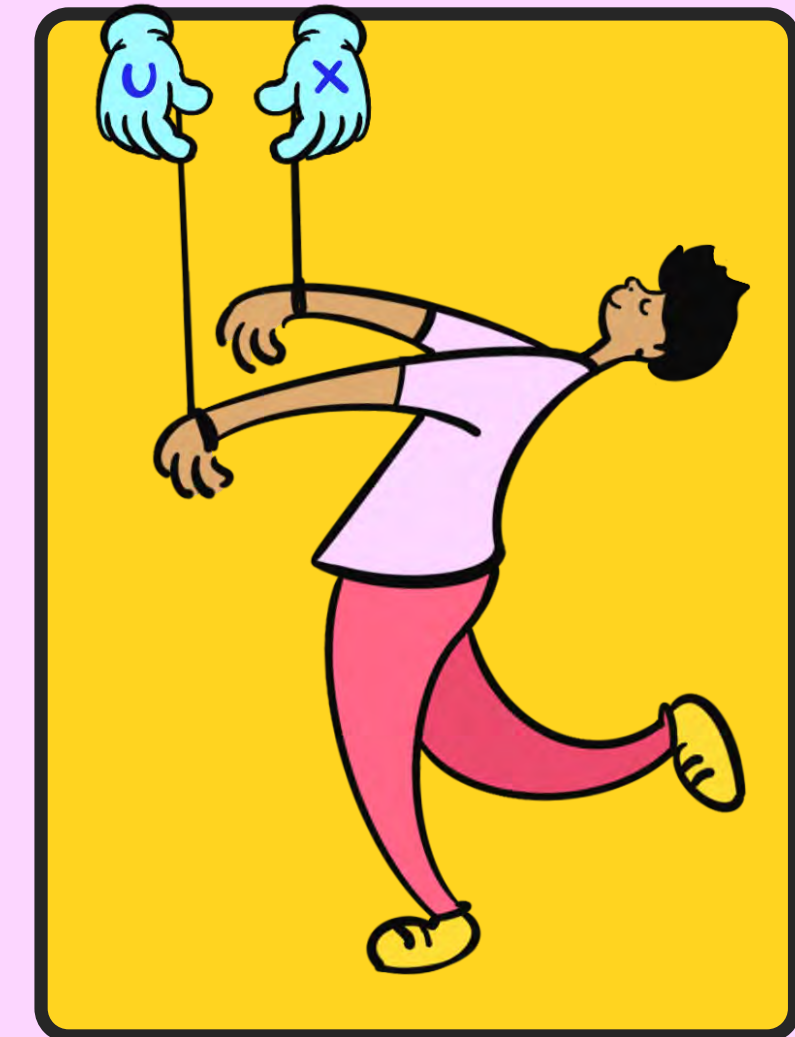
Many people feel exhausted, optimistic that what they want will come next, tempted to keep scrolling, slowed down because of lack of mapping of information. It reduces hesitation and conscious decision-making. ✕

Here is what we can do:

- 1 Define the goal for which you are on an app/website
- 2 Do a check with yourself every few minutes if you're doing what you came for (this is called self-observation!)
- 3 Chose an alternative which gives you pages so that you can have mental location of information
- 4 Close the app if you feel exhausted, or limit the time of use



The research across these three fields has resulted in the field of Persuasive Design. Persuasive design focuses on influencing human behavior through a product's or service's characteristics. Based on psychological and social theories, persuasive design is often used in e-commerce, organizational management, and social media and allows designers to achieve the desired behavior in users.



Let's breakdown the behavioural model

Fogg's Behaviour Model is a psychological model which states that three elements must come together for any behavior to occur. These are used to create effective app-designs. Three things make up the behavioural model: Ability, Trigger and Motivation. Try filling out each of these for yourself!

But Why Should I Care?

Because being able to spot how design plays on our minds helps us from falling victim to these design patterns.

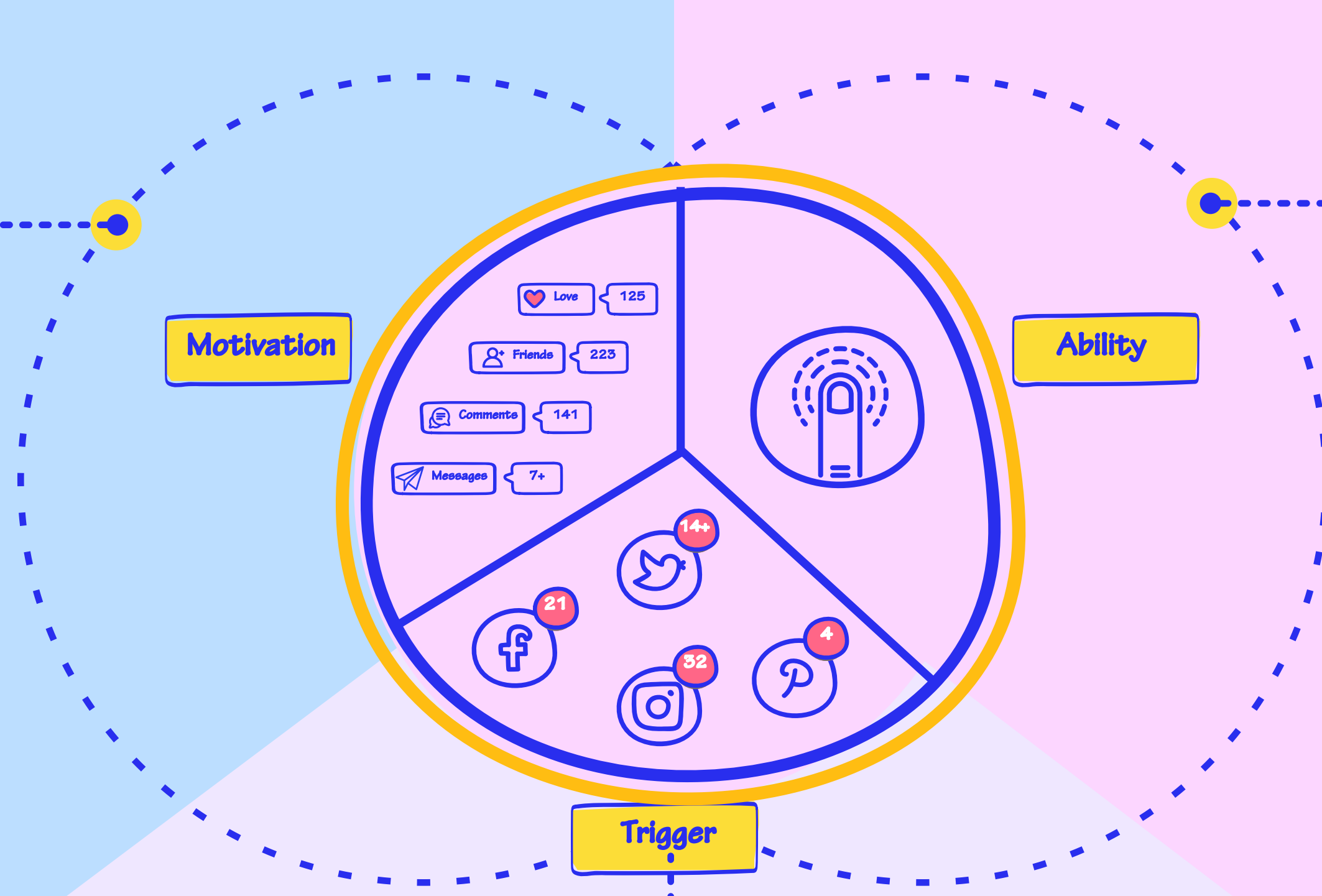


Motivation is the reason why we do anything. There are 6 core motivators according to Fogg's Model: Pleasure, Pain, Hope, Fear, Social Acceptance and Rejection. Eg. Likes on your posts are super motivators.

Are we able to perform particular actions online? Do we have the time, money and effort to do it? Eg. Scrolling on social media apps is super easy!

Grid of 20 empty speech bubble shapes for notes under the Motivation section.

Grid of 6 empty speech bubble shapes for notes at the bottom of the diagram.



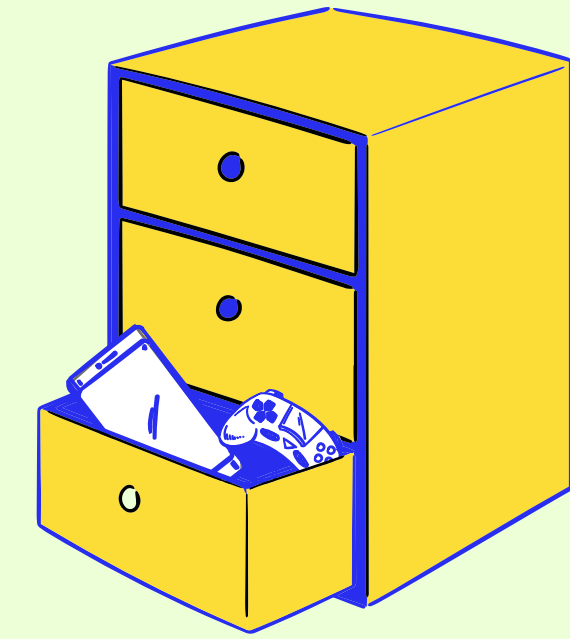
Grid of 10 empty speech bubble shapes for notes under the Ability section.

What prompts us to act in any space? Eg. Notifications make us act on our phones.

So how do we get our agency back?



Now that we know all this, what can we do about it? Research shows Indians spend an average of 1,800 hours on their phones annually manoeuvring through the digital world. We have already seen the power of knowing dark patterns and how that may help us be on guard. But below are a few personal tips to get you started:



The ultimate test: Can you put your phone back in your table drawer for an hour and enjoy?

Dig out your Life To-do List or Prepare one if you haven't already. Pick a hobby and immerse yourself in it. Do art, learn the guitar or do pottery.

Eating with a screen in front of you not only hampers digestion but also makes you less aware and miscalculate portions. Get off your phone while you eat and pay greater attention to your meal to avoid overeating and other bodily harms. Try to feel the taste & texture of food and observe how your body feels.

The no-phone zone: Keep a small space in your house an electronics-free zone. You may keep some books here, some plants, maybe your canvas for painting or anything for that matter that you would love to do.

Have fun!

Write down all the things you do on your phone. Now ask yourself, do these help me grow better everyday?

.....
.....

Find your most used apps. these could be browsers, social media or chat.

Now, find three alternatives and check them out to see if they:

- a help you save time
- b are less addictive
- c let you control your data
- d are privacy friendly



Use Focus Apps: Apps like Forest that block your phone access off for the duration you want to work for and makes your distractions unreachable. It will itch at first but enhance your creativity over time. Try Forest, Freedom or Noisli.




Try keeping your phone in your drawer and restore it to the hierarchy of an object for use in your mind. It's a simple, but powerful tool. You'll experience more freedom!

What do you do to gain more control and agency? Write down your thoughts, best practices, and share around!

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Meet the Team!






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Titiksha Vashist is a consultant and researcher on technology policy in India. Her work focuses on contextual policy-making and socio-political implications of emerging technology. She is also an educator and teaches courses that help young adults navigate a digital world. She holds a Masters's in International Relations from Jawaharlal Nehru University's School of International Studies. Her work ranges from academic writing to designing resources for specific audiences. She is passionate about building technological futures using emic Indian epistemologies.

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Shyam Krishnakumar is a technology policy consultant and researcher whose work engages with emerging technology in the Indian context. He has worked with key Indian think tanks and consults on technology policy for organizations across the US and Europe. Prior to this, he co-founded EduSeva, an ed-tech startup focussed on providing world class-education at the grassroots. Shyam is a Computer Science graduate and holds a Masters's in Political Science with a specialization in International Affairs.

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Athira K Das is a new media designer with a focus on user interface and experience design. A soon-to-be graduate of the National Institute of Design India with a master of design, she has diversified experience ranging from Product design to Visual design and creating 2d/3d Illustrations. She also holds a bachelor of design degree and has worked as a Graphic designer and UI/UX designer.

