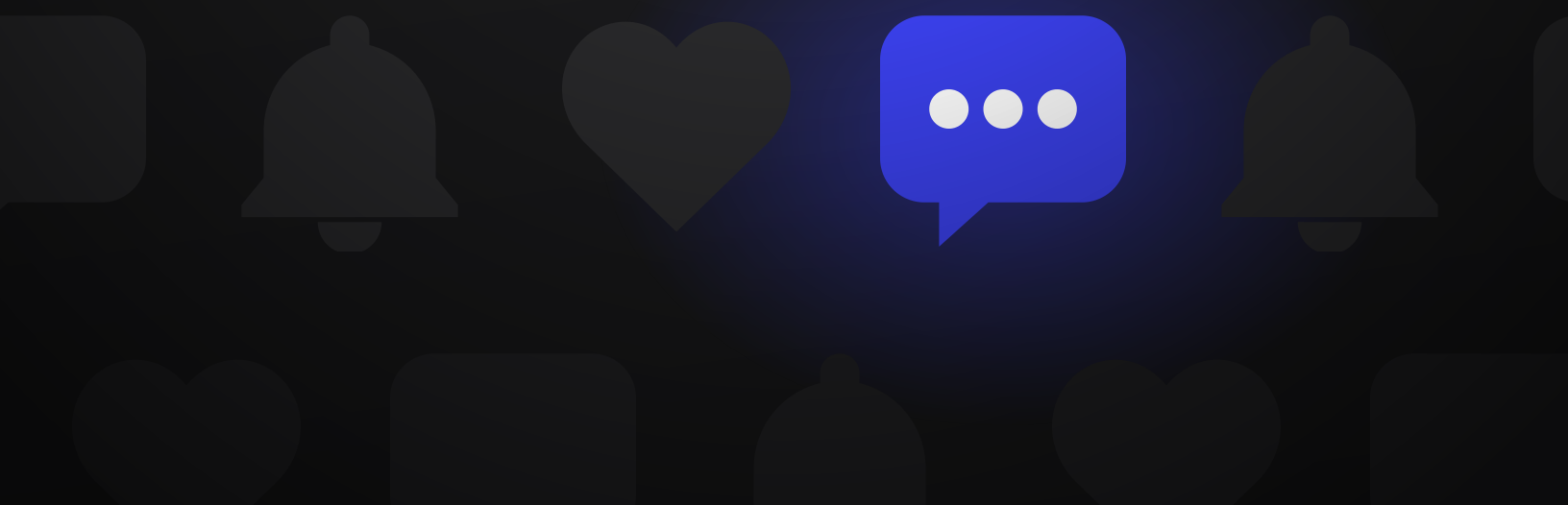
social.plus

Human Relationships

The answer to creating
a lovable product



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Why lovable products start with people

According to neuroscientist Antonio Damasio, emotions play an essential role in almost all decisions. From what we “feel” like eating to what we “feel” about a particular issue, our emotions shape how we respond to situations and things.

The people around us, our environment and our values all affect our emotions. That’s why brands and product developers must look into all these social connections to provide meaningful, emotionally connected products and services for their consumers.

However, despite knowing how these factors elicit positive emotions from customers, some companies still neglect these essential ingredients when building products.

What is the reason for this? Is it because companies still rely on impersonal and outdated product-building approaches? Do they fail to understand their customers’ needs, or are they simply out of touch?

By thinking about short-term building rather than long-lasting connection, brands miss the opportunity to create products that positively affect their customers’ lives in the long run.

How this book works

This book aims to help you produce something that consumers will love and keep for a lifetime. Divided into three parts, we'll look into:

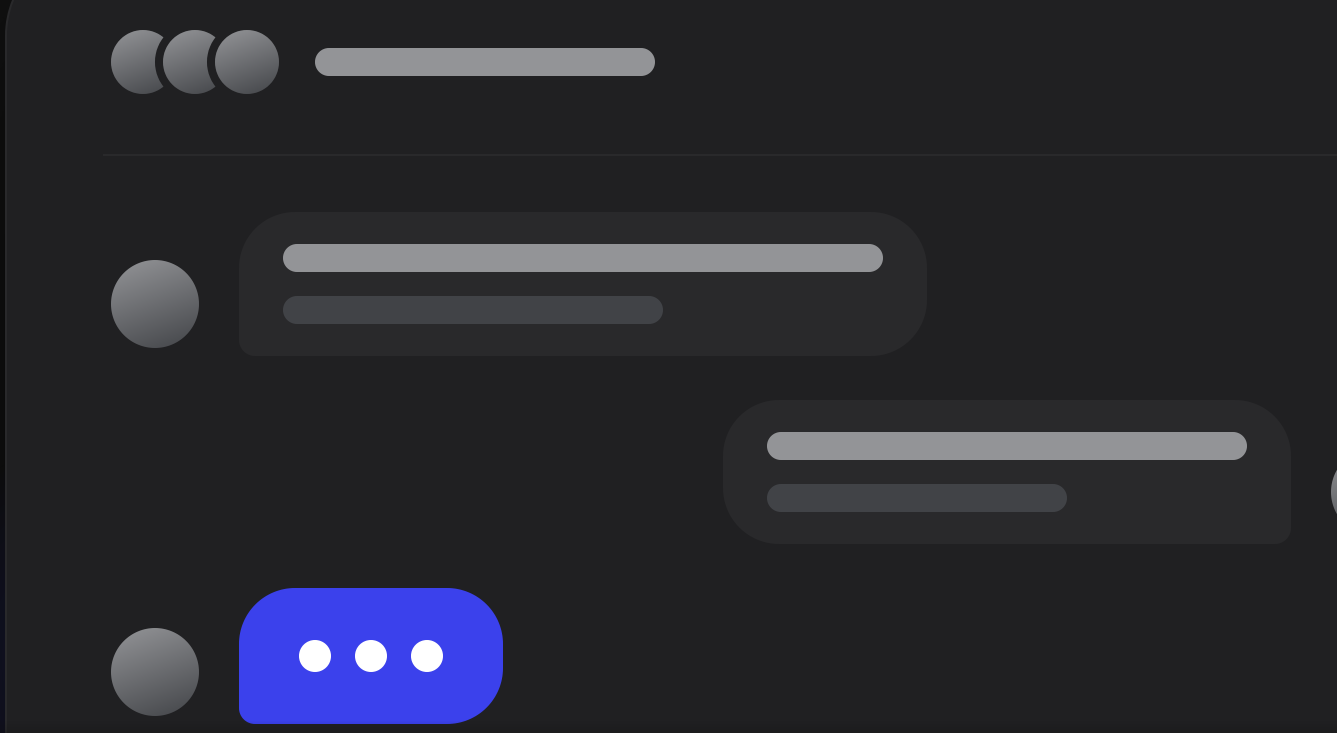
01 **Humans are social beings.** We look at how human relationships affect how we feel, and how we have shifted from offline to online connection.

02 **Humans and the products they love.** We look at building a brand and creating products people will love by understanding human emotions, relationships and interactions.

03 **Bringing human relationships into your product.** We dive into how integrating social features into your platform can help you create a lasting customer-brand relationship that goes beyond the transactional.

Each chapter unfolds how our relationships and emotions play a crucial role in building brand loyalty and attachment. We hope this book helps you create something that will impact your customers' lives in a world that craves authentic relationships and deep-rooted, meaningful connections.

Are you ready to start creating lovable products for your customers?



CHAPTER 01

Humans are social beings

Humans are social creatures, and it’s an innate need for us to form interpersonal relationships with the people around us.

From the womb, where humans connect to their mothers for sustenance, to adulthood, when most of our activities revolve around being with other people, a human’s sense of belonging is strong and evident every day. Throughout history, humans have lived with families, tribes and nations, and as part of a global, interconnected community.

> **“Humans are social beings, and we are happier and better when connected to others.”**
>
> PAUL BLOOM, PSYCHOLOGIST

CHAPTER 01

Humans are wired to connect

Studies have also revealed neurological responses to socialization. Neuroscientists found that we have a social reasoning system dedicated to helping us get along with others.

> **"The pain of social loss and the ways that an audience's laughter can influence us are no accidents. To the extent that we can characterize evolution as designing our modern brains, this is what our brains were wired for: reaching out to and interacting with others. These are design features, not flaws."**
>
> MATTHEW LIEBERMAN
>
> Professor, Social Cognitive Neuroscience Lab Director, and author of Social: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Connect

Lieberman, a professor at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Department of Psychology, Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences, wrote that our brains "experience threats to our social connections much like they experience physical pain." As with food and shelter, the neural link between social and physical pain makes staying social a lifelong need.

The World Health Organization (WHO) also stressed that social relationships are an essential determinant of health throughout someone's life. Belonging to a supportive, communicative community makes people feel cared for, loved and valued.

People with good relations are less stressed and depressed, and have a lower risk of chronic disease. Talking or being with other people dramatically increases our feeling of happiness, making us happier and healthier when we interact socially.

CHAPTER 01

Connecting when disconnected

There's no way around it: 2020 was not an easy year for most of us. The pandemic brought sudden lockdowns and an immediate shift to remote work, on top of the other social and political issues we faced that year.

That's why it became a struggle for many people when the pandemic forced them to stay indoors and distance themselves from their communities. According to the UK's Office for National Statistics, approximately one in five adults were likely to have suffered depression during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in June 2020.



1 in 5

adults were likely to have suffered depression during the pandemic (UK, June 2020)

To cope with the isolation, people relied on technology to connect despite the distance. In a Pew Research Center study, 32% of Americans surveyed said they had hosted or taken part in a virtual party or social gathering.

A study by Kantar found that social media use increased significantly over the past year. Based on a survey of more than 25,000 consumers across 30 countries, they found:

61%

increase in social media engagement

40%

increase in WhatsApp usage

37%

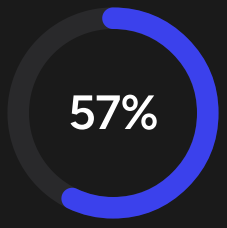
increase in Facebook usage

Other research also found:

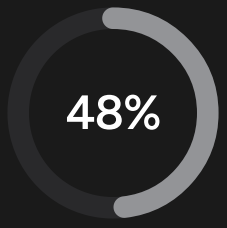
- Gallup found that 74% of respondents said social media is very important to them to stay connected with people close to them during the pandemic.
- According to a Facebook survey, messaging across Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp increased by more than 50% in the countries hit hardest by the virus.
- Twitter reported a 23% increase in daily users compared to the previous year.

A Global Web Index (GWI) survey from 2019 showed that social media had adverse effects on people's mental health, yet it became instrumental in keeping people connected during the crisis.

In another GWI survey, mental health concerns were prominent in the US and UK: 31% of UK internet users and 21% of US internet users were worried their mental health would deteriorate. Social media alleviated the feeling of isolation by connecting people, albeit virtually.



of internet users say social media has made them feel less lonely



of internet users say social media has made them feel less anxious or stressed

Source: How the outbreak has changed the way we use social media, Global Web Index, 2020

Social media, which started with the aim of connecting people who already knew each other, is now transforming with the growth of community platforms. From connecting with who you know, it became a safe space to meet and socialize with new connections.

Indeed, being able to connect with others is critical in one's life, and it is no different online. People used social media to meet their need for emotional connection through social distancing, so family and friends could stay connected despite being dispersed.



CHAPTER 02

Humans and the products they love

Creating a product is not always easy. From ideation and development to launch, keeping your brand and product top of mind is always a challenge.

Releasing a product comes with high risk. According to Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen, more than 30,000 new consumer products launch every year, and 95% of them fail.

> **“People don’t buy for logical reasons. They buy for emotional reasons.”**
>
> ZIG ZIGLAR, AUTHOR

CHAPTER 02

There are many reasons products do not find success, and one of the top reasons is that brands and product developers fail to know their customers. Marketing agency Veratempo believes that “a thorough and in-depth understanding of your target customer base” is the key to providing a unique customer experience.

Understanding your customers involves feeling what they feel: knowing their pains and joys, and making sure your product creates emotional attachment by filling a gap in their lives.

What’s love got to do with it?

Emotional attachment is a significant factor in making your product lovable. Consumer psychologist Peter Noel Murray said that “emotions may influence our behavior as consumers more than we’d like to admit.” According to him, functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) showed that consumers evaluate brands based on their emotions rather than on facts or information about a brand.

Emotional attachment comes in many forms, according to Michael R. Solomon, author of Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having and Being, and one of them is love. To him, consumers love a product when “it elicits emotional bonds of warmth, passion or other strong emotion.”

Susan Fournier, Dean of the Questrom School of Business at Boston University, also highlighted love, together with passion, as the core of a strong brand relationship. These emotions are reminiscent of feelings on an interpersonal level, and more than brand preference: participants with a strong brand relationship felt something was missing when they had not used the brand in a long time.

So how can your product elicit this strong emotion from your customers?

CHAPTER 02

Make your product lovable to your team

Studies found that the products people love are those they believe in and endorse. Surprisingly, companies don't have to look beyond their own workforce to see whether customers will love a product.

Evernote co-founder and executive chairman Phil Libin believes your team should love the products they build, first and foremost. The best way to ensure that is to make sure they love their jobs: the more they invest themselves in what they do, the more they will believe in the product and make it their own. Companies should show their teams why the product matters and what it can do for customers and the world.

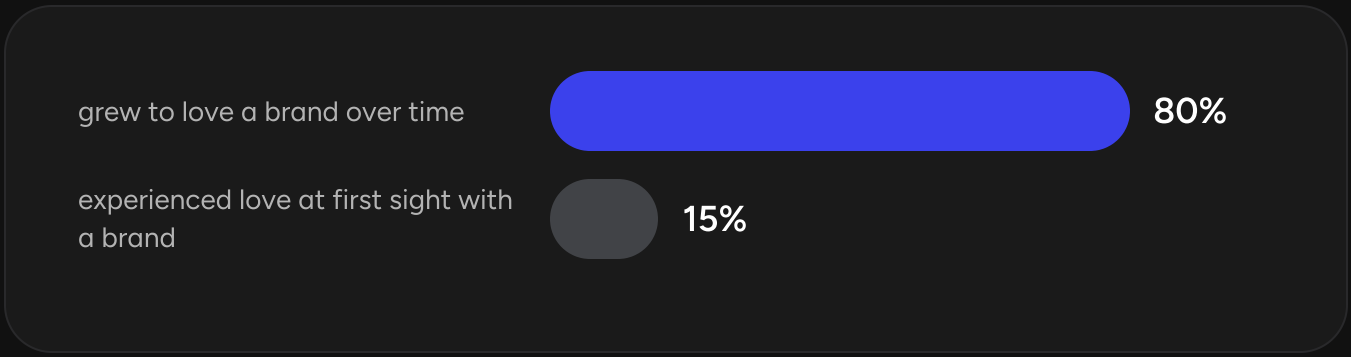
Another tip he shared is to make the product for yourself. Building for a market you don't care about keeps a product stuck in product-market-fit mode. Building with yourself in mind shortens iteration cycles and is more fulfilling, because everyone is invested in making it better.

> **"If you're honest with yourself and you're making a product for you, you can know when it's getting better. You can know when you're really being in love with certain features. You can know when it's going backward. You can know because you're the target audience."**
>
> PHIL LIBIN
> Co-founder and executive chairman of Evernote

CHAPTER 02

Make your users love it, too

Now that your team has rallied behind your brand, it's time to move to your customers. According to a survey by experience improvement company InMoment, 80% of respondents said they "grew to love" a brand over time. Only 15% said they experienced "love at first sight."



As with any relationship, earning your customers' affection takes time. It is an accumulation of everything your brand and product provide: a journey where you both come to understand each other, show up and, eventually, trust each other.

For your customers to love your product, you have to ensure they become attached to it.

Make your product serve a purpose in their lives that they find irreplaceable, so they use it again and again. Hendrik N. J. Schifferstein and Elly P. H. Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, writing in the International Journal of Design, defined consumer-product attachment as the strength of the emotional bond a consumer experiences with a durable product.

A product a person is attached to is considered unique and typically means a lot to them. The person would feel an emotional loss if it were lost, so they are unlikely to dispose of it. Here are four ways to establish that emotional connection.

CHAPTER 02 · STEP 01

Assess your company values

To form an attachment with your customers, make sure you share their values and support their community.

> **“The brands that will thrive in the coming years are the ones that have a purpose beyond profit.”**
>
> RICHARD BRANSON
> Virgin Group founder

A study by Edelman found that 50% of consumers worldwide say they are belief-driven buyers, and nearly two-thirds (64%) will buy or boycott a brand solely because of its position on a social or political issue. A brand should understand its audience and how they respond to issues, so it can align its stand with the values its customers uphold.

SIDE STORY

Taking a stand

Edelman shares three ways brands can take a stand and find a purpose:

01 **Purpose.** Clearly articulate why your brand exists and make a proactive effort to address that purpose. Your brand needs to live it every day.

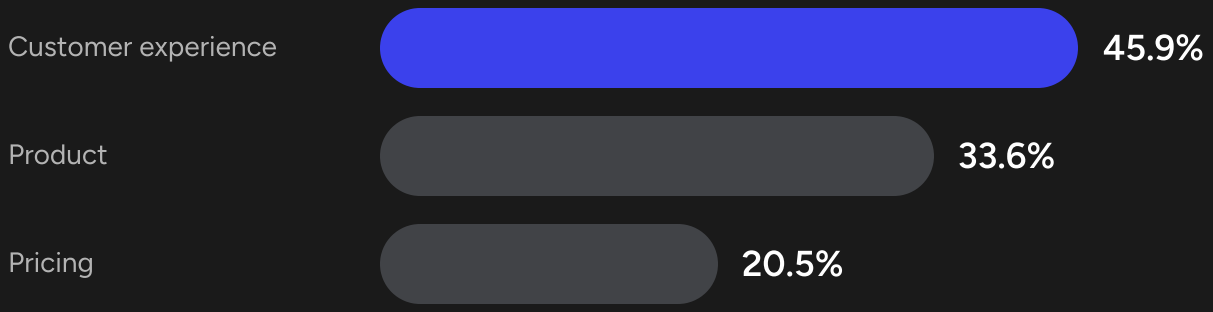
02 **Culture.** Authentically connect your stand to a relevant moment in culture: connect to it, don’t simply co-opt it.

03 **Activism.** Confront a controversial issue that directly affects your stakeholders or your brand, and make sure they will support your decision and act on it.

Provide a good customer experience

Are you delivering the best experience to guarantee satisfaction? Are you giving customers a good reason to stay or come back? CRM provider SuperOffice found that customer experience will remain a top priority for companies, and a focal point for the next five years.

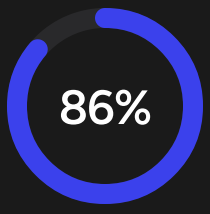
What is the top priority for your business in the next five years?



Source: 37 customer experience statistics you need to know for 2021, SuperOffice, 2021

More than the product, customers become attached to a brand because of their customer experience.

To create an emotional attachment to your brand and product, provide an excellent experience, from onboarding to after-sales. Good customer experience increases loyalty and satisfaction, and earns better reviews that customers pass on to family and friends.



of buyers will pay more for a better customer experience

Source: SuperOffice, 2021

CHAPTER 02 · STEP 02

As with any relationship, listening and responding fast are the keys to success, so brands must learn to listen to their customers. Hotjar says customer feedback is the number one driver of successful customer experience strategies: “Not only is collecting direct customer feedback critical for companies to execute their strategy, feedback is also the building block for creating the strategy to begin with.”

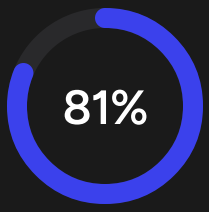
A fast response is also necessary, especially when customers share bad experiences in a review or on social media. In the same Hotjar survey, waiting for a response was the number one cause of customer frustration. Inc. suggests that once your brand resolves an issue, privately or publicly, you make sure the customer updates their review and their opinion with their social circle, so it doesn’t deter others.

CHAPTER 02 · STEP 03

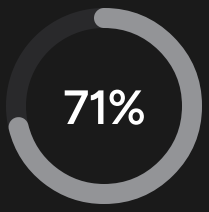
Win their family and friends

Emotionally connected customers involve their family and friends in brand and product decisions.

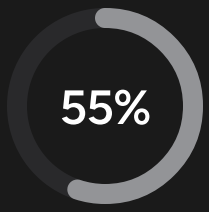
Capgemini found that 82% of emotionally connected customers will also promote a brand among their family and friends. HubSpot found that 81% of customers trust recommendations from family and friends. Customers don’t trust companies as much as they used to: today they trust their inner circle and review sites such as Glassdoor, Yelp and G2 to make informed decisions about a brand or product.



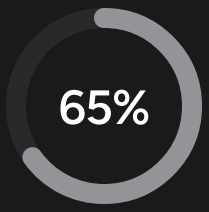
trust the advice of friends and family over business advice



don't trust sponsored social media ads



don't trust the companies they buy from as much as they used to



don't trust company press releases and advertising

Source: The Hard Truth About Acquisition Costs (and How Your Customers Can Save You), HubSpot, 2021

In research by Yieldbot and Kantar Retail, word-of-mouth advice from friends and family remains the top resource for building a product consideration set. American Express found that happy American customers share their positive experiences with about 11 more people, most likely their family and friends.



11 people

is how many people a happy customer shares their positive experience with, on average

A positive review from one person can trickle down to their family and friends, too. That's why it's crucial to build deep relationships with your customers: they can become brand advocates who bring the people closest to them to your brand and product.

Look into communities

As social beings, we need to be part of a group where members value our opinions. We want to communicate, collaborate and learn from each other. Each customer wants to be heard and to make an impact on other people's lives, especially in their communities.

Customers with a strong brand attachment can also influence people outside their circle. Review sites have become a popular source for customers seeking feedback from past and current customers, and they let customer communities connect and build relationships based on trust.

User communities are an exceptionally effective way to organize content and ideas at the community level. They shape the opinions of community members, and they are a good way for brands to gauge sentiment towards their products.

Building a community is the best marketing strategy, and it's crucial to make community-building a priority if you want a closer relationship with your customers.

Harvard Business Review highlights that strong communities help businesses acquire new members, resulting in lower customer acquisition costs and a tight viral loop. That's why it's necessary to leverage community in your brand and product marketing.

SIDE STORY

How LEGO leverages its community to bring ideas together

Since 1958, LEGO has carried its brand with a consistent promise: constantly innovate, build, have fun. Early on, the company knew how important its consumers were, calling them the "other half of the toy."

With that in mind, LEGO launched LEGO Ideas to turn its massive fan base into an online community. It is a perfect example of co-creation: fans express their ideas for new sets by designing and building them, enter contests and vote for their favorite ideas. Since 2008 the community has grown to over a million users, with more than 26,000 product ideas submitted and 28 sets produced.

What we love

Customer-brand connection. Before launching any new design, LEGO set up LEGO Review, where its teams evaluate which projects can become a LEGO product, and explain to fans what makes an idea win from both a design and a business perspective. Transparency is the fundamental rule.

Fans involved in product development. LEGO realized how powerful its fan base is and how endless its ideas are. Giving users the chance to design the next set is an excellent way to engage and connect with them.

Takeaway

LEGO built its strategy around one of its most powerful assets: the endless imagination of its users. By involving customers in product development, LEGO learns their expectations, encourages them to connect with like-minded peers and creates meaningful engagement with the brand.

CHAPTER 02

Positive customer relationships affect profits

It is a fact: emotionally connected customers bring more profit to your business. Their emotions play a critical role in deciding which brands and products they allow into their lives.

In an article published in Forbes, CEO Jia Wertz said that 65% of a company's business comes from returning customers, and that companies should focus on them and offer them perks.

> **"Since 65% of a company's business comes from existing customers, it's key to focus on the customers who already spend their time and money with your business and offer them perks. The investment will pay for itself."**
>
> JIA WERTZ
> Documentary filmmaker and CEO of Studio 15

$699

a year is what emotionally connected customers spend with a company (Motista)

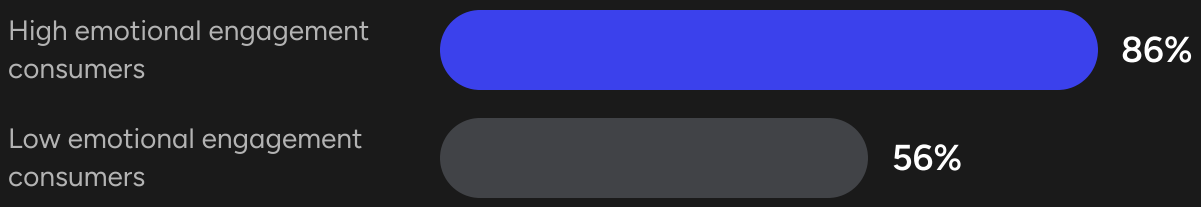
60–70%

probability of selling to an existing customer, versus 5–20% to a new one (ClickZ)

Emotionally attached, loyal customers never forget your brand and the products they love.

Emotionally connected customers keep supporting a brand or product because it stays on top of their minds.

“I always think of the brand I am loyal to when I need something in that product or service category”



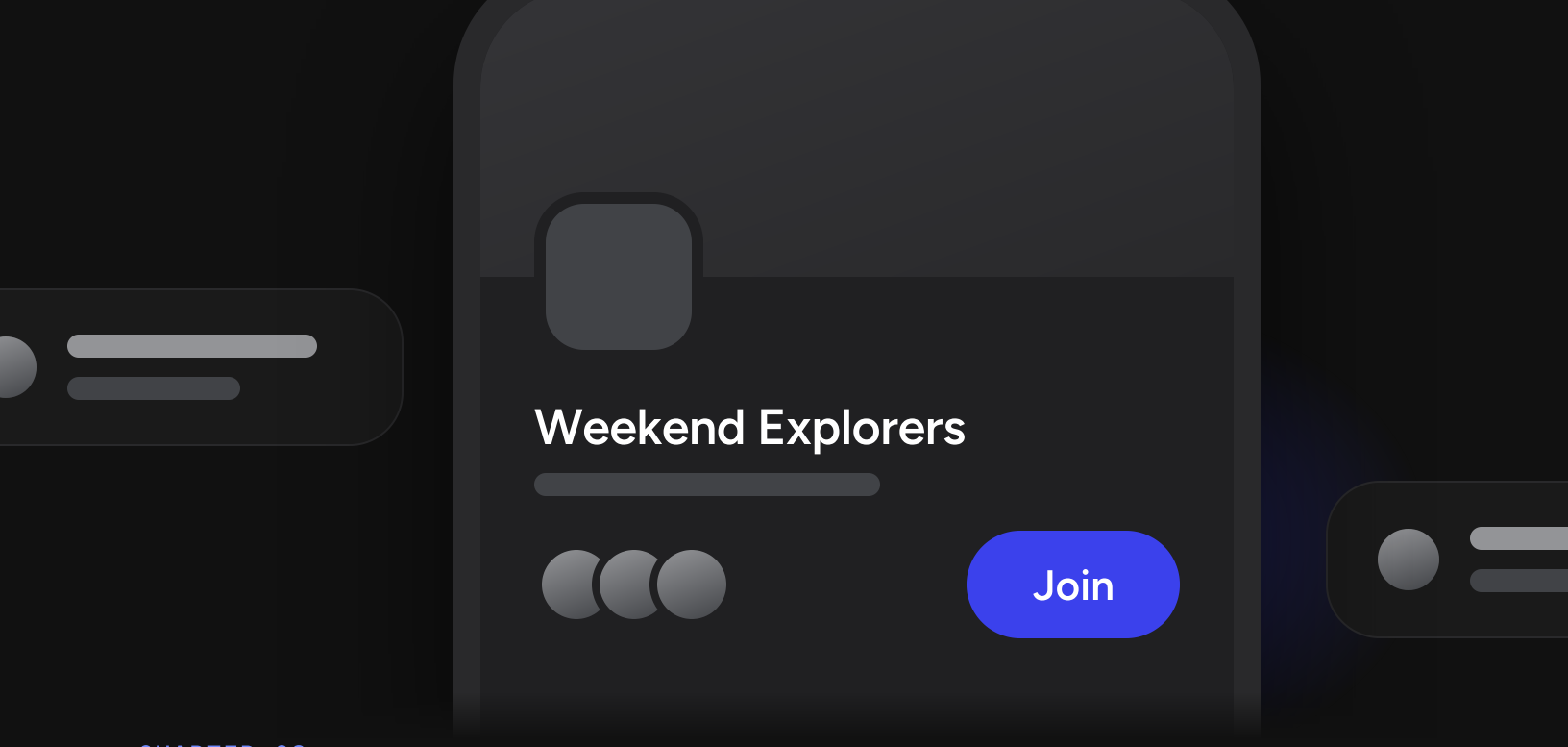
Source: Loyalty Deciphered: How Emotions Drive Genuine Engagement, Capgemini, 2017

Capgemini adds: “by cultivating emotional connections with consumers, brands can benefit not only from greater wallet share of their loyal consumers but also the positive word-of-mouth.”

These customers also become willing brand ambassadors, promoting your brand to their family, friends and community.

Emotions play a crucial part in a person’s decisions, and the primary emotion you want to impart to your customers is love.

Emotional attachment to your brand and products is ultimately vital to your success, so use every opportunity to make new and existing customers feel nothing but love for your brand.



CHAPTER 03

Bringing human relationships into your product

After learning why humans need to be social and how emotions drive their decisions, it's time to bring these factors into your product.

When customers feel seen, listened to and valued, they feel more engaged with a company, and are more likely to support it or buy again. Social platforms give customers quick ways to reach the brand and the people who support it the way they do.

Look at today's most downloaded apps: social media applications are at the top of the list, and social platforms have outperformed other categories. Why? Because humans are social beings, and these platforms give them a space to socialize online.

CHAPTER 03

It is a vital part of our DNA to connect and form communities with people, even if it’s virtual.

That’s why an online social presence is a staple of today’s marketing strategies. It lets brands reach customers in many ways, and lets people meet new acquaintances, widen their network and reach anyone who shares their interests.

While most brands rely heavily on Facebook, X (then Twitter), Instagram and TikTok to reach customers, they can do more with social features built into their own digital platforms. In-app social features improve the customer experience and make your product stand out, giving customers a familiar way to connect with you and their community without signing up for yet another social channel.

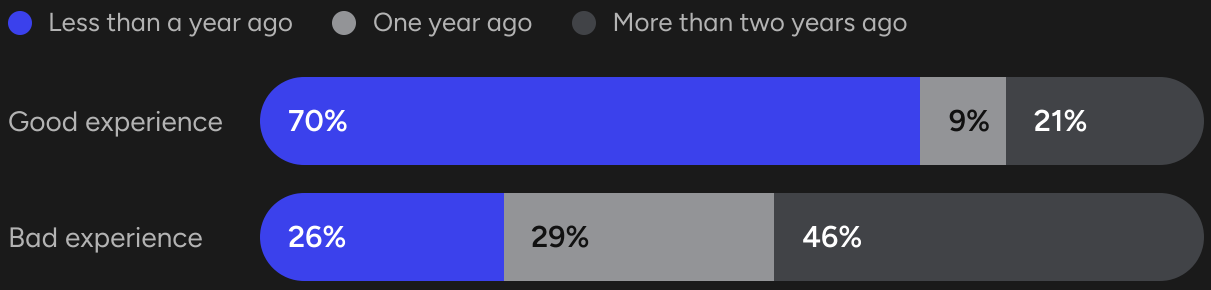
Unify ways to connect

Did you know that a typical user has an account on almost nine social media platforms?

An integrated social feature on your website or app gives people one seamless place to connect. By removing the need for other chat apps to talk to people and to your brand, you can improve your customers’ communication experience tremendously.

An integrated chat on your website or app also helps you address issues right away, showing that you are attentive and care about your customers’ needs. Live chat cuts the time it takes to resolve problems: according to one survey, 41% of customers prefer live chat for reaching customer support teams.

How long ago did you have the good or bad customer service experience?



Source: The business impact of customer service on customer lifetime value, Zendesk, 2020

A Zendesk survey found that 69% of participants associate good customer service with a quick resolution of their issue, and 89% say a quick response to an initial inquiry is essential when buying from a brand. Customers also remember negative experiences more than positive ones.

> **"People will often stop buying from a company altogether due to a poor experience. When consumers were asked about customer service experiences that happened a long time ago but still impact them today, 46% remember bad experiences from two or more years ago. In contrast, only 21% remember good experiences from a similar time period."**
>
> ZENDESK, 2020
> The business impact of customer service on customer lifetime value

Live chat also encourages loyalty: 82% of customers are more likely to convert if you chat with them first. To build a lasting relationship, make sure your customer service responds quickly, which a built-in live chat in your website or app makes possible.

CHAPTER 03

Turn casual users into communities

When people feel sad and isolated, they turn to their communities for support. More and more people turn to virtual communities to cope with loneliness: with online groups and chats, they can reach like-minded people even when apart.

As people crave community more than ever, brands and product developers should look into communities to increase brand awareness, get to know customers better, grow loyalty and find new ways to increase revenue.

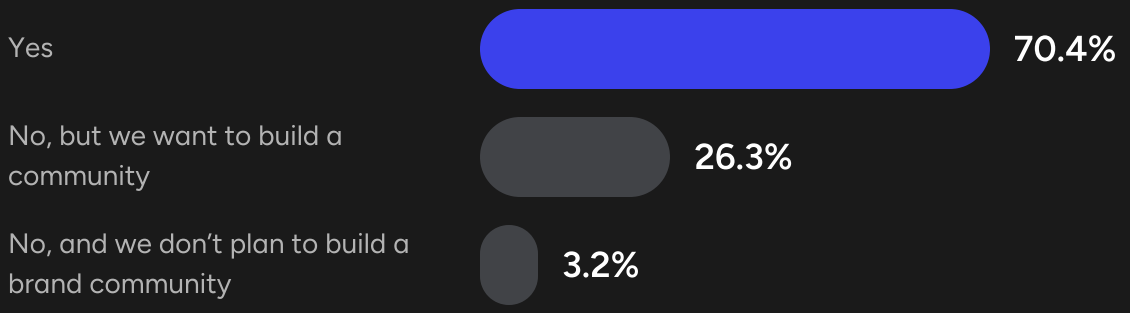
Popular community features such as comments and likes are a good gauge of what your users are into. They also connect customers with people who share their interests, even outside their circle.

Live streams of events such as sports matches and concerts on your website or app, paired with a live group chat, let users share the joy of the moment even virtually. They connect fellow fans and bring more users to your platform, establishing it as the place to be for supporters like them.

> **“A community is a group of people learning and growing from each other in an environment of acceptance, love, respect, and shared values. Communities seek to show others the benefits of the brand or community and invite others to be a part. Communities can be large or small, but they all have a common cause.”**
>
> ASPIREIQ, 2020
> Deconstructing the Consumer Engagement Gap

Influencer marketing platform AspireIQ found that 92.3% of brands said community has had a positive impact on their brand. Many brands use communities to test products, giving them a new way to collaborate with customers, and to collect feedback and customer data, giving their communities the power to help shape their products.

Do you already have an active community around your brand?



Source: Deconstructing the consumer engagement gap, AspireIQ, 2020

If you have a digital platform, it's time to start integrating social features. Facebook found that users are 2.7 times more likely to stay in an app for a sense of community and belonging, which shows how vital in-app communities are for retention.

2.7×

more users are likely to stay in an app for a sense of community

The more users you retain, the more you save: marketing to an existing customer costs about $7, while reaching a new user costs roughly five times that. Social features let customers connect with fellow users on an emotional level, build communities and develop the loyalty only returning users bring.

CHAPTER 03

Personalize customer-brand relationships

Personalization is a powerful tool. Today's consumers want a tailored experience: they expect companies to understand what they want and offer what they need, instead of pushing irrelevant information, products and services. In fact, 74% of customers feel frustrated when website content is not personalized.

Personalization drives loyalty and a stronger customer-brand relationship that trickles down to customers' inner and outer circles. That's why 89% of businesses are already investing in it, including Coca-Cola, Sephora and Wells Fargo.

> **"Digital professionals are prioritizing personalization today... But many still struggle to understand their customers, gather customer data, and deliver contextually relevant and value-adding experiences."**
>
> BRENDAN WITCHER
> Vice president, principal analyst at Forrester

This is where social features help. According to Accenture, 83% of consumers are willing to share their data for a more personalized experience. Chatbots on your website or app can collect it and store purchase history, and instead of gathering data from scattered social sites, you can learn preferences from your communities and how members interact with the content in their feeds.

When customers feel they are more than just a number, they are more likely to stay loyal to a brand.

For an e-commerce site, shoppers are more likely to buy from you again if you offer relevant recommendations. Customer data platform Segment found that personalization leads to repeat buyers: 44% of those surveyed said they would likely buy again.

80%

of companies saw an uplift since implementing personalization (Econsultancy)

44%

of shoppers say they would likely buy again after a personalized experience (Segment)

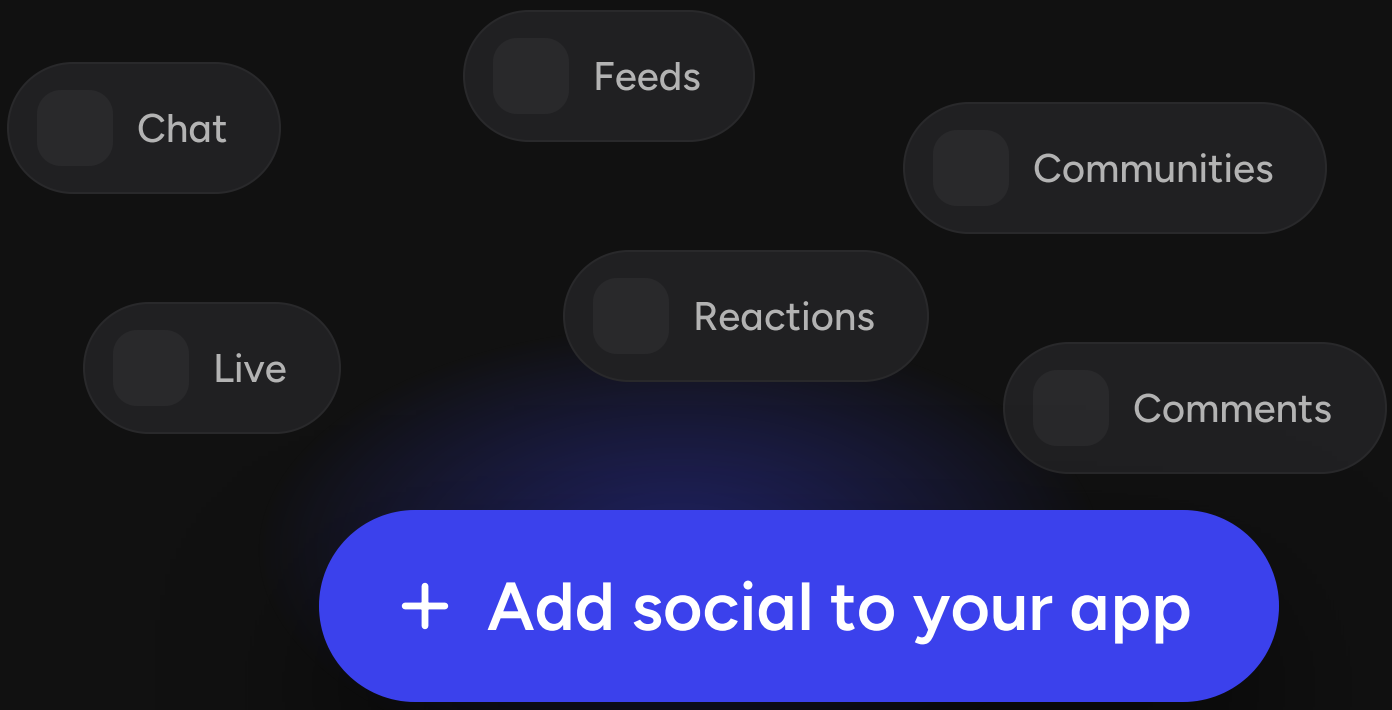
Personalization software company Monetate also found that 95% of companies that saw 3× ROI from their personalization efforts increased profitability in the year after they implemented it.

By using personalization to improve the customer experience, customers will feel strongly attached to your brand and products, and keep coming back for more.

Add social features to your platform

Now that we've covered the many ways social features build a product people love, how do you start plugging them into your digital platform?

At social.plus, we believe the future is social. Our mission is to unlock the power of social experiences on any digital platform, with scalable solutions that let companies build social features into their apps and digital channels.



CHAPTER 03

Build it with social.plus

social.plus lets companies add plug-and-play social features to their apps and websites to drive engagement, build communities and grow revenue.

Instead of developing everything from scratch, you use our ready-made modules, and all that's left for you is integration and front end. Our SDKs allow deep customization and an upgradable UI, making it easy to add social features to your app.

We aim to bring the power of social to your business and give your customers the best experience, one that makes them love your brand and your products.

Contact Sales →

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CUSTOMER STORY

How AirAsia used social integrations to reach 300,000 users

AirAsia, a leading low-cost airline in Asia, discovered the power of building a community to drive user engagement with social features built into its app.

AirAsia operates domestic and international flights to more than 165 destinations across 25 countries. Its brand has a strong presence in ASEAN and has won multiple awards for its digital transformation. One of its digital products is its mobile app, with over four million monthly active users.

The challenge

AirAsia wanted to turn its app into a more community-driven platform: from a ticket booking tool into a travel lifestyle app. To appeal to a broader community, it aimed for a less transactional, more content-driven application.

The goal was to get people to use the app regularly, even when they are not flying. With a social dimension, users would go beyond buying tickets: interacting with other members, getting informed and sharing their thoughts, generating their own content, talking to others and building a sense of belonging in the in-app community.

The solution

AirAsia initially planned to build the community feature with its in-house development team. When it discovered social.plus (then Amity), it realized we could do most of the heavy engineering for the community feature.

That let AirAsia's developers focus on guaranteeing the best experience for its many users. With the large user base AirAsia had built over the years, the biggest challenge was a service that could handle message broadcasts to over 300,000 users simultaneously.

300,000

users reached simultaneously by in-app message broadcasts

The result

Adding social features was a success. It improved the overall user experience, turning the app from a ticket-purchasing platform into a travel lifestyle app and community. AirAsia saw higher user engagement, with longer average sessions, more user-generated content and a high number of messages sent.

The results showed how popular social features are with users who want a sense of belonging and to express themselves with others. The number of users also grew significantly, with more community members joining every day.

Think of your customers as humans

Today, when everyone craves authentic human experiences, even online, it is essential to use this knowledge to strengthen your relationships with your customers.

Adding social features lets you bring the essence of every human interaction into your product. Give customers the means to connect, start communities and, ultimately, build a lasting relationship with you.

Looking into the core of being human, the relationships we build with other people and the emotions behind them, can help you make product development more human-centric.

Creating a lovable product can be challenging, but it is definitely doable.

Thinking about your customers as humans instead of sales numbers can shift the way you build your brand and your product, making it a purposeful, humanized experience for you, your team and your customers.

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Let social.plus bring social experiences to your app today.

Chat, feeds, communities and live experiences that turn casual users into people who love your product.

Contact Sales →