

7 Psychology Facts That All Social Media Marketers Should Know

What do **psychology** and **social media** have in common?

A lot more than you might imagine! Believe it or not, there are some very scientific reasons that people like, share, comment, click, and even purchase products online.

Understanding the psychology facts behind the *way audiences think on social media* is the first step in creating a better experiences, stronger relationships, and even more loyal customers in the long run.

This week on The Science of Social Media, we're looking at **7 psychology facts that all social media marketers should know** and how you can apply them to everything from content and customer support to strategy and execution.

Let's kick it off!

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What you'll learn in this episode

What follows is a lightly edited transcript of the conversation between Hailley Griffis and Brian Peters. Short on time? No worries! Here are four quick takeaways:

- The most successful marketers regularly use psychology to help them be better at their jobs
- One of the most effective ways to build trust and credibility for your brand is to be transparent and not shy away from your flaws
- Colors are powerful tool because they have a huge affect on people's behavior and how they perceive your brand from the very beginning
- According to a report by Psychological Science, evoking strong emotions can increase the likelihood of something being shared

7 Psychology Facts That All Social

Media Marketers Should Know

- Psychology Fact 1: Transparency and building trust with customers
- Psychology Fact 2: Why emotions are a powerful tool (and even contagious)
- Psychology Fact 3: The Halo effect and how it impacts our perceptions
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- Psychology Fact 7: The 5 psychological reasons behind why people share online

Hailley: Hi everyone! I'm Hailley Griffis and this is The Science of Social Media, a podcast by Buffer. Your weekly sandbox for social media stories, insights, experimentation, and learning.

Brian: Welcome to episode #107! I'm Brian Peters and this week we're here to talk to you all about psychology and how it can help you with your social media marketing. We pulled together 7 things that all social media marketers should know and we can't wait to share them with you!

Hailley: It's been awhile since we've had a good psychology episode, this is going to be great! Let's kick off the show!

Brian: Before we get started let's talk about marketers using psychology for a moment, because most marketers are not psychologists – although if you are that's a huge leg up!

But many successful marketers are regularly using psychology to help them be better at their jobs and connect with their audience.

We're all about being thoughtful and honest marketers who use

psychology ethically and respectfully to attract and engage an audience.

Hailley: Really well said, Brian! With that in mind, let's jump right into the psychology.

1. Transparency and building trust with customers

First off, and I love this one, is that one of the best ways to build trust and credibility for your brand is to **be transparent** and not shy away from your flaws.

So if you are familiar with Buffer, you know that we're all about transparency. It's one of our core values and you can go online right now and look up how much money Buffer is making and even check out Brian and I's salaries.

Now, we are not transparent because of the marketing benefits, but after becoming transparent we definitely saw more and more benefits, including marketing ones, to our transparency.

Brian: Exactly, so let's talk a little bit about why transparency is so powerful. Well, it's no secret that people tend to question marketing claims, and it's for a good reason. Many marketing claims simply aren't credible.

So the way to gain trust is to be transparency and right off the bat, point out your flaws or product shortcomings.

Be really open about what your product does and does not do. You can do this in social media posts, ads, in engagement when customers are asking you questions, there are tons of opportunities to be more open and start building trust with your audience.

Hailley: Yes, I love that you mention ads as well. I found potentially the original example of that in advertising, it's actually still referenced textbooks today! In 1949, Volkswagen

came out with an ad doing pointing out their own flaws. It's known as the Lemon ad.

So there's the word lemon as the headline and then a photo of a Volkswagen beetle and below it the copy reads:

"This Volkswagen missed the boat. The chrome strip on the glove compartment is blemished and must be replaced. Chances are you wouldn't have noticed it; Inspector Kurt Kroner did."

And then the ad went on to talk about how important attention to detail is for the folks at Volkswagen. The Lemon ad is a famous example of how to optimize credibility and it is so easy to replicate.

2. Why emotions are a powerful tool (and even contagious)

Brian: The second psychology fact that we're touching on today is that emotions are really powerful and even contagious.

Evoking strong emotions can **increase the likelihood of something being shared**, according to a report by Psychological Science. And while any content that was emotional did affect the audience, the University of Pennsylvania found that more specifically, positive content had the best results. The more positive the content, the more it was shared.

This is because it makes the person who is interacting with that content more positive and happy, so they are far more likely to want to share it and spread the happiness.

Hailley: And emojis have a really interesting place in all of this as well.

So as humans, mimicking expressions when you are face-to-face is one of the ways that we become closer with each other. And scientists found that using an emoji activates the same parts of the brain and replicates the same experience as those face-to-

face interactions, making us all more connected.

I wonder if it's even more powerful with Apple's new emojis that copy your exact facial expressions?

Brian: There are a lot of ways you can use this information to your advantage as a social media manager.

A great place to start is to look at the tone of your social posts and check them for positivity and happiness. Then, try and share more feel-good stories from your customers or in the other content you curate. A few other things that you can do are use humor in your content, and of course, add positive and happy emojis to your posts.

3. The Halo effect and how it impacts our perceptions

Hailley: Next up, let's talk about something called the Halo effect and just how much it really affects us.

The halo effect is a type of immediate judgement discrepancy, or cognitive bias, where a person making an initial assessment of another person, place, or thing will assume ambiguous information based upon concrete information.

This is like the expression, you never get a second change to make a great first impression.

Brian: Exactly! What this means in practice is that we **tend to allow a single attractive quality of a person or brand influence our judgement** for other unrelated aspects.

And what we really want to emphasize here is how much celebrity endorsements can influence perceptions of a brand, where the audience might associate the traits of the celebrity with the brand or product.

Essentially what we're saying is that influencer marketing

works, it's backed by psychology.

Hailley: Yes! Influencer marketing works and also social proof is important.

Here are some ways you can **leverage the Halo effect** in your social media marketing:

- You can highlighting a recognizable customer or get a customer testimonial.
- You can work with recognizable influencers or if possible get a celebrity endorsement.
- You can associate with cool companies that enhance your brand, this is something we do quite often and it is definitely something we recommend.

Onto psychology fact number four!

4. Using reciprocity to increase action

Brian: The fourth piece of psychology we want to chat through today is reciprocity.

So the concept of reciprocity is simple – if someone does something for you, you naturally will want to do something for them. This is right from Dr. Robert Cialdini's book, *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*.

I think we've all experienced this. If a friend invites you to their party, for example, it may feel like there's an obligation for you to invite them to a future party you are hosting.

Hailley: Yes, and in the context of a social obligation people are more likely to say yes to those who they owe.

So what's interesting here is that the key to using the reciprocity is to be the first to give and to ensure that what you give is personalized and unexpected.

For social media marketers, giveaways, free content, and unexpected resources are all great examples of this.

Brian: Totally! This is again something we've done at Buffer, though I don't think we knew what the principle was really called before this episode, but it has also worked really well for us.

We sent people who participated in our Twitter chat for the first time stickers, it was unexpected by them and I'm sure some people kept coming back because of that.

So think of ways you can use reciprocity in your social media marketing, and it can be anything from stickers, to an ebook, or maybe a free design template.

Just be sure you're giving away the free thing before you ask for something in return.

5. The Baader-Meinhof phenomenon and frequency illusion

Hailley: Alright, let's see if I can pronounce this next one. It's called the Baader-Meinhof phenomenon, or the less complicated version is the frequency illusion.

This phenomenon occurs when the thing you've just noticed, experienced or been told about suddenly crops up all the time. It gives you the feeling that out of nowhere, pretty much everyone you know is talking about the thing you just noticed.

And you're not crazy; you are totally seeing it more. But the thing is, of course, that's because you're noticing it more.

Brian: Yes, I've definitely experienced this and I'm sure our listeners have too.

According to PS Mag, this phenomenon is caused by two processes. The first process is **selective attention** and it

kicks in when you're struck by a new word, thing, or idea; after that, you unconsciously keep an eye out for it, and as a result find it surprisingly often.

The second process is **confirmation bias** and it reassures you that each sighting is further proof of your impression that the thing has gained overnight popularity.

Hailley: For marketers, this phenomenon is precisely why nurturing is incredibly important. Once someone starts noticing your brand, maybe they've come across a Facebook post or gone to your website, then you'll want to help them start seeing you "everywhere."

One of the best ways to increase the effectiveness of your sales funnel is to send audiences retargeting ads and Facebook Pixel is a great tool to do just that.

6. Color and its impact on social media marketing

Brian: Now, let's talk about color.

Color might be the part of psychology that marketers are more familiar with. We chatted about colors back in episode #61 and specifically why Facebook is blue.

Colors are powerful because they **affect people's behavior** and how they perceive your brand.

You might not have thought that color could impact social media strategy, but the psychology behind colors proves they are worth the extra effort.

Hailley: Yes they are! According to a study called Impact of Color on Marketing, people make up their minds within 90 seconds of their initial interactions with either people or products. About 62 to 90 percent of the assessment is based on colors alone.

What's interesting here is that although certain colors do tell us specific things, and we'll get to that in a minute, but it's less about the meaning behind the colors and more about whether or not the colors line up with what people expect from your brand personality.

Brian: Exactly! So a big takeaway here is to start **considering color in your social media content and plan**, but also think about how that color lines up with your brand voice and tone.

Let's also take a look at some information from a KissMetrics infographic where they looked at color. According to them, here are what a few popular colors make us feel:

- **Yellow:** optimism and youth
- **Red:** sense of urgency
- **Blue:** trust and security
- **Green:** wealth and relaxation
- **Orange:** aggressive
- **Pink:** romantic
- **Black:** powerful
- **Purple:** calm

Onto psychology fact number seven – and we saved the best for last!

7. The 5 psychological reasons behind why people share online

Hailley: To wrap up, let's talk about the psychology behind sharing.

We're all looking for more engagement on our posts and we want to share content that really resonates with people. Well, luckily for us, the New York Times conducted a massive study awhile back about the psychology of online sharing.

They named five primary motivations for sharing, which we will take a look at, but most notably they talk about how there's a

common thread for all the motivations for sharing, and that's that **people are motivated to share based on their relationships** with their network online.

Brian: Yes, so as marketers we should really be focusing on creating and sharing content with our audience that will enhance their relationships as a result of sharing it.

Here are the **five most important reasons people share** online:

- They wanted to better the lives of others (94%)
- They want the content to reflect their online identity (68%)
- They want grow and nourish relationships (80%)
- They share because they like the feeling of having others comment on it and engage (81%)
- They want to spread the word about something that they believe in (84%)

Remember what we said at the beginning of this section, the common theme here is that people are motivated to share based on their relationships with their network online. Keep that in mind next time you're loading up your Buffer queue!

Hailley: Thank you so much for tuning in to the Science of Social Media today. The show notes for this episode are now available on the Buffer Blog at blog.buffer.com with a complete transcript.

If you ever want to get in touch with me or Brian, we're always here for your on social media using the hashtag [#bufferpodcast](https://twitter.com/bufferpodcast). You can also say hi to us anytime and hello@bufferapp.com

Brian: As always, thank you so much for your iTunes reviews! It's so awesome to read through all your kind comments there – and we actually do read through all of them so thank you.

Best of luck using these neat psychology discoveries to help

you in your social media content creation and sharing this week! Let us know if any of these tactics work particularly well for you.

Until next Monday, everyone!

How to say hello to us

We would all love to say hello to you on social media – especially Twitter!

- Hailley on Twitter and Hailley's Website
- Brian on Twitter and Brian's Website

Thanks for listening! Feel free to connect with our team at Buffer on Twitter, Buffer on Facebook, our Podcast homepage, or with the hashtag #bufferpodcast.

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About The Science of Social Media podcast

The Science of Social Media is your weekly sandbox for social media stories, insights, experimentation, and inspiration. Every Monday (and sometimes more) we share the most cutting-edge social media marketing tactics from brands and influencers in every industry. If you're a social media team of one, business owner, marketer, or someone simply interested in social media marketing, you're sure to find something useful in each and every episode. It's our hope that you'll join our 16,000+ weekly iTunes listeners and rock your social media channels as a result!

The Science of Social Media is proudly made by the Buffer team. Feel free to get in touch with us for any thoughts, ideas, or feedback.



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