

Interview Guide – Preliminary

Introduction:

Short introduction of the study's focus

Definition of terms (What do I mean by 'brands' and 'social networking sites' in the following?)

Introducing Questions

1. How would you describe your use of social networking sites?
 - a. What would you say is your main purpose for using these platforms?
2. Do you follow brands on social networking sites, and could you give some examples?
 - a. What are your motivations for following these brands?
3. Could you describe how these brands communicate on social media? What are the typical characteristics of their content?
4. How would you describe your interactions with these brands on social networking sites?
 - a. Do you actively engage in conversations with brands or rather passively observe their communicative behaviors?
5. In general, would you say that social networking sites are appropriate platforms for brand communication?
 - a. Why do you think so?

Questions on conversational human voice & communicated relational commitment

Introduction and operationalization of the concepts through the use of stimulus material:

Post captions and extracts from the comment section showing brand-consumer interactions on social networking sites

6. What is your first impression of how the brand communicates?

- a. Does it appeal to you and why?
 - b. How do you perceive the authenticity of this communication style and why?
 - c. Would you say that this communication style is appropriate or rather inappropriate for a commercial brand?
 - d. Why do you think so?
7. How would you describe the personality of this brand based on its communicative behavior?
- a. What would you say are its main characteristics?
 - b. What makes you think so?
 - c. How do you perceive the brand's level of honesty and trustworthiness?
 - d. Do you think the brand has good intentions?
 - e. Based on your first impression, would you say that you are interested in the brand and would like to see more of it?
8. Have you personally experienced brands using a similar personal, human-like communication style on social networking sites? If so, could you please describe the situation in as much detail as possible?
- a. How did you feel?
 - b. How would you describe your connection to the brand based on its communication style?
9. How do you perceive brands using humor in their communication on social networking sites?
- a. What about emoticons and emojis?
10. What do you think about brands that actively invite you to conversations on social networking sites, for example asking about your experiences, opinion on a topic, or favorite weekend activity in a post caption?

- a. Do you like this kind of interactivity initiated by a brand?
 - b. Would you say that there is a limit? Can brands be too interactive?
- 11. How do you perceive brands that are open to dialogue, for example in the comment section or private messaging on social networking sites?
- 12. Let's imagine a situation, where you comment on a brand's Instagram post, and the brand answers addressing you by your first name. How would you perceive this personal reaction?
 - a. How do you think your perception would change, if at all, if it was an unfamiliar brand addressing you this way?
- 13. How do you feel when a brand treats you as a human or even as a friend and not primarily as a customer?
 - a. Would you say that there a limit? When does a brand's commitment to building a relationship with you become too much?
- 14. How do you like when a brand reaches out to you regularly (e.g., by daily posts and stories)?
 - a. Do you think this kind of engagement and commitment rather positively or negatively impacts your relationship with the brand?

Concluding questions

- 15. If you could instruct a brand on how to communicate with you, what would your preferred communication style look like? Please describe in as much detail as possible.
 - a. What would be your preferred tone of voice for brands?
 - b. How close do you want the relationship to be? Shall brands act as your friends or keep their distance?

16. Let' look back at the initial extracts of brand communication on social networking sites.

What would you say, if I tell you that the brand messages were generated by artificial intelligence?

a. How would your perceptions of this personal communication style change, if at all?

17. Is there anything else I haven't asked you about that you would like to add?