

Interview with Johnny

- *Q: Thank you for the quick response. Can I record our session so I can reference it later?*
 - *Johnny:* yeah, I am okay with that.
- *Q: Tell me about yourself. i.e., name, profession, age, etc*
 - *Johnny:* My name is Johnny Feneto. I am a cardiac sonographer currently working at CHA. I am 35 years old.
- *Q: Can you walk me through how you typically use social media on a daily basis? Which platforms do you engage with most, and why?*
 - *Johnny:* I usually start my day by checking Twitter (or X), Reddit, and Instagram. Twitter is where I get quick updates on news, Reddit is more about finding interesting discussions in different communities, and Instagram is for catching up on what friends are up to. I find myself scrolling through these platforms several times a day, especially during breaks or downtime.
- *Q: What do you find yourself repeatedly coming back to these platforms for?*
 - *Johnny:* It's a mix of content and community. On Reddit, the communities are the biggest draw. I can find people who are passionate about the same things I am, from tech to different hobbies like sports, politics, etc. Twitter is more for staying informed, and Instagram is primarily about staying connected with friends. Each platform serves a different purpose, so I often use them.
- *Q: How do you feel about interacting with others on these platforms? Are there any features or dynamics that make these interactions meaningful or difficult?*
 - *Johnny:* as I said on Reddit, interactions feel more meaningful because I can engage with people in a certain community who share similar interests. On Instagram, though, interactions feel more superficial, and there's less discussion and more "likes," which doesn't feel as rewarding.
- *Q: How do you typically feel after spending time on social media? Are there specific moments where it affects your mood positively or negatively?*
 - *Johnny:* It's a mix. I feel positive when I connect with friends or learn something new on Reddit. But I feel drained when I scroll mindlessly on Instagram, especially when I'm bombarded with irrelevant ads or content.
- *Q: Do you ever take breaks when that happens?*
 - *Johnny:* Yes, I take breaks when I feel overwhelmed or when social media starts to feel more like a chore than a fun activity. I'll step away for a few days to reset.
- *Q: When you find a post interesting, what makes you engage with it?*
 - *Johnny:* I'm more likely to engage with content that feels authentic or offers value, like a thoughtful post or a funny meme. If it's something I can relate to or learn from, I'll comment or share it.
- *Follow-up: Are there times when you hesitate to engage, and if so, what stops you?*
 - *Johnny:* Sometimes I hesitate because I feel like my comment won't be noticed, or if the conversation feels too one-sided. If I think my comment won't contribute meaningfully, I'll hold back.

- *Q: How do your relationships with people on social media compare to your relationships in real life? Are there ways social media helps or hinders these connections?*
 - *Johnny:* Social media helps me stay in touch with people I don't see regularly, but it doesn't replace real-life connections. I find that online interactions can sometimes feel shallow like just exchanging likes or short comments isn't the same as having a deep conversation in person. It can also make it easier to lose touch with people since the relationships become less personal.
- *Follow-up: Have you formed any meaningful relationships solely through social media? What made that possible?*
 - *Johnny:* I've made a few meaningful connections on Reddit through communities. What made it possible was the shared interest and the ability to have deeper conversations that don't revolve around just surface-level interactions, like you often see on Instagram or Facebook.
- *Q: With the rise of alternative platforms like Mastodon or Threads, have you tried any new or decentralized platforms? If so, what has your experience been?*
 - *Johnny:* I tried Mastodon after all the chaos with Twitter, but it felt a bit overwhelming. Threads was interesting at first, but it felt like just another version of Instagram, so I didn't stick with it for long.
- *Follow-up: What motivated you to try an alternative, and do you think you'll continue using it? Why or why not?*
 - *Johnny:* I was motivated to try because of my frustration with Twitter's changes, but I haven't continued using these alternatives regularly. They don't have the same user base or engagement, and switching platforms felt like too much effort.
- *Q: How do you feel about ads on social media? Do you find them relevant or intrusive?*
 - *Johnny:* Ads on social media are mostly intrusive for me, especially on platforms like Instagram and Facebook where they're everywhere. Sometimes they're relevant, but more often than not, they're just annoying because they interrupt the flow of my feed.
- *Follow-up: Would you be willing to pay for an ad-free experience, or do you prefer the current model with ads in exchange for free use?*
 - *Johnny:* I would consider paying for an ad-free experience if the price was reasonable, and if it improved my overall experience. Ads are such a huge source of frustration that I'd be willing to invest in a cleaner, more personalized platform without them.
- *Do you feel like social media gives you enough tools to express yourself authentically? Are there any ways you feel limited or misrepresented?*
 - *Johnny:* It depends on the platform. On Instagram, I feel a bit limited because it's so focused on visuals, and I'm not always looking to share pictures. Reddit allows more freedom with text and discussions, so I feel more authentic there. Sometimes, platforms push a certain "aesthetic" or way of presenting yourself, which doesn't always align with how I want to express myself.
- *Q: What additional features could help you better express your identity or share your voice on these platforms?*

- *Johnny:* I'd love more flexibility in post formats—maybe the ability to mix visuals and text more freely, or more personalization options for profiles. It would also be cool to have more control over how my content is presented, instead of it being dictated by the platform's design or algorithm.
- *Q: When you decide to create and share a post, what motivates you? Do you ever second-guess what you're about to share, and if so, why?*
 - *Johnny:* I'm motivated to share when I have something I think is valuable, like an interesting idea or something funny. But I definitely second-guess sometimes, especially on platforms like Instagram, where there's a pressure to post "perfect" content. I wonder if people will like it or if it fits in with the expectations of my followers.
- *Follow-up: What tools would help you feel more confident or comfortable in sharing content with others?*
 - *Johnny:* Maybe a draft system where you can get feedback from close friends before posting, or more granular privacy settings so I can control who sees specific content. That would make me feel more confident that my post is being shared with the right audience.
- *Q: Where do you see social media heading in the next 5–10 years? Are there trends or changes that excite you or make you wary?*
 - *Johnny:* I think we'll see more personalization and maybe even decentralization of platforms. AI and AR will probably play a big role in shaping content, which could be exciting but also a bit scary if it means more control over what we see. I'm wary of how much more intrusive advertising and data collection could get.
- *Q: If you were to design a social media platform for the future, what would be its core values or features?*
 - *Johnny:* I'd focus on privacy, user control, and meaningful interactions. It would be a platform where users have full control over what they see, how they engage, and how their data is handled. I'd also want to foster more genuine communities, rather than focusing on superficial metrics like likes or followers.
- *Q: How do you feel about the way current platforms recommend content to you? Do the recommendations feel relevant or repetitive?*
 - *Johnny:* Most of the time, recommendations feel repetitive and not very relevant. On Instagram and Facebook, especially, I get a lot of suggestions for content that has nothing to do with my interests. It feels like the algorithm is trying too hard to guess what I'll like, and it often misses the mark.
- *Follow-up: What would a better content discovery system look like for you? How could the platform make it easier to find new, interesting content?*
 - *Johnny:* A better system would give me more control, letting me choose what types of content I want to discover. Maybe a feature where I can toggle between different "modes," like one for discovering new topics and another for focusing on my regular interests.
- *Q: How do you manage notifications from social media platforms? Do you feel overwhelmed or informed by them?*

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- *Johnny:* I've had to turn off most notifications because they got overwhelming. Platforms like Instagram and Facebook were constantly pushing alerts for things I didn't care about—like random friend suggestions or posts from accounts I don't follow. I only keep notifications for direct messages or mentions, so I don't miss anything important.
- *Follow-up: What changes in notification design could help you feel more in control of your social media experience?*
 - *Johnny:* A notification system that lets me customize what types of alerts I want to receive would be great. For example, I'd prefer to only get notified about content from close friends or specific communities. Also, grouping notifications together instead of sending a barrage of individual alerts would help reduce the sense of overload.
- *Q: What are your thoughts on the privacy and moderation policies of the platforms you use? Do they make you feel safe or concerned?*
 - *Johnny:* Privacy is a big concern. I feel like platforms, especially Facebook and Instagram, collect too much data, and I'm always cautious about how my information is being used. Moderation is another inconsistent issue, and I've seen harmful content slip through the cracks.
- *Follow-up: How would you improve moderation tools, or how platforms handle content that feels unsafe or offensive?*
 - *Johnny:* There needs to be better automated detection of harmful content and more transparency about moderation decisions. Users should be involved in flagging content, and there should be clearer, faster responses from the platform.
- *Q: Are you concerned about how your data is used by social media companies? How much control do you feel you have over your personal information?*
 - *Johnny:* Yes, I'm very concerned about data usage, especially on platforms like Facebook that have had privacy scandals. I feel like I have very little control over what data is collected and how it's used. The settings are often too complicated or hidden to really feel like I'm in control.
- *Follow-up: What privacy features would make you feel more secure when using social media platforms?*
 - *Johnny:* I'd like to see more transparency in data collection and clearer options to opt out of certain types of tracking. It would also be helpful to have a simplified, easy-to-use dashboard where I can manage my data and see exactly what's being collected.
- *Q: What do you think about a social media platform that puts privacy first? What features or controls should be prioritize to make users feel secure?*
 - *Johnny:* giving users clear, simple control over their privacy settings, with options to decide what data gets shared and with whom. Features like encrypted messages and the ability to use the platform anonymously would be key. I'd also prioritize transparency so users always know what's being tracked and why.
- *Follow-up: Would a stronger emphasis on privacy affect how and what you share on social media? How could privacy settings be more user-friendly?*

- *Johnny:* Definitely. If I knew my data was secure and not being shared with advertisers, I'd feel more comfortable sharing personal thoughts or photos. Privacy settings could be made more user-friendly by having preset options, like "maximum privacy" or "share with friends only," so users don't have to wade through complex menus.
- *Q: How do you feel about the current ways platforms moderate user-generated content? Do you think these methods are fair or effective?*
 - *Johnny:* Moderation can feel hit or miss. Sometimes it's too strict, where harmless content gets flagged, while other times harmful content slips through. It's inconsistent, which can be frustrating. Platforms like Reddit do better with community-based moderation, but others, like Facebook & Instagram, struggle to balance it. I think community-based moderation, like on Reddit, works well because it empowers users to set the tone for what's acceptable. Platforms could also add clearer guidelines and faster response times for flagged content. A tiered system where content that's flagged gets reviewed first by AI, then by human moderators, could help strike a balance.
- *Q: Do you use social media on multiple devices (e.g., phone, tablet, desktop)? How does the experience differ across devices?*
 - *Johnny:* Yes, I switch between my phone and laptop. The mobile experience is usually more streamlined, but it's harder to do certain tasks, like writing long comments or editing posts. On desktop, I feel like I have more control, but some platforms don't adapt well to the bigger screen and feel cluttered.
- *Q: With the rise of new technologies like AR, VR, and AI, how do you think social media platforms should adapt their designs? Are there any new technologies you're excited to see integrated?*
 - *Johnny:* I'm excited to see how AR and VR could make social media more immersive. Imagine being able to attend virtual events with friends or explore a digital world where you can interact with content in 3D. AI could also play a role in creating more personalized experiences, though there are privacy concerns with how much control AI has over content curation.
- *Q: How would you want to interact with social media in a virtual or augmented reality setting? What would be the key features?*
 - *Johnny:* In a VR setting, I'd want the experience to feel like I'm really "in" the social space. Virtual hangouts with friends or exploring digital versions of real-world places would be cool. Key features would include interactive avatars, customizable environments, and seamless integration with existing social media feeds.
- *Q: Do you think social media platforms effectively design for users of different age groups, backgrounds, or levels of tech-savviness?*
 - *Johnny:* Not really. A lot of platforms seem to focus on younger, tech-savvy users, which can leave older people or those less familiar with tech behind. Some platforms, like Facebook, have a wide range of users, but many are hard to navigate for people who aren't as comfortable with technology.
- *Follow-up: If you were designing a platform for a specific demographic (e.g., elderly users, young children, professionals), what unique design choices would you make?*

- *Johnny:* For elderly users, I'd focus on simplifying the interface, with larger text, easy navigation, and clear instructions. For professionals, I'd create more tools for networking and collaboration, like integrated video calls or project management features. Tailoring the design to fit the needs of each group would make the platform more accessible.
- *Q: How much does the visual aesthetic of a social media platform influence whether you use it? Are there any platforms whose design aesthetic you particularly like or dislike?*
 - *Johnny:* Visual design definitely influences my experience. I like platforms that are clean and minimal, like Twitter or Reddit's newer design. I find Facebook's design too cluttered, and Instagram's constant pop-ups for reels or ads make it feel less enjoyable. A simple, modern design keeps me engaged longer.
- *Q: What visual elements (e.g., color schemes, fonts, layout styles) would improve the overall feel of your social media experience?*
 - *Johnny:* I'd prefer a layout that's not too overwhelming, with neutral color schemes and clear fonts. The ability to customize themes would be great, so I could choose a design that suits my mood or personality. Less emphasis on ads and more focus on content would also improve the overall aesthetic.
- *Q: How important is it for you to have a way to provide feedback on the design or functionality of social media platforms?*
 - *Johnny:* It's important, but I feel like most platforms don't take user feedback seriously. It would be great to have more ways to directly influence changes, like regular user surveys or beta-testing features. Platforms could improve by actually showing how they incorporate user feedback.
- *Follow-up: If you could influence the design or features of a social media platform, what would you suggest or change, and how would you want the platform to collect user feedback?*
 - *Johnny:* I'd suggest more user customization, especially for how content is displayed and filtered. The platform could collect feedback by offering more transparent ways to report issues or vote on upcoming changes. Maybe even a community-driven feature suggestion board, like a public forum, would help users feel more involved in the process.
- *Q: What design features on social media help foster a sense of community or belonging for you? Are there specific tools that make you feel more connected?*
 - *Johnny:* One feature that fosters a sense of community is dedicated groups or communities, like Reddit's subreddits or Facebook Groups. These spaces let me connect with people who share my specific interests, and the discussions tend to feel more genuine. Features like pinned posts, organized threads, and event calendars also help build stronger communities.
- *Q: How could social media platforms improve to better support the formation of meaningful communities or groups?*
 - *Johnny:* Platforms could offer better moderation tools for group admins and ways to personalize the community experience. For example, group-specific recommendations or tools to host virtual meetups would make communities feel

more active and connected. Platforms could also allow group members to set clear norms and guidelines that reflect their community's values.

- *Q: How do you feel about the ability to revisit old posts or memories on social media? Do you think platforms make it easy to find and archive past content?*
 - *Johnny:* I enjoy looking back at old posts and memories, but the current tools for doing so are pretty basic. Back in the day, I remember Facebook's "Memories" feature was helpful, but I think more could be done to organize past content. Searching for older posts on other platforms like Twitter or Instagram can be difficult because they lack proper archiving systems.
- *Follow-up: What features would improve the way you revisit or manage your historical content on social media?*
 - *Johnny:* A more robust archiving system that lets me categorize or tag posts by topic or date would be great. I'd also appreciate the option to highlight or favorite certain posts so I can easily revisit them later. Another feature could be a "time capsule" mode, where I can see what I posted a certain number of years ago.
- *Q: How do you feel about the way platforms encourage engagement (e.g., likes, comments, shares)? Are there any interactive elements that you think could be redesigned to feel more genuine or meaningful?*
 - *Johnny:* Sometimes the focus on likes and shares feels too transactional. I think platforms could do more to encourage thoughtful engagement. For example, Reddit's upvote system encourages more meaningful interactions because it's less about popularity and more about the quality of the content. Other platforms could benefit from similar features that reward valuable contributions rather than just viral posts.
- *Follow-up: Would you engage more if the interaction tools (e.g., reactions or feedback mechanisms) were designed differently? How so?*
 - *Johnny:* Absolutely. If there were more ways to leave thoughtful feedback, like long-form comments or reactions that are more specific than just "likes," I'd engage more often. Also, having a feature where users can recognize helpful or insightful contributions in discussions could make interactions feel more rewarding.
- *Q: How do you manage notifications from social media platforms? Do you feel overwhelmed or informed by them?*
 - *Johnny:* I've learned to manage notifications by turning off most of them, but it's definitely easy to feel overwhelmed. Some platforms send too many alerts, and it disrupts my experience. I'd rather have control over when and how I'm notified so I don't feel constantly bombarded by updates I don't care about.
- *Q: What changes in notification design could help you feel more in control of your social media experience?*
 - *Johnny:* Grouping similar notifications together would help reduce the sense of overload. I'd also appreciate smarter notifications that prioritize content from people or groups I interact with the most. If platforms allowed me to set my own notification priorities, like deciding what's truly important to me, it would give me more control over my experience.
- *Q: How important is customization in your social media experience? Would you prefer more control over the look and feel of your profile or feed?*

- *Johnny:* Customization is really important to me. I'd love to have more control over the appearance of my profile and the way content is presented in my feed. Right now, algorithms do most of the work, but I'd prefer to tailor my experience more manually.
- *Q: If you could change the way content is presented to you, such as the layout or prioritization of posts, what would you adjust?*
 - *Johnny:* I'd prioritize content from close friends and communities I follow, and reduce the number of ads and irrelevant recommendations. I'd also love to customize my feed's layout, like having different views for different content types—maybe one view for images and another for discussions.

Thank you for your time Johnny !