Interview Protocol

When we shop, we are often contributing to different causes by making a difference. For instance, our shopping patterns or preferences can have a huge impact on the environment, sustainability or on fair working conditions. Even if you do not agree, we would like to have your view on how you perceive some recent marketing strategies adopted during the holiday season.

Introductive Questions (warming up)

- How often do you see advertisements while scrolling on your social media feeds?
- How often do you engage with advertisements on social media?
- Do you think that social media advertisements make you purchase more items you wouldn't buy without being exposed to these advertisements?

Ethical Consumer

Consumers nowadays have a stronger stance towards ethics when compared to the past. Fair Trade and other similar ethical initiatives were started to ensure that the farmers and producers in developing countries get a fair reward for their efforts.

- Even if you don't shop for products that fall under ethical brand labels, what is your opinion on these movements?

Some prompts for your discussion:

- Do you eat genetically modified food?
- What do you think about animals being used for beauty product trials?
- Do you use garments made by companies that don't comply with human rights?
- Is child labour involved in the manufacturing of products you use?
- Why should we care about these questions before buying a product?

Boycotting Brands

A lot of boycott movements came to prominence in the past. Some examples include #deleteUber, #deleteFacebook or boycotting Amazon during Black Friday.

- Do you have any memories of these campaigns? Did you take part in them, and why?
- Are boycotts an effective way to take a stance against a company's practices? Do boycotts hurt a company's reputation?

Rather than boycotting specific products, some ethical initiatives now urge consumers to be more selective. Said initiatives now rely more on buying certain other products rather than boycotting them. Fairtrade is one common example of this approach.

- Do you look for products from companies that match your ethical beliefs when you're shopping? Why or why not? If not, what do you think of this strategy?

Brands Against Black Friday

This year, a cohort of brands are eschewing Black Friday and rejecting the hyper-consumerism of the annual bargain bonanza to instead highlight the climate crisis and offer social commentary.

- Did you buy something on Black Friday?
- Why did you buy/why didn't you buy something?
- What do you think about the concept of Black Friday?
- Did you feel pressure to buy something because it was Black Friday?
- Have you ever seen the promotion of Black Friday sales on social media?

As with previous years, the responsible outdoor clothing brand Patagonia is not going on sale on Black Friday, nor Cyber Monday. Patagonia is also asking the community to really reconsider what they need to buy during this period—a thread its extending to its physical stores, website and social media accounts.

- Do these initiatives make a difference to the way you think and feel about shopping?

Show the following visual stimuli to elicit the discussion
Buy Less, Demand more
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UAZ8Ts9CC6I
https://www.patagonia.com/buy-less-demand-more/
https://www.patagonia.com/activism/

- How do these initiatives make a difference to the way you think and feel about shopping?
- What do you think about the Patagonia brand?

Consumerism and Environment

- Do you consider climate change when buying new clothes?
- Have you participated in a Friday For Future's demonstrations?
- Do you see yourself attending any protests in the future? If so, for what cause? Are there any barriers that you feel might prevent you from participating?
- What do you think of a new generation of activists such as Greta?
- Are you aware of any other brands that actively promote sustainability and the environmental protection?
- Do you follow any influencers who are an activist for the environment?

The following open questions should be used to elicit a reflection on brand activism. Keep stimulating the discussion on the relationship between politics and marketing.

- Should brands be political?
- Does the “Buy Less, Demand More” campaign by Patagonia make them a political brand?
- What does it mean for a brand to be political?
- What does a political brand look like?

Shopping for Christmas
Ask in advance before the interview:

- Why do you make the choices you do (what thoughts and feelings are involved in making a choice).?
- Any health, moral or political reasons for choosing certain products?
- Look in other people’s baskets or trolleys! What do you think their choices say about them as a person?
- Are you fickle? Are there occasions when you know you could buy something for moral or political reasons, but you don’t? Say something about the feelings involved in your choices.
- But if you truly believe this consumerism should end, is it fruitless to call for people to shop less when our economy depends on that very act to survive?

Wider Issues

- Do you think the things you buy reflect your own values? What other ways are there of being moral/ethical in your everyday life? Do you think these are more or less effective in ‘making a difference’?

- Imagine there was a campaign to ‘make a difference’ to the lives of poor people based in your country or even in your city. If you were the brand manager for this campaign, what images do you think would or wouldn’t work? Can you tell us about why you think this imagery would or wouldn’t appeal to people?

Shopping during COVID

COVID-19 has disrupted life as we know it. In this part of the interview, you want to ask how your respondent’s daily lives may have changed – or stayed the same – as a result of the pandemic.

At this moment (December 2020), as lockdown is gradually easing, we would like you to please look back on your experiences of time and COVID-19 so far. Ask:

- Many people have been learning to use new forms of technology during the crisis. What has your experience been of this?

- What does it mean to you for life to get ‘back to normal’ in the present day, and imagine what you think the future might hold?

- For some people, it seems as if life has been put ‘on hold’ during the pandemic. Does this feel relevant to you? If so, please say how. Have you experienced a particular pause or a delay, for instance in waiting for appointments, activities, a new job or for work to resume?

- What is your experience of waiting? For example, you may have spent time queuing outside shops, waiting for deliveries, or waiting to see friends or family. Please describe how these times felt.

- Have you been using new social media platforms to keep up to date or escape from the events? If so, has using these new social media also made a difference on how you shop?

- What have your experiences of buying groceries either in shops or online been like? Have you experienced any challenges?

- Have your eating/cooking habits changed or stayed the same?

- Would like you to share your experiences of how you have been entertaining yourselves? Have you taken up any hobbies, learned new skills or games, or increased your exercise?

- To what extent does social media influence your shopping decisions?

- Do you think that you will keep shopping online in the same way in the future?

- Do you remember what products/brands you have recently purchased? Have you changed preferences since COVID?

- What brands are you going to buy for Christmas? For yourself and as presents…