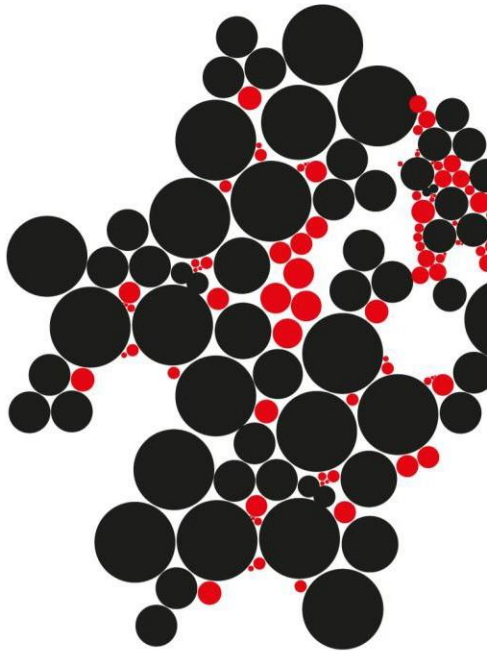


MASTER THESIS



# What's your story?

Designing a descriptive framework for  
brand stories on social media

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# PREFACE

“STORIES SHOULD HAVE A BEGINNING, A MIDDLE AND AN END” (ARISTOTLE, 384-322 BC)

The story about my Master thesis actually started in September 2014, when I did an internship at the Gardeners, an agency in Amsterdam. Specialized in brand stories and a strong preference for PR and Social, they produce online and offline campaigns. They believe in an interactive relationship between brand and target group, which is based on storybuilding (rather than storytelling). With smart activation strategies, the Gardeners aim at *activating* the target group to pass on brand stories. This internship inspired me for my thesis.

In the end, I am satisfied with the result. I have designed an appropriate framework, which is theoretical, practical, clearly formulated and well suited in the world of social media. Personally, I encountered many interesting opinions and met helpful people, which all benefitted my understanding of marketing and working life in general. The enthusiasm of the experts made me more confident about my work and I am happy with this last chapter of my study Marketing Communication.

The writing of this thesis could also be seen as just one of the many chapters in the greatest story of my life. My student life. Submitting this thesis will also mean the end to this story. A new adventure lies ahead. This story would not have ended without the help of some people. First of all, I would like to thank my supervisor Sjoerd de Vries. Thank you for making me come up with my own solutions and willingness to give me personal, or feedback via Skype when necessary. Also my co-reader Efthymios Constantinides, thank you. Critical comments and suggestions from the both of you have been very much appreciated.

Furthermore, my gratitude goes out to all the experts in making time in their busy schedules for participating in this study. Your opinions were extremely valuable. Also many thanks to everyone who had their fingers crossed for me during this thesis. Special thanks to Inge Rikkink for being my second rater and to Kara Vloet for her willingness to help me when I got stuck.

I would like to express my sincere appreciations towards my boyfriend and my best friend. Both of you, thanks for listening to my struggles and motivating me to keep the thesis-spirit alive. We were all in this final stage together, which really helped me a lot. Last but not least, I would like to thank my parents and temporary roommates, for supporting me and letting me stay with you in the last months of my student life.

Enjoy reading!

Judith Kamp  
October, 2015

## ABSTRACT

Brand stories on social media and storytelling as a strategy are often discussed in the practical marketing world. It is not surprising that marketers have adopted stories in their marketing strategies, as stories are found to be a good persuasion communication strategy. They arouse individual's attention and stimulate them to act. But the advent of social media has changed the game of marketing completely, as brand managers are not the pivotal authors of brand stories anymore. So what is the definition of a brand story on social media? Scientific literature on this topic is limited, in practice it is just applied as a strategy. To fill this gap, this thesis works towards designing an appropriate descriptive framework for brand stories on social media. The framework contributes to both theory and practice in adding knowledge about brand stories and providing a framework to identify them on social media.

This framework has combined and integrated both worlds in its design. By starting with a theoretical foundation of literature on stories, a draft version is made. With a two-phased formative evaluation in practice, the appropriateness of the framework is enhanced. First, the framework is applied in practice to identify the stories of Demak'Up, by conducting a case study. Based on the analysis of the case study, some alterations are made to the framework and the revised one is evaluated using semi-structured expert interviews. This last phase results in the final, appropriate descriptive framework for brand stories on social media, consisting of an introduction, a definition, a model (visualisation) and six design guidelines.

In textual summary, a brand story on social media can be described as follows. Everyone has a voice on social media to express their selves in many different ways, like (a combination of) a photo, video or textual post. Brand stories on social media are shaped by all the expressions of multiple narrators. A brand story is a sequence of coherent expressions. Coherent because of a common theme and the sequence of expressions is forming the story structure. In general, this sequence follows a bell curve shaped by the intensity of the expressions. The beginning starts with a first expression, the story reaches the middle at the highest point of the intensity, then the intensity will decrease but it remains an endless story. Each individual expression in this sequence, is directly related to the brand, has a valuable sentiment regarding the brand and is shaped by multiple narrators that participate in the story. These narrators depend on who is relevant for the specific brand and can be grouped as for example the brand, the press, bloggers or consumers.

The final descriptive framework in this study can be used in both theory and practice, to identify brand stories on social media and to build marketing strategies on. The value of the framework is well appreciated by experts in the field and can be seen as a foundation for future research on brand stories.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

“STORYTELLING IS HIP, STORIES ARE COOL” (FRANKWATCHING, 2014<sup>1</sup>)

Storytelling seems to be one of the hottest topics in the marketing area and the term ‘brand stories’ is used frequently (for instance by online marketing platforms like Marketingfacts, MarketingTribune, Frankwatching and AdFormatie<sup>2</sup>). The online marketing platforms provide many practical articles on storytelling strategies and brand story examples. Initially, I wanted to focus my thesis on these strategies. However, a quest in scientific research revealed a lack of articles explaining what a brand story is in the first place. How can I define strategies about something it is not sure what one is talking about? Therefore, the focus of my thesis shifted to discovering what brand stories are?

## 1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVE

Stories are studied for many years in multiple disciplines and are considered pervasive through life. Stories are found to be a good persuasion communication strategy (Cho, Shen & Wilson, 2014), arouse individuals’ attention and stimulate them to act (Green, 2008). It is therefore not surprising that marketers have adopted stories in their marketing strategies. Escalas (2004) extended narrative research to the area of advertising. She stated that at that time, “*advertisers appear to be implicitly aware of the power of narratives, because many ads tell stories*” (Escalas, 2004, p. 171). But the advent of social media has changed the marketing landscape completely. Are current definitions of stories thus still appropriate?

Hennig-Thurau, Hofacker and Bloching (2013) are referring to a “*chaotic and interactive game of pinball*” (p. 237), when arguing the changes in the field of marketing. It is not the traditional bowling area anymore, where the marketing mix (the ball) is used to reach and influence the consumers (the pins). Instead, the empowered consumer is not just receiving messages, but actively participates in the game, creating information and content (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger & Shapiro, 2012). Brand stories are thus no longer merely told by brand managers, since the consumer is not just a passive listener anymore. Also, the dynamics of social media possibly challenge the classical definitions of stories, because multiple narrators can ‘tell’ stories on different platforms, at the same time and all the time.

There is a gap in the academic world, as well as in practice, about what these brand stories are. In theory, it is ambiguous what a brand story is, in practice storytelling is simply applied as a strategy. Therefore, the focus of this research is not on how to handle brand stories, but to

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.frankwatching.com/archive/2014/09/29/online-storytelling-hoe-doe-je-dat/>

<sup>2</sup> Online marketing platforms: <http://www.marketingfacts.nl/>, <http://marketingtribune.nl/>, <http://www.frankwatching.com/> and <http://www.adformatie.nl/>

gain knowledge about how to identify brand stories. More specifically, what are brand stories on social media?

The objective of this study is to design a descriptive framework for brand stories on social media. This will be the operationalisation of a suggested definition. Therefore this thesis takes a design approach, starting with a theoretical foundation, which then will be evaluated in practice by means of a two-phase approach; a qualitative content analysis of a case and semi-structured expert interviews. With this design approach, theory and practice are well integrated and combined. The theoretical foundation and the practical evaluation, will enhance the value of this descriptive framework.

The academic relevance of this study is the contribution to the theory of brand stories with an appropriate framework of the concept, in order to gain knowledge about the phenomenon and to identify brand stories on social media. Future research about brand story strategies can build on this framework. Because what good are strategies if it is not clear what one is talking about? Furthermore, the descriptive framework provides practical relevance, because it helps marketers to identify the stories of their brand on social media platforms. Again, future strategies of marketers can be built on that knowledge.

## 1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To reach the objective of the research, the main research question of this study is formulated as follows:

### WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR BRAND STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

To achieve appropriateness of the framework it needs to be clear, sharply defined and suitable in theory as well as in practice. To answer the main research question, there are multiple sub-research questions to be answered. First, a clear definition for brand stories is needed in order to suggest a framework. This definition is based on theories about stories, because the terms ‘brand stories’ and ‘storytelling’ are suggesting a foundation in stories. The definition is followed by a descriptive framework, consisting of two parts: design guidelines and a model, which is the visualisation of the guidelines. The first two sub-questions will be answered in Chapter 2, as a result of theoretical background. These questions are formulated as follows:

- A      WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE DEFINITION FOR BRAND STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA?
- B      HOW CAN BRAND STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA BE IDENTIFIED?

The formative evaluation of the descriptive framework takes a two-step approach. The first phase has a dual purpose, because it includes a case study. In order to answer the main research question, the case of Demak’Up is used to apply the proposed framework in practice. This first phase results in a revised descriptive framework. The sub-research questions included in this phase of the study are answered in Chapter 4 and include the following:

- C** WHAT ARE THE BRAND STORIES OF DEMAK'UP IN THE PAST 6 MONTHS USING THE PROPOSED DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK?
- D** HOW APPROPRIATE IS THE PROPOSED, MAINLY THEORETICAL GROUNDED DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK WHEN IT IS APPLIED IN PRACTICE?

In the second phase, the opinion of experts in marketing is central to reach the objective of an appropriate framework. By means of semi-structured interviews, the resulting framework of phase 1 is evaluated by experts. The evaluation will also result in a new framework. The last sub-question is answered in Chapter 5, during the analysis of the expert interviews. It is formulated as follows:

- E** WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF EXPERTS TO ENHANCE THE APPROPRIATENESS OF THE REVISED DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK?

### 1.3 OUTLINE

Chapter 1	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4	Chapter 5	Chapter 6
• Introduction to this design study	• Theoretical background → sub-question A + B	• Methodology of the formative evaluation	• Phase 1: Application in practice → sub-question C + D	• Phase 2: The expert's opinion → sub-question E	• Conclusion, discussion, limitation and future research

This first chapter is the introduction to this design study. In the second chapter, a theoretical background is presented which starts with the fundamentals of stories in general and works towards designing a first draft version of the descriptive framework. In Chapter 3, the methodology of the formative evaluation is explained. In a two-phased study, this framework is evaluated. Each phase results in a revised framework. Figure 1 contains a descriptive model to present how this design study is conducted. The first phase is a case study, presented in Chapter 4. The second phase consist of semi-structured interviews with experts, analysed in Chapter 5. This thesis concludes with Chapter 6, in which a conclusion is presented, discussion and limitations are addressed to and recommendation for future research are given.

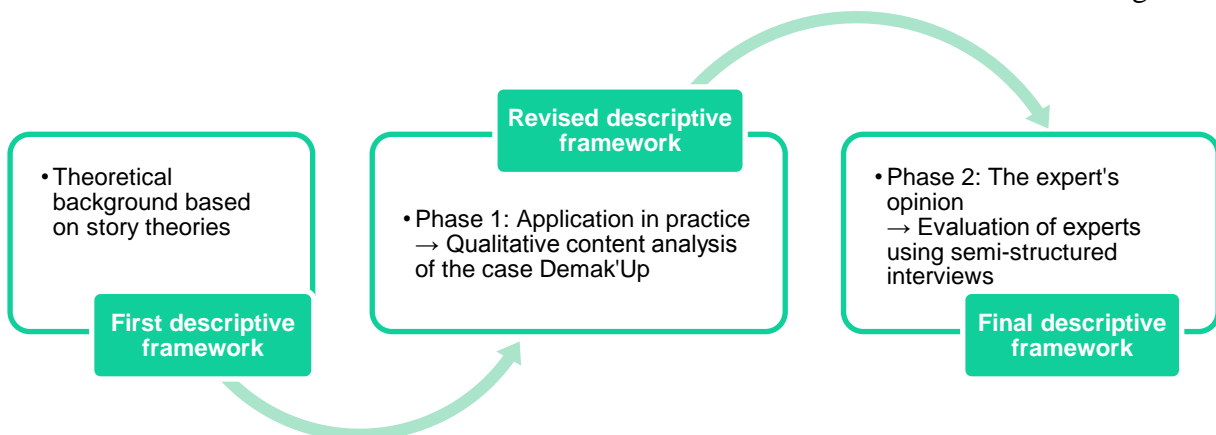


Figure 1: Descriptive model of this design study

## 2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Brand *story* and *storytelling* are suggesting a foundation in stories. It therefore seems logic that in order to explore what brand stories are, one should start with the fundamentals of stories. This theoretical framework therefore starts with a definition for stories in general and an introduction to how stories are used. To propose a definition and descriptive framework for brand stories on social media, relevant terms and elements are discussed.

### 2.1 THE CONCEPT OF STORIES

Stories are not an uncommon subject in scientific research. Like i.a. Chiu, Hsieh and Kuo (2012) suggested, the first theory about stories may have been proposed by Aristotle (384-322 BC). He determined that stories should have a beginning, a middle and an end and that a story should also include characters and a lesson learned. But what is the definition of a story?

#### 2.1.1 STORIES VS. NARRATIVES

In scientific literature, the term ‘story’ is used synonymously with the term ‘narrative’ (e.g. Gilliam, Flaherty & Rayburn, 2013; Green, 2008; Huang, 2010; Lien & Chen, 2013; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2010; Woodside, Sood & Miller, 2008), although some studies recognize a distinction between the two. Like Singh and Sonnenburg (2012), who argue the difference between a story and a narrative. They conclude that a narrative is the process of telling a story, in which the story is the content. Spear and Roper (2013) propose that stories ought to have internal temporality and coherence, whereas a narrative does not. Cho et al. (2014) reason contradictory and suggest that “*narratives are stories that consist of a sequence of thematically and temporally related events involving characters*” (p. 829).

In spite of these exceptions, most studies use the terms interchangeable. To determine the concept in this study, different dictionaries<sup>3</sup> are consulted for a more independent and objective view. A narrative as noun is “*a story or description of a series of events, experiences, whether true or fictitious*” and a narrative as adjective is “*telling a story*”. A story as noun is “*a narrative, a description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events*”. Storytelling is “*writing, telling or reading stories*”. From this perspective the meaning of the terms as a noun is the same. Therefore, and because the main part of the relevant literature is using the terms synonymously, in this study I did not make a distinction between narratives and stories in the evaluation of the literature.

#### 2.1.2 THE DEFINITION OF A STORY

Based on a literature review spanning publications from 1997-2014, I created an overview of the definitions and descriptions of stories. This overview is shown in Appendix 1: Definitions

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<sup>3</sup> For the definitions of narrative, story and storytelling, I consulted <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://dictionary.reference.com/>, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/> and <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

of stories. These definitions are compared and the 31 different elements researchers used to describe stories are presented in Appendix 2: Story elements. Synonyms are taken together and the most important elements became clear. The often used elements could be placed into five meta categories; character, structure, key message, events and other. Based on the two overviews, I formulise the concept of stories and storytelling (based on e.g. Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu, 2005; Liu & Wu, 2011) as follows:

A STORY CONSIST OF A SEQUENCE OF THEMATICALLY, CHRONOLOGICALLY, CAUSAL AND TEMPORALLY RELATED EVENTS, INVOLVING A KEY MESSAGE AND CHARACTERS ENGAGING IN ACTIONS, DRIVEN BY A GOAL AND LEADING TO AN OUTCOME. STORYTELLING IS THE PROCESS OF TRANSFERRING THE STORY AND EVOKE EMOTION.

## 2.2 THE USE OF STORIES

Stories play a much bigger role in our life than we might think. Storytelling is a way to transfer knowledge, because a considerable amount of information people gain in everyday life is transmitted to us and stored in our memory in the form of a story (e.g. Adaval & Wyer, 1998; Benjamin, 2006; McGregor & Holmes, 1999; Padgett & Allen, 1997; Schank & Abelson, 1995; Woodside et al., 2008). According to Schank and Abelson (1995) almost all of human knowledge, memory and social communication is based on stories originated from past personal and social experiences.

Individuals thus understand and perceive the world through stories (Escalas, 2004; Huang, 2010). Woodside et al. (2008) add that by telling stories “*individuals seek clarity, to make sense of prior conversations, events and outcomes from others and themselves*” (p. 99). So, individuals also use stories to understand who they are (Escalas, 2004), who they want to be (Benjamin, 2006) and how they relate to others (Woodside et al., 2008).

### 2.2.1 STORIES AS COMMUNICATION TOOL

The power of stories as a communication tool cannot be underestimated. Stories catch people’s attention and move them to action (Green, 2008; Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus & van Riel, 2012; Woodside et al., 2008). They stimulate our imagination and elicit emotions (Green, 2008; Spear & Roper, 2013). Stories as a means to change people’s mind is stressed by many scholars (e.g. Chiu et al., 2012; Dowling, 2006; Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins & Wiertz, 2013; Wentzel, Tomczak & Herrmann, 2010). For example, the experiments of McGregor and Holmes (1999) strongly support their proposed “storytelling effect” in which judgement becomes biased in the direction of the story.

This could be related to a phenomenon called narrative processing (Escalas, 2004; Huang, 2010; Schank & Abelson, 1995), which can be explained as follows. Incoming information is naturally organized in the same format in memory as it is received. When information is communicated as a story and because much of our knowledge is already stored as a story, the new information is easy to understand (Adaval & Wyer, 1998; Green, 2008; McGregor &

Holmes, 1999) and consequently, the message is easier to accept, process and evaluate (Lien & Chen, 2013). This phenomenon can be used as a strategy called narrative persuasion, “[...] to influence beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours through stories” (Cho et al., 2014, p. 829).

Some studies argue how narrative persuasion can also occur through narrative transportation (Green, 2008; Green & Brock, 2000). Green and Brock (2000) state that stories can lead to persuasion by immerse readers into the narrative world. Transportation is “*a state of cognitive, emotional and imagery engagement*” (Green, 2008, p. 47). Readers that are transported in a story world are easier being influenced and would easier change their minds.

### 2.2.2 STORIES IN MARKETING

Given the pervasiveness and power of stories it is not surprising that it can be used as a strong and effective marketing communication tool. For a long time, marketers may have been implicitly aware of the power of stories, because many advertisements have a story-like format (Escalas, 2004; Wentzel et al., 2010). Escalas (2004) explicitly linked the use of stories as a marketing tool. She emphasizes that because of the natural narrative processing of individuals, it is logically to present brands in a story format.

Stories can be used to communicate meaning and enhance emotional connections between consumers and brands (Chiu et al., 2012; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010; Huang, 2010; Lundqvist et al., 2012). Clearly, the persuasiveness of stories is also an important contribution to marketing (Gilliam et al., 2013; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2010; Wentzel et al., 2010). Accordingly, stories can create competitive advantages for brands and companies (Chiu et al., 2012; Huang, 2010), enhancing the reputation (Dowling, 2006) and increase consumer’s willingness to pay for the brand (Lundqvist et al., 2012). Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) even state that “*storytelling is essential to successful branding*” (p. 21). Because, in summary, stories can help build awareness, elicit emotions and empathy, enhance recognition and recall, persuade and incite action and provide meaning to the brand.

### 2.3 BRAND STORIES

In the light of using stories and storytelling in marketing, the term ‘brand story’ pops up. A story could provide value or meaning to a brand and by telling the brand story convey these values or meanings to consumers (Huang, 2010; Liu & Wu, 2011; Lundqvist et al., 2012). Liu and Wu (2011) define ‘brand storytelling’ as telling stories that sharpen brand knowledge and construct a specific brand personality. Brand stories are a means of (emotionally) connecting the consumers to the brand and building a relationship with them, moreover enhancing the brand image (Huang, 2010; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Gensler et al. (2013) suggest that brand stories can create strong brands in consumer memory. Huang (2010) and Chiu et al. (2012) explain this by referring to the narrative processes people encounter when receiving a brand story; they pay more attention, organize and store the information in a story-format, compare it with existing beliefs and values in mind and thereby the brand attitude and behavioural intentions are influenced.



Maybe most closely in defining brand stories on social media, is the framework of Gensler et al. (2013). They propose a conceptual framework to visualize the co-creational process of brand stories in social media, shown in Figure 2. With this framework, Gensler et al. (2013, p. 245) explain how brand stories are told through different channels by both the firm and consumers (*grey/black puzzle pieces*). Whereas the firm-generated brand stories are mainly consistent over time, consumer-generated brand stories are more likely to change ( $t=n$  vs.  $t=1$ ). The latter could support or challenge firm-generated brand stories (*the pieces do fit or not*). The consumer-generated brand stories could be about one ( $B1$ ) or more brands ( $B2/B3$ ). Market, firm, and consumer characteristics influence consumer-generated brand stories and the impact on the brand itself.

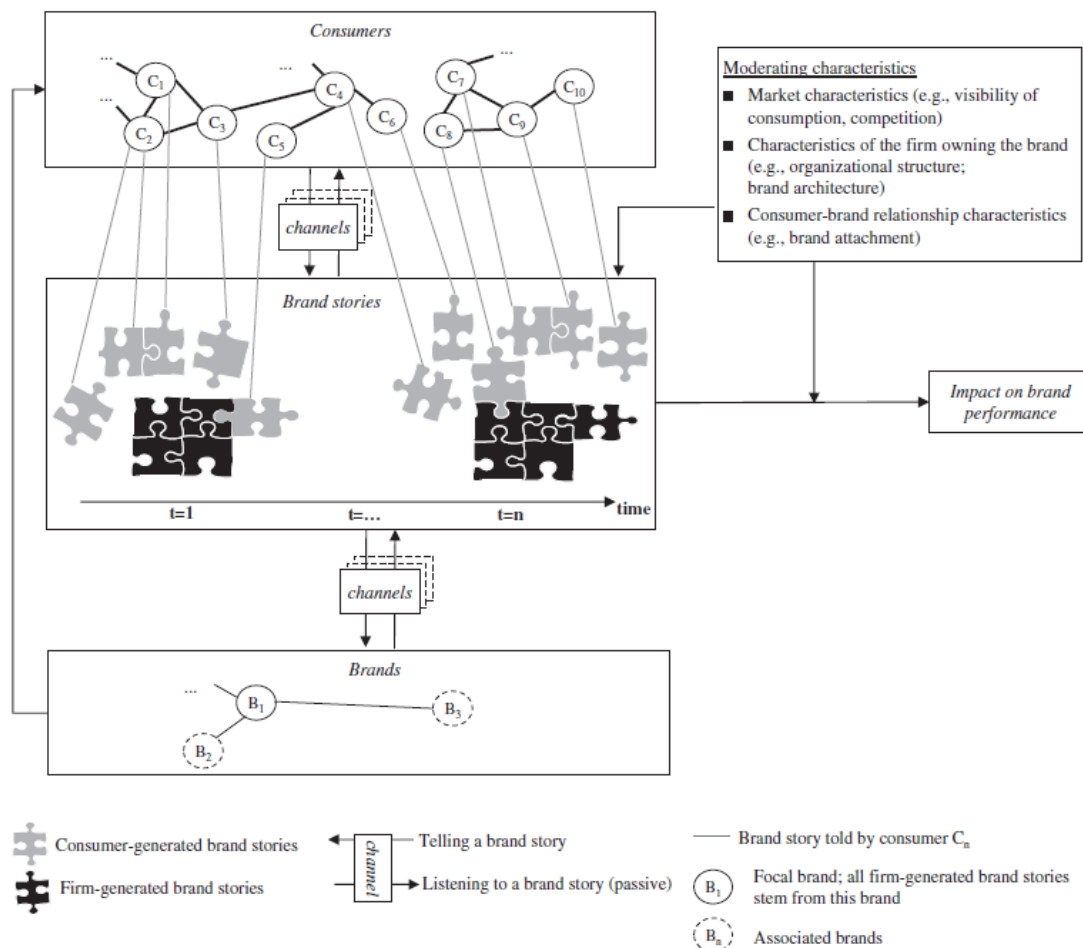


Figure 2: Gensler, et al (2013, p. 245): Conceptual framework of brand stories in social media.

In my perspective, there are three issues with this framework. First, the framework suggest the co-creational process of a brand story, but what the authors exactly mean by brand stories is not clear. They do not define the concepts that are used. Second, and maybe related to the first issue, it is somewhat indefinite whether every puzzle piece represents one brand story, or whether the puzzle pieces together form the brand story. Third, its multitude of narrators is limited. Whereas Gensler et al. (2013) propose that brand stories are co-created by brands and consumers only, there are other identifiable narrators, for example the press. From the next paragraph, I will work towards an appropriate descriptive framework in which it is clear what a brand story on social media is.

## 2.4 DEFINING BRAND STORIES

Currently, a marketing trend in storytelling can be identified. Though some marketers refer to ‘storytelling’ as just a buzz word that companies use, whether appropriate or not, to describe their strategy<sup>4,5</sup>. Despite the interest in brand stories and storytelling as a marketing strategy, there is no clear definition found in scientific literature. This paragraph will work towards an answer to sub-question A: “*What is an appropriate definition for brand stories on social media?*” Based on a literature study the concept of ‘brand story’ will be illuminated. I will first present some relating terms (paragraph 2.4.1), then I will elaborate on the different elements which the definition should include (paragraph 2.4.2). In the end of this paragraph, the answer to sub-question A is presented.

### 2.4.1 RELATING TERMS

While studying the literature, some relating terms are found that could help define the concept of brand stories on social media; the core story, corporate story, narrative advertisement and consumer-generated brand stories. In this paragraph, these terms are elaborated briefly.

#### *Core story*

Fog et al. (2005) suggest the term core story of a company as its foundation. “*All the stories being told in and around the company should stem from this one core story – just as nourishing leaves grow from the branches of the tree*” (p. 55). They argue how marketers should try to align the internal and external stories about the company with the core story, and therefore ‘nourishing’ the values of the core story. This core story starts from within, the company’s reason for being as Fog et al. (2005) argue. This could be linked to the Golden Circle of Simon Sinek (2009)<sup>6</sup>; start with the ‘why’ of the company. What is the purpose, cause or believe, why does it exist? Then comes the how and what. This is supposed to be the reason of success for companies like Apple.

#### *Corporate story*

Related to core story, but a more concrete term is the corporate story. Dowling (2006) suggest that a corporate story combines elements of a company’s mission, morality and modes of behaviour, suitable for both internal and external stakeholders, to support its reputation (see Figure 3). In other words, the identity, the offering and the future potential.

Partly similar are the suggested themes and elements of corporate stories by Spear and Roper (2013). The themes would be activities, benefits, emotion and strategy. The elements associated with the themes are respectively activities and accomplishments, internal and external benefits, emotion and conflict, and vision, mission and values. Unfortunately, Spear and Roper (2013), like Dowling (2006), do not propose a clear definition of corporate stories. Spear and Roper (2013) argue which definition of *stories* they use to study *corporate stories* and they suggest themes that *could* be used in their assumption that a good corporate story could drive corporate reputation.

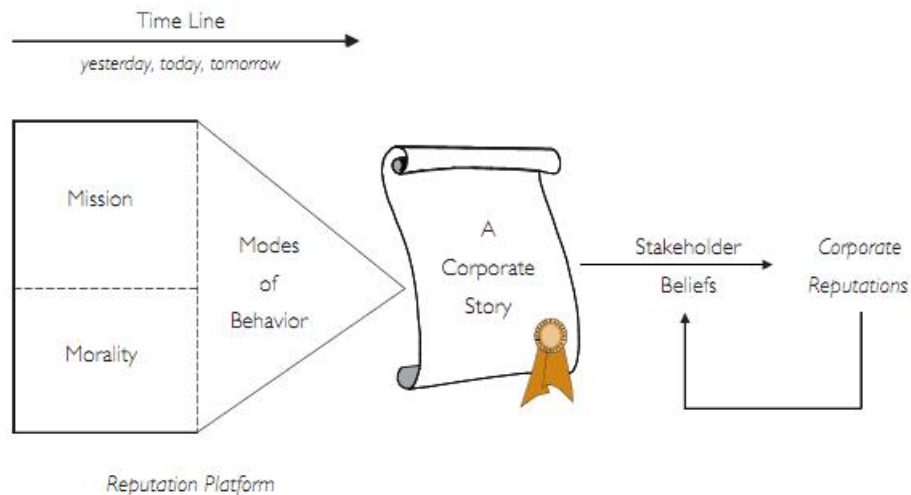
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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.frankwatching.com/archive/2014/12/26/storytelling-social-media-geen-lekker-verhaal/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.marketingfacts.nl/berichten/kevin-spacey-en-het-sprookje-van-de-marketeer-als-storyteller>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action?language=nl](http://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=nl)





**Figure 3: Dowling (2006, p. 86): The components of a reputation story**

Janssen, Van Dalfsen, Van Hoof and Van Vuuren (2012) argue how uniqueness does not have to be the key selling point of a corporate story. They conclude that corporate stories are rather similar because of specific textual characteristics that make certain *stories* recognizable as *corporate stories*. However, the characteristics they found are not merely applicable to corporate stories. Janssen et al. (2012) found characteristics that are most commonly used in Dutch corporate stories, but that does not necessarily work the other way around and thus be used to *recognize* corporate stories.

### **Narrative ads**

Another term used in research about stories in marketing is narrative advertisement (or narrative ads). An ad can take two forms; argumentative or narrative (Chang, 2009; Padgett & Allen, 1997). The first one presents product attributes in a logical way and is most useful in conveying functional information; the second one tells a story and is most effective in communicating symbolic information (Chang, 2009; Escalas, 2004; Padgett & Allen, 1997). Narrative ads are defined as a causal and chronological series of events [*structure component*] acted out by one or several characters, to illustrate how a product or service is consumed, used or created [*content component*] (Padgett & Allen, 1997; Wentzel et al., 2010). Similar to what is said about stories in general, researchers found that a narrative ad is evaluated more favourable than argumentative ads, because of the ability to elicit narrative processes (Escalas, 2004; Lundqvist et al., 2012; Wentzel et al., 2010). However, Chang (2009) did found some factors that could diminish this effect.

### **Consumer-generated brand stories**

Previous stories all stem from the brand, but another perspective on ‘brand stories’ found in literature has a consumer point of view. These stories are called ‘consumer-generated brand stories’. It enlightens how consumers fit brands into the stories they tell about themselves and their experiences (Gensler et al., 2013; Habibi, Laroche & Richard, 2014; Huang, 2010; Schembri, Merrilees & Kristiansen, 2010; Woodside et al., 2008). For example, Fog et al. (2005) suggest that individuals use brands to express their personality and values, whereby the brand story “*becomes synonymous with how we define ourselves as individuals and products become the symbols that [...] help us communicate who we are*” (p. 20).

#### 2.4.2 ELEMENTS OF A BRAND STORY

Though the definition of a brand story is unclear, scientific literature is suggesting several elements of a (brand) story which can be of help to define the concept. In order to do so, I created an overview of the elements that are used in definitions of stories, as already shortly described in paragraph 2.1.2. I conducted a content analysis on articles found during the quest for literature on (brand) stories. First, I coded all the definitions for stories that are used in the articles and made an overview, presented in Appendix 1: Definitions of stories. Then, I extracted all the elements that are used in the definitions. For example, the definition of Adaval and Wyer (1998): *“Much of the social information we acquire in daily life is transmitted to us in the form of a narrative. That is, it is conveyed in a thematically and temporally related sequence”* (p. 207), has the elements ‘theme’, ‘temporality’ and ‘related sequence’. I did an iteration for each definition, made a list of the elements, counted them or added new ones. Then, I combined synonyms (for example, outcome and consequence) and identified five meta categories: character, structure, key message and other. The overview is presented in Appendix 2: Story elements.

I conducted a second content analysis to gain knowledge about each element. In this paragraph, I will illuminate the different elements and highlight the challenges faced by social media, in order to formulate an appropriate definition for brand stories on social media.

But first, I should mention my use of the term ‘expressions’. Social media platforms provide many ways in which participants can express themselves, which is the new trend of storytelling (Habibi et al., 2014). For example (a combination of) a photo, video, link or a textual post. Brand stories on social media do not exist out of just textual stories anymore. Hence, I use the term ‘expressions’ to refer to these different types of stories and include all the ways individuals can express their selves on social media.

#### *Narrator*

Though the narrator is not per se mentioned as element of stories, the shift in authors is maybe the biggest change for brand stories that came with the rise of social media and therefore should be discussed first. Whereas previously brands were the primary source of brand stories, now the consumers are pivotal authors (Gensler et al., 2013). As Gensler et al. (2013) argued: *“A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is, it is what consumers tell each other it is.”* (p. 242). Social media has empowered the consumer and therefore increased the ability for consumer-generated (brand) content (Berthon et al., 2012; Gensler et al., 2013; Habibi et al., 2014; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). This causes the brand managers to lose control over the brand (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). Hennig-Thurau et al. (2013) are referring to a *“chaotic and interactive game of pinball”* (p. 237), when arguing the changes in the field of marketing. It is not the traditional bowling area anymore, where the marketing mix (the ball) is used to reach and influence the consumers (the pins). Consequently, the empowered consumer is not just a passive listener anymore, but actively participates in the game. The consumer-generated brand stories discussed before are now easily created, shared, consumed and widely present on social media platforms. Singh and Sonnenburg (2012) are referring to social media as an improvisational theatre

performance, with an “*uncontrolled and unpredictable nature [...] rather than a classical theatre performance*” (p.190), to discuss how brands co-create brand stories in an interactive cooperation with consumers.

Next to brands and consumers, Campbell, Cohen and Ma (2014) suggest that brand stories can also be created by news media, for example editorial content or free publicity. This study adds stakeholders and other participants in social media to the list of ‘narrators’ of brand stories, to include everyone who can tell, influence or shape a brand story.

### **Key message**

Fog et al. (2005) suggest that without a clearly defined message, “*there is no reason to tell stories – at least, not with a strategic purpose*” (p. 32). Each story should contain one clear key message (Fog et al., 2005; Lundqvist et al., 2012). Logically, for brand stories the key message should to some extent be related to the brand and is valuable (Lundqvist et al., 2012). In other words, the key message can be positive, negative or rather neutral. From a marketing perspective, it should best be problem solving<sup>7</sup>, the solution to a conflict (Black & Kelley, 2009; Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003; Fog et al., 2005; Gruen, Rauch, Redpath & Reuttinger, 2002; Lundqvist et al., 2012). Conflict or tension makes individuals emotionally involved, therefore forcing them to act and participate (Fog et al., 2005; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012).

Much of the stories on social media about a brand are now also generated by consumers, causing a loss of control for brand managers over their brand stories (Gensler et al., 2013) described by Hennig-Thurau, et al. (2010; 2013) as the earlier discussed game of pinball. Brown et al. (2003) already found that the meaning of a brand is not just coming from the brand manager and that it is dynamic. In their study, Brown et al. (2003) showed how trends, consumers, press and related celebrities are influencing the essence of brand meaning and associations. The rise of a multitude of social media platforms and its users has made this phenomenon more present than ever. Gensler et al. (2013) are arguing that marketers can passively watch consumers taking over their brands, or they can participate in and coordinate these consumer-generated brand stories. It is now the challenge for brand managers to co-create brand stories with consumers and stakeholders (Berthon et al., 2012; Gensler et al., 2013; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2013; Schieder, 2013; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012).

For the definition and the design of the descriptive framework in this study, I propose the following. Because there are multiple narrators that together co-create brand stories, I suggest that a brand story comprises a group of multiple expressions. The multiple expressions can be assigned to a group when they are coherent based on a common theme. A theme is related to key message, as the content analysis suggest (see Appendix 2: Story elements). Each individual expressions should hold a valuable (positive, negative or neutral) key message that is, at least to some extent, related to the brand. This way, expressions that are irrelevant for the brand, or don’t concern the brand, are excluded from the brand story.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.frankwatching.com/archive/2014/05/27/>

## Structure

According to the literature study, in stories the structure seems an important characteristic (e.g. Lundqvist et al., 2012; Padgett & Allen, 1997; Wentzel et al., 2010). Several aspects of structure are mentioned, as seen in Appendix 2: Story elements. It is a rather ambiguous element though, because there are so many mixed results and statements in scientific literature about the structure of a story and its aspects.

First, let us argue the aspects of story. Frequently named is the beginning-middle-end structure, which can be related to the term ‘temporality’. Temporality means it is related to time. Green (2008) argues how this structure has many advantages, because it is easy to understand. Another aspect related to time is chronology, which emphasizes the arranging in order of time. Chang (2009) and Lien and Chen (2013) argue that chronology and causality are critical for a story. Chiu et al. (2012) names chronology and character instead of causality, as the two factors necessary for a story. Furthermore, there is the plot, meaning the storyline according to some online dictionaries<sup>8</sup>.

It becomes rather complicated, when for instance the plot is often named as a separate aspect (e.g. Chang, 2009; Escalas, 2004), but sometimes the aspects plot and beginning-middle-end are used interchangeably. Fog et al. (2005) states the following: *“The plot: Generally speaking a traditional story can be segmented into three parts; beginning, middle and end”* (p. 31). Adaval and Wyer (1998, p. 208) state differently as *“stories [...] have a beginning, a plot and an end”*, in which they replace ‘middle’ for plot. Moreover, Lien and Chen (2013) use a beginning-middle-end structure to explain chronology: *“chronology means that narrative events occur over time such that viewers can perceive the events' beginning, progress, and ending according to their time flow”* (p. 517).

There are also mixed results in scientific literature about the importance of structure in a story. Huang (2010) studied the relationship between the structure of the brand story and perceived brand image. Her results seem promising, revealing significant effects from plot on consumers’ perceived brand image. But, looking at her discussion she states that *“having a brand story could help reinforce the brand image, regardless of the structure of the story”* (p. 313). The previously mentioned study of Janssen et al. (2012) showed that most of the analysed corporate stories did not comply with general story structures and genre types. On the other hand, Graaf and Hustinx (2011) found *“that a suspense structure [in stories] evoked more emotional response, led to more [narrative] transportation as a whole, and made people hold beliefs more consistent with the story [narrative persuasion]”* (p. 150).

It is difficult to define a ‘must-have’ for the structure of a story. With regards to social media, its dynamic nature makes the structure of a brand story rather continuous and ongoing. Different expressions could pop up on many channels at the same time and a brand could have various stories that are changing over time. I thus suggest a brand story is a group of continuous expressions.

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<sup>8</sup> <http://dictionary.reference.com/>, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>

Regarding a beginning-middle-end structure, as a classical story is suggested to have, it is questionable whether that applies to a brand story on social media. The beginning could be identified by ‘the first expressions’, but the end is rather ambiguous. Almost everything that is once posted on the internet, will always remain on the internet. For example, it may have been years ago that a brand suffered from a bad story, but this story can always be found on the internet. So is there a real end to that story?

### Events

Causality as a characteristic of stories may be found in the often mentioned element ‘events’. Gilliam et al. (2013) define ‘events’ as actions and consequences, like processes, situations or states. Actions and consequences, or outcomes, are often related to motives or goals (Escalas, 2004; Padgett & Allen, 1997; Wentzel et al., 2010). These descriptions of events suggest a causal relation; a motive causes one to act, which has a consequence. For the definition of brand stories, it is thus suggested that the group of expressions is formed by a sequence of events, which comprises a motive, an act and a consequence.

### Characters

The last element of a story seems to be one or more (main) character(s). For brand stories, this does not have to be a person, but it could either be a hero, company, brand, product or service<sup>9</sup>. Whatever the character of the brand story is, it is important that consumers are able to identify with the character (Fog et al., 2005; Gruen et al., 2002; Lundqvist et al., 2012). Some discuss how the character is most important for good stories (Black & Kelley, 2009; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010), for example Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) argue how persona-focused storytelling is essential for branding. A well-defined, recognizable, memorable and compelling persona – “*the articulated form of the brand’s character and personality*” (p. 21) – is the most important.

With regard to the definition, a brand story should thus include a character, although this character could ‘just’ be the brand. Earlier, I suggested that the key message of an expression should at least to some extent be related to the brand. Hereby the element of a character is included in this study.

#### 2.4.3 THE DEFINITION OF A BRAND STORY

Summarizing paragraph 2.4, I propose the following definition for brand stories on social media, as an answer to sub-question A:

**ON SOCIAL MEDIA, A BRAND STORY IS A SET OF CONTINUOUS, COHERENT EXPRESSIONS, FORMED BY THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS. THE INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSIONS ARE COHERENT BECAUSE OF A COMMON THEME, HOLD A VALUABLE KEY MESSAGE AND ARE DIRECTLY RELATED TO A BRAND, EITHER SHAPED BY THE BRAND ITSELF, CONSUMER(S), STAKEHOLDERS, NEWS MEDIA, AND/OR OTHER PARTICIPANTS.**

Social media has given a multitude of narrators the possibility to express their selves about a brand. A brand story on social media consist of a group of these expressions, that are coherent

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.frankwatching.com/archive/2014/05/15/storytelling-de-3-basisingredienten-om-iemand-te-raken/>

because of a common theme. These expressions appear continuously and to recognize a story in the set of expressions, a sequence of events should be identifiable. This comprises a motive, an act and a consequence. Moreover, for each individual expression, a valuable key message can be identified as well as the narrator.

## 2.5 A DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR BRAND STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Based on the definition and the literature study, the descriptive framework will be presented and thus the answer to sub-question B: “*How can brand stories on social media be identified?*”. This descriptive framework is the operationalisation of the definition.

Like discussed, this framework delineates the context to social media. Social media has empowered consumers, consequentially it becomes *the* way for consumers to express themselves. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010) and Gensler et al. (2013) argue how brand stories on social media are more impactful than stories on traditional channels, because they use “*social networks, are digital, visible, ubiquitous, available in real-time and dynamic*” (Gensler et al., 2013, p. 243). Brand stories provide and convey value and meaning (Huang, 2010; Lundqvist et al., 2012), moreover influencing brand performance (Gensler et al., 2013).

The purpose of this framework is to identify brand stories on social media. The framework consists of five design guidelines and a model, which is the visualisation of the guidelines. The five guidelines can be divided into three levels. The first guideline deals with the social media. The second and third guideline are concerning the set of expressions. The individual expressions are covered in the fourth and fifth guideline.

The visualisation of the guidelines is shown in Figure 4. Know that I acknowledge the fact that there are many ways in which the guidelines can be visualized. It can depend on one’s preference and objective of the identification. I will illuminate the model in Figure 4, which is an example of how a brand story could be visualized. Because of the possible influence on brand performance, this model mostly gives an impression whether the story was positive or negative and who primarily told the brand story. A legend for the complete model is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Legend for model in Figure 4**

Dimension	Description
Context	Delineated by the dotted line and represents social media ( <i>Guideline I</i> )
Circles	Denoting the individual expressions
Size of the circle	Indicates the amount of expressions at that time
Colour of the circle	Depends on the type of narrator at that time ( <i>Guideline IV</i> )
Vertical line	Indicates the value of key message (positive, neutral or negative) ( <i>Guideline V</i> )
Horizontal line	Represents the time, which can be divided according to one’s preference (e.g. by week or month)
Bigger oval	Indicates that these expressions belong together because of a common theme and a sequence of events ( <i>Guideline II+III</i> )



## A DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR BRAND STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

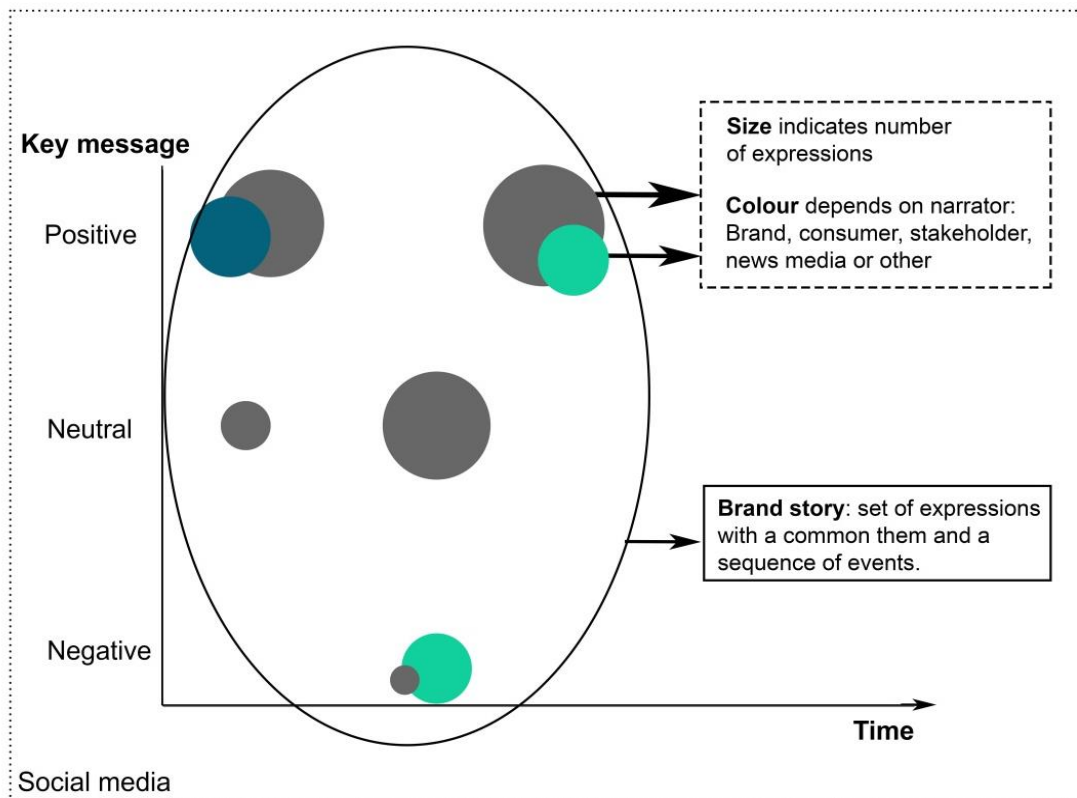


Figure 4: Model, example of visualisation of the design guidelines

### GUIDELINE I: SOCIAL MEDIA

The definition for social media of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) is adopted. They suggest that social media is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (p. 61). The most common platforms<sup>10</sup> are social networking sites (e.g. Facebook or Twitter), blogs and content communities (e.g. YouTube). But, also collaborative projects as Wikipedia, and virtual social and game worlds (e.g. Second Life and World of Warcraft) belong to the scope of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

### GUIDELINE II: A SET OF CONTINUOUS, COHERENT EXPRESSIONS

First, the ability to communicate on social media is endless. Therefore, I suggest that brand stories on social media exist of expressions, not just classical textual stories. These expressions appear continuously, on many platforms at the same time and all the time. Second, I suggest that a brand story is formed by expressions that are coherent mostly in terms of its theme. Importantly, coherent does not necessarily mean that the sentiment is the same. People may have different opinions on the matter. This is related to the guideline of the key message. Third, I propose that a brand can have multiple plots over time. In other words, the story of a brand can change over time.

<sup>10</sup> Based on the output of social media monitoring agency Coosto

### GUIDELINE III: SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

The second guideline concerning the set of expressions is about its causality. A brand story is formed by the sequence of events, which holds the individual expression with a common theme together. As Escalas (2004, p. 169) stated: “*stories consist of goal-directed action-outcome sequences*”. Like discussed earlier, events include a goal, act and outcome. It is important to note that there is a distinction between the motive in the story or the motive of the storyteller. In the dynamic nature of social media and the multitude of narrators, there are of course different motives to tell a brand story. For example, from a marketing perspective the underlying motive to tell a brand story is to gain more profit. But in this framework, it is about the motive in the story itself. To explain this guideline, an example of Escalas (2004) is used.

[The example, a consumer story about the Volkswagen Passat] “*It was a really difficult decision. I had a Honda Civic before, and I loved that car. But I've got two kids and I didn't feel safe, so I decided to buy a bigger car [formation of a **goal**]. I did a lot of research [action]: I searched the web and talked to two of my friends who I think know a lot about car decisions. They convinced me that the Volkswagen Passat was the safest car in its class [outcome, buying the car]. I'm really happy with my choice. It's safe for my kids -I've got eight airbags now! -and I think owning a Passat shows that I'm smart.*” (p. 168-169)

### GUIDELINE IV: MULTIPLE NARRATORS

As proposed in the second guideline, a brand story exist of a set of expressions that have a coherent theme. Each individual expression, comes from a certain narrator. I named this guideline the multiple narrators, although it is not merely about ‘telling a story’. The definition uses the verb ‘shape’, because the different narrators can influence the brand story and thereby shaping it. An example is *bendgate*, concerning the Apple iPhone 6. After its launch, one consumer posted a video on YouTube<sup>11</sup> about his bending iPhone 6 and two days later it is watched over 24 million times. Instead of talking about the ‘fantastic new iPhone 6’, the world is talking about *bendgate*, though according to Apple<sup>12</sup> only 9 people (out of millions of customers) actually complained about their bended iPhones. Not only consumers, but also companies followed on *bendgate* in their social media posts<sup>13</sup>. The different narrators thus *shaped* the brand story of the just-launched iPhone 6.

I suggest five narrators of an expression that could shape a brand story; the brand itself, consumers, news media, stakeholders and other participants.

### GUIDELINE V: VALUABLE KEY MESSAGE, RELATED TO THE BRAND

Furthermore, each expression should hold a key message that is at least to some extent related to the brand. The key message is a valuable one, which means that it can be positive, negative, or rather neutral. Because a brand story is shaped by different participants (as discussed in the next paragraph), it is possible for a brand story to have multiple perspectives.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=znK652H6yQM>

<sup>12</sup> <http://time.com/money/3433117/apple-bendgate-iphone-6-plus/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://debestesocialmedia.nl/de-grappige-reacties-van-bedrijven-op-apples-bendgate/>



## 2.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

In order to answer sub-question A and B, I started with a theoretical foundation in stories. This is the first part of this design study, as shown in Figure 5.

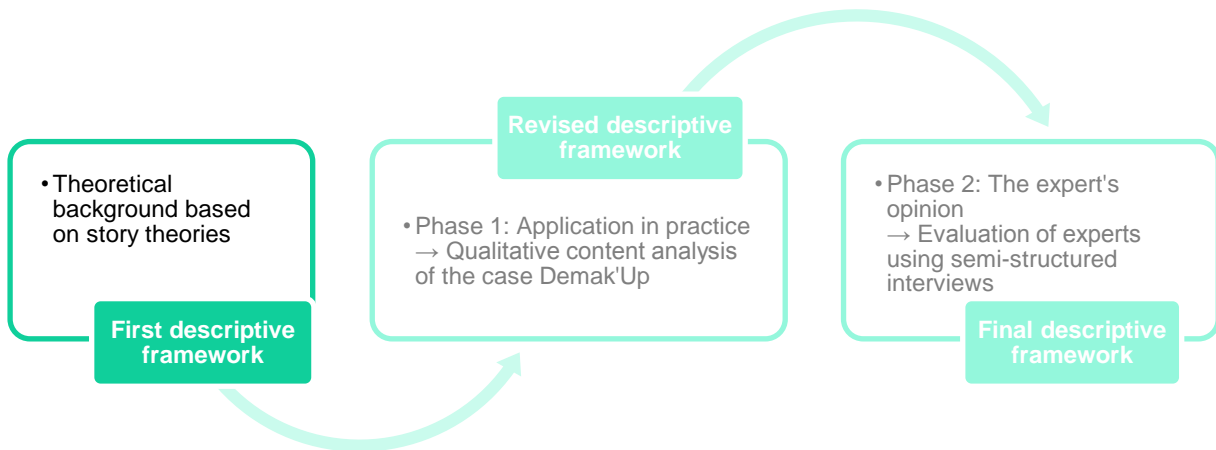


Figure 5: First part of this design study

Deriving from a literature review, a general definition for stories is formulated. Next, I evaluated relating terms and elements of what stories are. This resulted in a definition, and more importantly, a descriptive framework for brand stories on social media. The theory-based framework includes five design guidelines and a visualisation of the guidelines. This is the framework that will be evaluated in the formative evaluation. In the next chapter, the methodology of this evaluation is presented.

# 3 FORMATIVE EVALUATION

This chapter describes the formative evaluation of the framework. The justification of methodological choices for research and methods are being explained and information about data collection and analysis is provided. The purpose of this study is to design a descriptive framework for brand stories on social media, integrating theory and practice. The theoretical foundation is made in Chapter 2. Now, it will be evaluated in practice. This formative evaluation takes a two-step approach. In the first phase, a case study is performed with a dual objective: 1) valuable conclusions about the brand stories of Demak'Up and 2) a revised appropriate descriptive framework. In the second phase, by means of semi-structured interviews, the opinion of experts about the revised framework is gathered, to evaluate the appropriateness. The second phase will result in final descriptive framework, which is also the answer to the main research question.

## 3.1 PHASE 1: APPLICATION IN PRACTICE

In this first phase, the appropriateness of the mainly theoretical grounded descriptive framework is tested in practice. This paragraph will elaborate on how the phase is executed. It is important to note that in this phase the case of Demak'Up is central and not until the end the implications for the framework are discussed.

### 3.1.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

A case study is performed, in order to test how appropriate the descriptive framework is when applied in practice. Because the case is used in order to answer the main research question, the actual case is of secondary interest. This is called an instrumental case study, which provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Stake, 1995). A case study is suitable in this phase, because it concerns an exploratory “what” question, it is not needed to have control over behavioural aspects and the focus is on contemporary phenomena (Yin, 2003).

A case is defined as the unit of analysis (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1984). The used case in this phase is the brand Demak'Up. The sampling of this case is purposive, because in the light of any further inside information it depends on the clients of the Gardeners. Demak'Up is one of the biggest clients of the Gardeners. Demak'Up is a consumer tissue brand of SCA, a leading global hygiene and forest products company<sup>14</sup>. In the Netherlands, the brand is known for its cotton pads, wipes for make-up removal and facial cleansing and eye make-up removers.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.sca.com/en/Home/>

### 3.1.2 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

By means of a qualitative content analysis, the descriptive framework is used to identify the brand stories of one case. This implies a deductive content analysis. The research procedure corresponds with the three main phases of the content analysis process argued by Elo et al. (2014): preparation, organization and reporting of the results.



Figure 6: Main phases of content analysis (Elo et al., 2014)

A set of social big data of Demak'Up is gathered from social media monitoring agency Coosto. There must be taken into account that it is possible that the dataset does not include all existing expressions. Closed social media accounts for example, cannot be included because of privacy issues. Moreover, though I argued how expressions include all the ways that people can express themselves (e.g. photos, videos or text), the content analysis only concerned textual expressions. Coosto enables us to export the set of data into Excel. All the data from the past 6 months is exported, using the criteria presented in Table 2. In the filter, reactions and retweets are excluded from the dataset. Only the initial post, or expression, is included. This is done because the results of Coosto only contained Twitter reactions or 'retweets' and not for example, the comments on Facebook. In order to get a representative overview from all platforms, the filter criteria is set on 'only posts'. The resulting Excel file is imported into Atlas.ti.

Table 2: Search criteria dataset Coosto

Category	Criteria
Keywords search:	"demakup" OR "demak'up" OR "demak up" OR "Demak'Up" OR "Demak'up" OR "Demak Up" OR "Demak'upNederland" OR "DemakupNederland" OR "Demak'Up Nederland"
Time period:	6 months. (i.e. 03 January 2015 – 02 July 2015)
Filter:	All sentiments - All sources - All genders - Only posts - All Media

### 3.1.3 DATA ANALYSIS

To analyse the dataset, the coding system of Atlas.ti is used. Every expression in the social dataset becomes a Primary Doc (PD). Atlas.ti instantly codes the PDs into codes that match the column titles in Excel. These codes are presented in Table 3. On its first level, the PDs are *a priori* coded, because the categories are set prior to the analysis and based upon theory (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Stemler, 2001). A coding scheme is used, presented in Table 4. This coding scheme is based on *Guideline IV* and *V*, because they concern the individual expressions. The three 'delete-codes' are added to exclude expressions that are re-posts, that are in the dataset more than once, or expressions in another language than Dutch to avoid interpretation mistakes. In the second round, *pattern coding* is used to group the codes into a smaller number of overarching themes (Miles & Huberman, 1984). This second round relates to *Guideline II*. *Guideline III* is not included in any coding round, but is analysed retrospectively. Results about *Guideline I* can be extracted from the 'Type bron' from the automatic codes.

**Table 3: Automatic codes**

Code	Description <sup>15</sup>
Auteur	Author of the expression
Bereik	Reach from 1-10, measures the reach and importance of the website.
Bericht tekst	Content of the expression
Datum	Date the expression was published
Discussielengte	The size of the discussion to which the expression is part of
GPS breedtegraad	GPS location
GPS lengtegraad	GPS location
Invloed	Influence, only measured on Twitter expressions. Depends on (inter)activity of the author on Twitter
Sentiment	Sentiment according to Coosto. Is coded automatically based on emotions and is not really trustworthy.
Titel	Title, only available with blogs and news sites.
Type	Type of the expression. Always post because the reposts are excluded.
Type bron	Source of the expression, media platform.
Url	URL of the expression
Volgers	Followers, only available with Twitter expressions.
Zoekopdracht	Keyword search

**Table 4: Coding scheme**

Element	Code	Description
Key message	KM – Positive	A key message about the brand with a positive sentiment.
	KM – Negative	A key message about the brand with a negative sentiment.
	KM – Neutral	A key message about the brand without any notion of a positive or negative sentiment. For example, just the mentioning of the brand.
Narrator	N – Brand	The source of the expression is the studied brand.
	N – Consumer	The source of the expression is a consumer, an individual.
	N – News media	The source of the expression is a news medium or press. For example, a magazine. (mostly) Not an individual.
	N – Stakeholder	The source of the expression is a stakeholder, in some way related to the brand.
	N – Other	The source of the expression is none of the above.
	Delete: Repost	Reposts are filtered out of the data set, but some are still included.
	Delete: Same URL	An expression with the same URL that is also in the dataset.
	Delete: Other language	An expression with another language than Dutch.

Miles and Huberman (1984) introduce different ‘displays’ to present qualitative information in a systematic manner. Their Event Listing format is interesting, as it “*arranges a series of concrete events by chronological time periods, sorting them into several categories*” (p. 122). An example is the Growth Gradient (p. 87), which basically looks like the descriptive framework as suggested in Chapter 2. The conclusions of the case study analysis will be presented with the Growth Gradient and the framework in mind.

Appropriateness of the framework is analysed after conducting the case study. This is done by evaluating the clarity, suitability and practicality of the framework when it is applied in practice.

<sup>15</sup> [https://in.coosto.com/download/coosto\\_manual\\_nl.pdf?v=1078](https://in.coosto.com/download/coosto_manual_nl.pdf?v=1078)

### Reliability

Double-coding is used to reach interrater reliability in this study (Miles & Huberman, 1984). A second independent researcher coded 20% of the expressions in the case. Reliability is measured using Cohen's Kappa, whereas 1 is perfectly reliable and 0 is no agreement at all.

Table 5: Cohen's Kappa

Element	Cohen's Kappa
Key Message	0.66
Narrator	0.88
Theme	0.82

According to Landis and Koch (1977) a Kappa between 0.6 and 0.8 implies substantial agreement and is considered as a reliable coding process. A Cohen's Kappa above 0.8 is considered almost perfect (Landis & Koch, 1977). By discussing the differences in coding, the coding scheme was sharpened.

## 3.2 PHASE 2: THE EXPERT'S OPINION

The purpose of this second phase is to study whether the revised framework and definition is indeed appropriate from the perspective of a marketer. Basically, it is the evaluation of the descriptive framework by practical experts. In the following subparagraphs it is enlightened how this phase is executed.

### 3.2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

To gather the opinion of experts, individual open-ended interviews are used. In open-ended interviews, respondents can be asked about their opinions about events, as well as their own insights about certain matters (Baarda, De Goede & Teunissen, 2009; Yin, 2003). The open-ended interviews have a semi-structured construction. Because the goal of this second phase is rather clear, the structure of the interview can be prepared in advance. Semi-structured interviews have a clear direction towards collecting the right data, but leave enough space for the respondent to elaborate on interesting issues. In this phase, the opinion and evaluation of the expert is most important and as DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) state, in a semi-structured interview the person who is being interviewed is "*more a participant in meaning making than a conduit from which information is retrieved*" (p. 314).

### Topic list

For semi-structured interviews a topic list is made to guide the interview. The topic list is composed of the guidelines, the model and the definition. Baarda et al. (2009) recommend to start with easier questions, because as the interview progresses, both interviewer and interviewee will become more involved with the subject. Because of the complexity of the subject, first the individual guidelines will be discussed, followed by the model and concluding with the definition. The topic list is presented below in Table 6. Appropriateness is measured by asking experts' opinions about the content of each guideline and the overall phenomenon of brand stories on social media. Moreover, it is important that the used terms, definitions and explanations are clear and well defined, according to the experts.

**Table 6: Topic list**

Item	Topics to discuss
<i>Introduction</i>	Introduction of the interview and study Explanation of the descriptive framework
<i>Guideline 1</i>	The definition of Social Media
<i>Guideline 2</i>	The concept of Expressions
<i>Guideline 3</i>	The concept of Narrator Five distinguishable narrators
<i>Guideline 4</i>	The concept of Sentiment Positive, neutral or negative
<i>Guideline 5</i>	Continuity Coherence based on common theme Multiple plots
<i>Guideline 6</i>	The concept of Events Goal, act and outcome
<i>Model</i>	Visualisation of the guidelines
<i>Definition</i>	Formulation of the definition
<i>Conclusion</i>	Overall evaluation of the framework Further comments or questions Closure of the interview

### 3.2.2 EXPERTS

Sampling of the experts is based on the snowball technique. Initially a small group of people relevant for the research question is sampled, and these participants proposed other participants who have the experience or expertise relevant to the research. Relevant people are marketers specialized in marketing, brand management and/or social media management. These marketers are called experts (abbreviated in this thesis as E1, E2..8).

A total of eight experts participated in the formative evaluation, of which five male and three female experts. In the field of marketing, a clear distinction can be made between working at a client or working at an agency. Of the experts, four work at agencies and the other four work at clients. Any differences in perspective are thus accounted for. Another valuable advantage for the evaluation is the theoretical background of the experts. Six of them graduated from university, so they are familiar in combining theory with practice. The experts remain anonymous, but to give an impression of their expertise a job description is provided in Table 7.

**Table 7: Job description of the experts**

	Expert	Job description
Client	E1	Channel manager
	E2	Brand manager
	E3	Sr. Brand manager
	E4	Sr. Online marketer
Agency	E5	Digital strategist
	E6	Head of Copy & Content at storytelling agency
	E7	Communication and Social Media consultant
	E8	Managing director at social and PR agency

### 3.2.3 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

Via email or by phone, the experts were contacted to schedule the interview time and location. During this first contact, I noticed that the subject of this research appeared to be quite complex. Therefore, in advance to the interviews, the experts received an email with more in-depth information about the interview including the descriptive framework. The experts were not obliged to, but if they preferred they could prepare themselves for the interview. During the interview, each guideline was extensively explained prior to the ‘discussion’ about each guideline.

All interviews took place on a location preferred by the expert and were all face-to-face, except for one telephone interview. Each expert was again informed that the purpose of the interview is to gather their opinion and for the evaluation of the descriptive framework for brand stories in social media. They are asked for their permission to record the session, and they are assured that their contributions will remain anonymous. Appendix 3 and 4 include the Research Introduction and the Informed Consent Form (both in Dutch). All experts agreed on the recording. Each interview took for about 75 minutes.

### 3.2.4 DATA ANALYSIS

All the recorded interviews were transcribed. These transcriptions are analysed using the software program Atlas.ti. The first round of coding exists of *a priori coding* with *descriptive codes* (Miles & Huberman, 1984), based on the topic list used during the interviews. Parts of the transcriptions are thus divided into the different guidelines of the descriptive framework. In the second round, each transcription part (based on the *a priori coding*) is *open coded* using *pattern codes*. Subtopics in the segments of data are identified, to understand the evaluations and discussion points of the experts.

The results of the second round of coding are presented into the Conceptually Clustured Matrix (p. 110) of Miles and Huberman (1984). This matrix is relevant because it allows comparison between responses and between participants. It groups conceptual coherent items together in the columns. For each guideline a matrix is made, the columns derive from the second round of coding. The rows exist of the experts. This way the opinion and evaluation of all the experts about each topic, can be compared.

While making the matrixes, the *Memoing* technique of Miles and Huberman (1984) is used. They describe it as the write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they occur to the researcher while coding. Using the completed matrix in combination with the *Memoing* technique, conclusions about the appropriateness of the framework are drawn.

## 4 PHASE ONE: APPLICATION IN PRACTICE

This is the second part of this design study and the first phase of the formative evaluation, see Figure 7. First, the results of the case study will be discussed. The expressions from the past six months about the brand Demak'Up are coded using Atlas.ti. The results will be analysed using the proposed framework from Chapter 2. After the brand stories of this case are identified (sub-question C), the implications for the framework are addressed to (sub-question D). Concluding this chapter, a revised descriptive framework is presented.

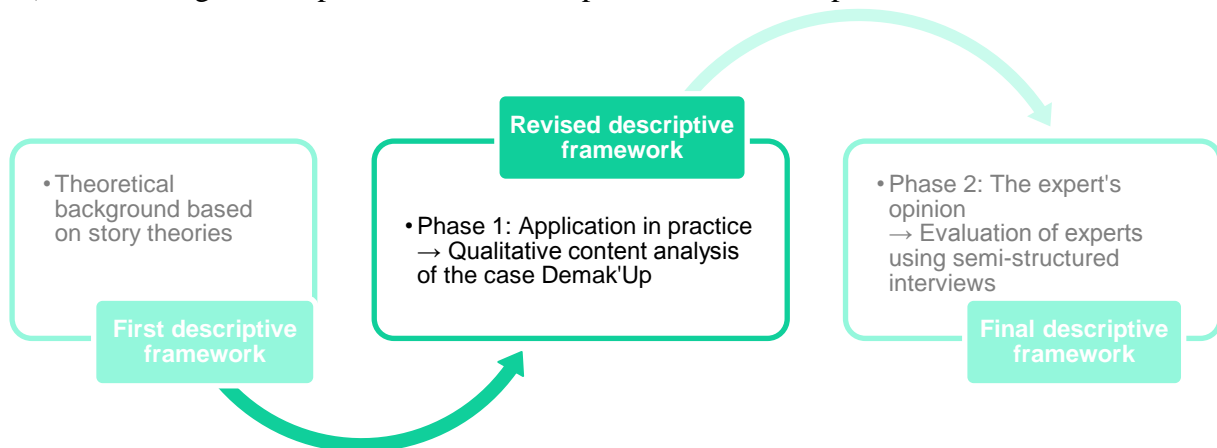


Figure 7: Second part, phase 1 in this design study

### 4.1 THE CASE: DEMAK'UP

As explained in Chapter 3, phase one exists of a case study within this design study. The main goal of the case study is to answer sub-research question C: “*What are the brand stories of Demak'Up in the past six months, using the proposed descriptive framework?*”. In order to so, the design guidelines of the framework are used to analyse the data. Therefore, first each guideline is reviewed. Then, a conclusion can be drawn about the brand stories of Demak'Up. This case study closes with some limitation points that need to be taken into account.

#### 4.1.1 RESULTS

A total of 302 expressions are coded using Atlas.ti. In Table 8 on the next page, some frequencies of the coding process are presented. First, the used social media channels, which were automatically coded by Atlas.ti based on the information from Coosto. Also the frequencies of the *a priori* coding, the elements *Delete*, *Narrator* and *Key message* are presented. 24 expressions are deleted from the original dataset, which resulted into a final dataset of 278 expressions. Moreover, Table 8 shows the frequencies of the second round of coding, which concerned the *Theme*.



**Table 8: Frequencies and percentages of Demak'Up expressions on Social Media**

Element	Code	Frequencies	Percentage
<b>Social media channel</b>	Twitter	118	39%
	Blog	93	31%
	Facebook	48	16%
	Instagram	24	8%
	News	16	5%
	YouTube	2	1%
	Google+	1	0%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>302</i>	<i>100%*</i>
<b>Delete</b>	Other language	14	5%
	Repost	6	2%
	Same URL	4	1%
	<i>Total delete</i>	<i>24</i>	<i>8%*</i>
<b>Theme</b>	Detox Challenge	183	66%
	Product	51	18%
	Mentioning of the brand	20	7%
	Promotion	12	4%
	Demak'Up for Men	8	3%
	Facelooks	4	1%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>278</i>	<i>100%**</i>
<b>Narrator</b>	Consumer	218	78%
	News media	27	10%
	Other	19	7%
	Brand	10	4%
	Stakeholder	4	1%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>278</i>	<i>100%**</i>
<b>Key message</b>	Positive	211	76%
	Neutral	58	21%
	Negative	11	4%
	<i>Total</i>	<i>280</i>	<i>101%**</i>

\* Percentage of initial dataset

\*\* Percentage of final dataset

#### 4.1.1 ANALYSIS OF THE CASE

As introduced in the beginning of this chapter, the guidelines of the framework are used to identify the brand stories of Demak'Up. Each guideline is analysed in this paragraph, using examples from the dataset.

##### *Guideline I: Social media*

Twitter is the most used medium, followed by blogs and Facebook. Noteworthy, in 97% of the Twitter expressions was linked to another website. These links were mostly redirected to blogposts.

*“Check my newest blogpost with a nice DIY beauty recipe!! <http://t.co/FxmOqql9yG> #demakup #detoxchallenge #skincare” (PD 255)*

A discrepancy can be noticed between the code *news* in social media channel and *news media* in narrator. This is due to the automatic coding of Coosto. For instance, a Twitter post expressed by news media, is coded as *Twitter* and not as *news*. Another important thing to note is that although YouTube is coded twice in the dataset, YouTube movies are sometimes embedded into other media. Mostly on blogsites, for instance:

*“A second ‘My day in beauty products’, but than in video-format! [..]” (PD 16)*



### **Guideline II: A set of continuous, coherent expressions**

This guideline groups the expressions together based on a common theme. In the second round of coding, these themes are identified. To get an impression of the group, each theme will be shortly addressed to.

#### **MENTIONING OF THE BRAND AND PROMOTION**

In 7% of the expressions the name of the brand is just mentioned, or a promotion is brought under attention (4%). Respectively presented in the following two examples:

*“[..] SCA produces and delivers hygiene and sustainable products for personal care, like Edit, Tempo, Libresse and Demak’Up. The Swedish company therefore chose a full female crew in the 2014-2015 Volvo Ocean Race. [..]” (PD 3)*

*“Promotion for <http://t.co/wmdzQtpTsP> - 2+1 free on the assortment of Demak’Up <http://t.co/6CVh6i5TIU>” (PD 116)*

#### **PRODUCT**

Then there is another group of expressions (18%) in which the products of Demak’Up are mentioned. Two matters of this theme will be highlighted. First, of the ten expressions in which the brand was the narrator, nine involved a ‘product theme’. And second, in the expressions of the consumers a trend can be identified in bloggers describing their ‘finished products’. For example:

*“In this article I show you my finished products of last year’s November and December. [..] I can be short about cotton pads: I cannot live without them! Last two months I used cotton pads of Kruidvat and Aldi, but as you know by now, those of Demak’Up are my all-time favourite! [..]” (PD 238)*

## FACELOOKS

The first expression other than about a promotion, the product(s) or the mentioning of the brand, is about Facelooks. This is a curious one, because Facelooks was a campaign of Demak'Up in 2013, produced by The Gardeners<sup>16</sup>. Interesting to see that though the campaign is not live anymore, the theme is still talked about.

*"I've added a video to my @YouTube playlist: <http://t.co/NP1TMSQ47D> Demak'Up Facelook // Two Toner" (PD 214)*

Know, it is not a very big theme (anymore), because the total of expressions is four.

## DEMAK'UP FOR MEN

The next theme that can be identified is about a new product line of the brand, Demak'Up for Men. The first narrator of this theme is the brand itself, introducing the products on Facebook. After the Facebook posts, it was mostly the news media that spread the story. Also, concluding from these expressions, a press release was send to the news media. They were not that positive about the special men cleansing products though. They were rather sceptical. For example this quote from Metro Nieuws.

*"Cleansing pads for men, really? We already knew male eyeliner and toothpaste, but now he can also cleanse his face with special designed male cleansing pads. "The Demak'Up for Men pads have a coarser structure and are impregnated with a cleansing lotion for the oily men skin" says the press release. Okay..." (PD 177)*

## DEMAK'UP DETOX CHALLENGE

The biggest theme about Demak'Up is the Detox Challenge, namely 66% of all the expressions. This 66% equals 183 expressions. To take a closer look into the Detox Challenge, several sub-themes can be identified. Frequencies of these subthemes are presented in Table 9. I will elaborate on each sub-theme.

**Table 9: Frequencies subthemes Detox Challenge**

Element	Code	Frequencies	Percentage
Subthemes Detox Challenge	Detox Challenge	66	36%
	DIY	42	23%
	Giveaway	27	15%
	Research	19	10%
	Press kit	16	9%
	Research + challenge	13	7%
	Total	183	100%

The first is the Detox Challenge (36%), which is not really a subtheme but include rather general expressions about the Detox Challenge. These expressions mostly concerned people stating that they joined the challenge and urging others to join as well.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=25&v=GNw0sabDjpY>

*“I join the Detox Challenge of Demak’Up! Do you also join the challenge? Sign up at ... <https://t.co/Y9vdm7DP0X>”* (PD 167)

*“Are you joining the Demak’Up Detox Challenge of Demak’Up Nederland, just like me? – I already tried a delicious mask! [http://www.belessa.nl/\[demakup\]-detox-challenge/](http://www.belessa.nl/[demakup]-detox-challenge/) Demak’up Detox challenge”* (PD 216)

The second subtheme is about DIY’s, the abbreviation for do it yourself. During the challenge a lot of expressions concerned the DIY recipes.

*“This morning you could already read the press release about the Demak’Up Detox Challenge, in this video I started with the Demak’Up Detox Challenge and made my own scrub! See how I did it and what I think about it, check the video!”* (PD 250)

The next group of expressions is about a giveaway (15%). People who joined the challenge had a chance to win a Demak’Up Detox box, with various Demak’Up products. The expressions about the giveaway are at its highest point during the week of the challenge. But also after the challenge was finished, expression about the giveaway still appeared. For example the next Instagram post.

*“I join the Demak’Up Detox Challenge! Do you want to take extra care of your skin next summer? Join the contest quickly and win a great Demak’Up package! ♥ #skincare #detox #demakup #giveaway #win #present #contest #blogger #bblogger #bblogbertips #summer15 #instago #instacool”* (PD 160)



This Demak’Up Detox package also showed up in expressions about the press kit (9%). Especially the Dopper (water bottle) with a personalized name on it was much appreciated.

*“Really nice package with a lot of DIY recipes and a Dopper with my name on it! Thank u Demak’Up #diy #demakup #thanku”* (PD 233)



The last two subthemes are concerning the research about cleansing rituals among more than 500 Dutch women, which was the reason for initiating the challenge. In ‘research’ (10%) only the research and its results are mentioned. In ‘research + challenge’ (7%), the research in combination with the challenge is expressed. The next example is an expression from a blogger. She wrote quite a long story, but to give an impression of the ‘research + challenge’ subtopic, an abbreviated expression is presented.

*“Demak’Up recently conducted a study on how we women take care of our facial skin. It appears that many women – no less than 41% - like I do, sometimes go to bed with makeup. The research also shows what kind of products we use and why we cleanse our face. Interesting! [...] Anyway, let’s go back to the 41% of women that goes to bed with makeup on. This must change! Demak’Up therefore came up with a great challenge to encourage everyone to take better care of her skin. You will get a new cleansing tip every day on demakupdetoxchallenge.nl and I challenge you to join!”*  
(PD 26)

### **Guideline III: Sequence of events**

As the descriptive framework suggested, the sequence of events are holding the expressions with a common theme together. This will make a group of expression a real story, not just stand-alone expressions with the same theme.

#### **PRODUCT, BRAND AND PROMOTION**

29% of the expressions in the social dataset of Demak’Up could be grouped into the mentioning of the brand, the alerting of a promotion or the product(s) of Demak’Up. These individual expressions are really stand-alone ones and therefore a sequence of events is not applicable to these groups. The descriptive framework thus suggests they are not part of a brand story.

#### **FACELOOKS**

The expressions about Facelooks in the past six months belong to a brand story that started in 2013. Substantively there is not much to conclude based on this dataset. Therefore, it is not a brand story in this time span, because a sequence of events cannot be identified in these four expressions.

#### **DEMAK’UP FOR MEN**

For the expressions about Demak’Up for Men, I identified the following sequence of events:

**[Goal]** A clean skin is a healthy skin and that goes for everyone. Furthermore, a tendency is going on that men have an increasing need for their own care products.

**[Act]** Demak’Up introduces Demak’Up for Men, a new skincare line specially developed for men. The cotton pads have a firm a coarse texture and are impregnated with a cleansing lotion, especially developed for the oilier men’s skin. The special structure of the pads will not ‘stick’ to his beard. Also the packaging has a more masculine appearance.

**[Outcome]** The press is rather suspicious and sceptical about the new product line.



### DEMAK'UP DETOX CHALLENGE

For the expressions about the Demak'Up Detox Challenge, I identified the following sequence of events:

**[Goal]** Our skin is the largest organ of our body, but women often ignore their cleansing ritual. A study among Dutch women shows that 41% sometimes goes to bed with makeup on and 46% barely cleans her face because they do not see the point of it.

**[Act]** During the 10-day Demak'Up Detox Challenge, the focus is on the care of the face and creating a moment for yourself, which gives just that little extra attention to the skin.

**[Outcome]** The surprising results are shared over social media, encouraging each other to join the challenge. The press kit includes everything you need for the challenge and the promotion of the giveaway is widely present. Especially the DIY recipes are popular; they are shared, tried out and evaluated a lot.

#### **Guideline IV: Multiple narrators**

Consumers are the ones that posted by far the most expressions about Demak'Up. Not that remarkable, as social media is in essence once made for consumers (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Most of these consumers were bloggers. This is most likely due to the fact that The Gardeners aim at (beauty) bloggers during Demak'Up campaigns. For example in the next expression, an Instagram post about the press kit that was send to beauty bloggers.

*“Soon on CherryCharlie.nl: summer detox DIYs  
:) #summer #detox #zomer #diy #demakup  
#gezichtsverzorging #skincare #diyskincare  
#soon #sneakpeek” (PD 131)*



#### **Guideline V: Key message**

Most of the expressions have a positive key message when it comes to the brand Demak'Up. Only some consumers and news media were negative about Demak'Up. Though the negative expressions are limited, five out of the eleven negative expressions concerned the Demak'Up for Men theme.

The 101% in Table 8 is due to the fact that two expressions included both a positive and a negative key message. One of them concerned two products of Demak'Up and rated one as good and one as bad.

*“Demak'Up cleansing milk, creamy. Available for €2,59. I personally do not like the cleansing milk and I now know why again. I think it does not work at all. It removes only half of my make-up and my skin becomes totally red and it is tingling. Demak'Up Original. Available for €0,98. These cotton pads are so nice! One side is smooth and the other side has a honeycomb structure.” (PD 282)*

#### 4.1.2 CONCLUSION: BRAND STORIES OF DEMAK'UP

The descriptive framework of brand stories on social media is used to answer sub-question C: “What are the brand stories of Demak’Up in the past six months, using the proposed descriptive framework?”. I suggest two brand stories of Demak’Up in the past six months: about the Demak’Up Detox Challenge and Demak’Up for Men. As discussed in Chapter 3, to evaluate these brand stories a matrix is made based on the Growth Gradient of Miles and Huberman (1984) and the presented model for brand stories in social media. In the original model, the colour of the expressions depends on the narrator (except for Figure 9, which will be explained later). A legend of the colours is shown in each figure. The size of the expressions depends on the number of expressions and is relative to the number of expressions in the same figure. Importantly, the expressions in one figure are therefore not comparable to expressions in another figure.

##### Demak’Up Detox Challenge

The biggest story about Demak’Up is the Detox Challenge, namely 66% of all the expressions (see Table 8 on page 25). An overview of this story is presented in Figure 8. According to the data from Coosto, only consumers and news media shaped this story. This is not entirely fair, because in reality the brand has had a big influence. During the challenge Demak’Up, among other things, posted on her Facebook page, created a Facebook event and an entirely new website was made. It is not sure why these expressions are not included in the dataset, but this will definitely be taken into consideration at the limitations section.

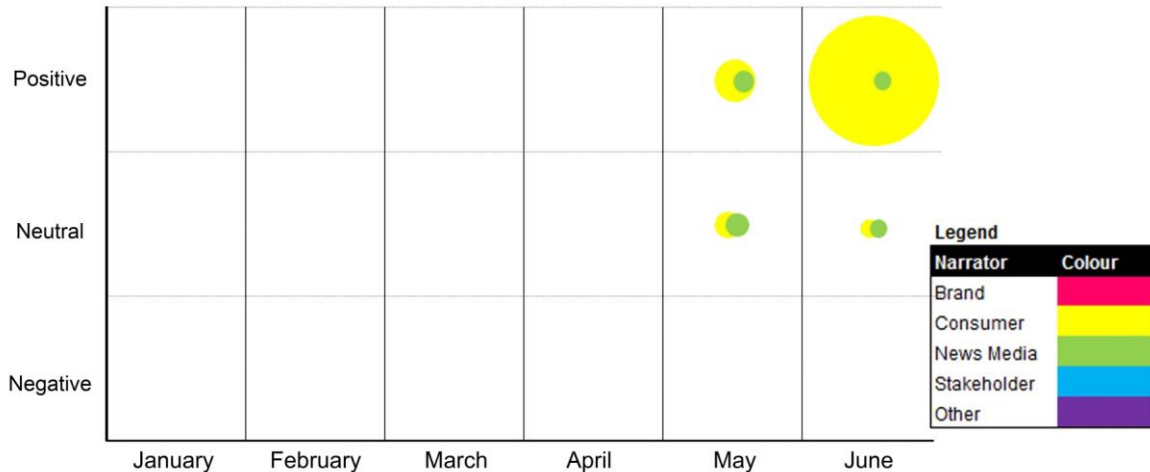


Figure 8: Model brand story: Demak’Up Detox Challenge

The 10-day Demak’Up Detox Challenge started at the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, until 14<sup>th</sup> June. As seen in Figure 8 some expressions appeared in May and most of them in June. To take a closer look into the story of the Detox Challenge, another model is made and presented in Figure 9. This model zoomed in on weekly basis, week 22 till week 27 (i.e. 25 May – 30 June). Like highlighted in the previous paragraph, there are several clear sub-themes to distinguish in this story. In Figure 9, the colour of the expressions depends on this subtheme. The expressions are sorted by week and again ranked by key message. Know that the challenge started halfway week 23 until week 24. With this model, the brand story about the Demak’Up Detox Challenge is also presented using the guidelines of the framework.

## THE BRAND STORY OF THE DEMAK'UP DETOX CHALLENGE

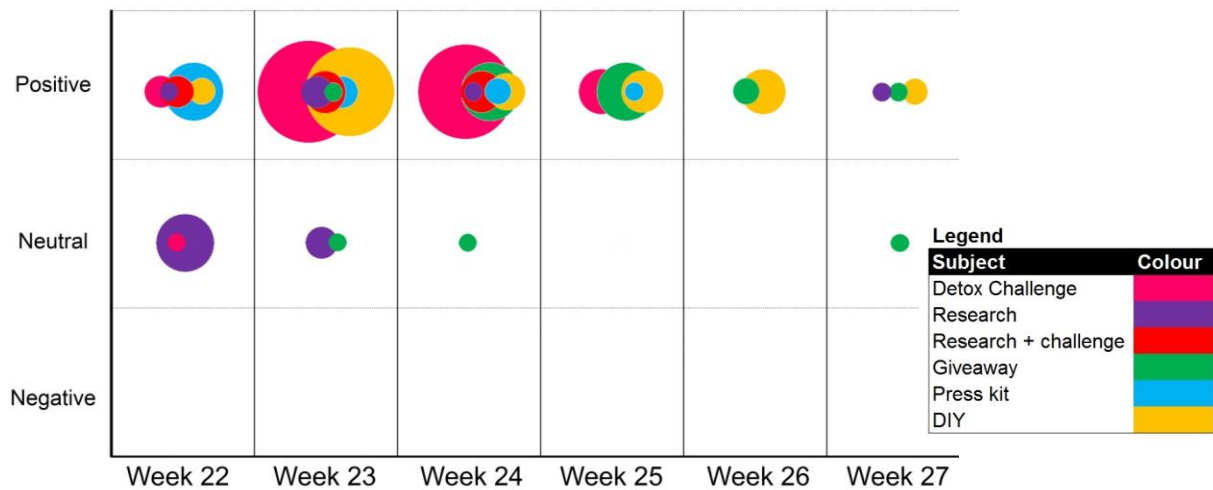


Figure 9: Model brand story: Demak'Up Detox Challenge (sub-themes)

Guidelines	
Social media	Top 3: Twitter, blogs and Facebook
A set of continuous, coherent expressions	Common theme: Detox challenge. Subthemes over time: Research about cleansing rituals, press kit, DIY recipes, giveaway.
Sequence of events	<i>[Goal]</i> A study among Dutch women shows that 41% sometimes goes to bed with makeup on and 46% barely cleans her face because they do not see the point of it. <i>[Act]</i> During the 10-day Demak'Up Detox Challenge, the focus is on the care of the face and creating a moment for yourself, which gives just that little extra attention to the skin. Accompanied with a press kit and giveaway, this is brought under the attention of women. <i>[Outcome]</i> The surprising results are shared over social media, encouraging each other to join the challenge. Especially the DIY recipes are popular; they are shared, tried out and evaluated a lot.
Valuable key message, related to the brand	Overall positive
Multiple narrators	Mostly consumers, more specific bloggers



### Demak'Up for Men

The second brand story, is about Demak'Up for Men. A visualisation of this story is presented below in Figure 10. Mostly news media told this story and were primarily negative about the new products. Again, the story is explained beneath the model using the guidelines of the descriptive model.

#### THE BRAND STORY OF DEMAK'UP FOR MEN



Figure 10: Model brand story: Demak'Up for Men

Guidelines	
Social media	Mostly Facebook and news sites
A set of continuous, coherent expressions	Common theme: Demak'Up for Men
Sequence of events	<p><i>[Goal]</i> A clean skin is a healthy skin and that goes for everyone. Furthermore, a tendency is going on that men have an increasing need for their own care products.</p> <p><i>[Act]</i> Demak'Up introduces Demak'Up for Men, a new skincare line specially developed for men. The cotton pads have a firm a coarse texture and are impregnated with a cleansing lotion, especially developed for the oilier men's skin. The special structure of the pads will not 'stick' to his beard. Also the packaging has a more masculine appearance.</p> <p><i>[Outcome]</i> The press is rather sceptical about the new product line and mock a bit about it.</p>
Valuable key message, related to the brand	Overall negative
Multiple narrators	Mostly news media

#### 4.1.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE CASE STUDY

Regarding the case study, there are two limitation points I need to argue. The first limitation concerns the dataset. The social dataset was exported from social media monitoring agency Coosto. This dataset was limited though; it did not include *all* expression about Demak'Up on social media. For example, only ten expressions of the brand could be identified in the dataset, but Demak'Up posted a lot more on social media in the past six months. For instance, the Demak'Up Detox Challenge. The brand initiated a lot in that story, such as Facebook posts and a Facebook event. But a more important example is about Demak'Up for Men. It

actually was an April Fools' Day joke<sup>17</sup>, but this was not part of the brand story according to the dataset of Coosto. This changes the story completely though. Second, the dataset exported from Coosto resulted in textual expressions, but each expression contained a link to the source of the expression. This way, the overall expression including possible photos or videos could be included in the analysis. But some of these links did not work anymore and resulted in an error page.

## 4.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FRAMEWORK

The application of the framework in practice is used to evaluate the appropriateness of the descriptive framework of Chapter 2. With the analysis of the case study in mind, implications for a revised descriptive framework are discussed in this paragraph. I will evaluate each guideline and argue some overall issues. Then, a new framework is presented that is subsequently evaluated by experts and analysed in the next chapter of this thesis.

### 4.2.1 ANALYSIS OF THE FRAMEWORK

In this paragraph, the central sub-question is D: *“How appropriate is the proposed, mainly theoretical grounded descriptive framework when it is applied in practice?”*. In order to identify the brand stories of Demak'Up, I started the analysis with the individual expressions (first round of coding) and thus *Guideline IV* and *V*. Therefore, I suggest it is more logical and appropriate to put these guidelines right after the first guideline about the context. In this analysis, I will discuss the guidelines based on the order of the case analysis; first the context, then the individual guidelines expressions and then the group of expressions. I will further discuss this sequence in the end of this paragraph.

#### *Social media*

*Guideline I* is about social media. There were no difficulties regarding this guideline, thus I suggest it is appropriate. No changes will be made to this guideline in this phase. There are limitations to the case study regarding the guideline though, as explained in paragraph 4.1.3.

#### *Individual expressions*

*Guideline IV* is concerned with the narrator of each expression. This guideline did not yield any difficulties while analysing the dataset. There are indeed five different narrators distinguishable. No changes have to be made to the content of this guideline. Noteworthy, in case of Demak'Up, it is primarily the brand who initiated a story. The other narrators, but also the brand, are then shaping the story. In Demak'Up for Men it was Demak'Up that send the press release and posted the first exciting expression. The news media and some consumers then shaped the story into a more sceptical one (based on the data from Coosto). Also the story about the Detox Challenge started with the results of the research about cleansing rituals and the receiving of the press kit by bloggers, both initiated by the brand.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/DemakUpNederland/photos/pb.154084834782363.-2207520000.1438682780./354281041429407/?type=3&theater>

The valuable key message of each expression was covered in *Guideline V*. Doing the content analysis made me realise that ‘key message’ may not be the best term for this guideline. Some expressions are so short, they rather express an emotion about the brand. The key message is more applicable to the set of expressions, rather than to all individual expressions. But when I re-evaluated earlier made choices in the literature study, the key message and the theme of a story are actually related to each other (I am referring to page 11). I allocated ‘theme’ to Guideline II and the group of expressions. For the individual expressions, the term ‘sentiment’ seems more appropriate in this guideline, like Coosto is doing. Sentiment is defined as “*a thought, opinion or idea based on a feeling about a situation, or a way of thinking about something*”<sup>18</sup>. Sentiment is a valuable concept and can also be scored positive, negative or rather neutral. The content of this guideline does therefore not change so much, but another term will be used for further evaluation.

Importantly though, Coosto automatically assigns a sentiment value to each expressions, but these are not reliable. As Coosto describes in their instruction manual<sup>19</sup> computers can make mistakes. According to their sentiment analysis, 66% of the Demak’Up expressions is rated as neutral, in contrast to 21% in my results. And for instance PD15 is valued as negative, while the expressions states “*I remove my eye make-up with Demak’Up cotton pads [..]*”, which is in my opinion not at all negative but rather a neutral sentiment. It is thus recommendable to keep up with the human and manual sentiment-coding.

### *Set of expressions*

That leaves us with *Guideline II* and *III*, related to the set of expressions. During the analysis, these two guidelines actually formulated the brand stories. These two guidelines hold the individual expressions together. *Guideline II* concerns the continuity and coherence of the set of expressions. First, the expressions indeed seem to appear continuously, on many platforms at the same time and all the time. There was no real end, as the story about Facelooks proofs. Second, the case study showed that it is possible to group the individual expressions into a set of expressions with a common theme. Third, in the case of Demak’Up, the brand has multiple plots. These plots differ in their intensity and duration. For example, the Facelooks story may not be as intense as in its beginning in 2013, but is still running. All aspects of this guideline seem appropriate and will be included in the next framework.

The last one, *Guideline III*, seems to actually distinguish between which group of expressions can be acknowledged as a brand story and which group not. The three themes ‘brand’, ‘promotion’ and ‘product’ really remain stand-alone expressions when a sequence of events is tried to be identified. This guideline is an important one and thus appropriate in identifying brand stories.

### *Sequence of the guidelines*

As I introduced in this paragraph, it seems more appropriate to arrange the guidelines differently. In the revised descriptive framework, the first guideline will still be about social

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<sup>18</sup> <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/sentiment>

<sup>19</sup> [https://in.coosto.com/download/coosto\\_manual\\_nl.pdf?v=1078](https://in.coosto.com/download/coosto_manual_nl.pdf?v=1078)

media. This is the delineation of the concept (I). In this context, a lot of expressions related to the concerned brand will be present. To enhance clarity, a guideline is added which explains the expressions in the framework (II). These individual expressions all have a narrator and a valuable sentiment regarding the brand (III & IV). A brand story is identified by grouping these expressions based on a common theme (V) and the identification of the sequence of events (VI). This is the order of the guidelines presented in the revised descriptive framework.

#### 4.2.2 CONCLUSION: REVISED DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK

Based on the analysis above, a revised descriptive framework (including a new model, in Figure 11) and an adjusted definition are formulated as the conclusion of this chapter. The following changes will be made to the descriptive framework for brand stories on social media, in order to enhance its appropriateness. The order of the guidelines is changed and another guideline is added that includes the explanation of the expressions. Moreover, the term ‘key message’ is replaced by the term ‘sentiment’. This revised framework will be used to evaluate with experts in the second phase of this study.

The model is remains an example of how the guidelines can be visualized. Like in Chapter 2, in Table 10 a new legend is presented for the model of the revised framework.

**Table 10: Legend for Figure 11**

Dimension	Description
Context	Delineated by the dotted line and represents social media ( <i>Guideline I</i> )
Circles	Denoting the individual expressions ( <i>Guideline II</i> )
Size of the circle	Indicates the amount of expressions at that time
Colour of the circle	Depends on the type of narrator at that time ( <i>Guideline III</i> )
Vertical line	Indicates the value of the sentiment, positive, neutral or negative ( <i>Guideline IV</i> )
Horizontal line	Represents the time, which can be divided according to one's preference (e.g. by week or month)
Bigger oval	Indicates that these expressions belong together because of a common theme and a sequence of events ( <i>Guideline V+VI</i> )

#### DEFINITION OF BRAND STORIES

On social media, a brand story is a set of continuous, coherent expressions, formed by a sequence of events. The expressions are coherent because of a common theme. Each individual expression is directly related to the brand and has a valuable sentiment regarding the brand, either shaped by the brand itself, consumer(s), stakeholder(s), news media, and/or other participants.

## DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR BRAND STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

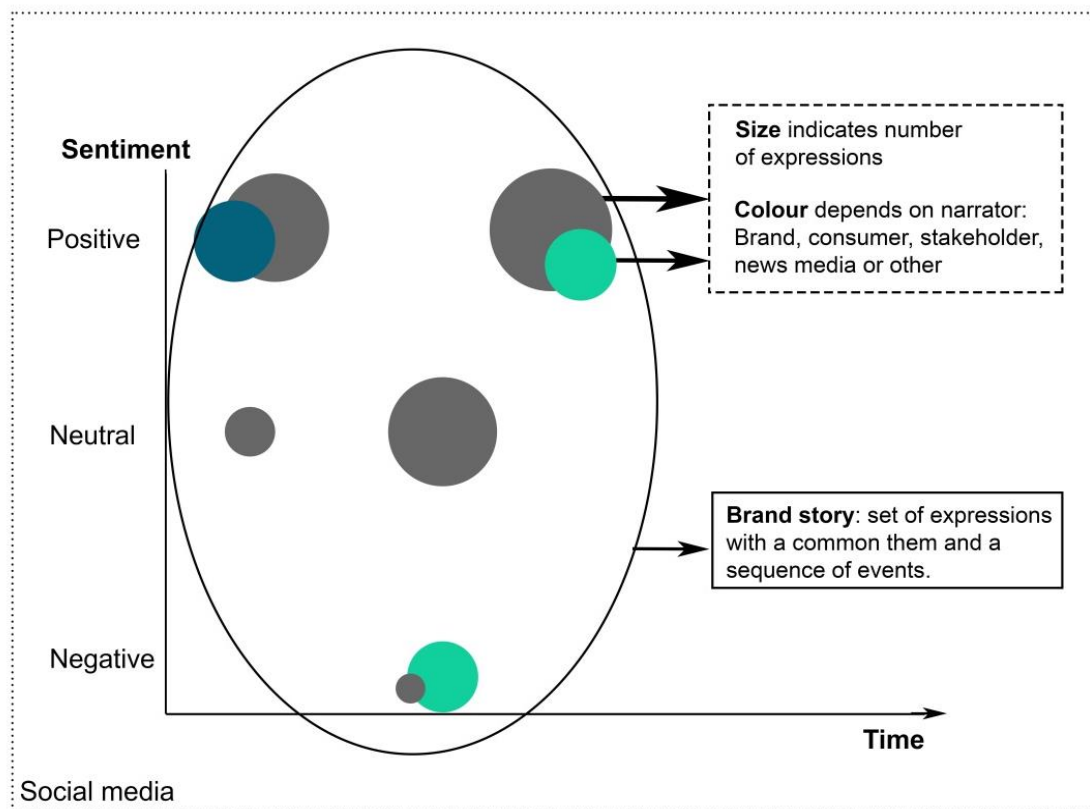


Figure 11: Example visualisation of the design guidelines

### GUIDELINE I: SOCIAL MEDIA

The definition for social media of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) is adopted. They suggest that social media is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content” (p. 61). The most common platforms are social networking sites (e.g. Facebook or Twitter), blogs and content communities (e.g. YouTube). But, also collaborative projects as Wikipedia, and virtual social and game worlds (e.g. Second Life and World of Warcraft) belong to the scope of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

### GUIDELINE II: INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSIONS RELATED TO THE BRAND

Social media is full of people expressing their selves in many different ways, like photos, text or videos. A brand story exists of a set of individual expressions that are related to the concerned brand.

### GUIDELINE III: FIVE DISTINGUISHABLE NARRATORS

The third guideline is the narrator, although it is not merely about ‘telling a story’. Each expression has its own narrator; the brand itself, consumers, news media, stakeholders or other participants. These narrators together ‘shape’ the brand story, by expressing their selves in individual expressions.

#### **GUIDELINE IV: A VALUABLE SENTIMENT REGARDING THE BRAND**

Each expression can be valued by its sentiment, either positive, neutral or negative. It is important to note that this concerns the sentiment about the brand and not the total of the expression. It is possible that the expression about the concerned brand is just a part of a bigger expression

#### **GUIDELINE V: A SET OF CONTINUOUS, COHERENT EXPRESSIONS**

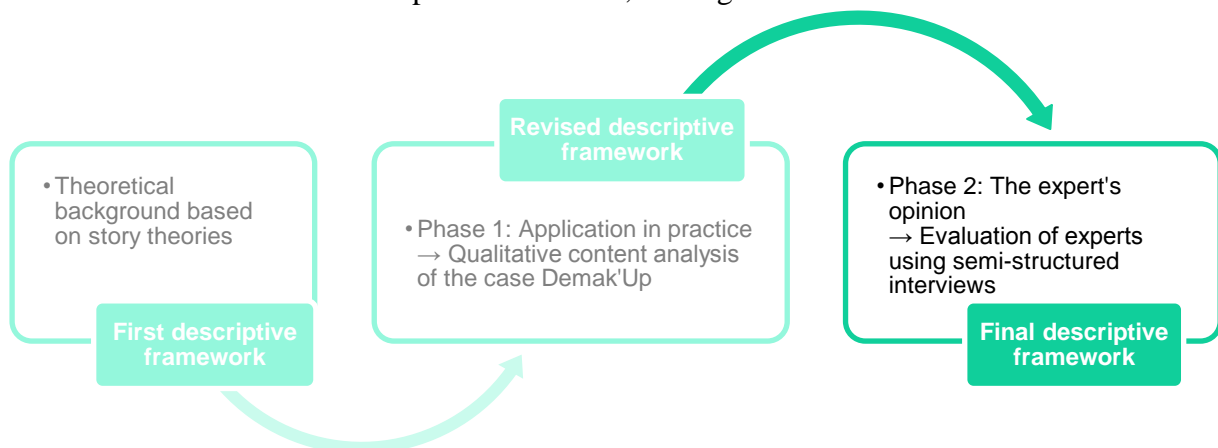
A brand story is formed by a set of expressions. First, these expressions appear continuously, on many platforms at the same time and all the time. Second, the expressions that form the brand story are coherent in terms of a common theme. Importantly, coherent does not necessarily mean that the sentiment is the same. People may have different opinions on the matter. This is related to *Guideline IV*. Third, I propose that a brand can have multiple plots over time, or in other words, more than one brand story.

#### **GUIDELINE VI: SEQUENCE OF EVENTS**

The sequence of events hold together a group of individual expressions with a common theme. Events include a goal, act and outcome. Note that it's about the goal of the story and not the motive of the storyteller, because the brand story is shaped by more than one narrator.

## 5 PHASE TWO: THE EXPERT'S OPINION

In this chapter, I will elaborate on the evaluation of the framework with the experts and answer sub-question E: “*What are the recommendations of experts to enhance the appropriateness of the revised descriptive framework?*”. Again, appropriateness means that it is clear, sharply defined and suitable. This second phase, is the last part of the design study and results with the final descriptive framework, see Figure 12.



**Figure 12: Third part, phase 2 in this design study**

In the first round of coding, fragments of the transcriptions were allocated to the related topic from the topic list. These topics were then, by means of the second round of coding, structured using the Conceptually Clustured Matrix of Miles and Huberman (1984, p. 110). This resulted in seven matrixes presented in Appendix 5. Analysing the matrixes and the *Memo's* made during this analysis, the results of the interviews will be evaluated. To strengthen and clarify the analysis, I use quotes that appear in the matrixes, but also from the rest of transcripts of the interviews.

### 5.1 ANALYSIS OF THE GUIDELINES

In this first paragraph, the design guidelines are analysed. For each topic, I will analyse the evaluation of the experts and review the implications that follow. To give an impression of the analysis, I added one matrix in this chapter. This is regarding Guideline III, because it is a good example of an interesting discussion with the experts. For the rest, a reference is added to the relevant matrix in the appendix.

#### 5.1.1 GUIDELINE I

##### SOCIAL MEDIA (TABLE 13)

Most of the experts are familiar with the definition for social media of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), but its appropriateness can be enhanced. Four of the experts suggested that the definition could use an update. First, Second Life is a platform that is not really used anymore and Expert 6 suggested to use to example of Minecraft instead. Second, the definition emphasizes user-generated content, but experts discussed the importance of it.



*“It’s about user-generated content, but what about brand-generated content? [...] That’s a nice discussion. When I open my social feed on Facebook, more than half of the posts are from that brand or ads of the other one” (E5)*

The experts agree that the importance of user-generated content differs across social media platforms. Facebook may be the biggest one, wherein user-generated content becomes less and less important, according to Expert 3. Instagram is an example wherein user-generated is still most relevant. But, is the way that brands use social media changing the definition of the concept?

*“Interaction between consumers and user-generated content, yes. [...] In essence, social media will not really change, the platforms do I think. [...] For brands it is not really social media, it is more an extra one-way transmitting channel” (E3)*

Third, the use of mobile phones is discussed, because a lot of what is happening offline is now easily shared online. This relates to the fourth issue, about the ambiguity of the concept Web 2.0.

*“Web 2.0 suggests the use of a computer. [...] But how about outside the Web, like WhatsApp. [...] Mobile internet is very pervasive nowadays” (E7)*

Basically, mobile phones are ‘build on the technological foundations of Web 2.0’, but in terms of clarity, it should be better explained in the guideline. Another matter is the difference between open and closed social media. As Expert 5 wondered, WhatsApp is not open, but it is social, is it social media then? It is good to acknowledge this in the guideline, but it is impossible for marketers to include closed social media accounts in the identification of brand stories.

Based on the issues of the experts, the guideline will be updated. A look-a-like definition is suggested by Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy and Silvestre (2011) *“Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content”* (p. 241). In this definition, mobile internet is emphasized. Moreover, it does not use the word Web 2.0, but the concept is included in the ‘highly interactive platforms’. This may avoid confusion and thus increase clarity. To update the rest of the guideline towards a more appropriate one, the examples of Second Life and World of Warcraft will be replaced by Minecraft. Moreover, the importance between open and closed social media will be emphasized, so the guideline takes this limitation into account.

Regarding user-generated content in the definition, I propose the following. Although the usage of social media platforms can vary, the definition of social media does not. In essence, social media is made for people, for users. Like Fournier and Avery (2011) argue, brands are the uninvited crashers of the social media party. The definition thus stays the same, but brands

are present in this world. Therefore, this will be taken into account, not in the definition of social media, but in the overall guideline about the context.

### 5.1.2 GUIDELINE II

#### INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSIONS RELATED TO THE BRAND (TABLE 14)

All experts agreed on the term ‘expressions’ in this guideline. They think it is clear what is meant by expressions and they do think the term is appropriate in this context. The experts were familiar with the term and also used it in their profession. One expert had a small difficulty with the ‘individual’ in the guideline and thought it was about an expression of an individual person, instead of one single expression. But after a small discussion this was due to the Dutch translation. He evaluated usage of the term in English as appropriate.

The ‘related to the brand’ also proved to be important. While discussing other topics, one expert used the example of a brand story about the Heineken Mono bottles (for more info check this article<sup>20</sup>). At some point, reactions were not about Heineken anymore, but about *“those stupid Chinese people, exporting all our stuff”* (E2). Because these expressions were not at all related to the brand Heineken anymore, it did not affect the attitude about Heineken.

There will be no changes to this guideline, because it is evaluated as appropriate.

### 5.1.3 GUIDELINE III

#### FIVE DISTINGUISHABLE NARRATORS (TABLE 15)

To give an impression of the evaluation of the experts, the matrix is presented on the next page in Table 11. For the analysis, this guideline can be divided into two subtopics. First, the term (multiple) narrators and second, the classification of these narrators.

#### **Narrator**

On the term narrators, six experts agreed. They thought it was a logical term that suited this context, although they did not think it was the most usual term. One expert suggested the term communicator, another suggested sender. Expert 3 argued that the term narrator implied that someone is aware of telling a story. The same discussion I experienced with Expert 5. It was a quite philosophical discussion about awareness and the truth: if you are not aware of telling a story, is it a story then? We agreed on the complexity of this issue and that as long as we do not know the answer, the term narrator was appropriate.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.volkskrant.nl/buitenland/hollandse-waar-geeft-chinees-status~a3897612/>

**Table 11: Evaluation matrix for Guideline III**

		Term (multiple) narrator	Classification	Consumer / Blogger	Stakeholder	News media / Other
Client side	E1	"The bigger the brand, the more diverse groups you reach and the more diverse your brand stories"	"Every individual or group of individuals can be a narrator" "Maybe it depends on your brand"	"We distinguish between consumer and shopper, but can you identify them with social media" "Maybe it ( <i>blogger</i> ) is a different category. If he/she is being paid it is actually the brand"	"Stakeholder are politically correct I think"	
	E2	"Very logical term" "There are multiple narrators that co-create the story together"	"I don't think you should make it to complex" "You could also make the classification based on your own perspective"	"I don't think you should distinguish between shopper and consumer on social media" "Maybe you should mention this ( <i>blogger</i> ) as a separate category"	"Difficult term. A brand has diverse stakeholders; the consumers, shoppers, government, customers, everybody that is relevant to the brand"	
	E3	"A narrator implies that someone is aware of telling a story"	"Maybe view from the supply chain perspective? Or five forces of Porter? Depending on your brand"	<i>Blogger</i> "Media I guess"	"Every participant is a stakeholder in some way"	"There is something like subjective and objective media"
	E4	"Yes, it's fine" "A story about your brand does not always have to come from the brand itself"	"Maybe it is missing a commercial entity. That participates with the brand to tell your story"	"Paid bloggers are actually the brand"	"A stakeholder belongs to the brand, more intern. I don't think a stakeholder will participate in a brand story on social media"	<i>Other</i> "Yes participant, that's what you can call it"
Agency side	E5	"It is the first time I've seen this term in this context. It's a fine term to use, I understand it."		"Sometimes it's ( <i>blogger</i> ) the consumer, sometimes the news, when it's objective. If he/she is paid than maybe a stakeholder"	"Partners, that are stakeholders"	"News is independent and objective. Media not always. For example RTL Boulevard"
	E6	"In the end you all have a voice in the story, so yeah narrators is a good term. Well chosen"	"Enough narrative perspectives for now"	<i>Blogger</i> "Paid participant?"	"Is a stakeholder an influential? Someone with who the brand cooperates?"	
	E7	"It sounds like the teller of a story, but according the guideline narrators together form the story"	"What about competitors? I think the rest is very clear and logical"			
	E8	"Good term in this context" "Yes it is very clear explained"				

### *Classification of the narrators*

More discussion involved the classifications of the narrator, in the initial guideline formulated as the brand, the consumer, the stakeholder, the news media and other participants. Two big issues about this subtopic derive from the interviews; how to classify a blogger and what is the definition of a stakeholder. First, with regard to the bloggers, there are paid bloggers and unpaid bloggers. When bloggers are being paid, it is actually the brand, argues Expert 1. Most of the experts thought it was more appropriate to make a different category for this narrator. Expert 4 suggested to add a commercial entity to the list of narrators.

*“We pay them to post that article, so that’s a collaboration with the brand. [...] Maybe it’s missing a commercial entity. That participates with the brand to tell your story” (E4)*

Second, a lot of debate arose about the definition of a stakeholder. Expert 1 stated that stakeholders are politically correct and Expert 4 argued how he thinks a stakeholder belongs to the brand and will not participate in a brand story on social media. Expert 2 and 3 argued that every participant is a stakeholder to the brand in some way.

*“A brand just has multiple stakeholders; the consumers, shoppers, government, customers, everybody that is relevant to the brand.” (E2)*

Then there are two smaller issues: the difference between objective and subjective news media and consumers versus shoppers. First, Expert 3 and 5 argued the difference between objective and subjective media. Expert 5 named news objective and media not always objective, but this difficulty may have occurred because in the Dutch translation of the narrator, the two words were separated (‘nieuws media’).

Second, two experts made a distinction between consumers and shoppers. Expert 1 explained this difference:

*“A consumer is the one who really uses or consumes the product or service. The shopper can be the same person, or not. The shopper is the one that actually buys the product or service. Stereotypical example with regards to beer, the wife is the one buying the beer in the supermarket (shopper), the man is the one who drinks it in the evening (consumer)” (E1)*

After we discussed this issue, we concluded that it is really hard to make this distinction on social media. So this will not have to be taken into account in this guideline about the multiple narrators.

Based on the evaluation of the experts, I propose the following for the third guideline. It will keep using the term narrator, because most experts agreed to its appropriateness. Like some experts already suggested during the interviews, perhaps the narrators of a brand story depends on the specific brand. So maybe the guideline is more applicable when it is fairly

open to interpretation. Therefore, it will be explained how multiple narrators shape the story of the brand, just like it is described now. The narrators will be called participants in the brand story, who participate in shaping a story. These participants depend on who is relevant for the brand. Suggestions are consumers, customers, bloggers, the press or commercial entities. To avoid misunderstanding and enhance clarity, the term stakeholder will not be used.

#### 5.1.4 GUIDELINE IV

##### A VALUABLE SENTIMENT REGARDING THE BRAND (TABLE 16)

This guideline was, just like guideline II, evaluated positively with hardly any suggested change. The term sentiment was reviewed clear and suitable, as well as the valuation of positive, negative or neutral. Only Expert 1 was sceptical about the neutral sentiment.

*“Are there neutral expressions? [...] I think that when people are neutral, they will not respond” (E1)*

After an example of the case study he agreed that the sentiment of the expression was neutral, but it will have a positive effect on the brand and therefore can be valued positive. Other experts did not mention this.

Also in this guideline, the relating to the brand was evaluated important. A suggestion was made about the quantification of the sentiment, but this will be further discussed in the part about the image of the framework. There are no implications needed for this guideline, which could enhance the appropriateness.

#### 5.1.5 GUIDELINE V

##### A SET OF CONTINUOUS, COHERENT EXPRESSIONS (TABLE 17)

The fifth guideline was the first one where we discussed the group of expressions and what made them an actual story. This guideline has three subtopics; the continuity, the coherence based on a common theme and the multiple plots. Another subtopic arose during the interviews, which is linked to continuity, namely the beginning, middle and end of a brand story. I will include this subtopic within the topic of continuity and start with this analysis.

##### *Continuity*

Setting up the initial guidelines in Chapter 2, I discussed the beginning-middle-end of a brand story. I concluded that this structure was not clearly present on social media, because of its dynamic nature. Therefore, I suggested to use continuity to overcome this problem. Seven experts did think the term continuity was appropriate. Mainly because they think there is not always a brand story going on. Sometimes there is a pause, when the intensity of the expressions is low.

*“It is not always of course. A brand is not always spoken or written about” (E7)*

*“Continuity implies no pause, but I think there are pauses. It’s not continuous” (E3)*

It is social media that is rather continuous (E2), but not necessarily the brand story. Summarizing the experts' opinions they evaluated this subtopic as following. A brand story always has a beginning, *"a first expression"* (E3). The middle of a brand story is identifiable by its intensity of the expressions. *"The intensity can vary"* (E7), but there is a high point at a certain time. After the high point, the intensity of the expressions will decrease. The experts did agree that there is no real end of a brand story on social media. Some state it is a never-ending story. *"It ends nowhere, but it will decrease"* (E1). It is endless because a story can stir again, plus it can always be found on the Internet. Expert 2 suggested *"there is no end to the story, but you can allocate the end yourself during the measurement"*. Continuity is not the right word in this context. During the interviews, a lot of experts drew a line while explaining themselves. Expert 3 actually named it a bell curve. A brand story has a beginning, builds-up its intensity to the middle and then decreases, but never really ends.

#### **Coherence based on a common theme**

On to the coherence based on a common theme. The experts agreed on this element, they thought it was clear and suitable. Like I discovered in the case study, Expert 5 argued how a theme often has several subthemes that can also be rated separately. This is the same I have done with the Demak'Up Detox Challenge.

#### **Multiple plots**

Three experts immediately agreed on the multiple plots. Expert 5 had some real difficulties with this element.

*"A brand can thus have multiple stories, but with multiple plots? But one story cannot have multiple plots?"* (E5)

It was very hard to explain him what I meant with the multiple plots. During the analysis, I noticed that Expert 7 had the answer to his ambiguity. She states:

*"A brand story itself cannot have multiple plots? Then this part does not belong to the guideline that describes brand stories. I do think a brand can have multiple stories though"* (E7)

The guideline indeed describes what a brand story is. Regardless whether it is true or not, the mentioning of the multiple plots of a brand does not belong in this description. Thus, to be appropriate, this part will be eliminated from the guideline. It is interesting to see if it can be put somewhere else in the framework, because of the overall agreement of the experts. I will discuss this later on in the general issues paragraph.

### **5.1.6 GUIDELINE VI**

#### **SEQUENCE OF EVENTS (TABLE 18)**

Expert 8 mentioned a really nice example of a brand story that could be easily linked to this guideline.

*“Yes, for example Yellow Backie. Creating a story with the goal of getting people together. For tourists to experience Amsterdam through the eyes of an Amsterdammer, and for Amsterdammers to meet new people. The act is the Yellow Backie [which you put on the back of your bike] and the outcome is maybe more stories about the meeting of the two.” (E8)*

Most ambiguity surrounded this guideline though. For example the confusion of Expert 2.

*“What is an event? Or is there only one event? Or is every expression an event?” (E2)*

Not only the event caused confusion, also the goal. The experts found it difficult to understand what the difference is of the goal within the story and the goal of the narrator. A lot of debate arose about how different narrators have different goals and how you thus can define the goal of a story. Some of the experts used their own explanation to understand the essence of the guideline.

*“So it’s about the flow, a build-up in what’s happening. Not just empty talk like [Product] get 2, pay 1” (E2)*

Expert 3 thought the guideline was too complex now and suggested if it could not be simpler.

*“Isn’t it much simpler, like a sequence of expressions? Because what’s the definition of an event? I think it’s a group of coherent expressions which follow each other” (E3)*

This guideline also elicit a discussion about the reactions to expressions. This will further be illuminated in the general issues. Two experts linked the sequence of events to reactions. Like Expert 4, who interpreted a sequence of events as a ‘sequence of reactions’. He stated that more responses to an expressions made it sequentially. Also Expert 5 proposed it less complex.

*“Maybe the sequence of events is, the first event is the action, the second event is the reaction” (E5)*

It is interesting to look at the discussion about the reactions to the expressions, when analysing brand stories on social media. But for this guideline, I suggest that several expressions without a reaction can also be a story, like Expert 6 argued:

*“I think that is a real story. Something is expressed and people are reacting to it, interaction” Is it the interaction which makes it a story then? “Well, not necessarily. A range of nice movies made with influential, combined with like a competition. I think that is a story as well” (E6)*

So this guideline will not elaborate on any reactions to an expression. But this guideline really needs change in order to create a clear guideline. Because of the confusion of the experts, I



engaged in some difficulties in explaining the concepts myself. Basically, this guideline should include an explanation of what makes the group of expressions an actual story and more than just stand-alone expressions with a common theme. As the experts suggested, is there no simpler way to put it? For this guideline, I suggest it is possible to combine the discussion about the beginning-middle-end structure together with the sequence of events. As Expert 3 cleverly stated, it is a 'sequence of expressions'. Expressions that follow one another is making the group a story. Therefore, it could be formulated as follows. Guideline VI is about a story structure. For brand stories on social media, it is a sequence of expressions that follow a bell curve. In this bell curve the beginning starts with a first expression, it reaches the middle when the intensity of the expressions are at an highest point and toward the end the intensity will decrease, but it remains a never-ending story.

## **5.2 ANALYSIS OF GENERAL ISSUES**

Next to the guidelines, I evaluated the definition and the model with the experts. They were told that I was interested in their opinion about the formulation and visualisation, regardless of any changes I had to make based on the interviews. The evaluation matrix is presented in Table 19 and analysed in paragraph 5.2.1 and 5.2.2. Moreover, the analysis of the interviews resulted in two more general alterations to the framework: the adding of an introduction (paragraph 5.2.3) and taking reactions into account during the identification of brand stories (paragraph 5.2.4).

### **5.2.1 DEFINITION**

The definition is evaluated very clear by the experts. It was a good thing to address the definition at the end of the interview, because some experts stated it was complicated to read it at first. But after the discussion of the guidelines, they better understood what we were talking about. Expert 3 thought of an example himself, to see if the definition worked. And it did. So, the definition will be reformulated based on the interviews, but I will try to keep the drafting the same.

### **5.2.2 VISUALISATION OF THE GUIDELINES**

The visualisation of the guidelines gained a lot of positive reactions too. Six experts stated it was a clear, visible and valuable model. The other two thought the completed model in the case study of Demak'Up (Figure 9, page 32) is more clear. This is perhaps partly due to the fact that the general visualisation was printed in black and white, and the completed visualisation about Demak'Up was in colour.

Some feedback was given by the experts. Expert 2 suggested to make a practical plan with steps for marketers. Like, first analyse the expressions about your brand. Second, rate them on its narrator and sentiment. Third, classify themes, etc. Expert 3 and 4 were interested in a bit more quantification of the data. Of course, the size indicated the amount of the expressions, but they suggested to put like a percentage, or the number of the amount in the framework. Expert 7 thought the circle in the general framework made it a bit confusing.

In the new visualisation, I will structure it a bit more. The completed models in Chapter 4 are more organized, with the separation lines between the sentiments and the circles of the expressions more in line. If it is important for marketers, a quantification of the amount of expressions can be included. Also, it is interesting to look if guideline 5 and 6 can be better visualized in the framework as well.

### 5.2.3 INTRODUCTION

To solve a couple issues of the experts, I propose to make an introduction prior to the framework. This way, some important elements can be introduced. First, I would introduce the concept of brand stories. Sometimes during the interviews, I noticed that the experts confused brand stories with the ‘core story’ of a brand. Like earlier discussed in Chapter 2, I propose that brand stories on social media are shaped by multiple narrators. The ‘core story’ of a brand exists inside the brand and is always told from a brand’s perspective. Therefore I distinguish between these two kind of stories. To avoid confusion, I can address to this distinction in an introduction. Second, the multiple plots from guideline 5 can be mentioned in the introduction. This is related to the first issue, because when one sees a brand story as the core story of a brand, then it (in general) does not have multiple stories over time. The third and last issue for the introduction, is the explanation of the value of the framework. During the interviews, I had to illuminate several times that the framework can be used to identify brand stories in social media. Experts agreed on the value, but for the clarity of the framework, it may have to be elaborated on into the framework itself.

Concluding, an introduction will be added to the framework, which contains the concept of brand stories, the multiple plots of a brand and the value of the framework.

### 5.2.4 REACTIONS

The last big issue is about the including of reactions and comments in the analysis of brand stories. Like I mentioned in paragraph 3.1.2, I did not include reactions to any expression in the case study of Demak’Up. Mainly, because Coosto did not provide a representative overview of these. According to most experts, the reactions are of great importance for the brand story. In order to provide an impression of the discussion, I cite a few of their statements:

*“Someone posts a message, that can be the beginning of a story, or the sequel of a story. Basically, you will not include the reactions to it. Unless these reactions form a whole new story. [...] I think you should include reactions when they deviate from your original story” (E1)*

*“I think the reactions belong to the brand story, particularly when the reactions go some other direction. [...] Exactly because you have multiple narrators, that co-create the story [...] then the reactions are of great importance” (E2)*

“[the reactions] *make the story right?* [...] *in the end the sentiment of the theme depends on it*” (E4)

According to marketers, the reactions to an expression are of big importance. Especially when the reactions deviate from the expression itself. This should thus be included in the identification process of the brand stories.

### 5.3 SUMMARIZING THE FINDINGS

Before heading to the conclusion of this design study, I will summarize the findings of this analysis in order to answer the sub-question E: “*What are the recommendations of experts to enhance the appropriateness of the revised descriptive framework?*”.

For the first guideline, another definition of social media will be used to avoid confusion about Web 2.0 and emphasize mobile internet. Moreover, it needs some updating in order to be more current. The second and fourth guideline, about the expressions and its sentiment, are evaluated appropriate according to the experts and do not need any changes. The third guideline could use some alterations though, to enhance the appropriateness. Most important finding is the complexity of standardizing the grouping of narrators for all brands. Therefore, it is more appropriate to explain the design guideline and leave the classification of the narrators fairly open to interpretation.

Guideline five and six will be completely restructured, to make them more clear and suitable for the purpose of the framework. The fifth guideline will explain the coherence of the group of expressions, based on a common theme. In the last guideline, the structure of the story will be addressed to, in order to really identify the story in a group of coherent expression. To enhance the clarity of the guideline, it is formulated as simple as possible. It will not use the term events anymore, because that elicited a lot of misunderstanding and confusion.

Furthermore, an introduction to the framework will be added, to address to some other issues of the experts. The visualisation of the design guidelines will be altered, as well as the definition of brand stories on social media, according to these findings. In order to be complete in answering the main research question, the definition is now part of the framework

### 5.4 CONCLUSION: THE FINAL DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK

This chapter concludes with the answer to the main research question:

WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR BRAND STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

## A DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR BRAND STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

### INTRODUCTION

In a marketing world where there is no getting away from social media, brand managers are not the only authors of brand stories anymore. Besides, brand stories on social media are considered more impactful on brand performance than stories on traditional channels. The purpose of this descriptive framework for brand stories on social media, is to retrospectively identify the stories of a brand in a certain period of time. The brand stories in this framework include all stories about a brand, which are present on social media platforms and can be shaped by different narrators. It is possible that a brand can have multiple brand stories over time. This descriptive framework consist of a definition of the concept, a model and six design guidelines. Basically, the guidelines are the operationalisation of the definition, which is visualised as example in the model.

### DEFINITION

On social media, a brand story is a sequence of coherent expressions, based on a common theme and formed by a story structure, which follows a bell curve. Each individual expression is directly related to the brand, has a valuable sentiment regarding the brand and is shaped by multiple narrators that participate in the story. For example, the brand, consumers or the press.

### THE MODEL

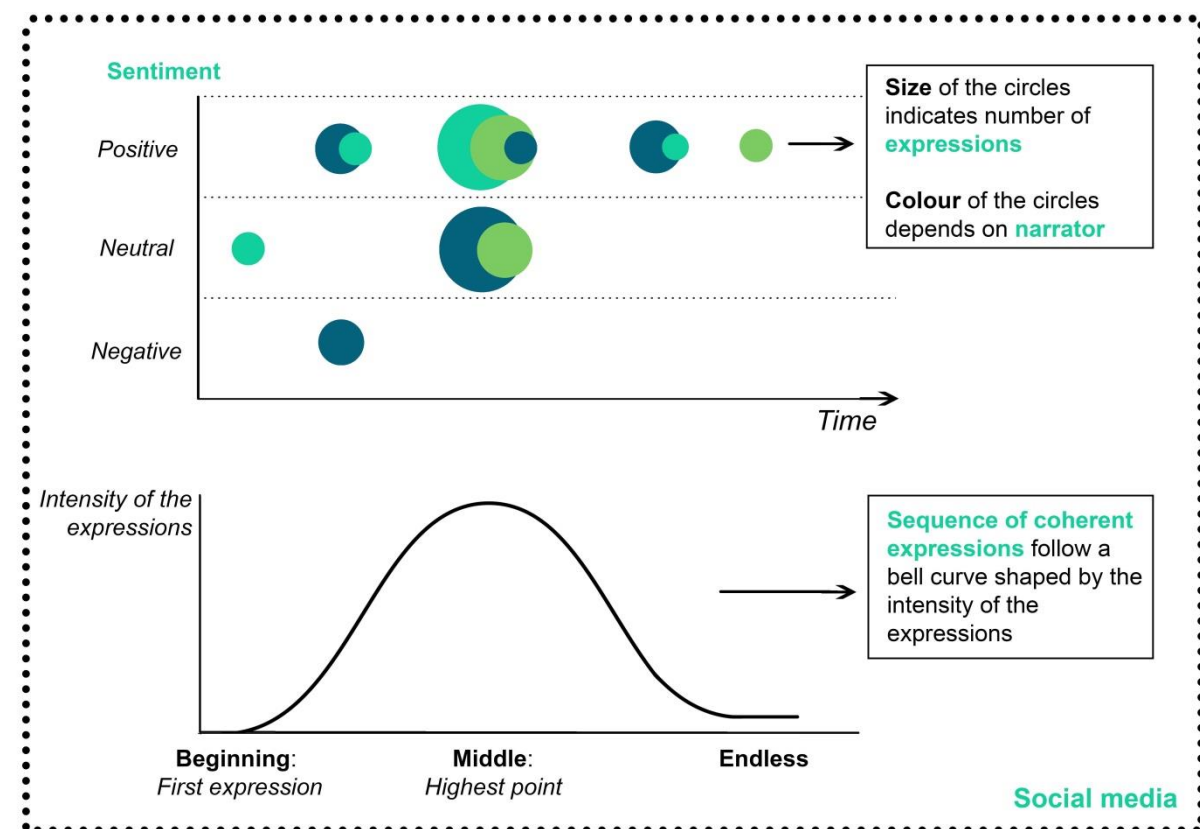


Figure 13: Visualisation of the guidelines

The model of Figure 13, is an example of a visualisation in which all the design guidelines are covered. It is thus an example of how a brand story can be pictured. A legend of the model is presented in Table 12. There are many ways in which the guidelines can be visualised, depending on one's preference and objective of the evaluation. Because of the possible influence on brand performance, this model mostly gives an impression whether the story was positive or negative, who primarily told the brand story and how intense the story has been.

**Table 12: Legend for Figure 13**

Dimension	Description
Context	Delineated by the dotted line and represents social media ( <i>Guideline I</i> )
<i>Upper graph</i>	
Circles	Denoting the individual expressions ( <i>Guideline II</i> )
Size of the circle	Indicates the amount of expressions at that time
Colour of the circle	Depends on the type of narrator at that time ( <i>Guideline III</i> )
Vertical line	Indicates the value of the sentiment, positive, neutral or negative ( <i>Guideline IV</i> )
Horizontal line	Represents the time, which can be divided according to one's preference (e.g. by week or month)
<i>Lower graph</i>	
Bell curve	A sequence of coherent expressions follow a bell curve, shaped by the intensity of the expressions ( <i>Guideline V &amp; VI</i> )
Vertical line	Intensity, or the amount of the expressions
Horizontal line	Represents the time; The beginning of a story starts with its first expression, it reaches the middle at the highest point of intensity and then decreases but remains endless.

#### **GUIDELINE I: SOCIAL MEDIA**

To delineate the context of social media, the following definition is adopted: “*Social media employ mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive platforms via which individuals and communities share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content*” (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 241). The most common platforms are social networking sites (e.g. Facebook or Twitter), blogs and content communities (e.g. YouTube). But also collaborative projects as Wikipedia, and virtual social and game worlds (e.g. Minecraft) belong to the scope of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

In essence, social media is made for users, but this guideline recognizes that brands are using social media as well and brand-generated content is thus also present in this context. With respect to open versus closed social media, this guideline acknowledges the limitation of the impossibility to include closed social media in any analysis of brand stories.

#### **GUIDELINE II: INDIVIDUAL EXPRESSIONS RELATED TO THE BRAND**

Social media platforms are full of people expressing their selves in many different ways, like (a combination of) a photo, text, video or sound. A brand story exists of a group of individual expressions that are related to the concerned brand.

#### **GUIDELINE III: MULTIPLE NARRATORS**

The third guideline is about the multiple narrators, although it is not merely about ‘telling a story’. Each expression has its own narrator. Since a set of expressions form the brand story, these multiple narrators together ‘shape’ the story. The narrators depend on who is relevant

for the brand. Suggestions for labelling the narrators are the brand, consumers, bloggers or the press.

#### **GUIDELINE IV: A VALUABLE SENTIMENT REGARDING THE BRAND**

Each expression can be valued by its sentiment, either positive, neutral or negative. It is important to note that this concerns the sentiment about the brand and not the total of the expression. It is possible that the expression related to the brand is just a part of a bigger expression.

#### **GUIDELINE V: COHERENCE BASED ON COMMON THEME**

A brand story is formed by a set of expressions, that are coherent in terms of a common theme. Importantly, coherent does not necessarily mean that the sentiment is the same. People may have different opinions on the matter.

#### **GUIDELINE VI: A STORY STRUCTURE**

The set of expressions that can be identified as a brand story, have a story structure because there is a sequence of expressions. In other words, the coherent expressions follow each other and are not stand-alone ones. This sequence of expressions follows a bell curve, in which the shape of the curve can vary for each story based on the intensity of the expressions. The beginning of the story starts with a first expression. The middle of the brand story is identifiable at the high point of the intensity of the expressions. After this high point, the intensity of the expressions will decrease. There is no real end to a brand story on social media, because a story can stir again and it can always be found on the internet.

## 6 CONCLUDING CHAPTER

The objective of this thesis was to design a descriptive framework for brand stories on social media, in order to know what brand stories are and how to identify them. Therefore, I have tried to answer the following main research question:

### WHAT IS AN APPROPRIATE DESCRIPTIVE FRAMEWORK FOR BRAND STORIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA?

The final descriptive framework is the result of a two-phased formative evaluation of a theoretical grounded framework, by means of a qualitative content analysis of a case and semi-structured expert interviews. The last phase, presented in Chapter 5, concluded with this final descriptive framework for brand stories on social media. I will therefore not repeat the framework in this last chapter. Instead, I will shortly summarize the execution of this design study and the most important learnings. In addition, I have made a template of the descriptive framework, which can be used to identify and present a brand story on social media. Furthermore, this chapter is focused on the discussion and limitations. The end of this chapter and thereby the end of this thesis, concludes with recommendations for future research.

### 6.1 CONCLUSION

The combination of theory and practice, resulted in an appropriate descriptive framework for identifying brand stories on social media. Reviewing various elements that are named in scientific literature in definitions of stories, led to a draft version of a theoretical grounded framework. In the first phase of the formative evaluation, the framework appeared to be well applicable to the case Demak'Up. Most important finding to enhance its appropriateness, was to change the order of the guidelines and to use the term 'sentiment' instead of 'key message'.

The expert's opinions in the second phase significantly increased the appropriateness of the second draft version of the framework. Their practical insight, but also theoretical background was extremely valuable for designing the final framework. For example regarding the first guideline, about social media. The definition of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) is most often used and very theoretical, but evaluating the clarity and practicality in the context of this framework, it does have some shortcomings. Like the vagueness of Web 2.0 and the absence of mobile internet in the definition. Another interesting finding and very important for the design of the framework, concerns the last guideline which is now named the story structure. While discussing the structure of a brand story on social media, the experts concluded a sequence of expressions is necessary to hold the individual (coherent) expressions together. Moreover, they argued that the intensity of expressions followed a bell curve with a quite clear beginning middle end structure. According to the experts, a motive, goal and outcome was too difficult to identify in a story shaped by multiple narrators.



### **6.1.1 TEMPLATE**

The descriptive framework is comprehensive and theoretically describes what a brand story on social media is. In addition, I have made a practical template of the framework, which can be used to present a brand story on social media of a certain brand in a given time period. The template is presented in Figure 14 on the next page. To give a better impression, I have used the template as an example to show the brand story of the Demak'Up Detox Challenge. To do so, I have used the existing data of the case study. I had to do a few new analyses based on the new framework, for example regarding the narrator. The completed template about the Demak'Up Detox Challenge story is presented in Figure 15. Again, this is just an example of how a brand story can be presented. Other options are possible, based on preferences and objectives.

### **6.1.2 RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY**

This design study contributes in adding knowledge about brand stories on social media, combining theory and practice about this topic. The descriptive framework is therefore also applicable in both worlds. In theory it can be used as a fundamental framework to build future research on. In practice, marketers can use this framework in order to identify the stories about their brand on social media, in a certain period of time. The value of this framework is well appreciated by the experts in the field of marketing and brand management. It is worthy in evaluating the brand, because brand stories on social media are considered more impactful than stories on traditional channels (Gensler et al., 2013; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Gensler et al. (2013) argue how these kind of stories influence brand performance. Brand stories provide value or meaning to a brand, are a means of building a relationship with consumers and can enhance the brand image (Huang, 2010; Lundqvist et al., 2012; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012).

# TEMPLATE: A BRAND STORY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

## PREPARE DATASET

### 1. Social Media

Import all expressions related to the brand available on social media platforms.

### 2. Expressions related to the brand

Remove all expressions that are not related to the brand, or that are twice in the dataset

### 3. Multiple narrators

Allocate a type of narrator to each expression. For example, the brand, consumer, blogger or press.

### 4. Sentiment

Value each expression on its sentiment: positive, neutral or negative. *Important:* Sentiment about the brand, not just the expression!

### 5. Coherent expressions

Collect all expressions that are coherent based on a common theme.

### 6. Story structure

Determine whether there is a sequence to identify in the group of coherent expressions.

## VISUALIZE BRAND STORY

### Upper graph

1. Determine division of time (e.g. week or month)
2. Plot the expressions at a specific moment in time based on:
  - Number of expressions determine size of the circles
  - Type of narrator determines the colour of the circles

### Lower graph

1. Plot the intensity of the expressions over time
2. Identify the beginning, middle and 'endless end'

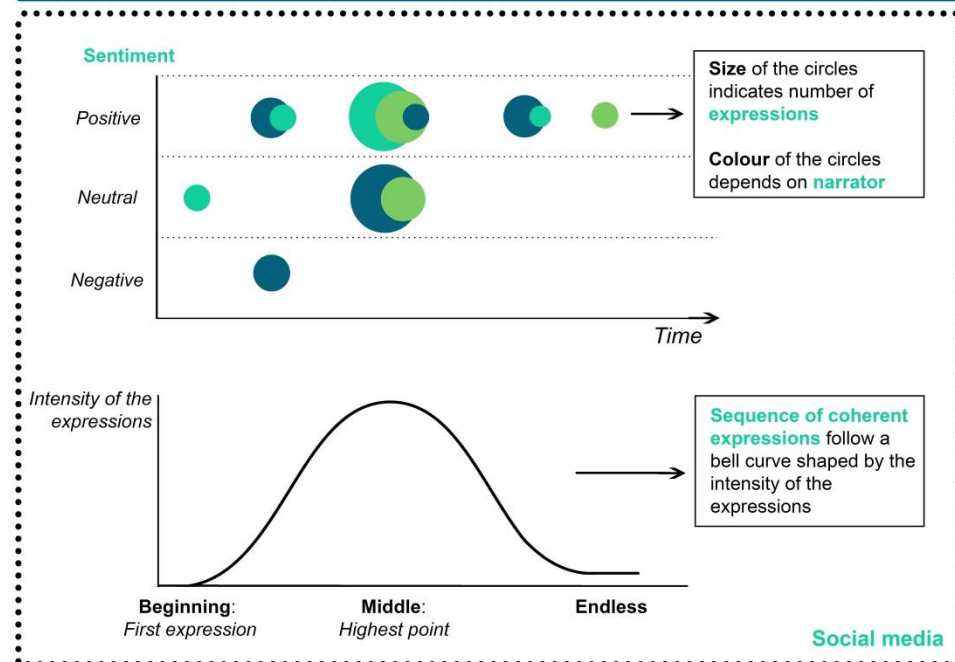


Figure 14: Template for a brand story on social media

## EXAMPLE: DEMAK'UP DETOX CHALLENGE

### PREPARE DATASET

#### 1. Social Media

Top 3: Twitter, blogs and Facebook

#### 2. Expressions related to the brand

A total of 278 expressions related to Demak'Up, of which 183 related to the Detox Challenge.

#### 3. Multiple narrators

Mostly bloggers. Some news media and a couple of consumers

#### 4. Sentiment

Primarily positive sentiment towards the brand. Some neutral expressions about the Detox Challenge.

#### 5. Coherent expressions

Coherent theme: Demak'Up Detox Challenge.

#### 6. Story structure

The story starts with a research about cleansing rituals, then women encourage each other to join the challenge, with a giveaway, press kit and DIY recipes.

### VISUALIZE BRAND STORY

#### Upper graph

1. Time is divided by week. Challenge started halfway week 23 until 24.

2. Size of the circles is determined by the number of expressions in that specific week. Colour of the circles relates to the narrator (see legend).

#### Lower graph

Bell curve of the sequence of expressions. First expression in week 22. Middle of the story in week 23, at the highest point of the intensity.

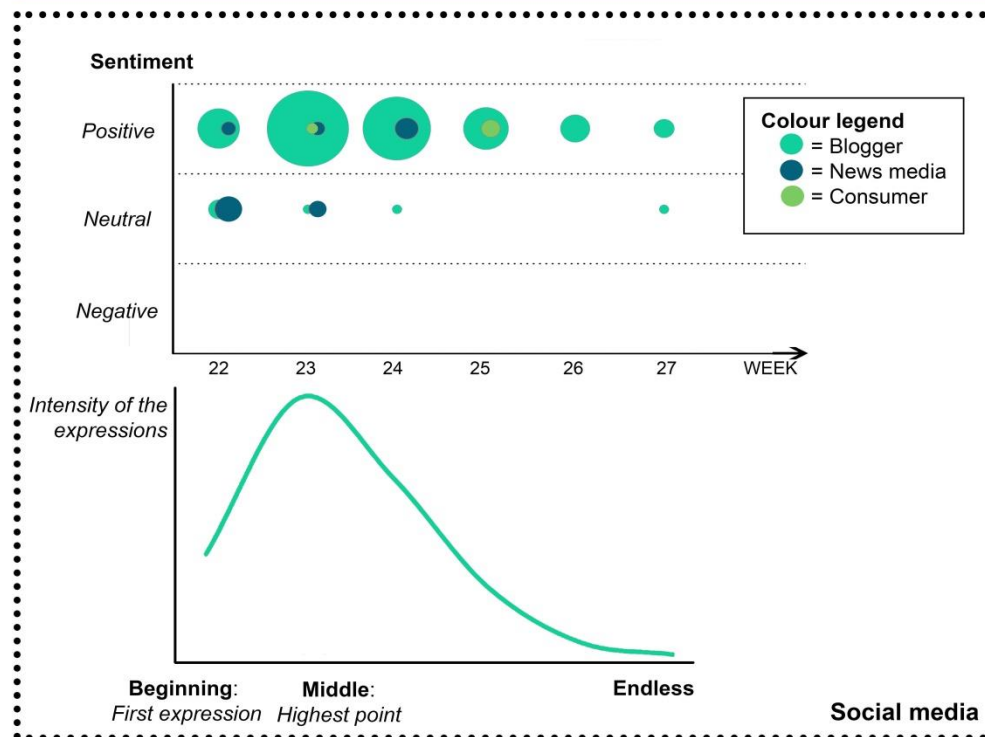


Figure 15: Example template of brand story the Demak'Up Detox Challenge

## 6.2 DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

In this paragraph, I will address several discussion points and limitations regarding the overall study, the literature review, the case study and the expert interviews.

### 6.2.1 OVERALL STUDY

My design study resulted in an appropriate framework, but it is important that I acknowledge the fact that there is not ‘one right answer’ to the main research question of this thesis. The foundation of the framework started in literature, where there are so many mixed results and explanations about what a story is. It was necessary to make choices, in which the influence of bias could have occurred in an early stage of this research. This is something I have been aware of during this study, and acted accordingly and to the best of my abilities. Likewise, I have chosen to use my proposed framework in the evaluation with the experts. I also could have decided to keep the interviews totally open for interpretation and thus without any framework as a reference, asking the experts what they think a brand story is. But this topic is so complex, it would have resulted in too many diverse results. Moreover, the final descriptive framework is purely based on the last phase of this design study. Therefore, it could use another validation.

This design study assumes that brand stories have an impact on brand performance, like various authors do (e.g. Gensler et al., 2013; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Huang, 2010). But strong evidence for demonstrating this effect is not yet found in scientific literature. As Gensler et al. (2013) argue, there is a lack in knowledge about the types of brand stories that may or may not affect brand stories and how different types of brand may be affected differently. This is not taken into account in this study. I focused on what a brand story is and how they can be identified, but did not research the effect on brand performance or differences in various types of stories. I will further address to this matter in the recommendations for future research.

### 6.2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

My quest involved different search strategies in order to find relevant literature. Due to access constraints, it is possible not all the scientific articles about this topic are included in the literature review. Another discussion about the literature section, concerns the foundation in stories. The framework is based on stories, because of the logical connection with brand *stories*. Authors who write about brand stories like Huang (2010), Singh and Sonnenburg (2012) and Gensler et al. (2013) also reason from a story basis. Other perspectives could result in different outcomes though. I mentioned it shortly before during the interview analysis, but also an interesting discussion is about the awareness of telling a story. Is it a story if one is not aware of telling a story? I did not take this rather philosophical discussion further into account.

Another issue I would like to address to is the possible misinterpretation of the elements plot and events in the literature study. The expert interviews made me critically look at what I concluded earlier in this research (in paragraph 2.4). Initially, I thought the definition of

events was clear to me. But trying to explain the concept to experts who did not understand it, made me confused and question my own explanations. In order to restructure guidelines V and VI, I re-evaluated some literature and tried to search for extra information online to better understand the concepts myself. Basically, online dictionaries<sup>21</sup> state that the plot is the storyline, or sequence of events in a story. But in my content analysis of the definitions of a story (Appendix 1 and 2), I interpreted ‘plot’ and ‘sequence’ together and allocated ‘events’ to another meta-category. The structure of this design study makes it impossible for me to recover this misinterpretation in Chapter 2, because it will affect the framework as used in the content analysis and as reference for the interviews. Nevertheless, in the end I do think that the evaluation of the experts ensured that the misinterpretation is resolved in the final framework. The discussion implies a guideline is needed that ensures the formation of storyline in the group of coherent expressions. This is now covered in the ‘sequence of expressions with a story structure’.

### 6.2.3 CASE STUDY

With regard to the case study, I used the monitoring tool of Coosto. It is proven though, that this tool does not include all expressions related to the brand. Moreover, as the experts suggested, the reactions to expressions should also be taken into account. Especially when they deviate from the original expression. The results about the brand stories of Demak’Up give an acceptable impression, but are therefore not completely reliable. For example, the concluded brand story about Demak’Up for Men versus the actual April Fools’ Day joke. Moreover, the tool allowed me to do a content analysis of textual expressions, though the guideline includes all the ways people can express themselves (e.g. video, photo). Notwithstanding, I think these limitations primarily concerns the case, which is of secondary interest in this study. It probably had little influence on the evaluation of the framework.

### 6.2.4 EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Interviews are easily subject to social desirability, but I believe it was limited during the expert interviews. The experts did not hesitate to prove me wrong or question the statements in the framework. The interviews were very open, more like a brainstorm or exchange of thoughts, but with a frame of reference. It was difficult though, to not let the experience of previous interviews interfere with new ones. After the first interviews several issues already became clear, but I did not let this interfere with the latter ones.

Another possible limitation of qualitative methodology relates to small samples, because it could reduce general conclusions (Myers, 2000). In the expert interviews, a relatively small sample is used. But Myers (2000) also argues that a small sample could be more useful to study a particular context in depth, while a larger sample size might result in a more basic understanding.

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<sup>21</sup> <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/plot>



Important to keep in mind, the interviews are conducted in Dutch. The quotes and examples used in this research have been translated into English. It is impossible though, due to the rhetorical nature of this research, to perfectly translate the experts answers. Especially the proverbs are often difficult to translate. I tried to translate certain sayings in a way that the meanings of the answers are not lost. This also worked the other way around, as the original framework is formulated in English but is evaluated in Dutch with the experts. It caused difficulties twice, about the 'individual' in Guideline II and the translation of 'nieuws media' of Guideline IV.

### 6.3 FUTURE RESEARCH

I would like to end this thesis with recommendations for future research. The objective of this study emerged when I had difficulties in determining strategies about brand stories. As I stated earlier, what good are strategies if it is not clear what one is talking about? In this study, I designed a descriptive framework to know what a brand story is and to retrospectively identify brand stories on social media. For marketers, evaluating what has happened with the brand is as important as trying to manage the future of the brand. The descriptive framework of this study can be used as a starting point from which these strategies can be developed. Several authors already did an attempt in describing storytelling strategies. Singh and Sonnenburg (2012) argue how the ideal brand management practice is to improve theatre, with a predetermined topic and a collaboration between the brand and the consumers, together co-creating the brand story. Gensler et al. (2013) and Hennig-Thurau et al. (2013) argue that a requirement for successful branding is to monitor social media and effectively moderate the co-creational brand story development process. But as earlier argued, it is also still a bit ambiguous how brand stories affect brand performance. This is also an interesting focus for future research.

This study delineates the context of brand stories to social media, but alternative options are possible. For example, mostly the experts that worked at a client side, argued the merging of the online and offline world. What is happening offline, is easily told online. This also works the other way around. Schieder (2013) emphasized the importance of involving and connecting customers in a physical and digital way, to create an ongoing interaction between the two which in turn increases a closer brand connection. This way, customers will easily share and create their own branded story (Schieder, 2013). One expert questioned whether the definition of brand stories on social media differs from other contexts. In expanding the context of this framework, future scholars could extend the knowledge about brand stories and storytelling.

As already discussed, future research could focus on different types of brand stories, like the difference in sponsored versus organic stories. Though I believe both types can be identified using the same descriptive framework, I do think it is interesting to study whether the framework can be altered based on various types of stories. Also studying whether they have significant differences in for instance the narrator, or the intensity of the story. This can also

be expanded to the impact on brand performance, as Gensler et al. (2013) suggested. Do different kind of stories have different impact on the brand?

For practical application of the framework, I suggest to use another monitoring tool for analysing the expressions about a brand. A tool that includes all expressions, plus the reactions and comments to the expressions is required. A manual check by for example googling the brand, is recommendable to ensure all expressions are included. It is even more interesting to investigate whether it is possible to make a complete tool of this framework. A tool that for instance first assigns a social media platform, a narrator and a sentiment valuation to each expression, that is directly related to the brand. Then, conducting a content analysis to allocate the expressions to a group with a common theme. Furthermore, a bell curve of this group could be exported just like for example Figure 16, in which Coosto presents the intensity of the expressions of Demak'Up. It is questionable however if it is possible to completely automate the process, due to technical limitations. For example, the sentiment valuation as discussed earlier, the recognition of the story structure or the grouping of the narrators. An interesting topic that future researchers can focus on.



**Figure 16: Activity graph for Demak'Up expressions, output from Coosto**



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## APPENDIX 1: DEFINITIONS OF STORIES

Authors	Studied/used term	Definition
Adaval and Wyer (1998)	<i>Narratives</i>	Much of the social information we acquire in daily life is transmitted to us in the form of a narrative. That is, it is conveyed in a thematically and temporally related sequence. (p. 207)
Black and Kelley (2009)	<i>Stories</i>	Elements of a good story: trust, character development, detail, tone of superiority, inspirational content and quality of writing. (p. 170)
Brown et al. (2003)	<i>Brand allegories</i>	Brand allegories are essentially symbolic stories, narratives, or extended metaphors. [...] Allegories successfully convey didactic messages that invoke and then offer resolutions for consumer states of moral conflict. In addition, allegories are dynamic; they alter and change in response to popular tastes and trends. (p. 21)
Chang (2009)	<i>Narratives</i>	A narrative involves “one or more episodes consisting of actors engaged in actions to achieve goals” and contains a “sequence initiated by some events and actions result[ing] in outcome(s)” The two important structural features of narratives are chronology and causality. (p.21)
Chiu et al. (2012)	<i>Stories</i>	A story is “an oral or written performance involving two or more people interpreting past or anticipated experience”. [...] <p>Stories should have a beginning, a middle, and an end; a story also should include characters and a lesson learned. It should be authentic, concise, and humorous, and as a good story progresses, the protagonist should face the crisis and find a solution. [...] Without factors such as chronological sequence or central characters, it is not called a story (p. 264)</p>
Cho et al. (2014)	<i>Narratives</i>	Narratives are stories that consist of a “sequence of thematically and temporally related events” involving characters. (p. 829)
Dowling (2006)	<i>Corporate stories</i>	The major elements of a reputation story: The company’s mission, morality, and modes of behavior. (p. 86)
Escalas (2004)	<i>Stories/narratives</i>	Stories elucidate goals, evaluate actions to achieve goals, and interpret outcomes. (p. 168) <p>Narratives are a mental organizing structure that provides meaning by combining elements temporally toward a goal or conclusion. (p. 176)</p>
Fog et al. (2005)	<i>Stories</i>	Basic elements of a story: The message, the conflict, the characters and the plot. (p. 31)
Gensler et al. (2013)	<i>Brand stories</i>	Generally, brand stories contain a plot, characters playing a role in the plot, a climax, and an outcome that causes empathy in listeners and helps them to remember the story. (p. 242)
Gilliam et al. (2013)	<i>Stories</i>	Definition of story: a story is a discourse dealing with interrelated actions and consequences in chronological order. Actions and consequences are ‘events’, i.e. processes, situations, or states. (p. 232)
Green (2008)	<i>Stories</i>	Stories “consist of a sequence of thematically and temporally related events” with a beginning, middle, and end. (p. 47)
Gruen et al. (2002)	<i>Stories</i>	Elements of stories: Fleshed-out characters, detailed settings, goals and obstacles, motivation, causality and dramatic elements. (p. 505-506)
Herskovitz and Crystal (2010)	<i>Brand narrative</i>	When it comes to creating a powerful brand narrative, the persona – the articulated form of the brand’s character and personality – comes first, and all other elements unfold from there. A compelling brand starts with a strong, well-drawn, and quickly recognized persona – the essential connection between what a company says and what it does. (p. 21)
Huang (2010)	<i>Brand stories</i>	The tale (truth/fiction), the telling (time and plot), the teller (narrative voice), and rhetoric are key components of a story. (p.308)

Janssen et al. (2012)	<i>Corporate stories</i>	The corporate story needed to have an obvious beginning–middle–end structure because this is an important condition for the narrative of a corporate story. (p. 34)
Lien and Chen (2013)	<i>Narrative ads</i>	A narrative structure consists of two critical elements: chronology and causality. Chronology means that narrative events occur over time such that viewers can perceive the events' beginning, progress, and ending according to their time flow. Causality then connects the story's events to causal inferences. (p. 517)
Lundqvist et al. (2012)	<i>(firm generated) Stories</i>	A story has a structure that keeps it together and engages the listener. Brand stories [...] answer questions like: who, what, why, where, when, how and with the help of what. They have a beginning, middle and end, and events unfold in a chronological sequence, which, when causal, is called a plot. Stories often make a point that is valued (positively or negatively) by the audience, and include a message, a conflict, a role distribution and action. (p. 285)
McGregor and Holmes (1999)	<i>Stories</i>	"Narrative deals with the vicissitudes of human intentions." This definition emphasizes that stories contain contextualized particulars and causal relations between intentions and consequences experienced by the characters over time. (p. 404)
Mossberg (2008)	<i>Narratives</i>	<p>The key features of narratives.</p> <p>The establishment of a valued end point: Every story must have a "point" to make. Moreover this point must be valued, negatively or positively, by the people involved in the narrative process</p> <p>Selection of events relevant to the goal state: Once we have decided the "point" to our story, we then select only those events that help us to make our point</p> <p>The ordering of events: Once we have decided the point of our story and selected the events with which we will tell our story, we tend to place them in "linear, temporal sequence"</p> <p>Establishing causal sequences: The order in which we put the events of our story also tend to be causally linked, that is event "b" only happened because of event "a" and so on</p> <p>Demarcation signs: Stories tend to have well recognized beginnings, (middles) and ends (p. 199)</p>
Padgett and Allen (1997)	<i>Narratives</i>	We describe storied stimuli as any stimuli that include causally/chronologically connected events enacted by characters. Typically, such stimuli involve actors with motives, an event sequence, and a setting that has physical, social, and temporal components (p. 53)
Shaw, Brown and Bromiley (1998)	<i>Strategic stories</i>	Set the stage (define the current situation in an insightful, coherent manner) (p. 43) - Introduce the dramatic conflict - Reach resolution (p. 47)
Singh and Sonnenburg (2012)	<i>Stories</i>	Stories contain indices such as locations, actions, attitudes, problems, characters, etc. that cause both empathy in the listener and help the story being recalled (p. 189)
Spear and Roper (2013)	<i>Corporate stories</i>	A story is a series of logically and chronologically related events. (p. 24)
Wentzel et al. (2010)	<i>Narrative ads</i>	Much of the information that individuals obtain in their daily lives is conveyed to them in the form of narratives, that is, in thematically and temporally related sequences of events. (p. 510)



Woodside et al. (2008)	<i>Stories</i>	<p>Stories and storytelling are central to achieving a deep understanding of consumer psychology.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People naturally think narratively rather than argumentatively or paradigmatically (p. 98).</li> <li>2. A substantial amount of information stored in and retrieved from memory is episodic—stories that include inciting incidents, experiences, outcomes/evaluations, and summaries/nuances of person to person and person-and-brand relationships within specific contexts.</li> <li>3. Retrieving, reliving, or repeat watching stories results in what Aristotle refers to as “proper pleasure”.</li> <li>4. Specific brands and products often play pivotal roles enabling consumers to achieve the proper pleasure that results in a consumer mentally and/or physically enacting a specific archetype—and reliving the experience by periodically retelling a given story.</li> <li>5. Individuals seek clarity, to make sense of prior conversations, events, and outcomes from others and themselves by telling stories.</li> </ol> <p>(p. 99)</p>
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## APPENDIX 2: STORY ELEMENTS

Meta Category	Element	Authors	Frequency
Character	Character	(Black & Kelley, 2009; Chang, 2009; Chiu et al., 2012; Cho et al., 2014; Fog et al., 2005; Gensler et al., 2013; Gruen et al., 2002; Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010; McGregor & Holmes, 1999; Padgett & Allen, 1997; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012)	11
	Beginning-middle-end / temporality	(Adaval & Wyer, 1998; Chiu et al., 2012; Cho et al., 2014; Escalas, 2004; Green, 2008; Janssen et al., 2012; Lundqvist et al., 2012; Mossberg, 2008; Wentzel et al., 2010)	10
Structure	Plot / sequence	(Adaval & Wyer, 1998; Chang, 2009; Cho et al., 2014; Fog et al., 2005; Gensler et al., 2013; Green, 2008; Lundqvist et al., 2012; Padgett & Allen, 1997; Wentzel et al., 2010)	9
	Chronology	(Chang, 2009; Chiu et al., 2012; Gilliam et al., 2013; Lien & Chen, 2013; Lundqvist et al., 2012; Padgett & Allen, 1997; Spear & Roper, 2013)	7
Key message	Message / theme	(Adaval & Wyer, 1998; Brown et al., 2003; Chiu et al., 2012; Cho et al., 2014; Fog et al., 2005; Green, 2008; Lundqvist et al., 2012; Mossberg, 2008; Wentzel et al., 2010)	9
	Conflict - Solution	(Brown et al., 2003; Chiu et al., 2012; Fog et al., 2005; Gilliam et al., 2013; Gruen et al., 2002; Lundqvist et al., 2012; Shaw et al., 1998; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012)	8
Events	Events	(Chang, 2009; Gilliam et al., 2013; Green, 2008; Lundqvist et al., 2012; Mossberg, 2008; Padgett & Allen, 1997; Spear & Roper, 2013; Wentzel et al., 2010)	8
	Causality	(Chang, 2009; Gruen et al., 2002; Lien & Chen, 2013; Lundqvist et al., 2012; McGregor & Holmes, 1999; Mossberg, 2008; Padgett & Allen, 1997)	7
	Goals / motivation	(Chang, 2009; Escalas, 2004; Gruen et al., 2002; McGregor & Holmes, 1999; Mossberg, 2008; Padgett & Allen, 1997)	6
	Actions	(Chang, 2009; Escalas, 2004; Gilliam et al., 2013; Lundqvist et al., 2012; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012)	5
	Outcome/ consequence	(Chang, 2009; Escalas, 2004; Gensler et al., 2013; Gilliam et al., 2013; McGregor & Holmes, 1999)	5
Other	Details	Black and Kelley (2009), Gruen et al. (2002)	2
	Inspirational content	Black and Kelley (2009)	1
	Quality of writing	Black and Kelley (2009)	1
	Tone of superiority	Black and Kelley (2009)	1
	Trust	Black and Kelley (2009)	1
	Dynamic	Brown et al. (2003)	1
	Episodes	Chang (2009)	1
	Authentic	Chiu et al. (2012)	1
	Concise	Chiu et al. (2012)	1
	Humor	Chiu et al. (2012)	1
	Mission	Dowling (2006)	1
	Modes of behaviour	Dowling (2006)	1
	Morality	Dowling (2006)	1
	Climax	Gensler et al. (2013)	1
	Rhetoric	Huang (2010)	1
	Setting	Padgett and Allen (1997)	1
	Situation	Shaw et al. (1998)	1
	Attitude	Singh and Sonnenburg (2012)	1
	Locations	Singh and Sonnenburg (2012)	1
	Logic	Spear and Roper (2013)	1

## APPENDIX 3: RESEARCH INTRODUCTION (DUTCH)

### Onderzoek introductie

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Allereerst bedankt dat u tijd vrij heeft kunnen maken voor dit interview. Op dit moment ben ik bezig met mijn afstudeeronderzoek. Ik ben op zoek naar een definitie en een duidelijk, geschikt framework voor brand stories op social media. Hiervoor ben ik benieuwd naar de mening van experts op dit gebied en daarom doe ik een aantal interviews.

U bent een van die experts. We starten zo het interview. Dit neem ik op met een recorder, dit doe ik alleen om straks het interview uit te kunnen schrijven. Op die manier is het mogelijk om de interviews goed te analyseren en de juiste conclusies te trekken. Ik wil u er op wijzen dat uw antwoorden te allen tijde anoniem worden behandeld. Dit interview zal dus niet naar u terug te leiden zijn.

Mocht u nog vragen hebben over het interview of de procedure dan kunt u deze vragen altijd aan mij stellen.

Voordat wij beginnen met het interview is het van belang dat u een toestemmingsverklaring formulier invult. Dit formulier ontvangt u van mij.

Hierna starten we met het interview.

Bij voorbaat hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking!

## APPENDIX 4: INFORMED CONSENT FORM (DUTCH)

### Toestemmingsverklaring

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#### **Onderzoek naar een beschrijvend kader voor brand stories op social media**

*Verantwoordelijke onderzoeker: Judith Kamp*

##### **IN TE VULLEN DOOR DE DEELNEMER**

Ik verklaar op een voor mij duidelijke wijze te zijn ingelicht over de aard, methode, doel en belasting van het onderzoek. Ik weet dat de gegevens en resultaten van het onderzoek alleen anoniem en vertrouwelijk aan derden bekend gemaakt zullen worden. Mijn vragen zijn naar tevredenheid beantwoord.

Ik begrijp dat de geluidsopname van dit interview uitsluitend voor analyse en/of wetenschappelijke presentatie zal worden gebruikt.

Ik stem geheel vrijwillig in met deelname aan dit onderzoek. Ik behoud me daarbij het recht voor om op elk moment zonder opgaaf van redenen mijn deelname aan dit onderzoek te beëindigen.

Naam deelnemer:

Handtekening:

Datum:

##### **IN TE VULLEN DOOR DE UITVOERENDE ONDERZOEKER**

Ik heb een mondelinge en schriftelijke toelichting gegevens op het onderzoek. Ik zal resterende vragen over het onderzoek naar vermogen beantwoorden. De deelnemer zal van een eventuele voortijdige beëindiging van deelname aan dit onderzoek geen nadelige gevolgen ondervinden.

Naam onderzoeker:

Handtekening:

Datum:

## APPENDIX 5: EVALUATION MATRIXES EXPERT INTERVIEWS

Table 13: Evaluation matrix Guideline I

		Agreement	Update	Mobile	User-generated content	Web 2.0
Client side	E1	"I think this is indeed the definition of social media"		"The separation between the offline and online world is blurring because of mobile devices [...] What's happening in the offline world is easily being told in the online world"		
	E2	"Yes, very clear"				
	E3	"Scientific definition" "In essence, the definition may still be the same. Interaction between consumers and user-generated content"	"In five years, this definition will be not true anymore"		"User-generated becomes less important"	"Web 2.0 is always a vague concept"
	E4	"Yes I know the definition"				
Agency side	E5		"Maybe the definition is outdated" "There is open and closed social media"	"I would definitely take mobile into account"	"What about Brand-Generated Content?"	"A lot of descriptions of Web 2.0 leave out the social element. But well, I don't know the foundations of Web 2.0"
	E6	"Yes I understand the guideline, so fine"	"I would update the examples of Second Life. I would rather call Minecraft"			
	E7		"I think you should adjust the definition more to the present" "Second Life, is that actually still used?"	"How about outside the Web? Like WhatsApp?" "Mobile internet is very pervasive"		"Web 2.0 suggest the use of a computer"
	E8	-				

**Table 14: Evaluation matrix Guideline II**

		Agreement	Ambiguity
Client side	E1	"Yes, expressions can be everything. Image, text, audio. Yes, expressions includes it all"	
	E2	"This guideline was very clear to me. Expressions, that is also what we always call it"	
	E3	"Yes I understand the term expressions"	
	E4	"Expressions is very wide, so yes, it includes everything" "I have nothing to add to that"	
Agency side	E5	"OK, I would add audio though"	"Some expressions are not individual are they? Some people represent the opinion of a group"
	E6	"The term expressions is really something from advertising , so yes fine. People from this profession will know what you mean"	
	E7	"Yes, I think it is very clear"	
	E8	"Right, very good"	

Table 15: Evaluation matrix Guideline III

		Term (multiple) narrator	Classification	Consumer / Blogger	Stakeholder	News media / Other
Client side	E1	"The bigger the brand, the more diverse groups you reach and the more diverse your brand stories"	"Every individual or group of individuals can be a narrator" "Maybe it depends on your brand"	"We distinguish between consumer and shopper, but can you identify them with social media" "Maybe it ( <i>blogger</i> ) is a different category. If he/she is being paid it is actually the brand"	"Stakeholder are politically correct I think"	
	E2	"Very logical term" "There are multiple narrators that co-create the story together"	"I don't think you should make it too complex" "You could also make the classification based on your own perspective"	"I don't think you should distinguish between shopper and consumer on social media" "Maybe you should mention this ( <i>blogger</i> ) as a separate category"	"Difficult term. A brand has diverse stakeholders; the consumers, shoppers, government, customers, everybody that is relevant to the brand"	
	E3	"A narrator implies that someone is aware of telling a story"	"Maybe view from the supply chain perspective? Or five forces of Porter? Depending on your brand"	<i>Blogger</i> "Media I guess"	"Every participant is a stakeholder in some way"	"There is something like subjective and objective media"
	E4	"Yes, it's fine" "A story about your brand does not always have to come from the brand itself"	"Maybe it is missing a commercial entity. That participates with the brand to tell your story"	"Paid bloggers are actually the brand"	"A stakeholder belongs to the brand, more intern. I don't think a stakeholder will participate in a brand story on social media"	<i>Other</i> "Yes participant, that's what you can call it"
Agency side	E5	"It is the first time I've seen this term in this context. It's a fine term to use, I understand it."		"Sometimes it's ( <i>blogger</i> ) the consumer, sometimes the news, when it's objective. If he/she is paid than maybe a stakeholder"	"Partners, that are stakeholders"	"News is independent and objective. Media not always. For example RTL Boulevard"
	E6	"In the end you all have a voice in the story, so yeah narrators is a good term. Well chosen"	"Enough narrative perspectives for now"	<i>Blogger</i> "Paid participant?"	"Is a stakeholder an influential? Someone with who the brand cooperates?"	
	E7	"It sounds like the teller of a story, but according the guideline narrators together form the story"	"What about competitors? I think the rest is very clear and logical"			
	E8	"Good term in this context" "Yes it is very clear explained"				



**Table 16: Evaluation matrix Guideline IV**

		Sentiment	Positive, neutral or negative	Related to the brand
Client side	E1	"Every expression about the brand influences the brand, how people think about the brand"	"Are there neutral expressions? [...] I think that when people are neutral, they will not respond"	
	E2		"Yes very clear. Clear classification, not about really positive or a bit positive. Fine!"	"Related to the brand is important, because sometimes the story is not about the brand anymore"
	E3		"Positive, negative, neutral, yes that's it"	"Good one"
	E4	"Yes, it's true. Positive, negative, neutral, that is always the sentiment"	"It's very general, positive, negative or neutral. Do you also take the impact into account?"	
Agency side	E5			
	E6	"Yes, I get it"		Yes, right. Always from the perspective of the brand, I get it.
	E7	"Yes clear, I don't have anything to add"		
	E8	"Yes good, like we always do when analysing a campaign"		

**Table 17: Evaluation matrix Guideline V**

		<b>Continuity</b>	<b>Begin-middle-end</b>	<b>Coherence</b>	<b>Multiple plots</b>
Client side	<b>E1</b>	“Continuity is time related. You state “always” but it is not always. “You tell a story, and then some time not. And then another story. It ends nowhere, but it will decrease”	“Every chapter has a begin, middle, end, and can overlap with other stories”	“Yes, I agree”	“I agree, certainly”
	<b>E2</b>	“Social media is continuous, so when does a story end?” “There is a high point in intensity at a certain point. That will decrease. That’s your story. Not really continuous”	“You can also state that when the ‘heat’ is out, the story ends” “There is no end to the story, but you can allocate the end yourself during the measurement”	“I think the theme can differ across marketers, what you think is relevant” “If you can allocate enough expressions though”	“Yes, I believe that too”
	<b>E3</b>	“Continuity implies no pause, but I think there are pauses. It’s not continuous. The intensity can change. It’s more a bell curve”	“I think there is always a beginning, a first expression. An end, it’s more a chapter that ends”		
	<b>E4</b>	“No, not continuous, a brand story is a group of expressions, which have one high point”	“There is a build-up in your story, but it kind of a never-ending story”		
Agency side	<b>E5</b>	“When a story pauses and then starts again, they are not two stories. So it’s not continuous”		“Yes, a common theme often has several subtheme’s that can be rated separately.	“A brand can thus have multiple stories, but with multiple plots? But one story cannot have multiple plots?”
	<b>E6</b>	“It’s better to be there at relevant moments, than to be continuous” “A brand story is rather consistent than continuous”			
	<b>E7</b>	“It is not always of course. A brand is not always spoken of or written about” “It maybe is unlimited time, but the intensity changes” “Continuity is not the right term”	“It does not disappear”	“Coherence seems logical to me, also on a common theme yes. It indeed does not have to have the same sentiment”	“A brand story itself cannot have multiple plots? Then this part does not belong to the guideline that describes brand stories. I do think that a brand can have multiple stories”
	<b>E8</b>			“Coherence on a common theme, yes. Like the Detox Challenge”	“Yes, of course”

Table 18: Evaluation matrix Guideline VI

		Ambiguity?	Agreement after extra explanation?	Own explanation
Client side	E1	No		
	E2	Yes “What is the event? Or is there only 1 event? Or is every expression an event?” “So, what is the goal behind the reactions of a consumer on a post of our brand?” “And the outcome, is the amount of reactions?”	Yes	“So it’s about the flow, a build-up in what’s happening. Not just empty talk like <i>[Product]</i> get 2, pay 1.”
	E3	Yes “What is the goal of critics of individual narrators on a new product?”	Yes	“Isn’t it much simpler, like a sequence of expressions? Because what is the definition of an event? I think it’s a group of coherent expressions which follow each other”
	E4	No, but wrong interpretation. Agrees on guideline because he interpret ‘sequence of events’ as a ‘sequence of reactions’.		“When you automatically elicit more responses, it will quicker become sequentially”
Agency side	E5	Yes “I think it’s difficult to understand. In my view, one story can have multiple plots. When two target groups react differently, then the goal of the story changes”	No	“Maybe it’s just action reaction. Some initiates something, and when there is 1, 2 or 1 million reactions, it’s a story. Or at least some storyline. So the sequence of events, the first event is the action, the second event is the reaction”
	E6	No		“It can also be a series of nice videos made together with influentials, combined with a competition or giveaway. I see that as a story as well”
	E7	No		“The course of each story will differ. I would better explain the events in your guideline, what you mean by them”
	E8	No		“Yes, for example the Yellow Backie! Creating a story about getting people together; for tourists to experience Amsterdam through the eyes of an Amsterdammer, and for Amsterdammers to meet new people. And maybe that will create more stories about the meeting of the two.

**Table 19: Evaluation matrix definition and visualisation**

		Agreement definition	Agreement visualisation	Feedback visualisation
Client side	E1	Yes	"Very clear, absolutely. Yes, the 'neutral' expressions will be limited. The framework makes it very clear and visible"	
	E2	"When you read it at first, is a complicated sentence, but I understand it now. Yes, very clear"	"Image was very clear to me, absolutely. I agree"	"Maybe you should introduce the value of the framework in a preface" "To make it extra practical, you can maybe make a plan with steps. Like, first analyse expression. Second classify themes, etc."
	E3	<i>Uses an example</i> "I think, yes, then the definition works"	"Yes this matches how we see certain things"	"Maybe intensity is an extra variable. Like big or small intensity" "Maybe a bit more quantification, like the percentages"
	E4	"Yes, sounds good"	"It's a valuable framework. Looks good"	"I would like to see more of the impact, more quantification in it. Which is purely the numbers of the amount of expressions."
Agency side	E5		"OK the general framework is ambiguous and I understand the Demak'Up framework. But maybe it's because of the black and white"	
	E6	Yes	"I think this is really valuable"	"If you nicely summarize it with a slightly better and compacter formulation"
	E7	"If you adjust the changes we discussed, then the definition is very clear to me. Yes, very clear"	"I think the completed framework of Demak'Up is clearer than the general framework"	"The circle makes it ambiguous, it causes confusion. It makes me wonder how it relates to each other"
	E8	"Yes, it is well defined"	"Yes really clear. Well defined and it looks good"	

**THE END**