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Snapchat as an Advertising Platform

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Abstract

This paper deals with the types of advertisements used in Snapchat and how brands utilise through examples of domestic and international campaigns. Snapchat is an instant messaging application that takes advantage of new technologies such as augmented reality, allowing brands to reach the target audience in interactive, unique and entertaining ways. Given the fact that digital advertising has now surpassed printed media and television advertising, research in this area is becoming essential.

Keywords: Snapchat advertising, interactive advertising, brand sponsorships, geo-filters, snapchat lenses.

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1. Introduction

'Today, advertisement is not only a business approach to execute or increase sales but a communication channel where the brand meets consumers to define its product by explaining why, where, how and for whom they build the product or service' (Elden & Bakir, 2010). Therefore, instead of traditional platforms, brands have been choosing digital platforms as an attempt to reach the youth. An approach has become necessary in the competitive world of business. Snapchat can be shown as one of the most successful examples in these platforms.

Snapchat is an instant messaging application that was launched in 2011 for use on smartphones. With this application, users can publish videos or photos within 1–10 seconds (in their own profile) or send them as private messages to their friends. It is possible to write, draw and add subtitles on videos and photos shared via Snapchat. However, all content shared in the story is deleted by the system after 24 hours, while photos/videos sent privately disappear after displaying them up to two times. In addition, if Snapchat detects that the recipient has received a screenshot, it sends alert notifications to the senders.

Since Facebook and Instagram are frequently used by parents, teens find that the disappearing data applications are more appealing. Snapchat's 27-year-old CEO Evan Spiegel said that the platform is designed in a way that family members cannot shame their children (Ogtrop, 2016). The function of disappearing data can be considered as a 'do not disturb' sign hanging on the doors of teenagers. So Snapchat managed to get 10 million active users in just 1 year from its launch (Vaynerchuck, 2016).

The rapid spread of Snapchat's use has also led to similar innovations in applications such as Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp. Especially with Instagram stories feature (available in 2016), users are able to share disappearing videos and photos within 24 hours like Snapchat. Thus, a big competition started between these two platforms.

Instagram stories can make content and users more visible using Instagram's search tools (hashtags, search options, search by location). On the contrary, the lack of a search function in Snapchat poses a problem for brands, celebrities and social media influencers. For this reason, nowadays many users prefer Instagram's story feature. But Snapchat is still popular among the young generation, who do not want to be seen and prefer privacy. A 19-year-old blogger Andrew Watts wrote on his blog 'Snapchat has a lot less social pressure attached to it compared to every other popular social media network out there. This is what makes it so addicting and liberating. If I don't get any likes on my Instagram photo or Facebook post within 15 minutes you can sure bet I'll delete it' (Watts, 2015).

2. How can brands use Snapchat?

Brands can use Snap Ads, Discover, Our Story (Live), Sponsored lenses and geo-filters to reach their target groups.

2.1. Snap Ads

Snap Ads can be up to 10-second vertical videos with the option to swipe up for access to more content such as article, app install, long-form video and web view. 'This option provides the best mobile video ads achieving 5× the click rate of similar ads on other social platforms' (Steven, 2017).

2.2. Discover

Discover is the feature that allows users to reach the news of the world's largest media organisations such as CNN, National Geographic, Tastemade, Mashable, People and Food Network.

2.3. Our Story (live)

'Our Story is a place where Snapchatters can build big community narratives together. Snaps you submit to Our Story can show up on Snap Map or in Search, grouped together with other Snaps from the same location, event, or about the same topic' (Snapchat Official Website, 2017).

2.4. Sponsored lenses

Snapchat offers fun moments to its users with several lenses by using augmented reality technology. For using the lenses, it is necessary to switch to the selfie mode by touching the camera icon located at the top-right of the application and then hold the face for a while. When this is done, it is seen that various lenses are added beside the shooting button in the lower middle part of the application. Because of the lens features are different Snapchat directs the user with these commands; Voice changer, try with a friend, open your mouth, raise your eyebrows, look around and swap the camera (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Snapchat face recognition (first visual) and lens samples

Image source: <https://www.i-w-t.org/consulting/business-consultant/udivitelno/samye-nashumevshie-ukrainskie-startapy-v-mire.html>

Brands that are aware that these lenses can interact directly with the customers have started to benefit from Snapchat's sponsored lenses. In addition to thousands of advertisements that are displayed on the screen outside of the request, these lenses are used and shared by the users' own accord. This allows the brands to interact with them in a fun way.

2.5. Geofilters

Geofilters, which was launched in 2014, can be described as a fun way of doing check-in. They can only be accessed in certain locations. Thinking that such a feature would be useful for brands, Snapchat created geofilters for advertising purposes. Thus, geofilters are divided into two categories: Community and On-Demand.

For the community category, artists and designers are encouraged to create and present free geofilters for cities, universities and for other public places. No brand logos are allowed in this category (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Geo-filters for Moscow/Russia, Frontera/Mexico and Tokyo/Japan

Image source: <https://www.snapchat.com/geofilters>

Moreover, on demand geo-filters allow users to create their own filters for weddings, birthdays, parties or different organisations. Companies can also create their own geo-filters with adding their logos for a specific location. This feature was first used by McDonalds in the United States (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Geofilter for McDonalds

Image source: <http://www.dailydot.com/debug/snapchat-mcdonalds-geofilter/>

3. Examples of snapchat campaigns

3.1. Burberry

For the first time, the British brand Burberry introduced parts of the Spring/Summer 2016 Functionregalia collection at the London Fashion Week in September 2015 via Snapchat. In addition, the interaction with Burberry followers has been enhanced with Snapchat's live feature, where models, designers and guests can share events simultaneously (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Burberry live campaign

Image sources: <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/cp/inside-fashion-week/spring-2016/burberry-snapchat-show>; <http://robbreport.com.sg/2016/06/13/burberry-gets-snapchat/http://robbreport.com.sg/2016/06/13/burberry-gets-snapchat/>

Burberry's creative team and chief executive officer Christopher Bailey said that with Snapchat, they focused on capturing the energy and the rawness of the shoot and sharing it the moment it happens. The famous fashion photographer Mario Testino, who shot Burberry, also commented on the campaign with the following words:

'With the Snapchat Campaign, we hope to make a whole new leap forward in capturing and sharing content by changing the way and style of the industry's traditional fashion campaigns; The result is much faster and more authentic' (burberryplc.com).

3.2. Empire TV series

A sponsored lens was created for the US-made TV series Empire after its four months of break to catch fan's attention. The lens, which targets the Y generation (born between 1980 and 2000), allows users to simulate singing with a microphone. In addition, sunglasses and headphones are added to users' image by using the augmented reality technology (Figure 5). FOX's Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer Angela Courtin explained the idea of the campaign with the following words: 'We wanted to create a campaign that echoes the same level of energy, creativity and urgency the hit show delivers every week' (Johnson, 2016).

'By the end of the campaign, FOX's Empire Lens had reached 27 million Snapchatters with a highly memorable and enjoyable execution' (Snapchat Official Website, 2016). According to Snapchat survey results, 'FOX's campaign boosted brand awareness by 16 points when comparing a group who saw the ad versus those who did not see the promo. It also increased tune-in intent by 8 percent' (Johnson, 2016).



Figure 5. Sponsored lens for Empire TV series

Image source: <http://www.adweek.com/news/technology/fox-s-sponsored-snapchat-lens-boosted-brand-awareness-empire-16-points-171668>

3.3. Mavi

One of the first brands to use Snapchat in Turkey is the textile company 'Mavi', which is known for its denim products. In 2015, 'Mavi' made its first Snapchat interview with famous Turkish stars Serenay Sarikaya and Kerem Bursin. Five questions were asked as a text and the stars answered them as Snapchat video (Figure 6). This interview via Snapchat reached 150,000 views in the first few hours (Mediacat Online, 2015). Serenay Sarikaya and Kerem Bursin's fans shared screenshots of the interview via other social media platforms and provided effective interaction in a short period of time.



Figure 6. Screenshots of Snapchat interview with Kerem Bursin and Serenay Sarikaya
Image source: <http://ekranella.com/haber/serenay-sarikaya-ve-kerem-bursin-snapchat-zerinden-sorulari-yanitladi>

3.4. World Wildlife Fund for Nature Turkey (WWF)

LastSelfie named Snapchat campaign launched in 2014 by '41?29!' agency for WWF. This campaign was created to draw attention to endangered animals (Figures 7 and 8). The founder of the agency Alemsah Ozturk, explained the campaign with the following words:

'Snapchat is an application that young people use to share their memories with their friends through photos or short videos. Just like our real memories, the moments shared by the users become visible and disappear for only a few seconds. From this similarity between Snapchat and real life dynamics, we have created selfie photographs for endangered species and we call them #LastSelfie. These photos disappear after a few seconds of reaching Snapchat users. Our aim is to ensure that users are actuated so that these species do not disappear in real life' (Campaign Turkiye, 2014).



Figure 7. #LastSelfie campaign 'You have 6 seconds, share a screenshot, don't let this be my #LastSelfie'
Image source: <http://www.campaigntr.com/turkiye/wwf-bunun-sonselfie-olmasına-izin-verme>



Figure 8. #LastSelfie campaign 'Don't let this be my #LastSelfie which you can see me'

Image source: <https://zarkafa.wordpress.com/tag/selfie/>

In this campaign, Snapchat's main attention is the importance of passing time. The campaign was designed for the rescue of endangered animals such as polar bears, black bears, lynxes and pandas. This was done by counting the seconds with photographic feature. By utilising the popularity of Selfie, its aim is to attract attention of young people, and inform them about the decrease of biological diversity.

4. Conclusion

'Digital technology has contributed to the area of communication and survey while providing opportunity for advertisement. Modern-day marketing, that has fundamentally different approach to deliver branding to the end user, has been renovation and fundamentally changing itself in virtue of new technologies' (Elden & Bakir, 2014, p. 442).

Together with the development of social media and digital marketing platforms, brands' advertising strategies must also evolve. For this reason, they should bravely use platforms such as Snapchat, which makes it easy to interact directly with the customers. 'The fact that Snapchat is innovative, surprising, entertaining and cognitively simple, help the application to differentiate itself from other social media networks and successfully connects the platform with millennials' ('Digitalage', 2017, p. 63).

Within the scope of the study, the Snapchat campaigns of Burberry, Empire TV Series, Mavi and WWF were examined. Each of these campaigns benefits from different features of Snapchat. As a result, the target group has been successfully reached. In all of the campaigns, the user is entertained while being informed on a brand/event/upcoming collection, etc. Besides, it is also observed that the users actively participate in the campaigns. For example, in Mavi's Snapchat campaign, users independently shared screenshots of the interviews on different social media platforms. Thus, a strong network of interaction was created.

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