

3.4.1: Snapchat

Learning Objectives

Describe the primary use of Snapchat

Snapchat started in 2011 and has over 180 million daily users. It is primarily used for creating multimedia messages referred to as “snaps.” Snaps can consist of a photo or a short video and can be edited to include filters and effects, text captions, and drawings. The ability to send video snaps was added as a feature option in December 2012. By holding down on the photo button while inside the app, a video of up to 60 seconds in length can be captured. After a single viewing, the video disappears by default. Spiegel (the company that owns the app) explained that this process allowed the video data to be compressed into the size of a photo. On May 1, 2014, the ability to communicate via video chat was added. Direct messaging features were also included in the update, allowing users to send ephemeral text messages to friends and family while saving any needed information by clicking on it.

Oriented largely toward Millennials and Generation Z, Snapchat’s more secure sharing features continue to resonate with many users. The sort of “anti-Facebook” vibe of the early days of the company seemed to culminate in 2014 when their owners resisted a sale of the company to Facebook:^[1]

Snapchat represents the greatest existential threat yet to the Facebook juggernaut. Today’s teens have finally learned the lesson their older siblings failed to grasp: What you post on social media—the good, the bad, the inappropriate—stays there forever. And so they’ve been signing up for Snapchat, with its *Mission: Impossible* style detonation technology, in droves. FORBES estimates that 50 million people currently use Snapchat. Median age: 18. Facebook, meanwhile, has admittedly seen a decline among teenagers. Its average user is closer to 40.

Given the limited demographics on Snapchat, its business use is probably most effective for companies targeting Millennials and Generation Z. On Snapchat, companies often form their marketing messaging into the stories and snaps that Snapchat offers. If consumers are on Snapchat and follow or make themselves available to various organizations, those organizations can message their following directly, similar to other social media. You can learn more about [Snapchat for business here](#).

Interestingly, Snapchat marketing appears to be more effective than other common platforms:^[2]

Snapchat collaborated with MediaScience to survey 320 consumers aged 16 to 56, which compared, during 552 sessions, Snapchat video ads to those on TV, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. The study tested emotional responses, eye-tracking, and exit surveys.

Snapchat says its ads garnered twice the visual attention of Facebook and 1.5 times more than Instagram. They were also 1.3 times more effective than YouTube. When compared to those platforms and TV, Snapchat claims that its ads generated greater emotional response and twice as much intent to purchase.

The blog post argues that Snapchat does two things very well:

1. 10 second Snap Ads (short, to the point, not too long to distract or lose an audience)
2. Snap filters which can overlay a brand message or promotion on top of a message or story

Despite these successes, the integration of advertising into Snapchat is somewhat controversial. There’s at least some evidence that early adopters of the platform wanted an ad-free messaging experience. (Though, as some pay point out, almost all platforms or apps that are “free” to download and use rely on an advertising model to maintain and grow their business.)

When assessing the usefulness of Snapchat, you should keep the pros and cons listed in Table 1 in mind:

| Table 1. Pros and Cons of Snapchat as a Social Media Platform | |
|---|--|
| Pros | Cons |
| Excellent for targeting Millennials and Generation Zs | Maybe too generational; most users are <34 years old |
| Appears to be more effective than other social media | Some users view advertising on Snapchat as intrusive and detrimental to their experience |
| Some better security features | Limitations on the kind of messages shared (video length, etc.) |

1. Colao, J.J. "[The Inside Story Of Snapchat: The World's Hottest App Or A \\$3 Billion Disappearing Act?](#)" *Forbes*. 6 Jan 2014. Web. 10 July 2018.
2. Parker, Sydney. "[Snapchat for Business: A Guide for Marketers.](#)" *Hootsuite*. 11 Oct 2017. Web. 10 July 2018.

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