

How to leverage Snapchat to boost your brand

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With over 8 billion video views a day, it's time that your business learnt a bit more about Snapchat. After a slow start in 2012, app downloads have sky rocketed this year, which means now is the ideal time to get acquainted.

Snapchat is the new ambitious kid on the block, and businesses are frantically trying to figure out whether it's the right match for them and how to use the platform.

Explained in brief, Snapchat is an instant messaging app that allows you to take photos or 10-second videos (called Snaps) and send them to your followers list. After that the snap disappears and can never be seen again.



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This sense of urgency, paired with the creativity the app offers, is something marketers are increasingly tapping into. According to Snapchat CEO, Kevin Systrom, there are more than 300 million active daily users with over 9000 Snaps sent per second. It's clear that the app has become increasingly popular, but each brand has to weigh up the pros and cons and decide whether it's well suited to them.

So how does the app work?

Turn on selfie mode, take a photo and choose from the 'lenses' on offer – it's as simple as that. Snapchat updates the lenses regularly to stay fun and creative, while still effectively targeting young adults. After taking your snap you'll be able to insert text, emojis and scribble on the image. The video feature allows you to take 10-second clips that you can edit and send to your followers.

Snapchat has cleverly become a one-stop shop with the option to message, send voice recordings and make phone calls.

In terms of tracking your audience's engagement, simply click on your snaps story and you'll be able to see who has viewed your content.

How to best use Snapchat for your business

Before you even start, you'll need to decide whether your target audience is aligned to the Snapchat demographic. According to Business Insider more than 71% of snappers are under the age of 25 years old and 77% of college kids use Snapchat daily.

Snapchat allows its audience to be part of the authentic storytelling action. If you are hosting a party, event, product launch or sporting feature, you'll be able to show your audience what you are up to regardless of where they are based. This gives viewers a sneak peek into what's going on behind the scenes.

More so, geo-filter overlays allow you to upload customised filters based on your location. This comes at a cost depending on the number of followers and complexity of the image you want to upload but it is effective.

The app's audience typically has a short attention span, so the more attractive and eye-catching the content the better. Exclusivity is key, and young adults love being the first to see something. Get your audience to engage with your channel by creating appealing competitions; incentivise them with prizes and make the mechanics fun.

What's the down side of using Snapchat?

- In South Africa, internet access isn't readily available or affordable, which means some people are reluctant to download the app and use a large amount of data. If your target audience has access to WiFi or can afford large bundles of data, then they'll easily be able to see and engage with your Snaps.
- The app is targeted at a very specific audience and often brands get it wrong by launching a channel which their audience won't be interested in. First trial it on other social media channels, and ask your audience whether they are active Snapchat users.
- Snaps are instantaneous, which means there is not longevity to the content you produce. A brand shouldn't rely on the campaign alone for viral campaigns but should rather use it in conjunction with other social media platforms.

The bottom line is that this authentic new platform can impact how your followers view your brand with real-time marketing. Good news is that South African brands haven't yet fully invested in the app as an effective marketing platform, and so it's the opportune time to stake your claim in this space and get it right.

Next steps? Weigh up the pros and cons and decide whether it's the right fit for your brand. If all lights are green, then set up your brand's Snapchat profile, use these essential tips and let the fun begin!

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