

Snapchat comes of Age with Discover

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At the end of January Snapchat released their most important advertising product to date; a premium content channel called 'Discover'.

What is Snapchat? Snapchat is the photo messaging application taking the world by storm. It currently has 6m app users a month in the UK (Comscore), 42% of whom are 15-24. Its mobile-first, mobile-only and its audience are so engaged that it's the kind of startup that can turn down a \$3bn offer from Facebook. This makes any move by them important in advertising, and thus very important for brands who are trying to engage with this audience.

Snapchat Discover feeds content from 12 different media companies directly to the users account. Participating media owners include Warner Music Group, National Geographic, People magazine, ESPN and Vice (all in the UK too), who enlist editors to select stories

that are shared and refreshed every 24 hours, as in deleted, reflecting the standard Snapchat experience.

While the look of the platform is strong the content is a bit of a let down. We're a few weeks in, and we are seeing stories rehashed from other platforms and unsuitable content (e.g. a 20 minute video from Vice).

However, the platform provides a unique opportunity for brands that can create bespoke content on the platform right now. Early adopters to Facebook crafted stories and curated their business histories on their pages (Manchester United are a good example). Early adopters on Twitter made the platform a hub for their personality (look no further than Paddy Power). Early adopters can now look at how they engage with people on Snapchat using this as a platform.

The fundamentals of mobile activity are that the content should be pithy, striking and sharable. These lessons are vitally important to success, especially for the early days of Discover. What also needs to be highlighted is that content must be designed for the format, not just crowbarred in, like many campaigns. It cannot be an afterthought. To win on Snapchat a brand must create bespoke content that engages the audience in a new way. A good way to approach this new medium is to consider that Snapchat is in its early throes of being a major ad partner, like Facebook and Twitter were, and Google before them. Naturally creating anything new beyond a display ad can be frightening, but innovation is frightening! Real game-changing advertising innovation is rare so that when a legitimately new avenue for engagement appears, it gets us very excited.

Snapchat Discover won't be for all brands – due to its young audience and reputation for edgy content it's not a mass social media platform such as Facebook. However, with millennials increasingly using channels such as Snapchat to find information, including news, Discover could be an important insight into getting front of mind with this group in the future.

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