

CASE STUDY: SNAPCHAT

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Introduction/Selection of Technology: Snapchat

This case study is on the Snapchat social media platform. Snapchat can be used for personal and professional purposes. Event though this resource is nicknamed the “cheater’s app,” I use it most to keep communication with my children. It also is a nice tool for keeping track of their location with its map feature. I would say it is my most favorite and most used social media application.

Technology Case Study

Background

Evan Spiegel, Bobby Murphy, and Reggie Brown, Stanford University students founded Snapchat in 2011. Today, it has over 290 million users.

Use of Technology

Users send messages in video, audio, photos, or text to other users, at locations on the Snap Map or on their story for other users to see. The application has filters for beautifying, adding layers to images with graphics, text, painting, stickers, or location labels to images or videos that are taken within the software or imported from a phone image gallery. You can see images displayed on the map or shared stories of your friends, locations of friends who share their location with you. Users can subscribe to users or companies or swipe through various public shares through the discovery story board.

Positive Effects

Snapchat for me keeps my children and I close. It is an application that they also favor instead of texting. For us, we have a group that they named, and we communicate as a whole no matter where we are within the home or if they are at different locations. It is more reliable than simply texting as the messaging sizes are a smaller data size and can reach them even when there is limited data connection. These messages delete once seen unless they are saved, which is a nice feature. No one must delete incoming messages and within our family that is a good thing.

We send many messages to each other, including notices of where we are and where we are going. The application has emoticons to show who the user texts the most, so I know who they communicate with often. Even though the children have certain people they message just for the sake of keeping in contact with them to keep their “streaks” up, the messaging identifies who is their besties. A streak shows they send photos every day and the kids use up their time doing this regardless if they communicate with them or not. I always know where my children are since their location is turned on in the map. During events, people can post multiple images on the map which is good for businesses and organizations or even relief efforts.

Negative Effects

The effects that I find negative would be that my kids do not come to me to communicate any longer. They are growing up in this atmosphere where they can just send me a message. If I want to see them, it seems I must go to them. When it is dinner time, I send them a snap image of dinner being done and they come running. This is both good and bad. They do not help with dinner and stay in their rooms watching videos on other people’s stories all day long instead. The kids have the equal opportunity to send, receive and they can choose to open or not open a message from me. This changes the hierarchy within our family. Loved ones have to watch the use of Snapchat by other members very closely to see how the software is being used.

Intended Consequences

The intended consequences for Snapchat was to make a fast multimedia messaging software that is easy to use with minimal maintenance that does not take up storage on your phone. With this consequence came the need to fund using advertisements. With minimal algorithms used, the advertisements are quick and not very harmful as they are purchased and does not have direct implications compared to other social media messaging software. The main intended consequence is to keep users on the app with the videos and stories in which the

advertisements are embedded. They are successful in this. The streaks and quick messaging keep people using all day long with the automatic notifications from friends.

Unintended Consequences

The unintended consequence is the fact that it is known as the cheaters' app since the messages go away once seen. You can see easily who they chat with the most, but you can not see the messages if they are not saved. Without this application, one would be able to look for phone calls, text messages or emails. Now they don't have to take any actions. A person could call or video call, message and nothing would be documented. Even worse, a child could fall pray to a predator and no one would know. They could have false identities and your child could add them as a friend not knowing the dangers. Popular social media personalities could challenge your children into taking actions that they normally would not do without your knowing it and your children can hide their posts from you. Children have much more power over their own destiny at a much younger age than ever before.

Ethics and Social Responsibility Analysis

Ethical Responsibilities

The users and designers of Snapchat are both responsible for their actions. They are both deemed to take responsibility for these actions and have the ability and desire to do something about the consequences of those actions (Waelbers, 2011). People have to have feelings in order to desire along with the ability before being able to take action or the intention to (Waelbers, 2011). Many people are looking for explanations or boundaries to be set for them to follow instead of depending on their own morals (Waelbers, 2011). Parents have the responsibility to teach their children safety and to keep watch.

Social Responsibilities

The social responsibilities lay between the creator or scientist in the lab during testing and the environment or the user, but these lines have been eliminated or blurred recently where

the testing is done in the environment (Arnaldi & Bianchi, 2016). The algorithms of use are tested, and the consequences follow. Some find that a person's social circle helps them define what their social responsibility is towards technology (Waelbers, 2011).

Responsibilities of Intended Consequences

It's the responsibility of the designer to be rational (Gonzalez, 2015) and look at the intended consequences of the product. To make sure the knowns are known and are worth the variables.

Responsibilities of Unintended Consequences

Unintended consequences that may not be reversed or damaging are the responsibility of the designers (Gonzalez, 2015), and parents teaching their children to beware of the downsides of technology and long-term effects. Snapchat does not leave an internet presence as online sharing does, but other users can do screen recordings and screenshots to save and share later. The fact that the person is using so much time on this social media platform could cost time they could be using for school, for home life, relationship building or for learning about the gospel.

Risks

The largest risks of Snapchat is that they keep making new items to keep users active and capture new audiences. We do not know where this will lead as their competition grows more difficult with other apps and interfaces. We have to be aware of the future. Since Snapchat is not as advanced in data and risk assessment and use less algorithms, their immaturity may show during their decision-making outcomes. Gonzalez, (2015) shared that the assessments are needed for future planning.

Conclusion/Role of the Practitioner

Practitioner Actions

As practitioners of a marketing firm or public relations professional, I would grasp on to making sure I had a skin created for Snapchat and available for any event planned while asking attending participants to share their locations during the event. As an instructor of children, I would remind children to never share where they currently are, only where they have been. As a practitioner, I would suggest being very aware of Snapchats abilities and keep in touch with the future. It is extremely popular in young adults 18-23 (Vaterlaus et al., 2016), college students (Sashittal et al., 2016) who are familiar with the downsides of communication but choose to continue using it with their closest contacts. It will join us in the future. I do not foresee it going away.

My personal Actions

Personally, I approve of it for my children and myself with boundaries of its uses. When my children were younger, being grounded from their phones was the worst because they did not have the ability to keep up with their “streaks.” Each child would log in to the other’s accounts to keep things up to date for them. I also keep an eye out for the newest challenges and make sure my children are secure in their looks since the Snapchat filters are used so often by insecure children about their looks. Also, I want them to remain humble and not be a showoff which is easy to do using this software. As far as professionally, for now, I will stay far from it. I will keep looking for a professional purpose as I’m certain it will come soon since college students find it a very important application and large brand names are focusing on marketing on it (Sashittal et al., 2016). Snapchat will grow its audience and as I mentioned who knows what the future will look like as it has to compete with other options. Above all, as mentioned, I believe it is just as much the user’s responsibility to use wisely, as it is the designer. “Thou hypocrite, first

cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye," (King James Bible, 1769/2017, Matthew 7:5).

References

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