

MESSAGING

SNAPCHAT COPYCATS

Messaging apps more and more are trying to swipe Snapchat's mojo, rolling out an assortment of updates that reflect the wildly popular app's panoply of polychromatic filters and face-altering effects, among other features. Facebook, which leads the copycaters, last week added a camera-zooming function to its mobile app that's been available on Snapchat for some time. Also last week, Facebook-owned Instagram unveiled live stories, mimicking another Snapchat staple. Meanwhile, Google is gearing up this fall to launch the app Allo, which will share obvious similarities with Snapchat. "The Snapchat killers are all nipping at its heels in their own way," said marketing consultant David Deal. "[They] are challenging Snapchat's dominance of content scarcity and creative storytelling." Here, a breakdown of how Facebook, Google and other challengers stack up. —Christopher Heine

BASELINE Seventy percent of Snapchat's 150 million monthly users post at least once a day, representing sweet spots and incredible engagement.

BATTLEGROUND With an assortment of filters for photos and videos, it has revolutionized the marketing space as rivals strive to catch up. Brands love its 360-degree format, lens and geofilter features.

CHALLENGE Facebook, Instagram and Google have "inherent advantages" when it comes to deep targeting data, said Valerio Davis, svp, paid media at PMX Agency.

FUTURE Look for new content on Snapchat to incorporate filters—including TV shows via a recent deal with NBCU, said insiders.



BASELINE It's all about scale and data for Facebook, with two mobile apps that each boast 1 billion regular users.

BATTLEGROUND Facebook Messenger mimics Snapchat features like secret chats, and COO Sheryl Sandberg recently said her team planned to add content to the app. Colorful selfie filters are being tested in Brazil and Canada.

CHALLENGE Neither Messenger nor Instagram has proved it can adopt quirky tools to attract Gen Y.

FUTURE Expect a big rollout for the selfie feature. "Users [would] win since they don't need to leave the Facebook ecosystem," said Peter Bassett, David's 901ath digital director.

BASELINE Instagram has drawn 500 million users due to its fancy photo and video filters, which help amateurs feel more like auteurs.

BATTLEGROUND A few weeks ago, the app introduced stories that disappear in 24 hours, à la Snapchat. On Aug. 17, it followed up by introducing live stories and real-time videos that also copy its rival.

CHALLENGE Too many Snapchat-esque tweaks could make Instagram a confusing experience. "As kids put it, 'Instagram is where you post to impress your friends. Snapchat is where you go just to hang out,'" explained Vince Bank, vp of client services at Organic.

FUTURE It will likely test more Snapchat elements to offer "the best of both worlds," said Davis of PMX.



BASELINE The app boasts 300 million users who average six chats per day at nearly 13 minutes per session.

BATTLEGROUND Kik has long competed directly with Snapchat by offering multimedia, smiley stickers and bots. So far, it seems to have worked.

CHALLENGE Can it grow its teen "super user" group with Snapchat-like tweaks? If it does, any new features must feel organic, industry watchers concur.

FUTURE Noah Mallin, head of social at MEC, suggested that creative chat bots could help Kik make "serious inroads with the younger part of Snapchat's demo."

BASELINE The Japanese app has amassed 218 million global monthly users thanks to a plethora of services that include thousands of emojis and a voice-calling feature.

BATTLEGROUND Line was early to emulate Snapchat, introducing hidden messages in 2014. This past May, it renewed its Snapchat rivalry by launching a selfie app with a slew of emoji-minded filters.

CHALLENGE As Line's latest numbers put U.S. users at 25 million, it is unclear whether it can truly challenge Snapchat here.

FUTURE To attract U.S. consumers, Line should keep spying the frontrunner, said Ben Hordell, founder of DXAgency. "Snapchat has essentially served as an excellent focus group for them," he added.



BASELINE A precious handful of tech players rival the bank account and the brain power of Google, and Allo will be one to watch as the messaging app battle heats up.

BATTLEGROUND The product will offer a promising private-chat feature called incognito mode that will delete encrypted chats.

CHALLENGE It is late to an already very crowded party.

FUTURE Google knows how to integrate apps with commercial functions. "It is the dark-horse Snapchat killer," said Deal. "Google has the muscle to create a more pervasive experience for brands and users."

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