

Snapchat sharpens focus on positive connections amid Meta's teen safety woes

Article

The news: As rival **Meta** faces renewed criticism that it doesn't do enough to protect young users, **Snapchat** is trying to reemphasize its focus on positive connections and authenticity to

position the platform for growth. This comes amid increased focus on teens' well-being.

- Since 1996, the frequency of face-to-face socializing among 10th graders has dropped from 2.5 times per week to just 1.5 times as of 2020, a decline paralleling the rise in smartphone ownership and social media usage.
- Overuse of phones and social media is harming the mental well-being of the youth, as 73% of Gen Z reports heightened sadness and loneliness, according to Dcdx. The firm's recent report indicates Gen Z's daily screen time averages 7 hours on mobile devices.
- The digital era is linked to negative impacts such as increased sleep deprivation in teens, with depressive symptoms doubling since 2012 and a 60% rise in suicidal thoughts among teenage girls.

Snapchat's response: In an Insider Intelligence interview, **Nina Mishkin**, head of US brand strategy at **Snap**, said Snapchat fosters “genuine connections and positive user experiences.”

- Snapchat aims to improve mental well-being by promoting a positive space for meaningful content and ad engagement, notes Mishkin. In an era valuing brand safety, ads in such a positive setting theoretically encourage continued spending.
- According to 2022 research, 4 out of 5 Snapchatters believe that connecting with friends is the simplest way to feel happier. Over 90% of users feel comfortable, happy, and connected when using the app.
- A 2023 Alter Agents study showed that 81% of users appreciate Snapchat's unique ability to let them have fun with friends and family free of judgment, outperforming competitive apps.

Meta analysis: Meta, meanwhile, is implementing new safeguards to strengthen protection for teens on **Facebook** and **Instagram**.

- Meta is navigating complex waters. Lawsuits allege it designed its platforms to exploit teen vulnerabilities and knowingly exposed users to inappropriate content.
- The company is doubling down on efforts to maximize teen engagement, particularly on Instagram.

Our take: Although Snapchat's emphasis on genuine interactions and user happiness may guide social platforms in harmonizing user well-being with business and reputational demands, the app needs to increase ad revenues and user engagement time.

- In 2024, we forecast Meta will generate **\$62.7 billion** in US ad revenues, while Snapchat's will rise 8.7% to \$2.1 billion. That's a recovery from a **9.7% decrease** in 2023, and the company's US ad revenues are expected to reach \$2.3 billion by 2025.
- User engagement on Meta platforms **is stable**, rising marginally from 56 minutes in 2021 to 58 in 2023, with a minor 0.2% decrease anticipated by 2025. In contrast, Snapchat faces a usage downturn, expecting 1.0% and 0.8% **declines** in 2024 and 2025, respectively, The Dcdx study also found Snapchat's Gen Z usage declining.
- Even with challenged metrics, **one study** showed Snapchat boosted brand recommendations **4.5 times more** than rivals and raised brand purchase intent by 1.7 times compared to YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. Brands on Snapchat were deemed **1.6 times more relatable** and **4.8 times less dated** than on other social networks.
- By cultivating a space where users feel happy and connected, Snapchat has a chance to gain ground against rivals like TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and X—but the way it's designed means it won't offer the reach of some of those platforms.

US Teens' Favorite Social Media Platform, Fall 2021-Fall 2023

% of respondents

	Fall 2021	Spring 2022	Fall 2022	Spring 2023	Fall 2023
TikTok	30%	33%	38%	37%	38%
Snapchat	35%	31%	30%	27%	28%
Instagram	22%	22%	20%	23%	23%
Discord	5%	5%	4%	3%	3%
Facebook	2%	3%	2%	3%	2%
X (formerly Twitter)	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%

Note: teens with an average age of 15.7; excludes "other" responses

Source: Piper Sandler, "Taking Stock With Teens," Oct 10, 2023

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