

MOBILE

Why Meerkat may have an edge over Instagram and Vine for brands

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By Brielle Jaekel

New live-streaming application Meerkat became a marketing sensation right after its launch because of its ability to connect brands and consumers in real-time without delay.

Meerkat is an app that links to users' Twitter feeds to let them stream live video footage. Brands are quickly jumping on board with this app because of its ability to directly access the consumer on a real-time basis without any lag-time that other apps impose.

"It's all about relationship building via a more humanized brand," said Vince Bates, account manager of digital marketing at **Eastwick**, San Francisco. "Meerkat live streams are very organic in nature. Audiences are watching unedited video that's happening in real-time.

"Brands can see viewer comments and questions as they stream and then respond live," he said. "For example, if a customer asks to take a closer look at something in the video, the streamer can satisfy their request immediately."

The app launched in February and has caught the eye of marketers. The Miami Dolphins, The Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon, Mashable, CNN, American Idol, Spotify, Red Bull, Starbucks and MasterCard are some of the brands leading the charge on Meerkat right now.

Trailblazer

To use the Meerkat app, users enter their Twitter information or just press Access Twitter account if it is already on their mobile devices. From there the option to click stream comes up and once users press that, a video stream and link on Twitter is sent out.

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A user live-streaming on Meerkat from Sarasota Bay, Florida

Brands are already using this as a way to connect to consumers on a faster and more connected level.

Brands can have a conversation with viewers instantaneously by allowing users to read and send out tweets while continuously sending out the live feed.

The sensation built around the new app proves that there is space for yet another social networking app to join the slew of apps already out there.

"Meerkat allows for the distribution of live-streaming video in real-time with no time limit," said Jeremy Walls, senior vice president and chief marketing officer of the Miami Dolphins. "With Meerkat, there is also the opportunity to create real-time engagement and interaction with the fans who are watching the stream.

"Meerkat has become another part of our dynamic, continually evolving social media strategy," he said.

Professional NFL team Miami Dolphins offered a live-stream feed of the national news conference where the team announced the signing of defensive tackle Ndamukong Suh. This is the first professional sports team to announce news in this manner.

The team took the news in its own hands and essentially reported it itself. More than 1,000 fans tuned in on their phones.

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Miami Dolphin's Meerkat page after streaming

NBA team Portland Trail Blazers also used the app by live-streaming a practice. The Dolphins', however, are quite taken with Meerkat.

"We are always looking for new technologies that enhance Miami Dolphins fans' experience and make sense for our brand," Mr. Walls said. "We see Meerkat as an opportunity to bring our fans closer to incredible moments from a vantage point only the Dolphins can provide. With behind-the-scenes coverage, we're able to deliver content to

our fans in a way they want to consume it.

"The Dolphins were able to incorporate Meerkat into a strategic social media plan around the signing of Ndamukong Suh," he said. "We knew this would be a highly anticipated moment, and wanted to communicate it to fans on all the platforms where we knew they'd enjoy connecting with us.

"With Meerkat, we were able to provide viewers with exclusive content in the moments leading up to and during the press conference introducing Suh as a member of our team."

Meanwhile, NBC's The Tonight Show host Jimmy Fallon streamed a rehearsal of the talk show on Meerkat for which 2,000 users viewed.

Setbacks with Twitter

Meerkat dominated the conversation at the tech portion of SXSW last week in Austin, TX, with many people calling it the breakout app of the event. Many celebrities, brands, musicians and users recorded live-feed videos at the festival.

This app is heavily integrated with Twitter. But what the Meerkat did not know is that Twitter just bought Periscope, another live-streaming app that offers users a way to view previously recorded live streams as well. This is something that Meerkat does not have and could pose a problem for the app's future growth.

Twitter also locked the emerging app out of its social graph, which is how users can connect to followers they have on both apps. This poses a setback for the new app, but should not halt it completely and is still something that brands should be using.

Snapchat is a similar app that displays disappearing video and photos only not through a live feed. Macy's and Marriott are two of the top brands that used Snapchat as part of their mobile marketing strategy, and both are leveraging the social media application in very different ways ([see more](#)).

Mountain Dew also jumpstarted excitement for two new flavors of Mtn Dew Kickstart by leveraging a real-time, consumer-driven Snapchat story, proving that the social messaging application continues to gain traction as a bridge to build personal connections between brands and customers ([see more](#)).

"Beyond surpassing the video length limits that other apps enforce, it boils down to speed and timeliness," Mr. Bates said. "Instagram and Vine videos are fantastic ways to engage audiences with creative, exciting content. However, no matter how fast one can post the video, the moment is gone.

"With Meerkat, I can offer my audience ongoing content as it happens and have a truly timely conversation with them," he said.

Final Take

Brielle Jaekel is editorial assistant on Mobile Marketer and Mobile Commerce Daily, New

York

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