

MARKETING

Snapchat reportedly unveiling third-party AR toolkit

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Snapchat's new toolkit will let third-parties access the platform. Image credit: IRM

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Snapchat is working to open up its platform to be more accessible to outside brands and applications thanks to a new development kit.

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According to a report from TechCrunch, the social media platform will be allowing outside developers to use its augmented reality camera in certain applications. The opening up of the platform to third parties was a strategy that helped propel Facebook to prominence in 2010, but whether this move will work the same way for Snapchat remains to be seen.

Snapkit

Snapchat's AR camera is one of its most popular and marketable features.

The plethora of AR lenses and filters provided by Snapchat are well loved by Snapchat's large and mostly young audience. The platform has also had significant success in licensing out these filters to brands who want to connect with Snapchat's highly engaged users.

Luxury brands in particular have been able to get some mileage out of Snapchat's filters. For example, U.S. fashion label Michael Kors' sponsored Snapchat lens for National Sunglasses Day garnered more than 104 million total views, according to the brand.

In 2016, Michael Kors allowed consumers to try on its Kendall II sunglasses via a one-day-only Snapchat filter lens. Using Snapchat as a virtual mirror, consumers were able to try on three colors of the Kendall II style, with each pair creating a different experience ([see story](#)).

Along with Michael Kors, brands including Tiffany & Co. and Burberry have rolled out Snapchat lenses for promotions.

Now, Snapchat is making those popular lenses even more available to third parties with the launch of a developer's toolkit to help outside apps and brands leverage Snapchat's AR camera.



Snapchat rolled back its controversial design decisions. Image credit: Snapchat

The toolkit is reportedly called Snapkit and will allow third-party apps to add a "log-in with Snapchat" option, use Bitmoji avatars and access a version of Snapchat's AR camera.

The possibilities for Snapkit should be immediately apparent. Just as Facebook opened up its platform for third-party apps to use, Snapchat's Snapkit would allow brands and apps to make use of the tools Snapchat has created to engage with their audiences.

Snapchat is hoping that by integrating into a large variety of other digital and mobile platforms, its ubiquity will help drive up both user numbers and revenues.

Augmented reality

The platform has been in a relatively difficult position recently. With a less easily monetizable business model, Snapchat has struggled against competitors such as Facebook and Instagram.

Additionally, some recent missteps have put Snapchat on the defensive. After its big redesign last year was met with massive consumer backlash, Snapchat has essentially rolled back many of the major changes, hoping to appeal to both its users and advertisers.

Snapchat has struggled with monetization in recent months, particularly as its competitors continually ape and improve on its core features, such as Instagram's popular version of the Stories format. Now, the platform is hoping that giving in to user demand will help win back the crowd ([see story](#)).



Snapchat Spectacles V2. Image credit: Snap

But the platform is invested in turning past failures into successes. For example, Snapchat has relaunched its only physical product, the video-taking eyewear called Spectacles. But after the first iteration was widely viewed as a flop, what purpose will the revamped glasses serve?

Reports showed that Snap's initial take on Spectacles was purchased by a minuscule fraction of 1 percent of all users, with many voicing confusion as to what exactly the product was meant to do. Yet now Snapchat is relaunching Spectacles with minor changes and with the same lack of fanfare that plagued the initial release ([see story](#)).

With Snapkit, it is likely that Snapchat is looking for a more reliable method of monetizing its large audience.

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