Innovative Storytelling with Snap Inc. Spectacles

Julian Bossert

With the steadily increasing innovation progress technical achievements also affect storytelling and journalism. At the beginning of rudimentary communication the only way to spread a message wide was by using the voice to tell stories. With the progress of time and technology people invented plenty of tools to let people know contents they want to share. Audiences grew bigger, messages delivered faster and more precise.

Nowadays people are always connected to everything. Most of the communication is held with people in their environment with a partial close relation. Another important part for the individual is mass media and a demand in interest based information. The third and newest part of communication for people is the human computer communication. With the rise of internet of things – which connects the physical world with the digital – devices can communicate and interact with people and each other. Driven by the promise to make the lives of their users easier and more convenient, more and more intelligent (smart) hardware is consumed and published. To have these advantages without being forced to pull out their smart phones, wearables are enjoying an increasing popularity over the past years.

In 2016 Snapchat the social messenger – famous for their self-deleting messages – split up in a hardware centered and camera focused company called Snap Inc. the messaging service remained as Snapchat. In the increasingly more difficult getting sector of multi media messaging applications Snap Inc.’s goal is to reinvent the camera to help Snapchat staying a successful Messenger and turning into a successful immersive TV platform. „We believe that reinventing the camera represents our greatest opportunity to improve the way people live and communicate.“ (Snap Inc. Website)

After Snapchat helped changing the way how people consume video on there devices it seems their key mission now is to impact how content is captured. The focus on the paradigm shift how users produce content can be great advantage for the future of both companies. As soon as Snap Inc. is giving users an added value with the usage of their cameras they will be kept in the ecosystem of Snapchat. With this strategy the innovated and
produced hardware makes it more difficult for competitors to copy the unique physical characteristics than copying features of a software.

**Usage and Advantage for Storytelling**

Snap Inc.’s first product is called Spectacles which are sunglasses with a build-in HD camera which is modeled like the human eye. It’s located in the left side of the Spectacle frame. With a press on a button on the right side of the frame you can record a ten second video – three presses record 30 seconds. While recording, the LED lights are spinning in a circle to show that the spectacles are capturing. After the record has been stopped by the user the content automatically syncs via bluetooth with the connected smartphone. The recorded videos are stored in the Snapchat application where the user can edit the content and work it up in a story similar to Snapchat native content. The videos are stored and uploaded chronological by the time of the recording. The whole process is accompanied by a convenient user experience. Not enough that spectacles have another feature for storytelling which wasn't seen before.

Horizontal versus vertical recording is a decision which divides the minds of people all over the world since the smartphone screen came into life. Snap Inc. found an answer for that question with a really simple solution: Make both perspectives happen – now the spectacles capture a round sphere which is cropped by the smartphone screen. As the user turns his device the section of the video follows the orientation of the device.

Function of the displayed content of the Snap Spectacles by Snap Inc. (Illustration in own production)
With this technique and the ability to let people experience situations through the eyes of the person who tells the story, the connection with what’s being said is getting more immersive. The spectator sees the whole scenario from the participants perspective. With this rhetorical device the viewer is getting closer to the story which is being told. Not only is the immersive view of the person who records the video a great achievement, also the ability to act and move around hands-free is a big advantage. For example, when the participant is recording a working sequence, he is able to work by himself without any help of others. Natural situations can be created by the video maker. A camera or microphone hasn’t to be hold in hands.

Another benefit is that the usage of the Spectacles is less intrusive than pointing on somebody with a camera. People who get portrayed or interviewed are not that distracted by obviously getting filmed. Combined with the convenience of recording and editing Videos Snap Inc.’s Spectacles provide users, brands and journalists a opportunity to create low-key content with a huge potential to deliver immersive stories instantaneously, interactively and informally.

How Snap Spectacles Impact Storytelling and Journalism

In times of Fake News people are getting increasingly distant from actual facts. The oversupply of sources, the gain of speed with wich news are published and the lack of attention and thoroughness overstrain spectators increasingly. Most of the views lack the references to many topics. Dishonest sources use this deficiency to show topics in a way – either by concealing facts or by adding false reports – to confirm their persuasion or the view they represented to influence the people.

With the increase of diverse and user transformative technological tools information brokerage got easier. The monopoly of information getting passed from broadcaster to recipient changed completely – anybody can produce and share content any time. In conclusion there are much more independent sources which are trusted and established by their audiences’ engagement. Platforms like Snapchat help users to receive and share content in real-time added with all kind of meta-information about the published video for example geolocation, time, temperature, etc. Wherewith users can show the documentary evidence of authenticity of their content.
With a tool like the Snap Spectacles the process of creating authentic and igniting content is significantly simplified.

Similar to politics, advertising and marketing both have a great problem with trust issues. Consumers see through superficial campaigns which promise a lot but are not being able to meet their needs. They are more skeptical and inform themselves as well as others through blogs and social media. The new social currency in advertising is an added value and secures authenticity towards the customer. Only this results in sustainable attention and solidarity towards a brand. Of course, this is a basic rule in using Spectacles for storytelling, too. Content always has to keep the low-key, spontaneous character to make customers trust in it. Scripted scenes to fit the campaigns claim precisely and to distribute a perfect image become a no-go.

For now, content creators and journalists have to find key conclusions to be drawn from this new kind of creating content. Workflows have to be created and concepts to be developed. It will be interesting to see how new formats will be realized just the same as what updates for the spectacles or entirely new products will follow from Snap Inc.

About the author:

Julian Bossert
Occupation: Digital Concept Developer & Consultant
Social Media Handles: http://julianbossert.de; https://www.linkedin.com/in/julianbossert
E-mail: info@julianbossert.de

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