January 19, 2017

THE SNAPCHAT OF SHOPPING: 4 QUESTIONS WITH THE FOUNDER OF YEAY

WE TALK TO THE FOUNDER OF A NEW SHOPPING APP THAT WAS CREATED FOR THE SNAPCHAT GENERATION...

It's no secret that apps that start off by attracting teen users can become major mainstream platforms—and serious marketing players. It's an audience with a high level of potential engagement if you can capture their interest. Gen Z are the most active smartphone users according to our research, and are looking at their phones far more times an hour than Millennials 18-33-years-old. They're also the most active on social media, posting more times a day than older users. According to a 2015 study from Common Sense Media, teens are spending almost nine hours a day consuming media on phones, computers, and tablets, and the majority of teens' activity on those phones is happening on apps.

Ypulse research has found that over seven in ten of 13-17-year-olds say the reason they download an app is because it seems fun, and we are definitely seeing a demand for apps that allow them to connect with friends in a more unfiltered, entertaining way, create and share fun content, and provide unique out-of-the-box entertainment. Recently launched mobile shopping app YEAY—featured in Apple's App Store as a "New App We Love"— has the potential to check all those boxes. Described by Forbes as a 'lively' platform with "very Snapchat-esque...flowing video [and] fun snippets," users and brands alike can both shop and quickly upload things to sell to the platform. From the moment you open the app, you are greeted with a stream of videos of products for sale. From there a simple navigation bar allows users to search shopping categories, follow and message sellers, or upload/record their own video with a click of a button. The app has reportedly already attracted an "unusual" level of attention from "big" brands interested in the platform's potential to "redefine shopping" for the Snapchat generation.

We spoke to the founder of YEAY, Melanie Mohr, to find out what inspired her, why she believes the platform will take off with Gen Z, and what brands should know if they want to get in on the action:

Ypulse: What inspired you to create YEAY?

Melanie Mohr: For twenty years, I've been in video content production, creating all kinds of videos from film to music videos to commercials to kids' entertainment, nonfiction, fiction—a very broad range. Then six years ago I met a CTO from the U.S. who totally brainwashed me by showing me all the new ways of distributing video content. I really dove into the digital space at that time, working on platform Apollo Muse, which was called the "mother of all art apps." Then a year ago I had an "Aha!" moment. I literally woke up in the morning with the idea of YEAY in my head. I'm a shopping lover and also a video lover, and I thought, why not combine both on one platform, and create a video shopping app—which for the initial stage was for the digital natives who easily create video content and are always on their Snapchat and Instagram. I'm a mother of three, and have a 19-year-old daughter and 16-year-old son. I see them every day on their mobile phones and how they consume video content and how they use technology. So it was really obvious to me that this could be the next kind of shopping platform for the younger Millennial or Gen Z. I mean, if you look at who are the early adopters of this very new

way of selling things and adopters of video it's the crowd that's most engaged in video already—this Snapchat, Musical.ly generation.

YP: So how is this app different from other mobile shopping apps?

MM: It's different because it's a mix of entertainment, social, and shopping. The key differentiator is that it is based on video, so instead of making a picture and entering all these crazy details that you usually need to enter when you want to sell something, on our platform you just need a video. We have a very great content creation tool embedded in the app, so you can really create good video content inside the app. Again, it has a very Snapchat-y feeling, you can add some emojis, some filters, and create really nice videos.

YP: Speaking of Snapchat, which your app has been compared to, why do you think that kind of platform will resonate with Gen Z and Millennials?

MM: On the one hand, this generation is very entrepreneurial one. Then there's video and mobile consumption which they embrace. Look at what kind of videos are really working for them—it's a lot about being authentic, being honest, and fun. That's also why this generation embraced Snapchat, because this is where even their beloved celebrities and VIPs appear to be so real and authentic, where you can really look into their lives, sometimes without makeup, and you are part of their everyday. If you look at our videos they are all fun to watch, entertaining, and informative, but they are also very honest and authentic. We also got great coverage from one of the editors of Forbes magazine and he described the product videos as coming across like a good recommendation from a friend.

YP: What should brands know about your platform, and how can they use it?

MM: We are just a few months in the market and we already have more than 500 brands because we started B2C in beta. But now, we are going out of beta and we are turning on the C2C on, and it's the mix of content that is making it so exciting.

Everyone, no matter if it's a person or a brand or shop, has his or her own shopping channel in our app. So you have a brand channel where you have all your videos but besides that, your videos are shown in all the category channels, like fashion, female fashion, etc. So there are many ways your content can be shown. Additionally, in our app it's also very social so you can like videos, share videos, you can message to sellers—it's very social and you can share the videos across all your social channels.

We've also gained a lot of experience in the past months in our beta phase, learning how good product videos should look. For some brands it was hard to adapt to social media and to create content on their social channels every day. Now it's going into the next phase: product videos, and a lot of brands have questions and are seeing this hurdle in the beginning. The good thing is my team and I have twenty years of video content production behind us so our startup is not a very usual one. It's not just a technology startup, it's a content creation startup, and we have a film studio. Brands are reaching out to us every day, asking "how can we create the first videos" and "could you be of help," and of course we are happy to help create their first videos.

This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity

Melanie Mohr is a digital media entrepreneur with 20 years of experience in editorial strategy, content creation, digital marketing and mobile applications. She is the founder of YEAY & APOLLO.TV.

Terms & Conditions: *Use of this content must adhere to the Terms & Conditions, published at http://www.ypulse.com/about-ypulse/terms*