

## **Marketing for Next Gen Extension Clientele Through the Use of Geofilters**

### **Abstract**

Research supports Extension educators' use of social media as an engagement, outreach, and marketing tool beyond posts shared by staff and faculty. This article highlights the practical use of Snapchat geofilters at county and statewide Extension events to support the creation of user-generated content and increase Extension's visibility with the public. The development and implementation of an innovative statewide marketing project resulted in data and recommendations that can help Extension educators make meaningful marketing decisions.

**Keywords:** [social media](#), [marketing](#), [Snapchat](#), [geofilter](#), [augmented reality](#)

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## **Introduction**

There is an unprecedented volume of current research to support Extension educators' use of social media as a communication, engagement, outreach, and marketing tool (e.g., Allen, Jolly, & Barnes, 2016; Brinkman, Kinsey, Henneman, 2017; Doyle & Briggeman, 2014). However, looking into the future of social media marketing for Extension events, programs, and educational opportunities, Extension educators must seek innovative strategies beyond the posts shared by staff and faculty (Davis & Dishon, 2017). To engage, inform, and excite audiences, we need to seek strategies that promote user-generated content (photos, posts, and tweets shared by one's peers). Supporting user-generated content is a highly effective marketing strategy and lends itself to creating more trustworthy content (Ipsos MediaCT, 2014).

One platform that promotes user-generated content is Snapchat. The integrated features within the Snapchat social media app make it one of the most popular platforms used by millennials and Gen Z users in communicating and sharing content with their peers (Cornelius, 2017). These integrated features include geofilters, which are themed graphics that overlay photographs and are available for users' physical locations. Snapchat users often seek unique geofilters when they are in a new location or attending an event by swiping through a selection of filter options, referred to as a "filter carousel." The availability of geofilters for Extension events enables clientele to be digital advocates for Extension while sharing snaps

with their contacts. The marketing approach of offering geofilters for Extension events not only increases user-generated content but also makes Extension events more digitally accessible.

In May 2017, Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service administration placed a call for Innovation Award applications to encourage and support innovation through financial investments for launching new and creative projects. In response to the call, we formed a cross-disciplinary Innovation Team to request a financial investment supporting the use of Snapchat geofilters to market and promote 4-H/Extension events. Through the competitive application process, our Snapchat geofilter project and one other project were selected from projects submitted by nine teams. The Snapchat geofilter project was fully funded with a \$10,000 award and was to be carried out over 18 months.

## **Project Implementation and Results**

To enable Extension personnel to request Snapchat geofilters to "flight" at their local 4-H/Extension events, our Innovation Team developed a web-based submission form. "Flight a geofilter" is terminology used in delineating the area a geofilter covers and the duration the geofilter is available for the selected area. The cost to flight a filter is based on these two factors. To encourage participation, we presented the opportunity to flight Snapchat geofilters to OSU Extension personnel through multiple in-state peer-reviewed presentations, concise and timely emails, and infographics mailed to each county Extension office.

When a geofilter was requested, a member of our Innovation Team developed a personalized filter at no cost to the requester. The filters were cobranded following OSU brand guidelines (see Figure 1 for an example) and were flighted during the time and at the location of the requester's event. After each event, a member of the Innovation Team followed up with the requester by providing Snapchat analytics for the filter. This allowed requesters to see how their audiences/clientele responded to using the filters and the impacts of making the filters available to event goers.

**Figure 1.**  
Example of Cobranded Geofilter



Over the course of the 18-month project, 95 geofilters were flighted. Of those, 80 filters were created internally and cobranded by the Innovation Team using Canva or Adobe Photoshop at no cost; the remaining 15 filters were developed through the use of a free template provided by the National 4-H Council. The cost to flight all 95 geofilters was \$4,750. The filters were viewed more than a million times. Selected analytic results are highlighted in Table 1.

**Table 1.**  
Selected Snapchat Analytics

Type of event	Price	Days			Use		
		flighted	Swipes <sup>a</sup>	Uses <sup>b</sup>	Views <sup>c</sup>	rate <sup>d</sup>	Price/view
4-H older youth retreat	\$7.19	3	148	63	2,000	42.2%	\$0.0036
Small farms conference	\$9.15	1	47	14	419	29.8%	\$0.0934
National 4-H Week open house	\$5.00	1	0	0	0	NA	NA
National 4-H Week community booth	\$28.12	1	45	23	280	51.1%	\$0.1004
Youth Voices in Action (4-H)	\$17.28	4	1,100	236	10,100	22.1%	\$0.0017
Urban county fair (high population)	\$85.80	7	6,200	1,000	37,600	16.5%	\$0.0023
Rural county fair (low population)	\$48.55	5	703	160	8,900	22.8%	\$0.0054
State fair	\$421.52	13	20,600	5,900	263,300	28.7	\$0.0016
4-H horse judges training	\$162.45	4	56	35	278	62.5%	\$0.5844

<sup>a</sup>Swipes (paid impressions) occur when the user sees the geofilter creative while swiping through the filter carousel to select overlays for their snaps. <sup>b</sup>Uses are when the user chooses to use the geofilter in creating a snap to send to their friends or post to their story. <sup>c</sup>Views (earned impressions) take place when a user's friends view the user's snap with the geofilter applied, either by direct snap or by viewing their story. <sup>d</sup>Use rate is the rate at which the geofilter is selected for use when viewed in the geofilter carousel.

The most valuable outcome of the project was the ability to provide OSU Extension faculty with county-specific results. A personalized geofilter was flighted at all 36 Oregon county fairs in 2018. The resulting data allow OSU Extension faculty to make informed decisions about continuing to support use of Snapchat geofilters when funding is no longer available through the Innovation Award project.

## Recommendations for Implementation

Developing a custom Snapchat geofilter can be completed online (<https://www.snapchat.com/create>) through the same website where geofilters are flighted. As noted, the cost for flighting a geofilter is based on two factors (geographic area and duration of flight), allowing this marketing tool to fit any budget as these factors can easily be modified to change the cost of flighting the geofilter. After a geofilter has run its course, Snapchat provides an email with data (analytics) on geofilter use and view rate.

There are Extension events that naturally lend themselves to using geofilters as a marketing tool. Our recommendations, presented below, outline the type of Extension events for which Extension educators may want to consider flighting a geofilter.

Characteristics that make events ideal for geofilters are as follows:

- cell phone coverage (required),

target audience age of 13 to 40,

- occurrence in a concentrated location and within a concentrated time frame,
- inclusion of engaging activities that promote participants' taking cell phone photos, and
- anticipated audience of 50+ people.

Suggested events to cover include

- state and county fairs,
- youth leadership retreats and conferences,
- community booths with engaging activities, and
- recognition events and ceremonies.

It is important to note that persons flighting geofilters do not need to know how to use the social media components of Snapchat to create and flight the filters or how to view the associated analytics. However, one must have a Snapchat user account to flight a geofilter. Likewise, we do not advocate for our clientele becoming Snapchat users, nor is advertising the geofilters necessary. A Snapchat geofilter is a marketing tool for reaching current Snapchat users who use geofilters.

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