Snapchat aims to spread reach to other apps

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Snapchat messaging service on Thursday set out to spread its reach, and panache, to other smartphone apps with a software kit that promised to share little data about users.

Parent company Snap said people will be able to use Snapchat credentials to sign into apps the way they might do using Facebook or Google credentials, while strictly limiting access to personal data or activity tracking.

The software kit will also allow free Snapchat features such as filters, stories or "Bitmojis" to appear in other applications, according to the California-based firm.

The kit, aimed at making Snapchat more ubiquitous in the world of smartphone apps, was built with privacy as a priority, Snap vice president of product Jacob Andreou told AFP.

"We did not want to lower privacy expectations," Andreou said.

The move comes as Facebook deals with aftershocks of a data privacy scandal that rocked the leading online social network.

Facebook admitted that up to 87 million users may have had their data hijacked by British consultancy firm Cambridge Analytica.

The firm, which was working for US President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign, has since declared bankruptcy.

Snap committed to making the kit well before the scandal involving Cambridge Analytica getting data about users from a psychological research app.

Facebook has since been hammered with criticism for not guarding more carefully user data collected by apps synched to the social network.

'Snappening' lessons

Snapchat sign-ins to other apps will use nicknames and "Bitmoji" avatars instead of [personal data](#) from profiles, according to the company. Snap also vowed to carefully scrutinize what applications do with the new software tools.

Snap deputy general counsel Katherine Tassi said that the service learned from an incident nearly four years ago when a huge trove of evidently intercepted Snapchat images and videos were exposed online.

In what was referred to in late 2014 as "The Snappening," people who used a third-party program instead of the official Snapchat application had copies of supposedly transient missives squirreled away by hackers who then posted them online.

Snap wanted to "make sure that we build security and privacy into the design" when creating the kit for outside developers, according to Tassi.

Snap has been modifying the app, sometimes to the chagrin of users, in the name of broadening the appeal of the youth-oriented service.

"We are now focused on optimizing the redesign based on our ongoing experimentation and learning," Snap co-founder and chief executive Evan Spiegel said last month during an earnings call with analysts.

Users had complained about an abrupt overhaul of the service late last year.

Snapchat rocketed to popularity, especially among teens, after the initial app was released in September 2011. Created by then Stanford University students, the app allows the sending of messages that disappear shortly after being viewed.

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