Threads review: *Twitter* without the rough edges or news

The site has potential to suck the remaining life – and advertising revenue – out of Musk's struggling network (*Twitter*)

Jim Waterson Media editor The Guardian 7 July 2023

_____

Summary

This is a review of *Threads*, a new social network launched by Mark Zuckerberg to challenge *Twitter*, which is facing a decline in users and revenue. The review compares *Threads* to *Myspace*, which was once dominant but then overtaken by Facebook. The review also highlights some of the features and drawbacks of *Threads*, and suggests that it has the potential to suck the remaining life and advertising revenue out of *Twitter*. The review also provides a link to a post by Zuckerberg on *Threads*, where he says *Twitter* has missed its chance to be the public conversation app with 1 billion+ people on it.

Threads is designed to be friendlier, more corporate, and less confrontational than *Twitter*, and to attract users who want a sanely run platform. *Threads* uses an existing feature from Instagram to allow users to reconnect their followers from the photo-sharing app, but it also has some drawbacks, such as lack of newsfeed, text search, and immediacy. The web page context also provides some links to related stories and sources.

Initial feedback from early users such as creators say they are "excited about testing it out" — but they're wary that the newest Twitter competitor won't stick around.

Threads has not been released in Europe due Meta's concern about the EU's strict privacy requirements. The app has been described as a "privacy nightmare" by tech journalists because, despite being a standalone app, it imports personal data from Instagram.

Ultimately, *Threads*' launch might be just be another step in the disintegration of the social media scene of the 2010s.

It could be wise for Social Media Marketers to wait for the 'dust to settle' before making changes to planned campaigns and commitments.

Source: Conversation with Bing, 08/07/2023: and others

_____

Complete Article

Imagine a social network where users have invested so much social capital in putting up data about themselves that it is impossible to imagine them leaving. Moving to a new site would be an enormous risk for users because you would lose your network of friends. The network's entire existence, the theory goes, is secured by these barriers to starting afresh at a new outlet.

This was how the Guardian described *Myspace* in 2007, when the early social network had 150 million global users, a number so large it was considered improbable that they would ever move elsewhere.
(In the end *Myspace* was soon overtaken by Mark Zuckerberg's Facebook, Rupert Murdoch lost almost all the money he spent buying the site, and *Myspace*'s once-ubiquitous founder Tom Anderson has travelled the world on the profits ever since.)

Sixteen years later, Elon Musk's *Twitter* is also testing the theory that people remain loyally addicted to their favoured social network until suddenly, one day, they give up and move elsewhere. This week Zuckerberg launched *Threads*, a new platform aimed at winning over people who, in the words of one executive, want somewhere a bit like *Twitter* that is "sanely run".
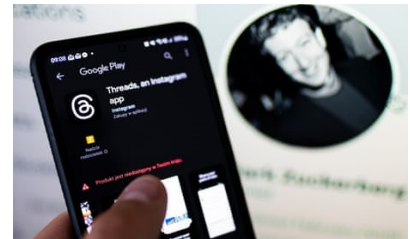
Zuckerberg uses Threads to say Twitter has missed its chance

So, what exactly is *Threads*??

Threads is a new social network launched by **Mark Zuckerberg** to challenge *Twitter*, which is facing a decline in users and revenue. *Threads* is designed to be friendlier*, more corporate, and* less confrontational than *Twitter*, and to attract users who want a sanely run platform.

Threads uses an existing feature from **Instagram** to allow users to reconnect their followers from the photo-sharing app, but it also has some drawbacks, such as lack of newsfeed*, text search, and* immediacy*.

Threads is dominated by users who are Instagram celebrities*, social media managers, and people fleeing *Twitter*'s toxicity.

Threads is not *Twitter*, but it **has the potential to be something different and powerful**: *Twitter* with fewer rough edges, more corporate sheen, and enough potential to suck the remaining life – and advertising revenue – out of Musk's struggling network.

Whether *Threads* can overtake *Twitter*'s 250 million monthly users and become the public conversation app with 1 billion+ people on it, as Zuckerberg hopes, remains to be seen. But one thing is clear: the social media scene of the 2010s is disintegrating and rebirthing as a more sanitised advertiser-friendly environment, rather than a messy free-for-all discussion.

First Impressions (by Guardian journalist)

After a day using *Threads*, ==one thing is pretty clear: it is not *Twitter*==. But *Threads* has the potential to be something different and powerful: *Twitter* with fewer rough edges, more corporate sheen, and enough potential to suck the remaining life – and advertising revenue – out of Musk's struggling network.

The biggest difference is that *Threads* feels substantially less confrontational, less aggressive, and less based around shouting at strangers with different political views than *Twitter*. The racism, antisemitism, transphobia and general abuse that is prevalent on *Twitter* is just nowhere near as visible. Zuckerberg told a user on the site that this was a design feature: "The goal is to keep it friendly as it expands … That's one reason why *Twitter* never succeeded as much as I think it should have, and we want to do it differently."

Threads has also solved the problem of starting a social network from scratch by borrowing an existing one from Instagram. Any existing Instagram user can sign up and swiftly reconnect their followers on the photo-sharing app, meaning *Threads* is not plagued by the sense that you've just turned up at a new school without friends. (In a strange benefit of Brexit for British users, EU countries are currently banned from signing up to *Threads* due to this feature potentially breaching Brussels' data rules.)

The flipside is that, ==at the moment, no one is entirely sure why they are using *Threads*==. Broadly speaking, three groups are dominating the site: users known for posting photos on Instagram that have unexpectedly gained an enormous audience on a text-centric app; social media managers at companies desperate to retain relevance by jumping on the hot new thing; and people fleeing *Twitter*'s increasingly toxic environment. All of them have a different idea of what they want from the site. ==A large chunk of the first day's posts consisted of people asking why they had signed up.==

Threads also lacks the immediacy of *Twitter*, with the app's main news feed currently only featuring an algorithmically generated summary of recent posts. Until this feature is changed to allow users to prioritise material published in the last few minutes, it limits the site's use as a home for breaking news. When Keir Starmer was heckled at an event in Gillingham on Thursday morning, the clip was immediately all over *Twitter*. But it was far less visible on *Threads*, which also currently lacks a text search function.

Instead, *Threads* is more like a cross between *Twitter* and Instagram, with a TikTok-style focus on juicing engagement from posts. You are more likely to see a funny post from the Archbishop of Banterbury (meme account) than an earnest discussion about a political intervention by his Church of England equivalent.

All of this is bad news for *Twitter* under Musk, which could retreat even further into being a home for right-wing libertarians arguing over culture war topics. At its best, the experience

of being on *Twitter* in the mid-2010s felt like being able to drop in on the funniest, most interesting party in town. It proved to be one of the best media regulators that has ever existed, a perfect place to rapidly call out shoddy journalism and political lies. It was not necessarily the place where the vast majority of the world found out about things – that was Facebook – but *Twitter* was probably where the information was posted first.

==Ultimately, *Threads*' launch might be just be another step in the disintegration of the social media scene of the 2010s and its rebirth as a more sanitised advertiser-friendly environment, rather than a messy free-for-all discussion.==

Zuckerberg said he hoped *Threads* would overtake *Twitter*'s 250 million monthly users. "It will take some time, but I think there should be a public conversation app with 1 billion+ people on it," he said. "*Twitter* has had the opportunity to do this but hasn't nailed it. Hopefully, we will."

Why is Threads not listed in EU countries?

Threads isn't yet running in the EU - and it might never run, as the bloc has stricter privacy rules than most other countries, and it has given Meta a few headaches to cope with in recent years.

It's unclear whether Threads would respect the EU's strict privacy requirements. The app has been described as a "privacy nightmare" by tech journalists because, despite being a standalone app, it imports personal data from Instagram.

On its US version, Threads users are informed that it will collect a wide range of their data including health and financial information, browsing histories, location, purchases, contacts, search history and sensitive information.

Advertising information would also be collected from Instagram.

In the EU, this kind of communication between social media platforms has been forbidden. Meta has been previously prevented from launching advertising services on Whatsapp that used data from Facebook or Instagram, and the same won't fly for Threads either.

It's unclear whether Threads will adapt to the EU market or it will ever launch in the continent.