

Facebook: Twenty Years [B2]

Vent'anni fa Mark Zuckerberg lanciava il social network che ha trasformato il nostro modo di relazionarci e di accedere al mondo esterno. Anche se i suoi momenti più gloriosi sono ormai alle spalle, nel 2023 la piattaforma contava 2,93 miliardi di utenti attivi mensili e profitti per 23,1 miliardi di dollari.



On 4 February 2004, a social networking site was launched to students of Harvard University. Calling itself TheFacebook, it allowed them to connect with each other using their university emails and photos. It was founded by a psychology and computer science student called Mark Zuckerberg, along with other Harvard students. Zuckerberg had previously developed a site called “[FaceMash](#)” on which visitors could compare the photos of two students and decide which one was more attractive.

TAGGING AND LIKES

Within twenty-four hours, 1,200 students had [signed up](#) to TheFacebook. Within a month, more than half the university’s [undergraduates](#) were members. The platform expanded to other US universities, high schools and tech companies like Apple and Microsoft. In 2005, the site changed its name to Facebook and introduced the idea of [tagging](#) people in photos. News Feed was launched in 2006. The ‘Like’ button appeared in 2009.

GLOBAL SUCCESS

Facebook quickly went global. People all over the world discovered that you could keep in touch with family and friends constantly, make new friends easily, and express yourself freely without the discomfort of physical interaction. Advertisers discovered that they could [engage](#) customers directly, which brought even more people to Facebook. By 2012, the platform had over 1 billion monthly active users.

ADDICTION AND BULLYING

However, social dilemmas were beginning [to arise](#). People tended to carefully curate their pages and image, and the scroll of miscellaneous [attention-seeking](#) ‘news’ became endless. The site became a [source](#) of distraction, unhealthy comparison and insecurity. It was easy to troll, [stalk](#) or bully someone on Facebook, or [to mislead](#) them by creating a false identity.

DEALS WITH DATA

Facebook also faced major controversies related to privacy, content moderation, influence on media, ethical [concerns](#) and security issues. It has been criticised for its [handling](#) of user data, such as in the Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal when, in the 2010s, personal data belonging to millions of users was collected without their consent and used for political advertising. Facebook has also been criticised for its opaque policies on dangerous content, including [hate speech](#), incitement of violence and the spread of disinformation.

THE METAVERSE

In 2021, Facebook had nearly three billion users, making it the largest social network in the world. That year, the company changed its name to Meta. [CEO](#) Mark Zuckerberg says he now wants to focus the company on building the metaverse, a shared virtual environment that will [fuse](#) physical and digital worlds. The success of the metaverse is a topic of [ongoing](#) debate and speculation.

A LEGAL BATTLE

From its early days, Facebook was subject to court cases. The most famous was that of Cameron and Tyler Winklevoss, twin brothers who sued [CEO](#) Zuckerberg, [claiming](#) that he stole their idea. This legal battle was depicted in the movie The Social Network. In 2008, the twins accepted a [settlement](#) which included \$20 million in cash and over a million Facebook [shares](#).

HUMANE TECHNOLOGY

In 2013, Tristan Harris, then a Google Design Ethicist, created the viral presentation “A Call to Minimize Distraction & Respect Users’ Attention.” This led to the 2018 founding of the non-profit organisation Center for Humane Technology (CHT). In the 2020 Netflix documentary film The Social Dilemma, CHT affiliates spoke up about the serious negative effects of social media, including, of course, Facebook. Today, CHT continues its work exposing the [drivers](#) behind all extractive technologies [steering](#) our thoughts, [behaviours](#) and actions. The organisation believes that by understanding the causes of [harmful](#) technology we can build humane technology that supports our [well-being](#), democracy and shared reality.

Glossary

- **tagging** = etichettare
- **fuse** = unire
- **drivers** = fattori chiave
- **harmful** = nocivo, dannoso
- **FaceMash** = miscuglio di facce
- **undergraduates** = studente universitario
- **source** = fonte
- **stalk** = fare stalking a
- **handling** = gestione
- **claiming** = affermare
- **settlement** = accordo
- **shares** = azioni
- **engage** = coinvolgere
- **to arise** = sorgere
- **behaviours** = comportamenti
- **concerns** = preoccupazioni
- **hate speech** = discorso di odio
- **CEO** = amministratore delegato (Chief Executive Officer)
- **steering** = guidare
- **attention-seeking** = in cerca di attenzione
- **to mislead** = ingannare
- **well-being** = benessere
- **signed up** = iscriversi
- **ongoing** = in corso