

Zuckerberg uses Threads to say Twitter has missed its chance

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Mark Zuckerberg has taken a swipe at Elon Musk's Twitter as his competitor to the platform, Threads, reached 30m sign-ups less than 24 hours after launching. The chief executive and founder of Meta used his new Threads account to say Twitter had not "nailed" its opportunity to become a mega app and implied that it had underachieved because of the amount of hostility on the microblogging platform. Zuckerberg's competitive move against Twitter has already resulted in Musk challenging his fellow billionaire to a cage fight, an offer that the Meta boss appears to have accepted. Appropriately, Zuckerberg said in an exchange with a mixed martial arts fighter on Threads that Twitter had not taken its chance to become a leading platform. Replying on his new Threads account to MMA fighter Mike Davis, who had asked if Threads could become bigger than Twitter, Zuckerberg wrote: "It'll take some time, but I think there should be a public conversations app with 1bn+ people on it. Twitter has had the opportunity to do this, but hasn't nailed it. Hopefully we will." Zuckerberg indicated in another Threads exchange that Twitter had not reached its potential because it had not been a friendly experience for users. "The goal is to keep it friendly as it expands. I think it's possible and will ultimately be the key to its success," he wrote. "That's one reason why Twitter never succeeded as much as I think it should have, and we want to do it differently." In a further thread, he added: "We are definitely focusing on kindness and making this a friendly place." However, Meta's Facebook and Instagram apps have come in for criticism over the years for their moderation standards, including from whistleblower Frances Haugen, who accused the company in 2021 of putting profit over the public good. Last year an inquest into the death of Molly Russell, 14, found that the British teenager had been able to view harmful content on Instagram before taking her own life in 2017. Twitter has been criticised since it was bought by Musk last October for reinstating previously banned accounts such as those for Donald Trump and the misogynist influencer Andrew Tate. It has also risked turning off users with a number of changes including a move last weekend to limit the number of tweets that account holders can view, as well as blocking the site to people who are not logged in. Musk, who has more than 146 million followers on Twitter, did not tweet about Threads directly on Thursday, although he appeared to dismiss the "friendly" approach, tweeting: "It is definitely preferable to be attacked by strangers on Twitter, than indulge in the false happiness of hide-the-pain Instagram". Threads users need an Instagram account to use the service. Meta, the owner of Facebook and Instagram, said early adopters of the Twitter rival included Jennifer Lopez, Coldplay and American football star Tom Brady as it revealed initial user numbers. The 30 million figure – after it launched at 7pm EDT in the US on Wednesday and at midnight in the UK – compares with about 13 million for another Twitter competitor, Mastodon, but is far behind Twitter's user count of more than 250 million. Threads closely resembles

Twitter visually, although some of the wording has been changed, with retweets called “reposts” and tweets called “threads”. Posts on Threads can be 500 characters long, compared with 280 for most Twitter users, and Meta has said it plans to make the app interoperable with other platforms like Mastodon, meaning users could take their accounts and followers to similar apps. US congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who threatened to quit Twitter in May after Musk promoted a “sick” impersonator account, used her new Threads account to write: “May this platform have good vibes, strong community, excellent humor, and less harassment.” Threads is freely available in 100 countries including the UK, US and Australia. Instagram has 2 billion users and account holders can transfer their follower list on to their new Threads account. However, the Zuckerberg lieutenant overseeing the launch, Instagram boss Adam Mosseri, said in an interview that the new app was aiming for cultural relevance over size. “It would be great if it gets really, really big, but I’m actually more interested in if it becomes culturally relevant than if it gets hundreds of millions of users,” Mosseri told tech news site the Verge.