

# Meta delivered ‘a major blow’ to Twitter. Will it flip the flailing firm’s fortunes?

Publication Date: 2023-07-06

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Section: Technology

Tags: Threads, Meta, X, Facebook, Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk, Social networking, analysis

Article URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jul/06/meta-struggling-threads-app-boost-twitter-blow>



Meta has launched a “Twitter killer” app, a nearly direct copy of the microblogging platform that was built to lure users away from the increasingly dysfunctional Elon Musk-owned company. But will it bring Meta the boost it has been looking for? Experts say it may. It’s certainly not the first time Meta has borrowed features from competitors or duped them outright – the company copied Snapchat with its Instagram stories feature and TikTok with its short form video tool Reels. But Threads has the potential to be Meta’s most successful attempt at emulating existing popular tech, said Ari Lightman, professor of digital media at Carnegie Mellon University’s Heinz College. “If they execute correctly, tying in all the successful aspects of the platforms and leveraging some of the volatility at Twitter, they could actually have a shot,” he said. “Taking into consideration what they’ve learned in the past, Meta is really more of a grown-up organization. They’re understanding how to maneuver some of these waters a little bit more adeptly than they’ve done in the past.” Success for Meta is key and the company bet big on Threads’ rollout. Meta has been struggling in recent years. The company laid off more than 20,000 workers over the past year. Its signature metaverse project has not taken off. The company has struggled to compete with newer platforms, as it fails to capture the demographic of younger users who prefer YouTube and TikTok. And it has faced multiple congressional inquiries following whistleblower revelations about its more toxic inner workings. Meanwhile, it stands to lose billions of dollars over changed policies in Apple’s App store that emphasize privacy and cut into Meta’s key business model of tracking user behavior for ad sales. Threads launched with very few glitches and was noted for its smooth interface and intuitive user experience, suggesting a more well thought out product than past Meta ventures. Twenty-four hours after its launch, it boasted 30m downloads, according to the company, apparently making it the most rapidly downloaded app ever. Zuckerberg believes the app can sustain that momentum, stating in a post on Threads that he envisions a future with more than 1bn users. Much of that success will depend on whether Threads can find its place in the online culture, bridging the freewheeling and text-focused energy of Twitter with the more idyllic, photo-centric world of Instagram. “Twitter’s appeal is not the ‘functionality’ which Threads is obviously imitating, but the network and the culture,” said Drew Margolin, assistant professor of communication at Cornell University. “I’m not sure how Meta can re-create this. It would need to create the sense that this was the place to be heard because this was the place where the people whose opinions matter pay attention.” Meta could also face potential roadblocks in the form of antitrust measures and other regulatory actions. At a time when big tech is facing unprecedented action after years of unabated growth, Meta’s attempt to go big with yet another platform is a gamble. “There are genuine antitrust concerns with Threads, particularly in Europe, where EU regulators are more aggressive than their US counterparts,” said Paul Barrett, deputy director of the NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights.

With that in mind, Meta has not yet introduced Threads in Europe, where the company is still navigating the region's new Digital Markets Act, a law passed in 2022 that targets "gatekeepers" in the tech ecosystem. Its inability to launch in that market, where Instagram has more than 280 million users, could have a big impact on Threads' success moving forward. Twitter on Thursday threatened to sue the company, accusing it of violating Twitter's "intellectual property rights". The true measure of success for Threads will be whether it is able to monetize in the future, experts say. Thus far, there are no advertisements on the platform, but Zuckerberg said in a post that the company plans to explore monetization after it reaches 1 billion users. Advertisers have been fleeing Twitter as it descends into chaos, with more than half of its top 1,000 advertisers having left since Musk took over. If Threads can be seen as a viable alternative, Meta could have a real chance of unseating Twitter, said Jasmine Enberg, a principal analyst at market research firm Insider Intelligence. "Once Meta reaches scale and begins to monetize, that's going to hit Musk where it hurts," Enberg said. "After months of not spending on Twitter, many advertisers have realized that they don't need Twitter to reach their goals. Twitter ads will be an even harder sell when there's a Meta-owned app that is perceived as an alternative." Thus far, with millions of users signing up almost immediately after launch, Threads represents a legitimate threat to Twitter, experts concurred. "The metaphorical cage match has started and Zuckerberg has delivered a major blow," said Enberg. "Meta only needs one in four Instagram users to use Threads monthly for it to be as big as Twitter, and Meta has the scale, resources and execution strategy to make that happen," Enberg said. "The simplicity of the onboarding process, the app's easy-to-use interface, and Meta's promise of a saner, kinder place than Twitter have already supercharged signups." She added: "It's not a deadly punch to Twitter, but Musk needs to watch his back."