

Facebook owner to push ahead with plans to launch Twitter rival

Publication Date: 2023-06-09

Author: Dan Milmo

Section: Technology

Tags: Meta, Social media, X, Threads, Digital media, news

Article URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2023/jun/09/facebook-owner-to-push-ahead-plans-launch-twitter-rival-meta-oprah-winfrey>



Mark Zuckerberg's Meta is pushing ahead with plans to launch a rival to Twitter because public figures reportedly want a similar platform that is "sanely run", with the Dalai Lama and Oprah Winfrey on the target list for users. The standalone app is codenamed Project92 and its public name could be Threads, according to a report by the tech news site the Verge. The report said Meta's chief product officer, Chris Cox, told an internal meeting on Thursday that the app was the Facebook and Instagram owner's "response to Twitter". "We've been hearing from creators and public figures who are interested in having a platform that is sanely run, that they believe that they can trust and rely upon for distribution," Cox was quoted as saying, in an apparent reference to the management of Twitter under Elon Musk. Cox reportedly said Meta was in discussions with Winfrey, who has more 42 million followers on Twitter, and the Dalai Lama, who has nearly 19 million, to be potential users, adding that coding for the app began in January and it would be made available "as soon as we can". The Verge said the app would integrate with ActivityPub, a technology that also underpins Mastodon – a Twitter rival that is a decentralised collection of thousands of sites – and allows social networks to be interoperable. In theory, this would allow users of the new Meta app to take their accounts and followers to apps supported by ActivityPub, such as Mastodon. According to earlier reports, the app will be based on Instagram and users will be able to sign in with their Instagram username and password, with their followers, user bio and verification transferring over to the new app. Cox said the app was aiming for "safety, ease of use, reliability" and giving creators a "stable place to build and grow their audiences". A screenshot of the app published by the Verge showed a similar interface to Twitter's, with blue ticks, profile pics and like, reply and retweet buttons. Twitter has had a tumultuous time under Musk's leadership, although the Tesla boss has insisted the platform's userbase has not declined since he bought the business in October. Musk claimed weeks after buying Twitter that daily active user numbers had reached an all-time high of more than 250 million. However, Twitter is experiencing financial problems as an advertising-reliant business. An advertiser boycott was triggered by concerns including the deterioration of moderation standards at the platform and a botched relaunch of Twitter's subscription service, which led to a slew of verified impersonator accounts. The New York Times reported on Monday that Twitter's ad revenues in the first week of May were 59% down on the same period last year, reflecting concerns about the platform. Last month, Twitter appointed Linda Yaccarino, a TV advertising executive from NBCUniversal, as its new chief executive. Meta declined to comment. Twitter was approached for comment.