☑ Meta's Ray-Ban Smart Glasses Fail to Catch On

https://www.wsj.com/articles/metas-ray-ban-smart-glasses-fail-to-catch-on-31f6ba4e?st=lbxbklag3imsczm&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated Aug. 3, 2023 at 12:02 am ET

- The Ray-Ban smart glasses launched by Meta Platforms almost two years ago have struggled to catch on with owners, many of whom appear to be using the devices infrequently, according to internal company data.
- Less than 10% of the Ray-Ban Stories purchased since the product's launch in September 2021 are used actively by purchasers, according to a company document from February reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.
- MetaMETA 1.88%increase; green up pointing triangle sold a total of 300,000 of the wearable devices through February, but the company only had about 27,000 monthly active users.
- Among the top drivers of poor user experience were issues with connectivity, problems with some of the hardware features including battery life, inability for users to import media from the devices, issues with the audio on the product and problems with voice commands for the smart glasses, according to the document.
- "We'll also need to better understand why users stop using their glasses, how to ensure we are encouraging new feature adoption, and ultimately how to keep our users engaged and retained," the document said.
- Despite the poor initial numbers, Meta is hoping to release the second generation of its Ray-Ban Stories smart glasses either in the fall—in time for the holiday shopping season—or next spring, according to people familiar with the matter.
- Other tech companies have struggled to make smart glasses, including Google, which discontinued its Google Glass product.
- The new version is expected, like the current one, not to have features that would be categorized as augmented reality, which allows wearable devices to project or overlay content into what a person is seeing in the real world.
- But Meta executives see the Stories device as a predecessor to augmented-reality glasses, which it hopes to release in the coming years.
- Meta set a goal of 478,000 unit sales for the entire lifetime of Ray-Ban Stories. Another forecast in the document also shows a lower figure, predicting sales of 394,000 units.

The Key People Driving Meta's Generative AI Work

https://www.theinformation.com/articles/the-key-people-driving-metas-generative-ai-work?_cio_id=91f70238cb07cccc66&utm_campaign=%5Bdrip%5D+V4+Subs+Welco&utm_content=1004536&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cio&utm_term=1000445&rc=hm8aii

Aug. 16, 2023 6:00 AM PDT

- As Meta Platforms has tried to cut costs and trim headcount over the past year, one area has emerged as an exception: generative artificial intelligence.
- The leader of the unit, former Apple executive Ahmad Al-Dahle, now has 551 people reporting up to him through six direct reports, according to internal data viewed by The Information. These include people pulled in from Meta's research organization, Fundamental AI Research, as well as some from product roles.
- The expansion of the team shows how Al-Dahle, a relative newcomer who joined Meta in 2020 from Apple, has quickly risen through the ranks at Meta and earned the ear of CEO Mark Zuckerberg, according to a person with knowledge of the dynamics.
- The generative AI unit is just one part of Meta's broader AI efforts, which include its research organization as well as AI teams working on various products and on ways of incorporating AI into advertising tools.
- While Al-Dahle's team is growing, it's not to the scale of the company's core teams.

- Al-Dahle previously spent 16 years at Apple, where he led a group working on autonomous systems software and algorithms, according to his LinkedIn page. He was recruited to Meta by Amir Frenkel, a vice president in Reality Labs—the department responsible for building metaverse technology—to work on Frenkel's team, two people familiar said. Al-Dahle's new role has brought him closer to the C-suite: He now reports to Meta's chief product officer, Chris Cox.
- It was notable that the generative AI unit was put under Cox, rather than Bosworth, who oversaw most of Meta's AI teams. A Meta spokesperson said the company made the decision because the generative AI team works closely with the people developing Meta's apps, including WhatsApp and Instagram, which also report to Cox. The spokesperson added that the generative AI unit would collaborate with the AI research and Reality Labs teams overseen by Bosworth.
- Since February, some employees have moved from FAIR to generative AI. For example, research scientist Hugo Touvron, who is listed as an author of the Llama 2 paper, joined the generative AI team from FAIR, his LinkedIn page shows.
- Others joined from the now-defunct Meta Probability team, which applied machine-learning research to Meta's infrastructure. When Meta laid off thousands of employees in November and dissolved that team, research scientists were given the option to find a new team at Meta within three months. Some ended up joining the generative AI team, according to a person with direct knowledge of the situation.
- The structure of the generative AI team—bringing together people from both product and research teams—reflects Meta's hopes of breaking down some of the silos between the two areas in order to compete with rivals like Microsoft and Google who have surged out in front of Meta in the AI race. Despite its research advances in AI, Meta has been slow in the past to adapt the technology for its core business.
- But the company's efforts to bring product and research closer together haven't gone down well with everyone. Several AI researchers left Meta after it created the generative AI team, frustrated by the increased focus on bringing AI to products, a former employee said.

☑ What TikTok's e-commerce launch could mean for marketers and content creators

https://digiday.com/marketing/what-tiktoks-e-commerce-launch-could-mean-for-marketers-and-content-creators/?utm_campaign=mb&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=morning_brew
August 18, 2023 •

- TikTok has launched an e-commerce platform called TikTok Shop.
- Creators are signing up to sell products directly on TikTok using this platform.
- TikTok Shop aims to help creators generate revenue by selling products on the platform instead of using third-party websites.
- Other social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and Snapchat have also experimented with in-app shopping.
- The new feature allows creators to upload video responses to products, enhancing authenticity in reviews.
- TikTok Shop started development in November 2022, and beta testing involved a few hundred beta merchants.
- An affiliate program is available, connecting creators and influencers with sellers to earn commissions on product marketing.
- Creators like Grace Mary Williams are benefiting from TikTok Shop's collaboration opportunities and creative freedom.
- TikTok's targeted algorithm helps users discover products they watch videos about, differentiating it from platforms like Facebook.
- TikTok Shop's launch has been likened to a virtual mall, with the hashtag #TikTokMadeMeBuyIt playing a role in influencer marketing and product discovery.

- TikTok's algorithm drives users to find new products, setting it apart from platforms that don't offer the same ease of discovery.

Meta's Threads is finally available on desktop

https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/22/tech/threads-web-version-meta/index.html?utm_campaign=mb&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=morning_brew
Updated 9:15 AM EDT, Tue August 22, 2023

- Threads users, rejoice: the app is rolling out its highly anticipated web version Tuesday
- The update – perhaps the most requested by users since Threads' mobile-only launch last month – puts the new platform one step closer to recreating the functions offered by rival X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, and could help reignite user growth following a sluggish period.
- The new web version could also raise fresh competitive concerns for X, after owner Elon Musk sparked user backlash last week by suggesting he might do away with the platform's block feature.
- Web access is just one of a series of recent updates to Threads as Meta continues to build out the new platform. Other features added over the past month include new "reposts" and "likes" tabs that show users the posts they have reshared and liked in their profiles, a chronological following feed and a button to share threads posts to Instagram DMs.
- By August 16, updates to Threads had helped the app notch slight gains to 11 million daily active users, Sensor Tower said in a report Monday.

☑ Facebook Marketplace Lets Users Sell Recalled Baby Products, Lawmakers Say

https://www.wsj.com/tech/facebook-marketplace-lets-users-sell-recalled-baby-products-lawmakers-say-45694c?mod=djemTECH
Aug. 22, 2023 at 2:52 pm ET

- A group of bipartisan lawmakers told Meta Platforms META 1.20%increase; green up pointing triangle in a letter that it is not doing enough to prevent users from selling recalled products, including deadly baby items, on its Facebook Marketplace.
- "Meta's failure to prevent recalled products from being posted for sale on its platform has resulted in your users and their children being placed at risk of purchasing and using a product that CPSC has found to pose a serious risk of injury and potential death," the letter said, referring to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.
- Online marketplaces have little government regulation, allowing companies like Meta to set its own rules for its platforms. Meta's Facebook Marketplace, one of the most popular flea-market-style websites, said it bans listings for items including guns, drugs and recalled products. Still, people selling these goods have found workarounds to flout moderators on the platform. Buyers and sellers negotiate directly with each other to exchange used furniture, gadgets and other products.
- Schakowsky said Tuesday that Meta and the other companies hadn't replied to the letters. The lawmakers asked each company to send responses by the end of the month detailing its efforts to keep recalled products off its marketplaces.
- McMorris Rodgers said Tuesday, "It's critical for the safety of children and infants that online marketplaces take steps to ensure products that pose a known hazard, and are subject to a recall or ban, not be made available on their platforms."

☑ Meta's News Block Causes Chaos as Canada Burns

https://www.wired.com/story/meta-facebook-instagram-news-block-canada-wildfire/?utm_campaign=etb&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=morning_brew
AUG 28, 2023

- Meta had finally made good on a promise to block news content in Canada, in response to a new law that requires the company to pay news businesses for content that ends up on Facebook or Instagram.
- Since 2008—the year after Facebook recentered its design around the newsfeed—Canada has lost 474 local news outlets, according to the latest report from the crowd-sourced [Local News Research Project](#). Meanwhile, Facebook and Google together gobble up 80 percent of digital advertising dollars in Canada, leaving the country's ever-dwindling news business to fight over the scraps. In 2021–2022, the government of Canada itself spent $11.4 million on Facebook and Instagram ads alone, and $64 million total on digital ads—more than half of its annual ad budget.
- The issue of Meta and Google's dominance over ad revenue has been the underlying catalyst of new legislation known as the Online News Act, or [Bill C-18](#). Passed in June, C-18 requires companies like Meta and Alphabet to pay Canadian news businesses when their content ends up on "digital news intermediary" platforms.
- Long before the bill was passed, Meta warned the government that the only way it could comply with the law was to "end news availability" in Canada, effectively blocking Canadians' ability to post and view links to news sites, including non-Canadian outlets. Many news companies warned the government that C-18 would devastate an already struggling industry. The Canadian government doubled down, saying that Meta should support the news industry it helped decimate.
- Canada believed it could play hardball and win, as [Australia had done the year prior with its news media bargaining code](#). With the world watching, Canada rushed C-18 through before breaking for summer vacation. It hoped the legislation would set a precedent others could emulate. And then the wildfires struck.
- Now, government officials and news outlets caught in the crossfire are now learning a lesson in the hardest way possible: Meta does not bend to governments, even when lives are at stake.
- MacLeod is more optimistic. He sees an opportunity in Canadians' [growing dislike](#) for Facebook. "People are starting to re-evaluate the relationship with Meta, as a function of Meta choosing to exit the [news] category and take a pretty aggressive posture relative to a piece of legislation passed in a democratic country," he says. He's hopeful it will allow the Canadian advertising industry to evolve, giving newspapers like his bigger pieces of the pie.
- He acknowledges that the consequences of the bill may throw some news organizations into further turmoil in the short term, but says it's ultimately good for the media ecosystem. "I'll take the trade of uncertainty that comes with C-18 with the opportunity to build a new future versus extending the status quo," says MacLeod.
- Publications big and small felt the effects of the Meta news ban immediately. Two news startups told WIRED the inability to share news on Meta properties made the future much more uncertain, with [Torontoverse](#) founder Chris Dinn adding that investors have already pulled their money.
- The Meta news ban means Canadians won't see fact-checked challenges to those kinds of falsehoods in their feeds. "It's a big-picture scary thing to see happening for us," Woods says.
- Before the passage of the law, Google had [also promised to remove links](#) to Canadian news when the law takes effect. The fact that it hasn't done so yet could be because the law, though passed in June, has until December to come into [full effect](#).
- The Canadian wildfires have been the first test of C-18 and the Meta news ban. So far, it has failed spectacularly. While people have found ways around the ban by posting screenshots of news stories, confusion and misinformation have abounded about which evacuation centers are still accepting people, how evacuees might be able to get financial compensation, the progression of the fires and what happens next as residents watch the fires through their screens, far from home.

- On October 21, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau [denounced Meta](#). "It is so inconceivable that a company like Facebook is choosing to put corporate profits ahead of ensuring that local news organizations can get up-to-date information to Canadians and reach them where Canadians spend a lot of their time—online, on social media, on Facebook," he said during a public appearance on Prince Edward Island.
- "That's correct, Mr. Julian," Curran replied. "We're working very hard to make sure we don't make the same mistakes in Canada that we made in Australia when we removed news from our platform. We're working very hard to make sure that we don't take down pages we don't mean to take down and we don't take down pages that don't fit the definition of 'news.'"
- The between-the-lines reading of that last line—"the definition of 'news'"—suggests Meta was prepared to continue blocking news even in an emergency. That reality has come to pass. And so perhaps Williams was being a bit of an optimist when he reached out to Nick Clegg requesting an off-the-record call about—as he put it—"Meta's news ban in Canada and our efforts to preserve life as wildfires threaten our communities."
- Clegg, the former deputy prime minister of the UK and current president of global affairs at Meta, had previously said in a [May 2023 statement](#) that Facebook users don't use the platform for news, adding that news represents just 3 percent of the content they see on their Facebook feeds. Meta has responded to criticism of its blocks by saying Canadians can simply read the news on outlets' sites.
- But Canadian government statistics say 80 percent of Canadians get their news online, while 34 percent specifically get it from Facebook. In fact, in 2023 just 47 percent of Canadians directly visited publications' sites; the remainder accessed news through a digital intermediary, with Google being the biggest at 48 percent, according to a report from the Canadian Internet Registration Authority.
- And it remains a reality, especially in smaller communities, that platforms like Facebook are a primary conduit for information. "No matter what Facebook says, a certain percentage of our country gets their news from Facebook," says Jeff Elgie, CEO of Canadian online news chain Village Media. "Even though they do a lot of other things on Facebook, the reality of [C-18 and the Meta block] is that there's a lot of people that are no longer going to be exposed to news, and that's scary for society."

Meta avatars are finally getting legs (in beta)

https://techcrunch.com/2023/08/29/meta-avatars-are-finally-getting-legs-in-beta/?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axioscloser&stream=top

August 29, 2023

- It's time to beta test Meta's greatest technological innovation since the News Feed: legs.
- When Meta launched its suite of virtual reality social products, its avatars did not have legs, instead hovering as disembodied torsos. Now our digital likenesses can finally get back on their feet. So far, users report that they only have legs in [Horizon Home](#), the area where you find yourself when you first turn on your headset.
- While Quest headsets support hand tracking, a technology that allows users to essentially use their hands instead of controllers, it doesn't track leg and foot movements. This makes it harder to create legged avatars that feel at least a little bit natural. [Early testers](#) say that you can only see legs in third person, not first person, which is supposed to make the visual a little less jarring.s
- Alongside announcements around the appearance and movements of the new full body avatars, Meta also announced that there will soon be an avatar store where people will be able to spend real money to buy accessories for their Meta avatar.

☑ Meta Uncovers Largest-Ever Chinese Influence Network

Updated Aug. 29, 2023 at 9:26 pm ET

- Meta Platforms META 0.17%increase; green up pointing triangle said it has taken down the largest known online covert influence operation in the world, a cross-platform campaign that was aimed at advancing China's interests and discrediting its adversaries including the U.S.
- Meta said the operation, known in the security community as "Spamouflage," dated back to 2019 and was linked to individuals associated with Chinese law enforcement.
- Meta said the China network was pushing positive commentary about the country as well as criticism of the U.S. and western foreign policies. It was run by operators dispersed across China, and many of the accounts were detected and disabled by the company's automated systems. Meta said this likely led to posting on smaller platforms and trying to amplify the content to larger services.
- "We have not found evidence of this network getting any substantial engagement among authentic communities on our services," Meta said.
- In a statement, the Chinese embassy in Washington said China opposes the production and spread of false information. It said U.S. social media was "awash with disinformation about China," but didn't address Meta's allegations or actions.
- The takedown was the seventh that Meta said it has removed from China over the past six years. It was also one of several around the globe that Meta said it recently completed, including the disruption of Doppelganger, the largest and most aggressive Russian operation the company has seen. That campaign, which was focused on weakening support for Ukraine by its allies, entailed operators posting links to websites resembling real news outlets and containing pro-Russia narratives. Because those exist off-platform, Meta said they can be difficult to counter.
- Meta and other social platforms began sharpening their focus on coordinated campaigns intended to sway public opinion after the identification of Russian government interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.
- Covert social-media campaigns are essentially a whack-a-mole problem for platform operators. People seeking to achieve illicit goals through such campaigns are constantly refining their methods to avoid detection, according to security experts.
- The China network's posts were so spammy that the operation appeared to be prioritizing volume over audience building, said Ben Nimmo, global threat intelligence lead at Meta.
- Meta's latest takedowns come as U.S. relations with China are tense and as the U.S. opposes Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In recent months, the White House has confirmed reports of China ramping up its military presence in Cuba, while President Biden called Chinese leader Xi Jinping a dictator. Washington has been preparing measures to curb exports of advanced semiconductors to China and to cut Chinese companies off from U.S. cloud computing platforms.

☑ Meta May Allow Instagram and Facebook Users in Europe to Pay to Avoid Ads

Sept. 1, 2023

- Meta is considering paid versions of Facebook and Instagram that would have no advertising for users in the European Union, three people with knowledge of the company's plans said, a response to regulatory scrutiny and a sign that how people experience technology in the United States and Europe may diverge because of government policy.

- Those who pay for Facebook and Instagram subscriptions would not see ads in the apps, said the people, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because the plans are confidential.
- That may help Meta fend off privacy concerns and other scrutiny from E.U. regulators by giving users an alternative to the company's ad-based services, which rely on analyzing people's data, the people said.
- Meta would also continue to offer free versions of Facebook and Instagram with ads in the European Union, the people said. It is unclear how much the paid versions of the apps would cost or when the company might roll them out.
- Providing a paid tier would be one of the most tangible examples to date of how companies are having to redesign products to comply with data privacy rules and other government policies, particularly in Europe.
- In July, the European Union's highest court effectively barred Meta from combining data collected about users across its platforms – including Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp – as well as from outside websites and apps, unless it received explicit consent from users. In January, the company was also fined 390 million euros by Irish regulators for forcing users to accept personalized ads as a condition of using Facebook.
- Meta's openness to creating paid subscriptions shows how those living in the European Union, which comprises 27 countries and roughly 450 million people, may begin to see different versions of consumer technology products because of new laws, regulations and court rulings.
- In recent weeks, as a new E.U. law called the Digital Services Act took effect to stem the flow of illicit content online, TikTok and Instagram users in the region have also been able to block personal data from being used to generate their social media feeds. Snapchat and Meta have stopped marketers from targeting teenagers ages 13 to 17 in Europe with personalized ads.
- By next year, another E.U. tech-focused law, the Digital Markets Act, will take effect. That is set to force big tech platforms to change certain business practices to encourage competition and will have wide-ranging impacts, with Apple expected to allow users in the European Union to download alternatives to the App Store on iPhones and iPads for the first time.
- Meta, which also owns Messenger, has faced particular scrutiny from E.U. regulators. In May, the bloc fined the Silicon Valley company €1.2 billion for violating its privacy laws by sending data on European citizens back to U.S. servers for the purposes of improving the company's advertising technology. Meta has appealed the ruling.

Meta Rejects Trudeau's Olive Branch in Canada Online News Feud

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-09-01/meta-rejects-trudeau-s-olive-branch-in-canada-online-news-feud?cmpid=BBD090123_BIZ&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_term=230901&utm_campaign=bloombergdaily&leadSource=uverify%20wall#xj4y7vzkg

September 1, 2023 at 12:10 PM EDT

- Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government released new details of a law that tries to force technology companies to pay news providers, but Meta Platforms Inc. said it will continue to block users in Canada from seeing news stories on Facebook.
- Draft regulations published Friday say Meta and Alphabet Inc. would need to pay news outlets a minimum of 4% of their annual revenue in Canada in return for carrying links to news articles. That means the law compels Alphabet's Google to pay about C$172 million ($127 million) annually to the news industry in Canada, while Meta's Facebook would need to shell out C$62 million per year, according to the government's estimates.

- The regulations are meant to be an olive branch that addresses the companies' complaints that the law, known as the Online News Act, exposes them to unknown financial liabilities. The act says the platforms must negotiate payments with news providers.
- "As the legislation is based on the incorrect assertion that Meta benefits unfairly from the news content shared on our platforms, today's proposed regulations will not impact our business decision to end news availability in Canada," Rachel Curran, head of public policy for Meta in Canada, said by email.
- Alphabet has also threatened to cut off Google News links in Canada. A spokesperson for the company didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.
- Government officials said the regulations weren't shared with the companies before Friday, and they will try to engage with the them in the coming weeks.

☑ Meta Is Developing a New, More Powerful AI System as Technology Race Escalates

https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai/meta-is-developing-a-new-more-powerful-ai-system-as-technology-race-escalates-decf9451?st=ev7q7cc2b7e7xwi&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink
Sept. 10, 2023 at 5:01 pm ET

- The parent of Facebook and Instagram is working on a new artificial-intelligence system intended to be as powerful as the most advanced model offered by OpenAI
- Meta aims for its new AI model, which it hopes to be ready next year, to be several times more powerful than the one it released just two months ago, dubbed Llama 2.
- The planned system, details of which could still change, would help other companies to build services that produce sophisticated text, analysis and other output. It is the work of a group formed early this year by Meta Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg to accelerate development of so-called generative AI tools that can produce humanlike expressions. Meta expects to start training the new AI system, known as a large language model, in early 2024, some of the people said.
- The company is currently building up the data centers necessary for the job and acquiring more H100s, the most advanced of the Nvidia chips used for such AI training. While Meta joined with Microsoft to make Llama 2 available on Microsoft's cloud-computing platform Azure, it plans to train the new model on its own infrastructure, some of the people said.
- Zuckerberg is pushing for the new model, like Meta's earlier AI offerings, to be open-sourced and therefore available free for companies to build AI-powered tools.
- Meta's new model also likely would come out after the expected debut of Gemini, an advanced large language model being built by Google.
- There also are potential downsides to an open-source model of the power Meta aspires to, say some legal specialists. These include increased risks around use of potentially copyright-protected information and broader access to a tool whose enhanced strength can be used to generate and spread disinformation or other bad actions.
- Large language models generally get more powerful when trained on more data. The most powerful version of the Llama 2 model that Meta announced in July was trained on 70 billion parameters, a term for the variables in an AI system that is used to measure size. OpenAI hasn't disclosed the size of GPT-4, but it is estimated to be roughly 20 times that size, at 1.5 trillion parameters. Some AI experts say there could be other methods to achieve GPT-4's power without necessarily approaching its size.

☐ Facebook Messenger drives hijacking scam for e-commerce pages

https://www.itbrew.com/stories/2023/09/15/facebook-messenger-drives-hijacking-scam-for-e-commerce-

September 15, 2023

- In a recent [blog post](#), cybersecurity tool company Guardio warned virtual storefronts about seemingly innocuous Facebook messages that include malware capable of hijacking the recipient's account.
- The Vietnam-based operation—seemingly perpetrated by a group of Telegram bots linked to an administrator called MrTonyName—has clocked a "staggering" success rate by blasting out messages that ask businesses to open a file, sometimes disguised as a product the sender wants to buy.
- If opened, the file drops a malicious payload that burrows into the user's browsers, hoovering up saved cookies and credentials and ultimately logging the legitimate user out, according to the report.
- The effects can be devastating. According to Guardio, this scam is aimed at "luring business owners to click on the malicious attachment, ultimately giving away their entire Facebook operation, and getting locked out for good."
- The report notes that business-grade Facebook accounts are valuable targets for scammers, as they're usually attached to financial information, advertising, trusted brands, and a large number of followers. There's even a thriving black market for buying and selling control of these accounts on Telegram and elsewhere on the internet, Guardio reported.

☑ Meta, Under Fire From Regulators, Dials Back Ad Targeting

https://www.theinformation.com/articles/meta-under-fire-from-regulators-dials-back-ad-targeting?utm_campaign=article_email&utm_content=article-11477&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sg&rc=hm8aii

Sept. 15, 2023 6:00 AM PDT

- Meta Platforms built a $114 billion-a-year advertising juggernaut by tailoring ads to Facebook and Instagram users based on what they liked, posted or bought on the company's apps. Now, under mounting pressure from regulators around the world, Meta is backing away from that approach.
- In the EU, users can now choose to see ads based only on basic personal data such as age, gender and general location. Meta is also considering offering subscriptions to a version of its services without ads. Meta's regulatory woes don't end in Europe: Countries such as India and Brazil are also considering stricter regulations, and Meta leaders are concerned about the passage of legislation that mimics the EU's efforts, according to two people familiar with the situation.
- Meta has been offering the less-personalized ad option to certain users in the EU since April, three months after a ruling by the Irish Data Protection Commission—and a roughly $410 million fine—forced the change.
- Meta responded by introducing an online form that allowed people to opt out of targeted ads. People who opt out now see less-tailored ads, a system that Meta calls Basic Ads.
- The introduction of Basic Ads to a portion of Meta's roughly 3 billion daily active users represents a concession that the company's model of keeping users hooked on its apps—and then selling ads based on data about those activities—may have hit a wall, especially in Europe.
- Meta already allows its users to opt out of tracking across other websites. The introduction of the online form in April marked the first time Meta has allowed users to keep their activities on its own apps private for the purposes of advertising.
- Essentially, that decision meant that it was no longer sufficient for Meta to allow users to opt *out* of targeted ads—users had to choose to opt *in*. The company is preparing a new prompt to ask users to opt in that it hopes to introduce later this year, according to a person familiar with the matter.
- If 60% of Meta's EU users opt out of seeing ads based on their activity on Meta's apps, that could cause a 20% drop in Meta's 2024 ad revenue from the EU—and a 5% drop in global ad

revenue, according to research firm The Benchmark Co. That's because advertisers are likely to spend more for more precisely targeted ads.

- At the same time, Meta is considering other options, such as subscriptions, which leaders hope will offset some of the revenue loss from people opting out of targeted ads.
- "My sense is [EU regulators] would probably push back on it unless the subscription price is very, very low," said Eric Seufert, an independent analyst who covers Meta.
- When it was first discussed, leaders believed that few people would pay for a subscription but that low demand could help Meta advance its position with regulators, the person said. If only a small number of people signed up for a subscription, the thinking went, it would be easier for Meta to make the case to regulators that users were not that worried about how the company used their data.

☑ WhatsApp launches in-chat payments service for businesses in India

https://www.ft.com/content/64104575-50ed-49ef-b9c9-4354294d96d2?accessToken=zwAAAYtMhYmAkc9kEEV1UO1J79O5yUNUKU2W0gE.MEUCIQDfMBxbixQbwVdFk1FHxJVchbzmMrHPACEvu88tlZyfhgIgZBFnuIn2vBp2mc_BMU_M7pT0WT9fL7N7KfLQccaX1Gw&segmentId=64104575-50ed-49ef-b9c9-4354294d96d2

SEPTEMBER 20 2023

- Hundreds of millions of WhatsApp users in India will be able to pay for products and services through the chat app, as its parent company Meta seeks to generate more revenue from the messaging service in its biggest market.
- Shoppers from Wednesday will be able to buy products and services from businesses using credit and debit cards, WhatsApp Pay and India's public digital payments network UPI, the company said. Companies will not be charged for the in-app payments but Meta stands to benefit from an increase in businesses using WhatsApp, who pay yo message their customers.
- "We're making it easier to complete a purchase directly in the chat," WhatsApp said in a blog on Wednesday as a business messaging summit in Mumbai got under way.
- "The goal is to help businesses make it more convenient for customers to pay right within a chat, which will help them close more sales,"
- Enabling merchant payments also allows the platform to gather more data to help it target and personalize existing advertising.
- WhatsApp, which has 400M monthly users exchanging messages in India, has the potential to rank "among the top three digital payments apps in the country", said Arvind Singhal, chair of Technopak Advisors, a retail consultancy.
- The chat app has become increasingly important to Meta's efforts to make more money from its platforms. Companies are charged for delivering marketing or customer service messages to their customers via WhatsApp, and to run ads on Facebook or Instagram that take a potential customer directly into a WhatsApp chat with the company
- Isha Ambani, the billionaire's daughter and the director of Reliance Retail, said last month that the number of customers shopping at JioMart inside a WhatsApp chat had increased "9X" since the launch
- WhatsApp's announcement comes weeks after India's long-delayed data protection bill passed last month. The legislation excludes rules on data sharing by companies and is widely considered more business-friendly than earlier drafts.

☑ Meta to Push for Younger Users With New AI Chatbot Characters

https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai/meta-ai-chatbot-younger-users-dab6cb32?mod=followamazon

Sept. 24, 2023 at 8:30 am ET

- Meta Platforms is planning to release artificial intelligence chatbots as soon as this week with distinct personalities across its social-media apps as a way to attract young users, according to people familiar with the matter.
- The bots are meant to be used as a means to drive engagement with users, although some of them might also have productivity-related skills such as the ability to help with coding or other tasks.
- Going after younger users has been a priority for Meta with the emergence of TikTok, which overtook Instagram in popularity among teenagers in the past couple of years.
- With the rise of large-language-model technology since the launch of ChatGPT last November, Meta has also refocused the work of its AI divisions to harness the capabilities of generative AI for application in the company's various apps and the metaverse. Now, Meta is hoping these Gen AI Personas, as they are known internally, will help the company attract young users.
- Meta is planning to develop dozens of these AI personality chatbots. The company has also worked on a product that would allow celebrities and creators to use their own AI chatbots to interact with fans and followers, according to people familiar with the matter.
- Meta isn't the first social-media company to launch chatbots built on generative AI technology in hopes of catering to younger users. Snap launched My AI, a chatbot built on OpenAI's GPT technology, to Snapchat users in February. Silicon Valley startup Character.AI allows people to create and engage with chatbots that role-play as specific characters or famous people like Elon Musk and Vladimir Putin.
- Researchers and tech employees have found that lending a personality to these chatbots can cause some unexpected challenges. Researchers at Princeton University, the Allen Institute for AI and Georgia Tech found that adding a persona to ChatGPT, the chatbot created by OpenAI, made its output more toxic, according to the findings of a paper the academics published this spring.
- My AI has caused a number of headaches for Snap, including chatting about alcohol and sex with users and randomly posting a photo in April, which the company described as a temporary outage.
- Despite the issues, Snap CEO Evan Spiegel in June said that My AI has been used by 150 million people since its launch. Spiegel added that My AI could eventually be used to improve Snapchat's advertising business.
- There are also growing doubts about when AI-powered chatbots will start generating meaningful revenue for companies. Monthly online visitors to ChatGPT's website fell in the U.S. in May, June and July before leveling off in August, according to data from analytics platform Similarweb.
- Meta's early tests of the bots haven't been without problems. Employee conversations with some of the chatbots have led to awkward instances, documents show.
- AI chatbots don't "exactly scream Gen Z to me, but definitely Gen Z is much more comfortable" with the technology, said Meghana Dhar, a former Snap and Instagram executive. "Definitely the younger you go, the higher the comfort level is with these bots."
- Dhar said these AI chatbots could benefit Meta if they are able to increase the amount of time that users spend on Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.
- "Meta's entire strategy for new products is often built around increased user engagement," Dhar said. "They just want to keep their users on the platform longer because that provides them with increased opportunity to serve them ads."

☑ Meta Unveils New Mixed Reality Headset in Push for Traction on Metaverse

https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai/meta-unveils-new-virtual-reality-headset-in-push-for-new-traction-on-metaverse-ba374ce5?mod=djemTECH

Updated Sept. 27, 2023 at 6:35 pm ET

- Facebook parent Meta Platforms META -2.09%decrease; red down pointing triangle on Wednesday announced the release date of its coming Quest 3 mixed-reality headset and new Ray-Ban smart glasses along with a bevy of AI chatbots for its social apps.
- The company is hoping the devices will jump-start its push to bring users into the so-called metaverse, an effort on which it has spent billions of dollars and seen limited returns. Apple is set to release its Vision Pro headset in 2024, years after Zuckerberg renamed the company in an attempt to focus on what he's said may be the next emerging computing platform.
- The Quest 3 will place an emphasis on the ability for users to work or play in apps that overlay virtual objects within users' physical spaces, Zuckerberg said. The headset will begin shipping to users on Oct. 10, with preorders for the $499 device starting on Wednesday.
- Zuckerberg said the company designed the device to have the "world's best immersive content library." As part of the presentation, Zuckerberg showed a demonstration of a Lego game and announced that Meta has joined with Microsoft to bring Xbox Cloud Gaming to the device in December. Additionally, Microsoft 365 will come to the Quest by the end of the year, Zuckerberg said.
- The Quest 3 "is going to be the best value spatial computing headset on the market for a long time to come," said Meta Chief Technology Officer Andrew Bosworth, adding that the device features no wires or a battery pack, a shot at Apple's Vision Pro device. That headset will cost $3,499.
- Meta will also release the second generation of its Ray-Ban smart glasses on Oct. 17 for $299.
- The second generation Ray-Ban smart glasses will allow users to livestream their perspective to their followers. The new smart glasses will include a 36-hour battery life and will be available in different Ray-Ban models than its predecessor.
- The device will also come equipped with Meta AI, an artificial-intelligence assistant announced by Zuckerberg on Wednesday. Users will also be able to point at objects or landmarks they are looking at and ask Meta AI for information about it.
- "Smart glasses are the ideal form factor to let an AI assistant see what you're seeing and hear what you're hearing," Zuckerberg said.
- Meta AI is built on the company's Llama 2 large-language model and is a general purpose AI assistant that can answer user questions within Messenger, WhatsApp and Instagram. Meta AI will be able to provide users with real-time information through a partnership with Microsoft Bing, Zuckerberg said.
- Meta announced that it will release 28 other AI chatbots that users will be able to interact with. Meta joined with a number of celebrities, including Tom Brady, Paris Hilton and Snoop Dogg, whose faces provide facial expressions as users interact with the chatbots. The Journal had previously reported that Meta would release AI chatbots with personalities.
- "This is our first effort at training a bunch of AIs that are a bit more fun," Zuckerberg said, adding that they will have a number of limitations that will become apparent to users.
- In addition to the chatbots, Zuckerberg announced EMU, an AI model capable of taking users' text prompts and turning them into images within five seconds. EMU, which won't be open sourced, will be integrated within Meta AI and will roll out to English-speaking users over the next month, starting on Wednesday. The image-generating model will allow users to create custom stickers they can send to friends, and it will also allow users to edit their images on Instagram next month, Zuckerberg said.

Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses hands-on: in pursuit of content
https://www.theverge.com/2023/9/27/23889307/meta-ray-ban-smart-glasses-wearables-connect
Sep 27, 2023

- The smart glasses – which were just announced at Meta Connect – are the successor to 2021's Ray-Ban Stories. And this time, Meta is actually putting its name on the product.

You'd think that's because it's done something special or innovative to zhuzh up the category. I got hands-on time with the glasses a few weeks ago, and that's not it. It was more that the tech finally started to make sense — both in terms of hardware and how the TikTok era turned normal people into overnight influencers.

- The Ray-Ban Stories came out in 2021. The clips I recorded with the new glasses? Those were 1080p at 30 frames per second — and looked similar to what I see every day on TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram Reels.
- Needless to say, the 12MP camera also means better photos, too. The original Stories photos were 2592 by 1984 pixels. Now, it's 3024 by 4032 pixels. Most photos will get smooshed when you share them on social media or view them on a phone — but starting out with a higher resolution generally makes for a higher-quality photo.
- I only got to see a few videos and photos snapped with the Meta smart glasses during the demo, but so far, everything's looked shareable. Nothing I'd enter into a contest but something I wouldn't be embarrassed to post. That shareability is *key* to the updates this time around.
- Case in point, Meta showed me a livestreaming demo on Instagram with the glasses. (You can also livestream to Facebook, but c'mon.) It was neat to see the Instagram app immediately recognizes the glasses *and* let you switch between the phone's selfie camera and the glasses. No one was actually watching the livestream, so I couldn't try out the part where the glasses are supposed to read out the latest comments or reactions in real time. But generally speaking, everything I tried worked seamlessly. Granted, this was a demo in a controlled space. We'll have to see how well this works in real life.
- Meta told me you'll also be able to share the photos you take via voice command — and choose *where* they're sent (e.g., texts, Messenger, and WhatsApp). Again, I didn't get to see this feature in action, but if it ends up working well, it makes this device easier to use in the moment.
- the capture LED that alerts others you're recording is slightly bigger. It also flashes in a pulsing pattern — which Meta says is less easy to ignore than the Stories' static LED. This, I'm less sure about. Yes, the pattern was more noticeable in person, and these days, people seem more accustomed to others recording social videos in public spaces. But I was also indoors, and direct sunlight has the tendency to wash out any kind of LED or screen. Until I get to test them out in daily life, it's hard to say whether this slight tweak is actually enough to address privacy fears when the device itself is so discreet. At least with a phone, it's more obvious when someone's recording.
- But all that aside, they wear like any other pair of glasses. The arms may be thick, but the tech housed inside them doesn't really weigh down your face. Compared to other smart glasses, these also have more style options — which has always been one of the weak points in this category.
- Meta says it managed to make the glasses 50 percent louder while improving the directional audio to help keep sound aimed at *your* ears.
- What feels new-ish here is, for the first time, I can imagine content influencers actually *wanting* to use one of these for something other than irony-poisoned clout. Whether it appeals to the average person — that we'll have to see.

☐ Meta's smart glasses can take calls, play music, and livestream from your face

https://www.theverge.com/2023/9/27/23889133/meta-rayban-smart-glasses-price-release-date
Sep 27, 2023

- The new glasses, which Meta just announced at its Connect launch event and which are up for preorder now and will be on sale October 17th starting at $299, have two primary purposes. The first is to replace your headphones: the smart glasses have a similar personal

audio system like Amazon's Echo Frames and the Bose Tempo series, all of which play music but endeavor to make sure only you can hear it. With the new generation of glasses, Meta also upgraded the microphone system in a big way: the specs have five mics, including one in the nose bridge, which should make both your calls and voice commands much clearer.

- The other job of the glasses is as a camera. The smart glasses have small camera lenses on each right temple, just like the Stories – but these cameras take 12-megapixel photos and 1080p videos, both big upgrades from the previous generation. You can store roughly 500 photos and 100 30-second videos (that's the maximum length the glasses allow) before you fill up the 32GB of internal storage, and everything syncs through the Meta View app. The app also lets you quickly share anything you capture to Meta's many, many sharing platforms.

- In addition to taking photos and videos on the camera, you can also now start a livestream to Facebook or Instagram with just a couple of taps on the stem of the glasses. When you're recording, a white light around the lens pulses to indicate you're recording.

- Adding livestreaming exacerbates a lot of the product's already serious privacy questions. It's also one of Meta's attempts to answer the big question surrounding all smart glasses: *what are you supposed to do with them?* Meta reportedly struggled to keep users interested in wearing its Stories, with [more than 90 percent of buyers](#) eventually giving up on using their devices.

- Last time, Meta's big pitch was messaging; this time, it's pitching the smart glasses as more of a creator tool, so you can cook or play drums or do any number of two-handed activities while still recording.

- It all runs on Qualcomm's Snapdragon AR1 Gen 1 processor, which Qualcomm boasts has "on-glass AI" in a sub-one-watt package, and Meta says the battery inside the smart glasses should last between four and six hours of active use. (And when they're dead, they're just, you know, glasses.) The included case can also charge the smart glasses another eight times.

Here are the Qualcomm chips that power Meta's Quest 3 and new Ray-Bans

https://www.theverge.com/2023/9/27/23891035/meta-quest-3-qualcomm-snapdragon-xr2-gen-2-ar1-gen-1

Sep 27, 2023

- Meta has just fully revealed its [Quest 3](#) virtual reality headset and announced its [Ray-Ban Meta Smart Glasses](#), and they've both got Qualcomm silicon inside. There's a new Snapdragon XR2 Gen 2 in the Quest 3 and a new Snapdragon AR1 Gen 1 in the Ray-Bans that boasts onboard AI.

- Qualcomm VP Hugo Swart confirms it's the first time feature detection and 6DoF tracking have been baked right into its VR headset chip. It lets headsets like the Quest 3 offload one of their "most intensive" tasks to dedicated silicon, constantly keeping you oriented in a 3D environment while cutting the power and latency by more than half.

- Meta has seemingly chosen performance over battery life. Meta CTO Andrew Bosworth [said in July](#) that battery life would be "about the same" from the Quest 2 to the Quest 3, and Meta's saying the same now. Meta will offer an optional battery strap for the Quest 3 that adds a couple extra hours of battery life, just like it did with the Quest 2.

- As for the Ray-Bans, their Snapdragon AR1 Gen 1 is mostly about adding smartphone-grade photos, videos, and smarts to "light, sleek tethered glasses" with under one watt of power. Qualcomm says they can theoretically support dual displays of 1280 x 1280 per eye, 12-megapixel photos, and six-megapixel videos and could power turn-by-turn navigation, real-time translation, voice assistants, and hands-free search.

- Practically, [Meta's new Ray-Bans](#) will offer voice commands, 12-megapixel photos, 1080p30 video, and some basic spatial audio – no displays yet. Meta says the battery will last four to six hours of use on a charge.

- Qualcomm wouldn't comment on whether these chips cost a premium over their predecessors. [Meta has a special multiyear deal with Qualcomm](#) for customized headset chips, but Swart says these chips aren't exclusive to Meta. "They have a natural advantage in having earlier access," he told journalists. "I do think other products will come." The previous XR2 Gen 1 wound up in headsets from HTC and Pico, in addition to the Meta Quest 2.

☑ Roblox is launching on Meta Quest VR headsets today

https://techcrunch.com/2023/09/27/roblox-is-launching-on-meta-quest-vr-headsets-today/
September 27, 2023

- Roblox is launching on Meta Quest VR headsets today, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced at the company's [Connect event](#).
- Meta previously shared that players will be able to access the Quest version of Roblox on the Quest 2 and Quest Pro. It will also work on the [newly announced Quest 3](#), which costs $500.
- Today's announcement doesn't come as a surprise. Back in July, Meta [announced](#) that Roblox was coming to Meta Quest VR headsets, starting with an open beta that will be available on App Lab.
- Back in 2021, Roblox CEO Dave Baszucki [said during a call with investors](#) that Quest makes "perfect sense for Roblox." Baszucki's comment indicated that the company had planned to make Roblox available on the Meta Quest in the future.
- Although Roblox is already compatible with [various VR headsets](#), including Oculus Rift and HTC Vive, gamers currently need to connect their PC to a VR headset to play. The Quest version of Roblox should be a lot easier to load and access, especially since you will eventually be able to download it directly from the Meta Quest Store.

☑ Meta Quest is getting a business platform next month

https://techcrunch.com/2023/09/27/meta-quest-is-getting-a-business-platform-next-month/?guccounter=1
September 27, 2023

- Meta's Quest headsets have long been reliably consumer focused — at least until last year's Quest Pro launch. Meta, like Magic Leap and Microsoft before it, has seen the writing on the wall. The real money is in enterprise.
- At today's Connect conference in Menlo Park, California, Meta teased Meta Quest for Business. The platform is designed to offer enterprise AR applications in a single spot. The new service is set to launch in October.
- Meta Quest for Business will be compatible with a number of different enterprise applications, including Microsoft 365, which is set to arrive for the platform later this year. No further details were offered during today's keynote.

☑ Meta executive leading AI chip efforts to leave position

https://www.reuters.com/technology/meta-executive-leading-ai-chip-efforts-leave-position-sources-2023-09-27/
September 27, 20232:02 PM AST

- A Meta Platforms [(META.O)](#) executive overseeing the company's efforts to develop its own chips for artificial intelligence work is leaving her position at the end of the month, according to two sources familiar with the matter.
- Alexis Black Bjorlin, vice president of infrastructure at Meta and a veteran of chip companies Broadcom [(AVGO.O)](#) and Intel [(INTC.O)](#), headed a team charged with designing a custom chip to handle a range of AI work, a key part of company's efforts to overhaul its sprawling network of data centers for an era dominated by chatbots and image generators. She is

- leaving her position at the end of the month but not immediately leaving the company, one of the sources said.
- Yee Jiun Song, Meta's vice president of engineering, will take over her role, and the company will continue its efforts to develop its own AI hardware, one of the sources said.
- To create and power those features and others, Meta is reworking its data centers and building powerful supercomputers with chips from Nvidia (NVDA.O).

☑ TikTok Employees Say Executive Moves to U.S. Show China Parent's Influence

https://www.wsj.com/tech/tiktok-employees-say-executive-moves-to-u-s-show-china-parents-influence-ef5ff21f?st=1jmyzu2w2oekxw8&reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink

Updated Sept. 27, 2023 at 12:00 am ET

- TikTok has spent the past three years trying to convince U.S. lawmakers it can operate independently in this country from its China-based parent company, ByteDance. After recent personnel moves, some employees aren't so sure.
- Since the start of the year, a string of high-level executives have transferred from ByteDance to TikTok, taking on some of the top jobs in the popular video-sharing app's moneymaking operations. Some moved to the U.S. from ByteDance's Beijing headquarters.
- The TikTok employees say they are worried that the appointments show ByteDance plays a greater role in TikTok's operations than TikTok has disclosed publicly.
- A spokesman for TikTok said the company hasn't played down its relationship with ByteDance. He said in a large, global organization, it isn't uncommon for employees to work on different products or in multiple locations over the course of their careers.
- TikTok has faced scrutiny from U.S. authorities over fears that the Chinese government could pressure it for data about its users or use the app to spread propaganda, concerns TikTok has repeatedly denied.
- In 2020, the Trump administration attempted to ban TikTok downloads in the U.S. The Biden administration called for TikTok's Chinese owners to sell their stakes in it. TikTok has fought both administrations' demands, while working to show it is independent from its Chinese owner. The financier and influential Republican political donor Jeff Yass, who through his Susquehanna International Group owns a big stake in ByteDance, has also worked to fend off a U.S. ban. "The idea of banning TikTok is an anathema to everything I believe," Yass has told The Wall Street Journal.
- TikTok established regional headquarters outside China, including in Culver City, Calif., and forged a partnership with Oracle called Project Texas to store user data in the U.S. and monitor the app's algorithm. Part of the Project Texas pitch to lawmakers is that the setup lets TikTok operate independently from ByteDance.
- ByteDance used to take a more hands-off approach in some areas of the company. In TikTok's moneymaking operations, U.S. employees in 2021 started receiving more responsibilities and providing more input on strategic decisions for the app.
- In all-hands meetings in 2021, when employees asked executives how separation of the U.S. unit from China would work, managers responded that they planned to elevate the decision-making of U.S.-based employees, according to the current and former employees.
- ByteDance executives weighed in from time to time, but for the moneymaking operations, the feedback from ByteDance typically involved approving budgets and offering product suggestions, according to current and former employees. TikTok employees said that began to change earlier this year, when the new executives started arriving from ByteDance, and ByteDance began weighing in more on strategy.
- The TikTok spokesman said company decisions are made by the leaders of each business unit, and said TikTok employees weren't losing their autonomy.
- Some TikTok employees complained to managers after watching the congressional testimony of TikTok Chief Executive Officer Shou Zi Chew in March about the app's ties to

China. They said they felt Chew's statements to Congress misrepresented TikTok's relationship with ByteDance.

- It couldn't be learned whether TikTok has responded to employee complaints. A spokesman said the company has an internal process in place for employees to complain to human resources. While significant projects and investments are coordinated with ByteDance, he said, TikTok employees are responsible for TikTok's strategy, and its parent doesn't weigh in.
- Executives from ByteDance who are now working at TikTok are taking on influential roles related to how the app operates and makes money.
- Some of the most prominent U.S. employees have left, including TikTok's Chief Operating Officer V Pappas, who departed in recent months. Chew's chief of staff, Adam Presser, took over many of Pappas's duties as TikTok's new head of operations.
- The personnel moves are fueling a joke at TikTok's offices: Employees say TikTok is solving its challenge of being owned by China-based ByteDance by moving ByteDance to the U.S. They point to a large office ByteDance recently opened in San Jose, Calif.
- TikTok has also consolidated some of its teams under the new leaders from ByteDance, in reorganizations that have left employees confused, particularly since TikTok doesn't share its organizational chart with employees. The spokesman for TikTok said employees, when they join, are informed the company doesn't have an organizational chart.

☐ Meta Stock Fell on the Quest 3 Launch. Minutes Later It Was Up on AI News.

https://www.barrons.com/articles/quest-3-meta-ai-chatbots-9f3417cd?mod=djem_b_Feature_9282023%2064636%20AM

Updated Sept. 27, 2023 3:19 pm ET

- The mixed-reality Quest 3 headset will have no wires and allow users to play in the world around them with virtual objections layered on top of physical surroundings. Zuckerberg said the new headset has 10 times the pixels of the Quest 2. The devices will support games from Microsoft Xbox.
- The company is also targeting the device at business users and plans to launch a platform called Meta Quest for Business, that allows app and device management for corporate customers. Meta said that the business version of the device will include support for the Microsoft 365 suite of productivity apps.
- One thing clear at the event—and highly relevant for investors—is that Zuckerberg isn't walking away from his company's expensive vision for the future of the virtual world.
- Shares of Meta (META) were down nearly 3% on the Quest 3 and metaverse news but then rebounded as the company talked about AI. Shares were essentially flat in late afternoon trading.
- Zuckerberg said a coming challenge for the industry will be combining physical and digital worlds. In particular, he expects the emergence of meetings that combine people in person with people attending with holograms.
- Zuckerberg made a flurry of announcements related to new AI software, positioning the company as a clear competitor to other consumer facing AI players, like Open AI 's ChatGPT and Alphabet 's Bard. The company is launching a text-to-image platform called Emu, which, among other things, will allow sticker generation on the fly in the company's Messenger app. The company is also adding AI photo editing tools in Instagram starting next month.
- Zuckerberg announced Meta AI, a general purpose chatbot assistant build on the company's Llama 2 large language model that will be included in Messenger and eventually other Meta apps providing access to real-time information via a partnership with Microsoft (MSFT) Bing Search. Meta AI can be used in any chat by invoking @meta AI in the discussion. Users can generate images in a chat with a "/image" command.
- The Meta CEO also launched a collection of 28 other personality driven AI chat bots focused on various topics, like "Max the sous chef" or "Lorena travel expert." The company is working

with a group of celebrities, including Tom Brady, Chris Paul, Snoop Dogg, Dwayne Wade, Paris Hilton, and Kendall Jenner to be the personalities of some bots. (Snoop Dogg plays a personality called the Dungeonmaster, targeted at Dungeons and Dragons players.)

- Zuckerberg also announced AI Studio, a platform for developers for building AI chatbots. He said Meta is also bringing the new AI personalities to the metaverse, where they can be included as avatars or non-playing characters in games. He also said the company is launching customer AIs with a small number of businesses starting today.

Facebook Needs to Continue Covering Meta's Expensive Quest

https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai/facebook-needs-to-continue-covering-metas-expensive-quest-b201366f?mod=djemMoneyBeat_us
Sept. 27, 2023 at 4:29 pm ET

- Mark Zuckerberg really needs to hope that Facebook's META 1.34%increase; green up pointing triangle advertising growth doesn't start slowing again.
- The co-founder and chief executive of Meta Platforms took to the stage at the company's Silicon Valley headquarters on Wednesday to tout the latest efforts in mixed reality, which blends virtual reality with real-world images. There weren't many surprises—especially because Zuckerberg scooped himself by announcing the company's new Quest 3 headset in June as a way to get ahead of Apple's AAPL 0.58%increase; green up pointing triangle unveiling of its first mixed-reality device the following week. Zuckerberg also used the event to jump on the bandwagon of generative artificial intelligence, announcing a new personal assistant chatbot called Meta AI.
- Still, the parent company of Facebook and Instagram stands out. Reality Labs, the segment that houses Meta's work in VR and augmented reality, generated just 1.5% of the company's total revenue for the 12-month period ended June. It also produced an operating loss of $15.7 billion for that time. That loss has effectively taken about 35% off the operating earnings over the last four quarters by the company's Family of Apps—mainly Facebook and Instagram advertising. By contrast, Alphabet's Other Bets ventures cost about 7% of the operating earnings of the core Google business for that time.
- According to data from IDC, Meta's headset shipments in the first half of this year have slid 72% from the same period last year, which was helped by the brief popularity of its Quest 2 headset. IDC also projects total headset shipments across the industry will fall 3% this year from last year.
- That might explain why Zuckerberg himself seems anxious to change the subject. After announcing that the Quest 3 will start shipping next month, he quickly pivoted to AI—tech's topic du jour. In addition to the Meta AI chatbot, he announced other more specialized chatbots fronted by celebrities, including Snoop Dogg, Tom Brady and Kendall Jenner. The company will also start selling new smartglasses next month with Meta AI built in through its partnership with Ray-Ban.
- But AI is expensive as well. And unlike big-tech peers such as Microsoft and Google that have already rolled out prices for their new GenAI-based services, Zuckerberg said nothing about any business model being attached to the new AI tools announced Wednesday.
- Hence, the company still in the midst of its "year of efficiency" faces a growing set of bills, even after having shed nearly 16,000 employees. Meta's share price has surged 147% this year—the second-best performer on the S&P 500—mostly on the belief that the Facebook and Instagram advertising businesses will keep accelerating their recent growth trends.

Meet the A.I. Jane Austen: Meta Weaves A.I. Throughout Its Apps

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/27/technology/meta-ai-celebrities.html?campaign_id=9&emc=edit_nn_20230928&instance_id=103861&nl=the-

Sept. 27, 2023

- Ms. Austen was not *actually* talking to us. But a modern interpretation of her likeness was used by **Meta**, which owns WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram, as part of an artificially intelligent character that could chat across the company's messaging apps. Characters based on other people's likenesses — including the former quarterback Tom Brady, the social media influencers **Mr. Beast** and Charlie D'Amelio, and the hip-hop artist Snoop Dogg — were also available to converse.
- "Most people haven't had the chance to experience" the newest and most powerful A.I technologies, Mark Zuckerberg, Meta's chief executive, said on Wednesday. "That's a thing that I think we can change."
- He added, "People aren't going to want to interact with one single super intelligent A.I. — people will want to interact with a bunch of different ones."
- Meta is aiming to keep pace with OpenAI, Google, Microsoft and other companies in the frenzied race over A.I. that can instantly generate text, images and other media on its own. Since November, when OpenAI **unexpectedly launched the chatbot ChatGPT**, Silicon Valley executives have embraced the technology as the next big shift in computing — and struggled not to be left behind.
- For Meta, widespread acceptance of its new A.I. products could significantly increase engagement across its many apps, most of which rely on advertising to make money. More time spent in Meta's apps means more ads shown to its users.
- While Meta has worked on A.I. behind the scenes for years, it was initially slow to introduce products with generative A.I., especially as it focused on **transforming into a metaverse company**. To catch up, Mr. Zuckerberg overhauled the company to focus on building A.I.-focused products like the ones introduced on Wednesday, holding weekly meetings with his executive team to discuss the progress.
- Now Meta is using its tried-and-true playbook of leveraging its enormous size — globally, more than three billion people use its products — to popularize its offerings. And whereas interactions with ChatGPT and **Google's Bard chatbot** have largely been between an individual and the bot or within productivity programs like Gmail, Mr. Zuckerberg envisions users of Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp interacting with chatbots more socially in their everyday conversations and group chats with friends.
- Meta's new character-like bots work similarly to Snapchat's offering — and a little like the digital personalities offered by **Character.AI**.
- The celebrities and athletes are being paid for their A.I. characters; Meta did not provide details on compensation.
- "We see people going to different A.I.s for different things, which is how we see ourselves building out an ecosystem of many more A.I.s over time," said Ahmad Al-Dahle, Meta's vice president of generative A.I.
- But like other chatbots, Meta's chatbots can generate false and misleading information — a phenomenon that researchers call **hallucination**. This can happen even when the bot bases its answer on what it grabs from a search engine.
- Like **Microsoft, OpenAI and others**, Meta is also offering a tool for instantly generating photorealistic images. Users will be able to instantly create A.I.-produced photos or sticker emoji reactions inside the company's messaging apps based on whatever they type into the chat prompt, with some limitations.

- This kind of image-generating technology can be used to spread disinformation online. To guard against this possibility, Meta said, images created with the tool will be marked with an icon indicating they were created by A.I.
- Mr. Al-Dahle said Meta had spent thousands of hours doing "red team" scenarios to test the potential misuse of the technologies. The company has also published a set of responsible-use guidelines for those who want to use Meta's underlying technology to eventually power their own chatbots.
- Many of the products will also be rolled out in a limited capacity to U.S. users only, as the company works out any early kinks and watches how users respond.

☐ Meta announces new Quest 3 VR headset as Apple competition looms

https://www.cnbc.com/2023/09/27/meta-announces-new-quest-3-vr-headset-as-apple-competition-looms-.html?utm_campaign=mb&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=morning_brew
SEP 27 20231:13 PM EDT

- Quest 3 Introduction: Meta unveiled the Quest 3, a sequel to its best-selling VR headset. The device is priced starting at $499.
- Improved Features: The Quest 3 comes with enhancements including a more powerful Qualcomm chip, better screens, and a feature called "passthrough." This feature allows users to quickly see the real world outside the headset, making it less isolating and more comfortable for extended use.
- Availability: Preorders for the Quest 3 opened on the announcement day, and the headset is set to ship on October 10.
- Passthrough Mode: One of the defining features of the Quest 3 is its "passthrough" mode. Users can double-tap the headset to switch from a virtual world to seeing the real world around them. This feature improves usability and convenience.
- Hardware Improvements: The Quest 3 features a new headband strap, a slimmer headset design, improved speakers, and controllers with better haptic feedback. It uses Qualcomm's Snapdragon XR2 Gen 2 chip, offering higher resolution displays per eye.
- Battery Life: Users can expect approximately two hours and 12 minutes of battery life with the Quest 3.
- Market Competition: Meta's launch of the Quest 3 comes ahead of Apple's Vision Pro headset, which is expected to be more expensive, starting at $3,499. This competition between Meta and Apple is seen as a significant development in the VR industry.
- Quest as a Gaming Device: Meta primarily positions the Quest 3 as a gaming device and has lined up 500 games and apps for the headset. However, Apple frames its VR device as more of a computer.

TikTok targets Asia's red-hot video game market to boost ad revenue

https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Media-Entertainment/TikTok-targets-Asia-s-red-hot-video-game-market-to-boost-ad-revenue?utm_campaign=IC_techAsia_free&utm_medium=email&utm_source=NA_newsletter&utm_content=article_link&del_type=5&pub_date=20230928150000&seq_num=8&si=__MERGE__user_id__MERGE__
September 27, 2023 11:00 JST

- TikTok is looking to cash in on Asia's increasingly competitive video game market by persuading game developers, particularly independent studios, to advertise on its short video platform.
- According to Kotler, TikTok has a dedicated team for gaming business that includes ad solutions and marketing. It is also helping game companies create effective ads on the

platform, including offering workshops on how to make TikTok-friendly video content. "It shows the importance of gaming [to TikTok]," she said.

- According to a report by TikTok and Dutch research firm Newzoo, the number of releases of PC games increased 82% in 2022 compared to five years earlier, to 12,690 games -- but the number with at least 50,000 players declined 51%.
- As the race to attract players heats up, TikTok sees potential demand from gaming companies eager to reach a wider audience.
- The Asia-Pacific region is "a very significant market," she added, as it is seeing a growing number of "indie games," which generally have fewer development resources than titles from industry giants like Nintendo.
- More Asian game companies are also trying to reach global audiences, something Kotler says may be due in part to weaker currencies in the region.
- Richmond Lim, creative director of the indie game company Illam Software Entertainment, was also in town for the Tokyo Game Show. He said his company is "struggling" to reach players as competition heats up. Illam is currently focused on more conventional means of advertising, such as posting information on social media or issuing press releases. "Ads are quite expensive," he said.
- The introduction of the video game platform Steam and Nintendo's move to deliver more low-profile games on its Switch console have made it easier for publishers to sell their games, with the result that competition for players' attention has also risen.
- Shin Imai of Hyper Real, another independent studio, estimated that "around 80% of indie games go unnoticed after launch." He added, "It's a discovery problem."

☑ Meta is putting AI chatbots everywhere
https://www.theverge.com/2023/9/27/23891128/meta-ai-assistant-characters-whatsapp-instagram-connect
Sep 27, 2023

- Meta is officially entering the AI chatbot wars, starting with its own assistant and a slew of AI characters it's releasing in WhatsApp, Instagram, and Messenger.
- For anyone who has used OpenAI's ChatGPT, or other chatbots like Anthropic's Claude, Meta's AI will immediately feel familiar. Meta sees it as a general-purpose assistant for everything from planning a trip with friends in a group chat to answering questions you'd normally ask a search engine. On that latter piece, Meta is announcing a partnership with Microsoft's Bing to provide real-time web results, which sets Meta AI apart from a lot of the other free AIs out there that don't have super recent information.
- Another big aspect of the Meta AI is its ability to generate images like Midjourney or OpenAI's DALL-E via the prompt "/imagine."
- Like all of Meta's AI features being announced this week, this image generation is totally free to use.
- Ahmad Al-Dahle, Meta's VP of generative AI who has been leading the assistant's development, wouldn't tell me exactly what it's trained on. He described it as a "custom-made" large language model that is "based on a lot of the core principles behind Llama 2," Meta's latest quasi-open source model that is being quickly adopted across various industries.
- The rapid adoption of Llama 2 has helped Meta refine how its own assistant works, he says. "We just saw huge demand for the models, and then we saw an incredible amount of innovation happening on the models that really helped us understand their performance, understand their weaknesses, and help us iterate and leverage some of those components directly into product."
- In terms of how Meta AI differs from Llama 2, Al-Dahle says his team spent time "refining additional data sets for conversations so that we can create a tone that is conversational and friendly in the way that the assistant responds. A lot of existing AIs can be like robotic or bland." Meta expanded the model's context window, or the ability to leverage previous

interactions to generate what the model produces next, "so that we can build a deeper, more capable back and forth" with users. He says Meta AI has also been tuned to give "very concise" answers.

- Alongside Meta's assistant, the company is beginning to roll out an initial roster of 28 AI characters across its messaging apps. Many of them are based on celebrities like Charli D'Amelio, Dwyane Wade, Kendall Jenner, MrBeast, Snoop Dogg, and Paris Hilton. Others are themed to specific use cases like a travel agent.
- An interesting twist is an aspect of these characters that Al-Dahle calls "embodiments." As you chat with one of them, their profile image subtly animates based on the conversation. The effect is more immersive than the 2D chatbots I've interacted with to date.
- During my brief time trying Meta AI last week, I tried getting it to slip up and say something bad. It told me that covid vaccines are safe and that it can't help me make a dirty bomb. It wouldn't give me advice on how to break up with someone, which suggests that Meta has added *a lot* of safeguards to avoid as many PR disasters as it can. Al-Dahle says the company spent 6,000 hours red-teaming the model to find problematic use cases and that employees have been creating thousands of conversations with it daily in the run-up to release.
- For now, Meta AI isn't trained on public user data across Instagram and Facebook, though it sounds like that is coming. It's easy to imagine asking it to "show me reels from the south of Italy" and that being a compelling use case that other chatbots can't replicate. "We see a long roadmap for us to tie in some of our own social integrations as part of the assistant to make it even more useful," says Al-Dahle.
- After talking with Al-Dahle and other Meta execs, it's clear that the company sees its unrivaled distribution – billions of daily users across its messaging apps – as a key competitive edge against ChatGPT and others. The assistant is "right there inside of your chat context, and our chat applications are quite popular," says Al-Dahle. "You don't have to pull yourself out of context to interact or engage or get the assistant to help you."

☑ Meta's new AI assistant trained on public Facebook and Instagram posts

https://www.reuters.com/technology/metas-new-ai-chatbot-trained-public-facebook-instagram-posts-2023-09-28/

September 28, 202310:55 PM AST

- Meta Platforms (META.O) used public Facebook and Instagram posts to train parts of its new Meta AI virtual assistant, but excluded private posts shared only with family and friends in an effort to respect consumers' privacy, the company's top policy executive told Reuters in an interview.
- Meta also did not use private chats on its messaging services as training data for the model and took steps to filter private details from public datasets used for training
- "We've tried to exclude datasets that have a heavy preponderance of personal information," Clegg said, adding that the "vast majority" of the data used by Meta for training was publicly available.
- Meta AI was the most significant product among the company's first consumer-facing AI tools unveiled by CEO Mark Zuckerberg on Wednesday at Meta's annual products conference, Connect. This year's event was dominated by talk of artificial intelligence, unlike past conferences which focused on augmented and virtual reality.
- Meta made the assistant using a custom model based on the powerful Llama 2 large language model that the company released for public commercial use in July, as well as a new model called Emu that generates images in response to text prompts, it said.
- The product will be able to generate text, audio and imagery and will have access to real-time information via a partnership with Microsoft's (MSFT.O) Bing search engine.
- The public Facebook and Instagram posts that were used to train Meta AI included both text and photos, Clegg said.

- Those posts were used to train Emu for the image generation elements of the product, while the chat functions were based on Llama 2 with some publicly available and annotated datasets added, a Meta spokesperson told Reuters.
- Clegg said Meta imposed safety restrictions on what content the Meta AI tool could generate, like a ban on the creation of photo-realistic images of public figures.
- On copyrighted materials, Clegg said he was expecting a "fair amount of litigation" over the matter of "whether creative content is covered or not by existing fair use doctrine," which permits the limited use of protected works for purposes such as commentary, research and parody.
- OpenAI, for instance, signed a six-year deal with content provider Shutterstock this summer to use the company's image, video and music libraries for training.

☑ Facebook and Instagram will soon get a slew of AI-powered creator tools

https://www.theverge.com/2023/9/27/23892231/meta-generative-ai-image-editing-stickers-instagram-facebook-whatsapp
Sep 27, 2023

- New generative AI tools announced Wednesday at Meta's Connect event will allow users to edit images and create stickers using text prompts. AI image editing will be available on Instagram, and AI-generated chat stickers will roll out on Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, and Messenger.
- AI-powered photo editing on Instagram includes two new features: restyle and backdrop.
- For both editing features, Meta says it will identify when images are created using AI tools so audiences can discern whether what they're seeing is synthetic or human-generated. The company says it's experimenting with other labeling features, including visible and invisible markers.
- AI-generated stickers will bring more synthetic content to Meta's apps. Users will have the option to create stickers using text prompts, which should result in "multiple unique, high-quality stickers in seconds." The feature is powered by Meta's large language model Llama 2,
- AI-generated stickers will appear on Facebook Stories, Instagram Stories and DMs, Messenger, and WhatsApp. Select English language users will get access to the feature over the next month.
- Tech companies are in a frenzy of launching AI-powered tools that promise better, faster, and more personalized versions of tools that often already exist, from movie recommendations and bots that synthesize news to uncanny face filters. But we've seen AI image editing and generation before, and more recently, other social media platforms seem to have the exact same idea as Meta.
- The news of AI image editing tools on Meta apps follows a similar announcement from YouTube earlier in September. At the company's Made on YouTube event, leadership announced several new AI-powered features that, if used, would significantly increase the amount of AI-generated content on the platform — and alter what kind of content is created.
- The news of AI image editing tools on Meta apps follows a similar announcement from YouTube earlier in September. At the company's Made on YouTube event, leadership announced several new AI-powered features that, if used, would significantly increase the amount of AI-generated content on the platform — and alter what kind of content is created.
- But judging from the wave of features coming from Meta, YouTube, and other companies, users are about to see much more AI-generated content on social platforms appearing next to everything else. The question is whether these tools will actually make platforms and content more interesting.

☑ Xbox Cloud Gaming Comes To Meta Quest 3 With Mixed Reality This December

https://www.gamespot.com/articles/xbox-cloud-gaming-comes-to-meta-quest-3-with-mixed-reality-this-december/1100-6518030/

September 27, 2023

- As part of the Meta Connect event, the company announced that Xbox's cloud gaming network will be available in mixed reality for Meta Quest 3 this December.
- Support for Xbox Cloud Gaming and Xbox Game Pass on the Meta Quest platform was announced at Meta Connect in 2022, but at the time, the company did not provide a release window.

Mark Zuckerberg on Threads, the future of AI, and Quest 3

https://www.theverge.com/23889057/mark-zuckerberg-meta-ai-elon-musk-threads-quest-interview-decoder

Sep 27, 2023

- See Twitter as being farther from become a 1B user platform after Elon's takeover.
- Set culture of Threads as a positive platform where to generate discussions, sees Twitter as a negative atmosphere.
- Not focused on monetization with Threads right now. Are still in the initial part of their product cycle where they find ways to retain users to then later grow the community. After growing the community they start thinking of possible monetization streams.
- Will focus Threads on decentralized protocol.
- Sees future of interaction with many different AI's for different purposes.
- AI's will not only interact over chat. They will have profiles and will be able to interact with users and with each others. Also see them as being enbodied in the Metaverse.
- Social is being used more in VR than for gaming but in the economics its reverse because gamers pay more for experiences.
- When looking at the R&D costs of RL, the largest costs goes to glasses.

The Meta Quest 3 is sharper, more powerful, and still trying to make mixed reality happen

https://www.theverge.com/2023/9/27/23890731/meta-quest-3-headset-hands-on-mixed-reality-connect

Sep 27, 2023

- Meta's mixed reality seems to be getting better, but it's still struggling to demonstrate that the new feature is worth buying into – at least before launch.
- The Quest 3 is a slightly more compact iteration of the Quest 2 that promises a screen clarity bump and more graphically intensive games. It features dual 2064 x 2208 pixel displays compared to the Quest 2's 1832 x 1920 pixels per eye, and it's the first product to ship with a second-generation Qualcomm Snapdragon XR2 chipset, which Meta says can achieve graphics performance that's twice as fast as the Quest 2's first-gen XR2.
- This chip won't match a PC graphics card.
- Meta says all of its high-profile Quest 3 launch titles are also on the Quest 2, but I wouldn't be surprised to see Quest 3 exclusives pop up soon, taking advantage of its higher visual fidelity.
- The Quest 3 has also slimmed down the Quest 2's controllers.
- The Quest 3's controllers still use disposable batteries, but it's launching with a charging dock that includes rechargeables you can slot into them instead
- he Quest headset battery itself is supposed to last between two and three hours, similar to the Quest 2 and better than the Quest Pro. While Qualcomm says the second-gen XR2's GPU

is 50 percent more efficient than its predecessor, Meta clearly opted for performance over increased battery.

- The Quest 2 originally shipped with a foam face mask that was annoying to clean, but I used the Quest 3 with a soft rubber mask that seems decently wipeable if you've just sweated through a *Beat Saber* session. Its default head fixture has been redesigned to better accommodate hair buns and ponytails with a Y-shaped top strap, and you can still buy a version of the Elite Strap with or without a supplemental battery. (It's not interchangeable with the Quest 2's version.) In addition to the default black face mask and white cloth strap, you can get a mask and strap in "Blood Orange" or "Elemental Blue". It's a hair heavier than the Quest 2 – 515 grams compared to 503 grams – but still significantly lighter than the 722-gram Quest Pro, although, as with the Quest 2, the Elite Strap will probably add some heft.
- There's now a focus wheel to let you adjust the distance between lenses while you're wearing the headset, rather than the Quest 2's awkward manual lens snapping. The lenses have a slimmer profile, and a pair of buttons on the inside will let you change their distance from your face, accommodating people wearing glasses.
- From people who have tried the Apple Vision Pro (I haven't), I hear the Quest 3 doesn't nearly measure up – which is reasonable given that it costs a fraction of the price. But its passthrough seems noticeably less grainy than the Quest Pro's and vastly better than the fuzzy black-and-white feed on the Quest 2.
- Qualcomm says the XR2 Gen 2 chip is capable of just 12 millisecond passthrough latency, on par with Apple's Vision Pro, but it depends on the resolution of the images being sent by the headset's cameras.
- The Quest 3 also has a depth sensor that wasn't included on the Quest 2 or the Quest Pro, which means it should be able to scan your physical surroundings with more accuracy, detecting where walls and objects are placed.
- Unlike with Meta's earlier headsets, you don't have to use your controller to trace a boundary for virtual reality mode. You can let the headset suggest one and manually modify it as necessary, similar to the PlayStation VR2's setup process.
- I found little of that promise in the Quest 3's mixed reality demos. The best one involved me and one other person putting on headsets and sitting at a coffee table, where we called up a virtual floating arena and steered tiny robots around punching each other. The passthrough video meant we could see our surroundings and each other, making it feel more like playing a board game than descending into a completely separate world. That's neat – but the experience wasn't something I'd do for more than a few minutes.
- Other MR apps were simply frustrating. A *Stranger Things* game used the hand-tracking feature that all current Quest headsets support, letting me open portals and move bat creatures with hand gestures. But the game's use of these gestures felt awkward and unreliable, and the experience was short and on-rails. I played a decent minigame about blasting cute fuzzy aliens to capture them, but it was mostly a slower rehash of [a HoloLens demo I tried in 2015](#).
- But compared to Meta's proactive work pushing VR development forward, its MR demos made the medium still seem like a solution looking for a problem.
- Combine that with the Quest Pro's existing work-oriented MR apps, and Meta's overall MR pitch seems similar to that of the Apple Vision Pro: a really big virtual screen that can substitute for your TV and monitor. I find myself left cold by this pitch, at least for the current generation of headsets – but I've heard enough people [express interest in it](#) that I'm willing to concede there could be a market.
- Even so, while I haven't tried the Quest 3 nearly long enough to render a judgment, I'm not confident it's a viable substitute for your other screens just yet. As with most VR headsets, I spent my demo time struggling to find a comfortable fit – because no matter how well designed they are, current-gen devices are just unavoidably bulky. The Elite Strap might help

with that, but this still isn't something I want to wear all day for work or slip on to watch some TV during dinner.

The synthetic social network is coming
https://www.platformer.news/p/the-synthetic-social-network-is-coming
SEP 28, 2023

- Meta is developing AI assistant characters and personality-driven chatbots for its messaging apps, featuring celebrity voices.
- Meta plans to place AI characters on various surfaces of its products, potentially transforming social networking into a partially synthetic experience.
- Meta unveils its Quest 3 headset and plans for mixed reality.
- Mark Zuckerberg discusses Meta's focus on innovation and product development.

Meet the Meta AI cinematic universe
https://www.emergingtechbrew.com/stories/2023/09/28/meta-ai-cinematic-universe?mbcid=32863812.90683&mblid=2b011c51811c&mid=e1b4f8acf002cf2d6104630a97a174fc&utm_campaign=etb&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=morning_brew
September 28, 2023

- Introduction of AI Characters: Meta is introducing 28 new AI characters, some with the likenesses of celebrities like Naomi Osaka, Snoop Dogg, and Paris Hilton. These characters can interact with users through messaging and social media profiles.
- Emu Image Generation Model: Meta is using a new image generation model called Emu to create custom emoji stickers for WhatsApp, Messenger, Instagram, and Facebook Stories. This complements their large language model (LLM), Llama.
- AI Tools for Image Editing: Similar to Adobe's Firefly, Meta is adding AI tools to image editing in Instagram, offering features like custom backgrounds and stylization.
- Meta AI Assistant: Meta is introducing a new assistant called Meta AI, based on the Llama model, to chat with users across all Meta properties. It also has a search partnership with Microsoft Bing.
- Integration with Hardware: Meta AI will be integrated into the Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses refresh and the upcoming Quest 3 AR/VR headset.
- Accessibility and Humanizing AI: Meta aims to make AI more accessible to its billions of users by giving AI a human face. Mark Zuckerberg believes this approach will set Meta apart from rivals like Microsoft and Google in the AI space.
- Shift in Focus: The article notes that Meta's focus on AI at the Meta Connect conference somewhat overshadowed its previous emphasis on the metaverse and Horizon Worlds.

☑ Fact Checkers Take Stock of Their Efforts: 'It's Not Getting Better'r
https://www.nytimes.com/2023/09/29/business/media/fact-checkers-misinformation.html
Sept. 29, 2023

- With a wave of elections expected next year in dozens of countries, the global fact-checking community is taking stock of its efforts over a few intense years – and many don't love what they see.
- The number of fact-checking operations at news organizations and elsewhere has stagnated, and perhaps even fallen, after a booming expansion in response to a rise in unsubstantiated claims about elections and the pandemic.
- The social networking companies that once trumpeted efforts to combat misinformation are showing signs of waning interest. And those who write about falsehoods around the world are facing worsening harassment and personal threats.

- At the end of last year, there were 424 fact-checking websites, up from just 11 in 2008, according to [an annual census](#) by the Duke University Reporters' Lab.
- Facebook, which is owned by Meta, helped spur some of the growth [in 2016](#) when it started working with and [paying](#) fact-checking operations. Online platforms, [like TikTok](#), eventually followed suit.
- This year, only 417 sites are active. The addition of new sites has slowed for several years, with just 20 last year compared with 83 in 2019.
- "The leveling-off represents something of a maturing of the field," said Angie Drobnic Holan, the director of the International Fact-Checking Network, which the nonprofit Poynter Institute started in 2015 to support fact checkers worldwide.
- Harassment and government repression, however, remain major deterrents. Political polarization has turned fact-checking and other misinformation defenses into a target among right-wing influencers, who claim that debunkers are biased against them.
- "We're in this highly distrustful environment where you're evaluating just on the basis of the speaker and distrusting people who you decided their judgment is not trustworthy," Ms. Green said.
- Intervening against misinformation has a broadly positive effect, according to researchers. Experiments [conducted in 2020](#) concluded that fact checks in many parts of the world reduced false beliefs for at least two weeks. [A team at Stanford](#) determined that education about misinformation after the 2016 election had probably contributed to fewer Americans visiting websites in 2020 that were not credible.
- [Success](#), however, is [inconsistent](#) and contingent on many variables: the viewer's location, age, political leaning and level of digital engagement, and whether a fact check is written or illustrated, succinct or explanatory. Many efforts never reach crucial demographics, while others are ignored or resisted.
- After falsehoods swarmed Facebook during the pandemic, the platform instituted [policies against Covid-19 misinformation](#). Some researchers, however, questioned the effectiveness of the efforts in a study published this month in the journal Science Advances. They determined that while the amount of anti-vaccine content had declined, engagement with the remaining anti-vaccine content had not.
- The remaining anti-vaccine content was more likely to be misleading, researchers found, and users linked to less trustworthy sources than they did before Facebook put its policies in place.
- Social platforms where false narratives and conspiracy theories still spread widely have scaled back [anti-disinformation resources](#) over the past year. [Researchers found](#) that fact-checking organizations and similar outlets grew gradually more dependent on social media companies for a financial lifeline; misinformation watchers now worry that [increasingly budget-conscious tech companies](#) will start reducing their philanthropy spending.
- If Meta ever cuts the budget for its third-party fact-checking program, it could "decimate an entire industry" of fact checkers that depend on its financial support, said Mr. Roth, now a visiting scholar at the University of Pennsylvania. (Meta said its commitment to the program had not changed.)
- Crowdsourced fact-checking has shown mixed results in research, said Valerie Wirtschafter, a fellow at the Brookings Institution. An article she co-wrote in The [Journal of Online Trust and Safety](#) found that the presence of a Community Note did not keep posts from spreading widely. Users who created misleading posts saw no change in the engagement for subsequent posts, suggesting that they paid no penalty for sharing falsehoods.

- Tests are also being run using A.I. to quickly parse the enormous volume of false information, identify frequent spreaders and respond to inaccuracies. The technology, however, has a shaky track record with truth. After the fact-checking organization PolitiFact tested ChatGPT on 40 claims that had already been meticulously researched by human fact checkers, the A.I. either made a mistake, refused to answer or arrived at a different conclusion from the fact checkers half of the time.

☑ The Supreme Court will decide if state laws limiting social media platforms violate the Constitution

https://apnews.com/article/supreme-court-social-media-florida-texas-820e90e58e49c1146b69101ece4dd9d5?utm_campaign=mb&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=morning_brew
Updated 3:04 PM AST, September 29, 2023

- The Supreme Court agreed Friday to decide whether state laws that seek to regulate Facebook, TikTok, X and other social media platforms violate the Constitution.
- The justices will review laws enacted by Republican-dominated legislatures and signed by Republican governors in Florida and Texas. While the details vary, both laws aim to prevent the social media companies from censoring users based on their viewpoints.
- The justices had already agreed to decide whether public officials can block critics from commenting on their social media accounts, an issue that previously came up in a case involving then-President Donald Trump. The court dismissed the Trump case when his presidential term ended in January 2021.
- The new social media cases follow conflicting rulings by two appeals courts, one of which upheld the Texas law, while the other struck down Florida's statute. By a 5-4 vote, the justices kept the Texas law on hold while litigation over it continues.
- The tech sector warned that the laws would prevent platforms from removing extremism and hate speech.

☑ Meta quietly unveils Llama 2 Long AI that beats GPT-3.5 Turbo and Claude 2 on some tasks

https://venturebeat.com/ai/meta-quietly-releases-llama-2-long-ai-that-outperforms-gpt-3-5-and-claude-2-on-some-tasks/
September 29, 2023 11:00 AM

- But the biggest news from Mark Zuckerberg's company may have actually come in the form of a computer science paper published without fanfare by Meta researchers on the open access and non-peer reviewed website arXiv.org.
- The paper introduces Llama 2 Long, a new AI model based on Meta's open source Llama 2 released in the summer, but that has undergone "continual pretraining from Llama 2 with longer training sequences and on a dataset where long texts are upsampled," according to the researcher-authors of the paper.
- As a result of this, Meta's newly elongated AI model outperforms some of the leading competition in generating responses to long (higher character count) user prompts, including OpenAI's GPT-3.5 Turbo with 16,000-character context window, as well as Claude 2 with its 100,000-character context window.
- Meta researchers took the original Llama 2 available in its different training parameter sizes – the values of data and information the algorithm can change on its own as it learns, which in the case of Llama 2 come in 7 billion, 13 billion, 34 billion, and 70 billion variants – and included more longer text data sources than the original Llama 2 training dataset. Another 400 billion tokens-worth, to be exact.

- Then, the researchers kept the original Llama 2's architecture the same, and only made a "necessary modification to the positional encoding that is crucial for the model to attend longer."
- That modification was to [the Rotary Positional Embedding (RoPE)](#) encoding, a method of programming the transformer model underlying LLMs such as Llama 2 (and LLama 2 Long), which essentially maps their token embeddings (the numbers used to represent words, concepts, and ideas) onto a 3D graph that shows their positions relative to other tokens, even when rotated. This allows a model to produce accurate and helpful responses, with less information (and thus, less computing storage taken up) than other approaches.
- Using [reinforcement learning from human feedback (RLHF)](#), a common AI model training method where AI is rewarded for correct answers with human oversight to check it, and synthetic data generated by Llama 2 chat itself, the researchers were able to improve its performance in common LLM tasks including coding, math, language understanding, common sense reasoning, and answering a human user's prompted questions.

Meta launches Quest 3 and new Ray-Ban glasses ahead of Apple's Vision Pro.

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2023-10-01/could-apple-replace-google-with-own-search-engine-it-s-possible-but-unlikely-ln7gywed
October 1, 2023

- The Quest 3 is [finally arriving](#), alongside the second-generation version of Meta Platforms Inc.'s Ray-Ban "smart glasses." The Quest 3 is a pivot from prior versions of Meta's headsets. Instead of focusing on the metaverse and virtual reality, Meta sees the new device as a tool for productivity, gaming and mixed reality – the melding of VR with augmented reality. It even has a mode to transition between VR and AR, which relies on passthrough cameras to show the world around you.
- While the price is up $200 from the Quest 2, it's still a seventh of the price of the Vision Pro. The Vision Pro probably isn't going to be seven times better, but I still think these devices play in different leagues of the same market.
- The new glasses, meanwhile, should fare better than the original model – Ray-Ban Stories, which launched in 2021 – but they aren't going to transform the wearables industry. For one, they aren't really smart glasses in the sense most people expect: something with augmented reality. The product focuses instead on letting you take pictures and video, listen to audio (which is actually terrific), and make calls. The ability to livestream video to Instagram from the glasses (via a phone) is a nice touch, but it'll be two years until a version of this product is able to handle AR.

Paris Hilton Inks Content and Commerce Deal With Elon Musk's X/Twitter, Will Host Videos Featuring Live Shopping

https://variety.com/2023/digital/news/paris-hilton-x-twitter-live-shopping-1235742191/
Oct 2, 2023

- Paris Hilton has signed a content and commerce deal with X, formerly known as Twitter, for an array of content and commerce initiatives.
- Under the deal, Hilton and X will collaborate to create four original video content programs per year that include live-shopping features.
- Hilton will also serve as a launch partner for new X consumer products, services, and feature releases.
- The partnership includes a revenue-sharing agreement between X and Hilton's 11:11 Media company.
- X's Live Shopping product allows users to watch, chat, and shop in the same window while watching a livestream with Hilton on X.

- X will seek brand sponsorships to support each of Hilton's activations, including live-shopping content programs.
- Linda Yaccarino, CEO of X, welcomed Paris Hilton to the X family and expressed excitement about the partnership.

☐ Meta, OpenAI Square Off Over Open Source AI

https://www.theinformation.com/articles/meta-openai-square-off-over-open-source-ai?_cio_id=91f70238cb07cccc66&utm_campaign=%5Bdrip%5D+V4+Subs+Welco&utm_content=1004536&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cio&utm_term=1000445&rc=hm8aii

Oct. 2, 2023

- That question has pitted companies such as **Meta Platforms**, which recently made the code for its conversational AI freely available on the internet, against rivals such as **OpenAI** that sell proprietary AI like ChatGPT but don't share the code. OpenAI, Anthropic and other proprietary software makers have said governments should regulate the most capable AI models so bad actors can't easily use them. That could hamstring Meta and startups that increasingly rely on open-source models.
- Advances in open-source AI have thrust the question into discussions between tech executives and policymakers,
- CEOs including Meta's Mark Zuckerberg argued that open-source models were necessary for the U.S. to stay competitive, and that the tech industry could resolve concerns about their safety. "It's better that the standard is set by American companies that can work with our government to shape these models," Zuckerberg said, rather than allowing other countries to lead on open-source code.
- But they've also sparked fears that nefarious groups or governments could use freely available LLMs or related AI programs that create images or videos to propagate disinformation or exploit software security flaws.
- Some politicians and executives, such as former **Google** CEO Eric Schmidt, say that because American companies are in the lead when it comes to this type of AI, squandering that lead by releasing open-source software hurts U.S. national security interests.
- There's no indication that the Biden administration or Congress plan to take up the issue right away, which gives tech executives more time to carve out their corners of their debate. While most of them agree that less-powerful open-source models should be widely available, they differ on whether cutting-edge models, which are trained on vastly more data, are safe enough to release widely.
- For instance, Anthropic opposes an open-source release of advanced AI, while Meta supports releasing the current generation of cutting-edge models. Microsoft falls somewhere in the middle of these two views. Google hasn't made clear whether it wants regulations on open-source AI.

Friends and Foes of Open-Source AI

Where key companies stand on regulating advanced open-source AI software

Company	Stance	Details
Anthropic	🔴	Opposes open-sourcing cutting-edge AI. Supports independent evaluation for safety of models prior to release, including by the U.S. government. Has not open-sourced its AI.
OpenAI	🔴	Wants companies to obtain government approval before releasing highly capable AI models. Has not open-sourced a large language model since 2019.
Microsoft	🟡	Has supported requiring companies to obtain licenses before releasing models. Released Phi-1.5, an open-source LLM, in September.
Google	🟡	Has not indicated whether it supports requiring government approval for launching open-source LLMs. Last released an open-source LLM in December 2022.
Meta	🟢	Says licenses are not appropriate for current generation of AI models. Released Llama 2, a cutting-edge open-source LLM, over the summer.
Databricks	🟢	Says open-source AI should not be "unduly restricted" by regulation. Sells products that help enterprises use powerful open-source models.

Source: The Information reporting

- The Llama 2 launch has forced the industry and regulators to take positions. Until recently, most people felt open-source LLMs were technically two to four years behind proprietary models, said John Borthwick, founder of New York–based venture studio Betaworks. Thanks to Meta's release of Llama 2 and other open-source tools like Falcon, built by a group based in Abu Dhabi, he said, "all of that changed."
- One way to address potential misuse, which has gained traction in recent months, is to authorize governments to evaluate the largest AI models, including open-source ones, prior to their release. Governments would then check whether their creators had taken steps to prevent users from deploying them for harmful purposes such as carrying out cyberattacks.
- Raising fears about open-source models could directly benefit companies that sell proprietary AI software. OpenAI is on pace to generate more than $1 billion annually from the sale of proprietary AI software, and Meta's push into open-source AI could slow OpenAI's growth.
- The licensing idea has drawn pushback from startups and other developers that worry that regulation will limit access to the technology and give incumbents like OpenAI, Microsoft and Google even more influence over it. While Google and Microsoft have released open-source versions of some of their technology, they sell access to their cutting-edge models. Their cloud-computing arms stand to benefit from open-source models because the developers using the code would need to rent servers.
- Startup investors such Andreessen Horowitz have been trying to convince lawmakers of the dangers of excessive regulation. Their partners have argued that if startups don't get access to open-source AI, they will have no choice but to buy software from the big technology companies. "There should be no regulatory barriers to open source whatsoever," the firm's co-founder, Marc Andreessen, wrote in a recent blog post.
- Llama 2 has extended a lifeline to startups, said Florent Crivello, founder of AI assistant startup Lindy. "People like me want open-source models to exist, because I don't like giving

all my money" to OpenAI, he said. At the same time, he said, the concerns that runaway AI systems could hurt people are valid and should prompt regulators to slow development of the technology.

☑ TikTok is testing an ad-free monthly subscription plan (Update: Confirmation)

https://www.androidauthority.com/tiktok-testing-ad-free-monthly-subscription-plan-3370353/
October 3, 2023

- TikTok is testing an ad-free monthly subscription plan, according to code found in the app.
- During the testing phase, the plan costs $4.99 per month in the USA.
- TikTok confirmed the test of the ad-free subscription plan but disputed that it would necessarily lead to a product launch.
- The ad-free subscription plan is a new offering from TikTok, which has primarily relied on advertising revenue.
- It remains unclear if this feature will be rolled out widely, and final pricing may differ when it goes live for the public.
- The article asks readers if they would be willing to pay for an ad-free TikTok experience.

☐ Rare Look Inside TikTok Parent's Finances Shows Slowing Revenue Growth

https://www.wsj.com/business/tiktok-parent-bytedance-turns-operating-profit-sees-revenue-slow-bb270bc8?mod=followamazon
Updated Oct. 3, 2023 at 4:11 am ET

- ByteDance, the parent company of TikTok, reported an operating profit of nearly $6 billion in the first quarter of 2023.
- This marks a significant turnaround from 2021 when ByteDance had an operating loss of $7 billion.
- While ByteDance's revenue continued to grow, surging by over 38% to $85.2 billion in 2022, its revenue growth rate has slowed compared to the previous year.
- The company generated more than $20 billion in operating profit in 2022.
- ByteDance offered to buy back shares from current employees at $160 per share, implying a valuation of $223.5 billion, down nearly 26% from $300 billion a year ago.
- ByteDance's detailed financial report shows increased revenue and significant cost-cutting measures in marketing, administrative, and research expenses.
- ByteDance launched TikTok Shop in the U.S. in August as an e-commerce initiative to increase revenue.
- ByteDance faces competition from U.S. social media companies and political uncertainty regarding its safety and data privacy.
- TikTok CEO Shou Zi Chew has faced questions from lawmakers about security concerns and potential Chinese government influence over the company.
- The article highlights that TikTok is also facing stiffer competition from American counterparts like Meta and Alphabet.

☑ Meta Plans to Charge $14 a Month for Ad-Free Instagram or Facebook

https://www.wsj.com/tech/meta-floats-charging-14-a-month-for-ad-free-instagram-or-facebook-5dbaf4d5?mod=djem_b_Feature_1032023%2061704%20AM
Updated Oct. 3, 2023

- Would people pay nearly $14 a month to use Instagram on their phones without ads? How about nearly $17 a month for Instagram plus Facebook–but on desktop?

- That is what Meta Platforms META 3.49%increase; green up pointing triangle wants to charge Europeans for monthly subscriptions if they don't agree to let the company use their digital activity to target ads, according to a proposal the social-media giant has made in recent weeks to regulators.
- The proposal is a gambit by Meta to navigate European Union rules that [threaten to restrict its ability](#) to show users personalized ads without [first seeking user consent](#)—jeopardizing its main source of revenue.
- Meta has told regulators it hopes to roll out the plan—which it calls SNA, or subscription no ads—in coming months for European users. It would give users the choice between continuing to access Instagram and Facebook free with personalized ads, or paying for versions of the services without any ads, people familiar with the proposal said.
- Under the plan, Meta has told regulators it would charge users roughly €10 a month, equivalent to about $10.50, on desktop on a Facebook or Instagram account, and roughly €6 for each additional linked account, the people said. On mobile devices the price would jump to roughly €13 a month because Meta would factor in commissions charged by Apple's and Google's app stores on in-app payments.
- Planning to launch a subscription option for core Meta services is a major turnaround for the company. Meta Chief Executive [Mark Zuckerberg](#) has long insisted that his core services should remain free and supported by advertising so that they can be available to people of all income levels.
- Privacy-conscious users in the U.S. shouldn't expect to be offered the option to pay for ad-free Instagram or Facebook soon. Meta's proposals have been pitched specifically as a way to navigate demands by EU regulators to seek consent before crunching user data to select highly personalized ads.
- It isn't clear if regulators in Ireland or Brussels will deem the new plan compliant with EU laws, or whether they will insist Meta offer cheaper or even free versions with ads that aren't personalized based on a user's digital activity.
- One issue for regulators, some of the people familiar with the proposals said, is whether the prices Meta is proposing to charge will make the ad-free service too expensive for most people, even if they don't want to have their data used to target ads.
- A Meta spokesman says the company believes in "free services which are supported by personalized ads" but is exploring "options to ensure we comply with evolving regulatory requirements."
- Driving Meta's proposal has been demands by privacy regulators, led by Ireland, that Meta seek user consent before showing so-called behavioral ads, targeted with user activity data. In response, Meta had offered to seek such consent as soon as the end of October, The Wall Street Journal previously reported.
- Separately, the EU's executive arm said last month that Instagram, Facebook and Meta's advertising network would fall under the scope of the bloc's new digital-competition law, the Digital Markets Act. That law requires user consent before mingling user data among its services, or combining it with data from other companies.
- Meta has said it hopes its subscription plan could comply with both edicts. Under the EU law, a user who declines to give consent for certain data use must still be able to access a service.
- Meta reported its overall revenue in Europe worked out to roughly $17.88 per Facebook user in the second quarter, or just under $6 per user across all of its apps, on average, per month. The real average-revenue-per-month figure for EU users is likely somewhat higher, however, because Meta's broader Europe region includes several non-EU countries including Turkey and Russia where lower revenue may drag down the average.
- Meta has in pushing for its plan pointed to previous examples of how some other companies, such as music-streaming service Spotify, offer users a choice between a free ad-supported service or a subscription service without ads. Meta's proposed pricing on mobile is similar to what YouTube charges for its ad-free premium service in Europe.

- The company has also pointed to a paragraph in that July EU court decision that said social-media companies could charge a "reasonable fee" to users who decline to let their data be used for certain ad-targeting purposes, saying that opens the door to a subscription service.

Senators Probe TikTok's Executive Transfers From ByteDance

https://www.wsj.com/tech/senators-probe-tiktoks-executive-transfers-from-bytedance-c26b4e2d?mod=followamazon
Updated Oct. 3, 2023

- Senators Marsha Blackburn and Richard Blumenthal are probing TikTok's executive transfers from ByteDance, its Chinese parent company.
- They are seeking information about the relationship between TikTok and ByteDance, including whether TikTok disclosed recent personnel moves to the U.S. government.
- Some high-profile executives have transferred from ByteDance to TikTok, taking on key roles in TikTok's moneymaking operations.
- The senators are concerned that these personnel changes could undermine the security of U.S. data and TikTok's claimed independence from ByteDance.
- TikTok has faced scrutiny from U.S. authorities over potential Chinese government influence and data privacy concerns.
- The senators have requested answers to their questions by October 13.

Indonesia's ban on social media e-commerce worries sellers

https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/Indonesia-s-ban-on-social-media-e-commerce-worries-sellers?utm_campaign=IC_asia_daily_free&utm_medium=email&utm_source=NA_newsletter&utm_content=article_link
October 4, 2023

- TikTok is suspending e-commerce transactions in Indonesia following the government's ban on e-commerce on social media platforms.
- The Indonesian government introduced a new regulation prohibiting social media companies from facilitating product sales on their platforms to protect local retailers and user data.
- TikTok Shop, which had become the third-largest e-commerce platform in Indonesia, will be affected by this ban.
- Analysts suggest the ban could benefit existing e-commerce players like Shopee and Tokopedia.
- TikTok had pledged to invest billions in Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, which is already a crucial market with millions of users.
- TikTok's parent company, ByteDance, is facing regulatory challenges in various markets, including the U.S.

☑ Meta debuts generative AI features for advertisers

https://techcrunch.com/2023/10/04/meta-debuts-generative-ai-features-for-advertisers/
October 4, 2023

- Meta announced today it's rolling out its first generative AI features for advertisers, allowing them to use AI to create backgrounds, expand images and generate multiple versions of ad text based on their original copy.
- The first among the trio of new features allows an advertiser to customize their creative assets by generating multiple different backgrounds to change the look of their product images.
- However, in the ad toolkit, the backgrounds are generated for the advertiser based on their original product images and will tend to be "simple backgrounds with colors and patterns," Meta explains. The feature is available to those advertisers using the company's Advantage+ catalog to create their sales ads.

- Another feature, image expansion, allows advertisers to adjust their assets to fit different aspect ratios required across various products, like Feed or Reels, for example. Also available to Advantage+ creative in Meta's Mads Manager, the AI feature would allow advertisers to spend less time repurposing their creative assets, including images and video, for different surfaces, [Meta claims](#).
- With the text variations feature in Meta Ads Manager, the AI can generate up to six different variations of text based on the advertiser's original copy. These variations can highlight specific keywords and input phrases the advertiser wants to emphasize, and advertisers can edit the generated output or simply choose the best one or ones that fit their goals. During the campaign, Meta can also display different combinations of text to different people to see which ones drive better responses. However, Meta won't showcase the performance details for each specific text variation, it says, as the reporting is currently based on a single ad. However, the more options the advertiser selects to run, the more opportunities they'll have to improve their ad performance, [Meta informs them](#).
- Meta says it's already tested these AI features with a small but diverse set of advertisers earlier this year, and their early results indicate that generative AI will save them five or more hours per week, or a total of one month per year. However, the company admits that there's still work ahead to better customize the generative AI output to match each advertiser's style.
- In addition, Meta says there are more AI features to come, noting it's working on new ways to generate ad copy to highlight selling points or generative backgrounds with tailored themes. Plus, as it announced at Meta Connect, businesses will be able to use AI for messaging on WhatsApp and Messenger to chat with customers for e-commerce, engagement and support.

Meta's Synthetic Data Patent:
Source: Newsletter Patent Drop
Oct 5, 2023
- Meta (formerly Facebook) is seeking a patent for a system that generates synthetic data.
- This synthetic data is designed to help in designing custom applications without relying on actual system data, addressing privacy concerns.
- The system retrieves data patterns from user-generated content to create synthetic data that mimics statistical characteristics of real content.
- Synthetic data could solve data privacy issues but must accurately represent real-world data to be effective.

☑ Meta Is Paying Creators Millions for AI Chatbots
https://www.theinformation.com/articles/meta-is-paying-creators-millions-for-ai-chatbots?rc=hm8aii
Oct. 5, 2023 3:01 PM PDT
- Last week, the parent of Facebook and Instagram said it was paying stars including **Snoop Dogg, Tom Brady, MrBeast** and **Charli D'Amelio** for allowing Meta to use their likenesses for fictional AI characters. For several top creators, the payments can amount to millions of dollars each over multiple years, according to a person with direct knowledge of the offers.
- In fact, Meta is paying one top creator roughly $5 million over two years, in exchange for about six hours of work in a studio, said the person. This is a nonexclusive arrangement as well, which means creators are free to work with other AI products and services. Other deals were in a similar price range, said the person. Details of the deals haven't been previously reported.
- Right now, these characters are primarily text-based chatbots on Instagram, WhatsApp and Messenger, but Meta CEO **Mark Zuckerberg** said voice for the AI characters will arrive early next year.

- Meta's deals are notable for a number of reasons. First, they demonstrate how much AI and the metaverse remain a priority for the company. They could also help establish a benchmark for how creators get paid to license their likenesses for digital avatars. Meta was initially willing to pay more than $1 million each for these deals, said the person with direct knowledge, but it paid even more to nab big names.
- Meta likely hopes that by working with brand-name talent such as MrBeast or D'Amelio, it can take advantage of the huge audiences these stars have built across platforms. Creators who have become famous on platforms such as YouTube and TikTok have proven they can get their fans to watch content, purchase products and use different services. Ostensibly, their AI avatars should have the same power.
- Facebook Watch's history is an important reminder: As willing as Meta is to fund programs, it's also equally willing to stop funding them. The same thing could happen with these AI characters.

☐ Look out, webcams: Metaverse headsets are coming for your job

https://www.itbrew.com/stories/2023/10/05/look-out-webcams-metaverse-headsets-are-coming-for-your-job?mbcid=32945546.20701&mblid=74c67953ba9f&mid=e1b4f8acf002cf2d6104630a97a174fc&utm_campaign=itb&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_source=morning_brew

October 5, 2023

- Meta's new commercial partner is positioning the platform's headsets as a modern business essential, and launching a suite of enterprise software products later this month. IT distributor TD Synnex will exclusively roll out the Meta for Work suite in North America, the companies announced in a press release Wednesday.
- "As the lines between digital and physical business operations are ever evolving, the products, integrated with the Metaverse, promise to reshape the paradigms of meetings, trainings, collaborations, and creation," Dylan Leach, a product management SVP at TD Synnex, said in a statement. "We're excited to bring these transformative tools to market and help businesses unlock the power of this evolving XR ecosystem."
- Overall, the company had reportedly sold 20 million headsets across all its models as of March (the first of which, the Oculus Quest, launched in 2019).
- We'll have to wait until the October 24 launch date for more details, but so far the companies have said the offerings will include licensed software that adapts Meta Quest for businesses, an extended headset warranty, and enhanced support services.
- Perhaps most intriguingly, the package also comes with "the Shared Mode feature enabling facilitators and educators to disseminate content seamlessly across multiple headsets," according to the press release. That's one way to liven up your next all-hands.

Apple's Challenge for the Next Vision Pro: Making It Easier to Wear

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2023-10-08/apple-plans-smaller-lighter-vision-headset-meta-works-on-cheaper-quest-3-ar-lnhh1ulx

October 8, 2023

- Apple's Vision Pro and Meta's Quest 3 haven't even been released yet, but the two companies are already deep into work on follow-up products.
- Apple Inc. and Meta Platforms Inc. are on the cusp of launching new mixed-reality headsets, but work is already well underway on next-generation models.
- A key focus for Apple is making its device more comfortable to wear — with a smaller and lighter design. The company's first headset, the Vision Pro, has caused neck strain in testing

- due to its size and weight. That could turn off consumers already wary of mixed-reality headsets, which meld virtual and augmented reality.
- Meta, meanwhile, is looking to reduce the price of future products. Though the upcoming Quest 3 will sell for a fraction of the Vision Pro's price, it's still $200 more expensive than Meta's prior model. The company would like to get the price back down to that previous $300 level, which would help introduce mixed reality to a broader market.
- As this showdown looms, there's confidence within Apple that it has the superior product. But there are concerns about whether consumers will see a need for the device, especially at its current $3,500 price.
- The feeling within Meta is a bit different. On one hand, the company believes it has the better gaming ecosystem – with lots of titles available for the Quest 3 that take advantage of VR. The $500 price also makes the headset far more appealing to mainstream shoppers.
- But it's hard to bet against Apple, and the Vision Pro may lead consumers to embrace mixed reality in a way they haven't before.
- Ultimately, Meta can take a wait-and-see approach. Though the company has its own product road map, it could adjust features based on what Apple ends up adding to the Vision Pro and how the technology resonates with customers.
- Already, Meta has retooled its strategy to be more like Apple's. Rather than pitching the Quest 3 as a portal to the metaverse – Mark Zuckerberg's much-derided vision of interconnected online worlds – the device is now marketed as a tool for gaming and productivity apps.
- That said, the Quest 3 has its merits. It's an [improvement over the Quest 2](#) in nearly every way except for price. The device feels considerably faster and less cumbersome, and it has an elegant approach to mixed reality. And even with the price increase, the Quest 3 is one-seventh the cost of Apple's product.
- The goal now is to get even more aggressive on price. For next year, Meta is planning a cheaper mixed-reality headset that looks a lot like the Quest 3 but uses less costly components, I'm told. Meta would then reposition the Quest 3 as its mid-tier offering. At the high end, the company would come up with a replacement for its failed Quest Pro. That product launched at $1,500 last year, only to see the price cut to $1,000 when it flopped with consumers.
- One way Meta is considering lowering the cost of an entry-level headset is by not bundling it with hand controllers.
- Right now, the hand controllers are an essential part of the Quest. Just relying on hand gestures works well enough for navigating the operating system and launching apps, but the approach is barely functional when it comes to using the virtual keyboard. The silver lining here for Meta is that Apple's in-air keyboard doesn't appear to be much better. In other words, you'll probably want to pair a Bluetooth keyboard with either headset.
- At Apple, software and operations employees are preparing the Vision Pro for its debut. The hardware itself has been ready to go for months, letting the [Vision Products Group](#) – the team behind the device – move on to next-generation models. The company is considering multiple options, including a [lower-end model](#) and a more powerful version.
- But developing true AR spectacles is easier said than done. A year ago, Apple all but [stopped formal work](#) on standalone AR glasses because the technology was too elusive. It was a particular setback for Chief Executive Officer Tim Cook, who saw AR spectacles as a key objective.
- I'm told that Meta isn't planning to update the glasses hardware next year (it will just offer new color options), but a more dramatic change is slated for 2025. That's when the company hopes to release glasses with AR displays. Meta is testing the screens internally now, and they show things like text messages, map directions and information about music that's currently being played. But Meta hasn't finalized exactly what it will release.

- Like its strategy for Quest headsets, Meta is hoping to eventually segment its glasses line into low-end and high-end models – separated by whether they have the AR features.
- As for Apple, I expect the company to someday ramp up development of AR glasses again – and perhaps finally fulfill Cook's long-delayed dream.

☐ Newsom signs bill to curb spread of child sexual abuse material on social media

https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2023-10-09/california-newsom-child-sexual-abuse-online-social-media
OCT. 9, 2023

- California Gov. Gavin Newsom on Sunday signed a bill into law that would hold Facebook-owned Instagram, TikTok and other social media platforms liable for failing to combat the spread of child sexual abuse materials.
- Under the new law, Assembly Bill 1394, social media platforms will be barred starting in January 2025 from "knowingly facilitating, aiding, or abetting commercial sexual exploitation." A court would be required to award damages between $1 million and $4 million for each act of exploitation that a social media platform "facilitated, aided, or abetted." The platforms could avoid lawsuits by conducting biannual audits to detect potentially harmful designs, algorithms and features and fix any problems.
- AB 1394 also requires social media platforms to give California users a way to report child sexual abuse material they're depicted in and respond to the report within 36 hours. If they failed to meet certain requirements such as permanently blocking the material from being viewed, they would also be liable for damages.
- Common Sense Media, a nonprofit that advocates for online child safety, said in a statement that the "inadequate self-policing" of child sexual abuse materials by social media companies has harmed young people and their families.
- Industry advocacy groups NetChoice and TechNet opposed the legislation, stating that it would have a "chilling effect" on free speech because tech platforms could end up pulling down more lawful content or disabling features popular among teens.
- California is already facing lawsuits over legislation targeting online platforms. X, formerly known as Twitter, sued California over a law that would require social media companies to disclose their content moderation policies and provide a report to the California attorney general. A federal judge in September also temporarily blocked an online child safety bill after NetChoice, a group whose members include Facebook parent company Meta, Google and TikTok, filed a lawsuit against California.

☐ Lawmakers shift gears on TikTok ban

https://www.politico.com/news/2023/10/09/what-happened-to-the-tiktok-ban-00120434
10/09/2023

- Efforts to ban TikTok, a Chinese-owned app, have faced challenges due to legal concerns.
- The RESTRICT Act, a TikTok bill with bipartisan support, is stuck in Congress.
- The administration is supporting the Guard Act, a new bill written by Commerce Committee Chair Maria Cantwell.
- The Guard Act aims to grant the Department of Commerce broader authority to ban TikTok and other foreign-based apps.
- The administration's national security review of TikTok remains frozen due to defense and economic officials' differing views.
- The alternative legislation seeks to address the First Amendment concerns that have stalled the RESTRICT Act.
- While TikTok declined to comment, it asserts there is no evidence to support claims of Chinese government control.

- The path forward for the Guard Act remains unclear, and the legislation may need to address conservative concerns.

Meta Quest 3 review: almost the one we've been waiting for

https://www.theverge.com/23906313/meta-quest-3-review-vr-mixed-reality-headset

Oct 9, 2023

- The Meta Quest 3 is an upgrade over its predecessor, the Quest 2, in several ways, including comfort, power, usability, and visuals.
- The headset offers improved passthrough technology, allowing users to see their real-world surroundings without removing the headset.
- While the Quest 3 is a significant improvement over the Quest 2, there is some uncertainty about its purpose. It's much more expensive than its predecessor, and it's unclear whether it aims to be a virtual reality headset, a mixed reality device, or a game console.
- The Quest 3 boasts better hardware, improved displays, and snappier performance, but it lacks enough mixed reality content.
- The review points out that despite being technically capable, the Quest 3 primarily functions as a VR headset, and mixed reality is still in its early stages, with limited compelling content.
- The device offers a sharper display, faster performance, and better audio quality than the Quest 2.
- The reviewer suggests that for mixed reality to become mainstream, new types of apps and ideas are needed, but the Quest 3 currently lacks such content.
- The Quest 3 has a strong ecosystem of VR games and experiences, making it a great choice for gaming and entertainment.
- The review highlights the need for future developments in technology and society to make mixed reality more mainstream.

U.S. judge grants $181 million attorneys' fee request in Facebook privacy case

https://www.reuters.com/legal/transactional/us-judge-grants-181-million-attorneys-fee-request-facebook-privacy-case-2023-10-10/

October 10, 2023

- A U.S. judge on Tuesday awarded more than $181 million in legal fees to plaintiffs' lawyers as part of a $725 million data privacy settlement with Facebook parent company Meta Platforms.
- Meta agreed last year to the settlement to resolve accusations that the social media company allowed British political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica and other third parties access to consumers' personal information in violation of privacy protections. Meta did not admit liability.
- Attorneys for the class have previously said the $725 million settlement is the largest data-privacy recovery in history and the largest private settlement Meta has ever agreed to.

Utah sues TikTok, claiming app has harmful impact on children

https://www.reuters.com/legal/utah-sues-tiktok-over-impact-app-children-2023-10-10/

October 10, 2023

- Utah sues TikTok for harming children by intentionally keeping young users spending unhealthy amounts of time on the app
- Utah's lawsuit is the latest action challenging the popular app in the United States, with Indiana and Arkansas also bringing similar suits
- TikTok is accused of lying about the safety of its app and exploiting children into compulsively checking and watching it compulsively
- The Utah suit seeks civil penalties and an injunction prohibiting TikTok from violating state law that protects consumers from deceptive business practices

- Congress is considering legislation to restrict or ban TikTok over concerns of potential spying
- Hershey is investigating its technology that force-feeds inappropriate content to children through TikTok
- Consumer Reports finds more evidence of cadmium and carbon monoxide in chocolate and urges change at Hershey to combat climate change
- Adobe is collaborating with regulators to reduce the amounts of CO_2 in its products
- Facebook-parent Meta (META.O) is suing TikTok and Facebook for pushing addictive platforms.

Meta Proposes $14 Subscription Fee for Ad-Free Instagram and Facebook

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/meta-proposes-14-subscription-fee-for-ad-free-instagram-and-facebook?utm_campaign=article_email&utm_content=article-11477&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sg&rc=hm8aii

October 10, 2023

- Meta Platforms is proposing offering $14 subscriptions for ad-free versions of Facebook and Instagram to European users, as the company navigates the potential revenue hit from new European laws targeting its advertising business.
- Meta detailed the plan to regulators in Ireland and Brussels in September, and has been seeking input from other privacy regulators in the region, according to the Journal.

☐ TikTok Is Testing a $5-Per-Month, Ad-Free Version of Its App

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/tiktok-is-testing-a-5-per-month-ad-free-version-of-its-app?utm_campaign=article_email&utm_content=article-11477&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sg&rc=hm8aii

October 10, 2023

- TikTok is testing a paid, ad-free version of its app, according to a person with direct knowledge of the matter.
- News of the test was first reported by the tech blog Android Authority, which posted screenshots that showed TikTok offering users two versions of its app: the current free one with personalized ads or an ad-free option for $4.99 per month
- TikTok's test is in one market outside of the U.S. and is in a very limited and early stage, said the person with direct knowledge of the matter.
- TikTok, which at one point last year was projected to generate $10 billion in annual ad sales, has been looking to diversify its revenue streams beyond advertising. It has invested heavily in TikTok Shop, the app's nascent shopping service, including by hiring, building a delivery network and subsidizing merchants that offer big discounts and free shopping. Those investments mean TikTok Shop is expected to lose more than $500 million in the U.S. this year, as The Information has previously reported.

☑ TikTok now supports direct posting from AI-powered Adobe apps, CapCut, Twitch and more

https://techcrunch.com/2023/10/10/tiktok-now-supports-direct-posting-from-ai-powered-adobe-apps-capcut-twitch-and-more/

October 10, 2023

- TikTok today is introducing a new feature that will allow its users to post directly to the video platform from a range of popular editing apps, including Adobe's AI-powered video editing software Premiere Pro, its AI creativity app Adobe Express, as well as others, including Twitch, SocialPilot and ByteDance's CapCut.

- The new offering, Direct Post, is actually aimed at the developers of third-party apps that want to integrate more closely with TikTok and builds on TikTok's existing "Share to" integrations which allowed third-party apps to publish to TikTok along with their own hashtags.
- With Direct Post, however, apps not only have the ability to post video content directly to TikTok's platform, they can also take advantage of other options, like the ability to set captions, audience settings and more within their own platform, then send information through to TikTok with a single click. In addition, the feature allows long-form video creators to schedule their content to publish to TikTok through social media management platforms.
- Adobe, which just today unveiled a host of new AI software and technology at its annual MAX conference, is a key partner for TikTok's new feature. The company will now be offering Direct Post from Adobe Premiere Pro, which offers AI-powered video editing tools, and Adobe Express, a lightweight AI-powered creativity app.
- Other partners include CapCut, a popular video editing tool from TikTok's parent company ByteDance, which is also the second app from the company to hit the $100 million milestone, data.ai recently reported.
- In addition, Twitch streamers will be able to use Twitch's Clip Editor to covert their clips to portrait mode for direct sharing on TikTok and will also have the option to export their portrait clip to TikTok as a draft, so they can continue their edits.
- The social media marketing tool SocialPilot is adopting Direct Post, as well, bringing the option to professionals, teams, agencies and businesses that need to automate their social media posting.

☐ TikTok's Effect Creator Rewards fund now has lower eligibility requirements, an updated payout model and more

https://techcrunch.com/2023/10/11/tiktok-updates-effect-creator-rewards-lower-eligibility-requirements-new-payout-model-and-more/
October 11, 2023

- TikTok is updating its Effect Creator Rewards program with lower eligibility requirements, a revamped payout model, reduced payout increments and a lower threshold to start collecting rewards. The $6 million fund, which launched in May, rewards creators for the effects they make through TikTok's AR development platform, Effect House.
- The company also announced that it's expanding the program to 14 more countries, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, Indonesia, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Netherlands, Philippines, Poland, United Arab Emirates and Vietnam. Previously, the fund was only available in the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom.
- As part of the changes, TikTok has lowered the required number of videos that creators need in order to qualify for the program. Creators now only need to have five effects published and at least three of their effects used in 1,000 videos to qualify.
- In the earlier version of the program, creators needed an effect to have been used in 500,000 videos for the effect to start earning rewards, but now, each effect only needs to be used in 200,000 videos in order to qualify.
- As for the payout model, TikTok is transitioning to a variable payout rate, which means that creators will receive different payouts for videos created with their effects based on certain factors, such as the region where the video was created. In addition, creators previously had to accumulate 100,000 more videos created with their effect to get their next payout, but now creators can collect rewards for every additional qualified video until the end of the 90-day period.

☐ Instagram head says Threads is 'not going to amplify news on the platform'

- In response to a post about Threads' position on hard news, Mosseri explained the company did not intend to "amplify" news on its platform.
- Despite its past missteps, Meta-owned Threads has the potential to pull in X users who are dissatisfied with changes Musk is making to the platform, including the most recent update that bizarrely removed news headlines in an effort to keep X users from leaving the app.
- But if Threads is hesitant to embrace news out of fears of turning into a negative-leaning network like Twitter became, it also won't ever be able to serve as a 1:1 Twitter replacement.
- *We're not anti-news. News is clearly already on Threads. People can share news; people can follow accounts that share news. We're not going to get in the way of any either. But, we're also not going go to amplify news on the platform. To do so would be too risky given the maturity of the platform, the downsides of over-promising, and the stakes.*
- the need for an X alternative has become more dire in the face of the increases in misinformation circulating on X around the Israel-Hamas war.
- As a result, a number of reporters hopped over to Threads this weekend to establish themselves and build a following. In a viral post, journalists introduced themselves to the Threads user base, prompting others to do the same.
- But if Threads' position is to not "amplify" news, it won't work as an X replacement. Real-time news and information are the lifeblood of X, and it's a hard formula to reproduce. Threads was lucky to even have a shot at that, and it seems it's a shot it doesn't want to take.
- In addition, Mosseri is incorrect that Threads isn't getting in the way of news – the company has already blocked a number of search terms that have news value, including "covid," The Washington Post reported.
- Without a focus on news, the question for Threads is how will it deliver on its mission to create a place for discussions at scale.
- In other words, instead of generating conversations around news events, leading to debates, Threads wants to be "a more positive, friendly place for discussion," as Zuckerberg put it.
- But a friendly place for discussion could also mean a dull place to be. That's something X, for all its faults, is not.

Threads is rolling out an edit button, and it's free

- Threads will start rolling out an edit button starting today for all users. The option will allow users to edit a post for a brief time after a post goes out. For the first five minutes, the post can be edited as much as needed, but after five minutes, it's blocked.
- The functionality works both on mobile apps and on the web, and is appearing already for some users.
- Notably, the functionality is free, but also more limited compared to Twitter's version given the more strict time limit. Threads also doesn't show a history of edited posts, which makes it less obvious which posts have been edited. Rather, there's only an indicator of whether or not a post has been edited in the first place.
- Also rolling out today is a new feature called "Voice Threads," where users can attach an audio clip to a post.

☑ Meta's Clegg Says Working to Prevent 'Inappropriate' Replies From New AI Chatbots

https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2023-10-12/meta-s-clegg-says-working-to-prevent-inappropriate-replies-from-new-ai-chatbots?srnd=technology-vp&leadSource=uverify%20wall#xj4y7vzkg

October 12, 2023

- "We've had thousands of hours of red teaming – stress testing – to make them as safe as we possibly can," Clegg said
- "We can't guarantee that they won't spew something inappropriate or something unwelcome at any point, but we can keep retraining it."
- Clegg said he's involved "right from the outset" when decisions are being made by senior leadership about the direction to take the company's AI tools "in order to anticipate some of the legal, regulatory, moral, ethical, cultural issues which these new products might bump up against."
- But now, AI isn't just a solution to the company's problems; it's also a big potential headache. Meta must confront a new set of concerns posed by AI tools that may go wildly off script with a user or spread misinformation. Some users have already reportedly found that Meta's AI-generated stickers, announced alongside the celebrity chatbots last month, can create concerning imagery.
- So far, the US has only sought voluntary agreements from tech companies to safeguard their AI products. Clegg joined President Joe Biden at the White House in July to debut some of those agreed upon. Europe, meanwhile, is moving faster to regulate AI than the US. The European Parliament approved a draft law in June that would set boundaries on how AI technology can be used – and massive penalties for violations.
- Clegg said Meta's use of transparent, open-source licenses for some of its datasets and large-language models – the technology that underpins AI chatbots – would be key to safeguarding ethical use.

☐ Meta responds to EU misinformation concerns regarding Israel-Hamas conflict

https://www.engadget.com/meta-responds-to-eu-misinformation-concerns-regarding-israel-hamas-conflict-102640126.html

Oct 13, 2023

- It follows a stern letter from Thierry Breton, the European Union's (EU) regulatory commissioner, to Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg about misinformation concerns (such as deep fakes) and compliance with the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA). The company had 24 hours to respond.
- In its statement, Meta said that it created an ever-evolving operations center with experts fluent in Hebrew and Arabic
- Meta claims this new setup lets them remove content and fight misinformation faster.
- Meta reportedly took over 795,000 distinct pieces of content in Hebrew or Arabic and removed or marked them with a disturbing label in the three days following the terrorist attack by Hamas. Seven times more content across these two languages was removed daily for violating its Dangerous Organizations and Individuals policy compared to the two months leading up to the conflict.
- Hamas is listed under Meta's Dangerous Organizations and Individuals policy and banned from all of the company's platforms – as is any content praising the terrorist group.
- Further actions by Meta include restricting certain hashtags that are regularly associated with content that violates its policies and removing any content that clearly identifies a hostage (though blurred images are allowed).

- The company has also lowered the threshold for its monitoring technology, ideally reducing the chances of it recommending harmful content to users.
- Whether these steps will satisfy Breton is unclear.

☑ Meta says it's stepping up misinformation enforcement during Israel-Hamas war

https://www.cnbc.com/2023/10/13/meta-says-its-stepping-up-safety-enforcement-during-israel-hamas-war.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=newsletter_axioscloser&stream=top

OCT 13 2023

- Meta is expanding its enforcement of its policies against violent posts and misinformation amid the Israel-Hamas war as charged images and posts balloon on social media.
- Meta and other social media platforms such as X, formerly known as Twitter, have faced pressure from Europe to stay vigilant on misinformation during the conflict, in light of the European Union's Digital Services Act. The DSA requires social media platforms to monitor and remove illegal content in Europe.
- It has created a special operations center with experts fluent in Hebrew and Arabic. It has also already removed or marked disturbing more than 795,000 Hebrew or Arabic posts that violated policies against violent and graphic content, hate speech, harassment or coordinating harm, among others.
- Hamas is designated under that policy and banned from Meta platforms due to its designation by the U.S. government as a foreign terrorist organization.
- In the blog post, Meta said it has temporarily lowered the threshold to trigger its technology that prevents "potentially violating and borderline content" from being amplified across its services. Meta is also "temporarily expanding" its violence and incitement policy and will remove posts that identify hostages, even when done to raise awareness.
- The company said certain Instagram hashtags that it finds consistently used on posts in violation of its policies will not be searchable. People who have previously violated its policies will have restrictions on the use of Facebook and Instagram Live.

WhatsApp turns on passwordless logins with passkeys for Android users

https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/16/23919609/whatsapp-passkey-android-update-passwordless-security

Oct 16, 2023

- The Meta-owned company announced on X (formerly Twitter) that it's rolling out support for a passwordless passkey feature to all Android users.
- The new security option allows WhatsApp users to use their device's face, fingerprint, or pin security to unlock and access their accounts — following Google's lead when it began prompting users last week to create passkeys.
- We reached out to Meta about iOS compatibility, and while there's no word yet on support for WhatsApp passkeys on iPhones, Android support will roll out over the coming weeks and months.
- That doesn't mean WhatsApp's 2 billion-plus users are completely protected from all digital threats, but it should help make things easier and more secure for both those who already have good password habits and those who still set their passwords to "12345."

The Meta glassholes have arrived

https://www.theverge.com/23920102/meta-quest-3-in-public-privacy-recording-glassholes

Oct 16, 2023

- Over the weekend, as buyers got their first uninterrupted stretches of time with [the new Meta Quest 3 headset](#), some started posting videos of themselves interacting with the real world *instead* of playing games.
- Sure, it's cool to blast low-poly baddies breaking through your walls, but isn't it more technically impressive that Meta's new headset lets you [cook a meal](#) or [sweep your floors](#) or enjoy a [fancy coffee on a beautiful day](#) without ever taking off the machine? That's what the Quest 3's full-color, low-latency passthrough video allows.
- We've been through all of this before, of course – a decade ago, public opinion turned against Google Glass, with public business owners in particular coming out against the tech. [Diners](#), [movie theaters](#), [casinos](#), bars, and other public establishments outright banned the headset – one woman was [allegedly assaulted for wearing Google Glass](#) in San Francisco, and [an XR pioneer was assaulted in Paris](#) while using a similar-looking device.
- But that was a decade ago, and [I argued last year](#) that our definition of privacy, our tolerance for public photography, and our resistance to wearable technology have all changed considerably since Google first introduced Glass. Maybe it won't be such a problem this time around? Smartphone cameras everywhere is now the norm, and small businesses often benefit from an influencer plug; Ng was fine with me naming Fiddle Fig Cafe in this story.
- While the company has put considerable thought into making sure its glasses-like Ray-Bans don't fall into the same trap – publishing privacy explainers and [guidelines on using those glasses in public](#), including proactively letting people know you're recording – the Quest 3 doesn't seem to have similar published guidelines.
- It's also a bit harder for bystanders to tell when the Quest 3 is recording. It simply pulses a white light, slowly, and it's [a light that's already on by default](#). When I asked my wife if she thought I was recording, she said she had no clue.
- Then again, if I saw someone walking into a cafe with a bulbous white object atop their face with multiple camera slits, I'd just automatically assume they were recording absolutely everything.

☐ Social Media Users Accuse Facebook and Instagram of Suppressing Pro-Palestinian Posts

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/16/world/middleeast/israel-hamas-war-social-media.html
Oct. 16, 2023

- Thousands of Palestinian supporters say their posts have been suppressed or removed from Facebook and Instagram, even if the messages do not break the platforms' rules.
- Meta, which owns the two social networks, said that some of those posts were hidden from view because of an accidental bug in the company's systems. In particular, messages of support for Palestinian civilians, many of whom have been displaced, injured or killed by Israeli airstrikes, were being hidden from the platforms, users said. Some people have also reported that Facebook suppressed accounts that called for peaceful protests in cities around the United States, including planned sit-ins in the San Francisco Bay Area over the weekend.
- Aya Omar, an artificial intelligence engineer, told The New York Times that she was unable to see Palestinian media accounts she regularly reads because Meta and Instagram were blocking those accounts. She said that people were seeing a sanitized version of the events occurring in Gaza.
- Meta has cautioned that some posts may be temporarily suppressed or suspended as it enacts measures to deal with a high number of reports of graphic content. In some cases, the

company said, there were technical difficulties that suppressed posts that should have been widely visible.

- "We identified a bug impacting all Stories that re-shared Reels and Feed posts, meaning they weren't showing up properly in people's Stories tray, leading to significantly reduced reach," Andy Stone, a Meta spokesman, said in a [post on X](#) on Sunday. "This bug affected accounts equally around the globe and had nothing to do with the subject matter of the content — and we fixed it as quickly as possible."
- Many Palestinian supporters have flocked to other platforms to get their messages out, while criticizing Meta's content moderation. LinkedIn, used mainly for professional networking, has seen an influx of posts critical of Israel's response to Hamas and in support of civilian victims in Gaza.
- Others have posted in the comments sections of posts by widely followed Instagram and Facebook accounts, pleading for support. The comments under the [most recent post](#) by Beyoncé, whose Instagram account has more than 318 million followers, have been flooded with Palestinian and Israeli supporters trying to drum up support for their causes. Many of those messages have been copied and pasted for broader circulation across Instagram and Facebook.
- "We want to reiterate that our policies are designed to give everyone a voice while keeping people safe on our apps," the company said. "We apply these policies regardless of who is posting or their personal beliefs, and it is never our intention to suppress a particular community or point of view."
- Meta also acknowledged that its policies may not be applied perfectly every time, especially in times of global crisis.

☐ Meta will now let you stop Instagram from tracking you across the web

https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/17/23921095/meta-disconnect-data-websites-send-to-instagram
Oct 17, 2023

- Meta will now let you block Instagram from collecting your data across the apps and websites you visit. The [company says](#) that it's expanding the ability to disable this kind of tracking to Instagram, allowing you to review which businesses are sharing information with Meta, disconnect specific activity, or clear the collected information.
- Meta announced a few other features coming to the Accounts Center as well, including a way to transfer your photos and videos from Instagram to other services.
- It's not clear which specific services you can transfer your information to, but Meta cites an example of using a third-party service to create and print a photo album with pictures from Instagram.
- The company has also been tweaking its approach to ads by offering more transparency about [why you're seeing certain ads](#) and [launching a new ad distribution system](#) in response to claims it enabled housing discrimination. Meta is also contending with the new rules it must comply with in the European Union and may even make [highly targeted ads opt-in in the region](#).

☐ Instagram head says Threads' blocking of 'covid' and related terms is temporary, to lift in 'weeks or months'

https://techcrunch.com/2023/10/17/instagram-head-says-threads-blocking-of-covid-and-related-terms-is-temporary-to-lift-in-weeks-or-months/
October 17, 2023

- A week after Instagram head Adam Mosseri said the company's [new Threads app will not "amplify news,"](#) saying it's too risky for the young X competitor, the exec is now saying that one of the app's more serious issues around blocking news – a ban on health-related search terms like "covid" – is only temporary.
- First reported by [The Washington Post,](#) Threads today blocks a number of terms for user safety and to drive its early focus on developing a "positive, friendly" culture. This includes blocks on search terms like "gore," "nude," "sex" and "porn," but also those tied to news around the COVID pandemic like "vaccines," "vaccination," "coronavirus," "covid" and "long covid."
- Threads' goal, explained Mosseri, [was not to be "anti-news"](#) as users could find and follow news accounts that share information. But it also won't amplify news, saying it's too risky "given the maturity of the platform."
- But not allowing users to engage in discussions around COVID or read reporting on the topic has felt, to some, including The WaPo's Taylor Lorenz, like a bridge too far.
- In an [exchange yesterday on Threads](#), Mosseri confirmed that such a block was only temporary, however, and the company was working on lifting it. He cited the current situation in Gaza as the more pressing focus right now in terms of managing content, and detailed other projects that Instagram has prioritized before unblocking COVID-related terms.
- [In a follow-up](#) he said that the reality of the situation was that there's "lots of important work to do" and Threads' block on COVID would likely lift in a matter of weeks or months. In other words, Threads' move to block the terms is not a permanent decision – it's one where Threads prioritized other areas instead of trying to manage the potential risks around COVID misinformation spreading at a time when the network is still growing.
- Still, it's an extreme step to take to actually create a blocklist of terms that, when searched, provide no results, as it limits conversations, debate and news-sharing. It also means Threads won't have the feel of a fast-moving news network, like X, where discussions happen in real time and almost nothing is off-limits.
- That may be the point, though. As Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg recently [explained](#) in an interview, Threads didn't want to become just another Twitter – an app he described as indexing "very strong on just being quite negative and critical." Instead, he wanted Threads to be more accessible to a lot of people, and a "positive" place for discussions. Today, that means an early culture where it blocks adult topics and censors terms that could lead to more heated discussions.
- However, these choices may be limiting Threads' adoption by those looking to leave Twitter/X in some cases. Reports indicate that Threads' usage [dropped by half from its initial surge](#) and now the company is [looking for new ways to revive interest in the app](#), including by courting creators to post more often.

☐ Hamas Hijacked Victims' Social Media Accounts to Spread Terror

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/17/technology/hamas-hostages-social-media.html
Oct. 17, 2023

- What they found shocked them. Hamas members were using Ms. Idan's Facebook account to livestream themselves holding her and her family hostage. During the 43-minute broadcast, gunmen forced Ms. Idan and her family to crouch on a tile floor as missiles and gunfire blasted their building.
- In a new war tactic, Hamas has seized the social media accounts of kidnapped Israelis and used them to broadcast violent messages and wage psychological warfare, according to interviews with 13 Israeli families and their friends, as well as social media experts who have studied extremist groups.
- In at least four cases, Hamas members logged into the personal social media accounts of their hostages to livestream the Oct. 7 attacks.

- In the days since, Hamas also appeared to infiltrate their hostages' Facebook groups, Instagram accounts and WhatsApp chats to issue death threats and calls for violence. Hamas members also took hostages' cellphones to make calls to taunt friends and relatives, according to the Israeli families and their friends. Israel's military has said <ins>at least 199 people</ins> have been taken hostage by Hamas.
- But hijacking individual hostages' Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp accounts "weaponizes social media in a way I don't think we've seen before," said Thomas Rid, a professor of strategic studies at Johns Hopkins University. "We are not psychologically prepared for this."
- Social media has become a lifeline for friends and family searching for clues about missing loved ones, and receiving a message or seeing a video posted to the accounts immediately inspired a moment of hope, said two of the families whose relatives were taken hostage by Hamas. But that fizzled when they saw that someone else had made the posts.
- Meta, which owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, declined to comment on the commandeering of kidnapped Israelis' social media accounts but said it had established a "special operations center staffed with experts, including fluent Hebrew and Arabic speakers, to closely monitor and respond to this rapidly evolving situation."
- Two members of the security team that oversees Facebook, who declined to be identified because they were not authorized to speak publicly, confirmed that Hamas had gotten access to the Facebook accounts of Israelis who were taken hostage to start livestreams and post to their accounts. This appeared to be part of Hamas's strategy from the moment the attacks happened, they said. The accounts have since been made private and the livestreams removed, they added.

Meta to limit some Facebook comments on Israeli, Palestinian posts

https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/meta-limit-some-facebook-comments-israeli-palestinian-posts-2023-10-18/

October 18, 2023

- Facebook-owner Meta Platforms (META.O) on Wednesday introduced temporary measures to limit "potentially unwelcome or unwanted comments" on posts about the conflict between Israel and Hamas.
- Meta said it will change the default setting for people who can comment on new and public Facebook posts created by users "in the region" to only their friends and followers, Meta said in an updated blog post.
- The social media company added it will disable the ability to see the first one or two comments on posts while scrolling the Facebook feed.
- Earlier this week, some users who posted in support for Palestine or Gaza citizens accused Meta of suppressing their content. Meta designates Hamas as a "dangerous organization" and bans content praising the group.
- Meta said it fixed a bug on Instagram that caused re-posted content to not appear correctly in a user's story, which disappears after 24 hours.
- "This bug affected accounts equally around the globe – not only people trying to post about what's happening in Israel and Gaza – and it had nothing to do with the subject matter of the content," Meta said.

☐ EU's Thierry Breton Warns Mark Zuckerberg Over Disinformation

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/eus-thierry-breton-warns-mark-zuckerberg-over-disinformation?utm_campaign=%5BTI-

October 18, 2023
- European Commissioner Thierry Breton has asked Meta Platforms CEO Mark Zuckerberg to respond within 24 hours to requests for information about what Meta is doing to combat disinformation on its platforms related to the Israel-Hamas war.
- In a letter published to X Wednesday, Breton asked Zuckerberg to be "vigilant" in removing disinformation and illegal content related to the conflict, particularly in light of the Digital Services Act, a new European law that imposes strict rules around content moderation. Breaches of the DSA could lead to fines of 6% of Meta's annual revenue.
- Breton also said he had received reports of deepfakes on Meta's apps—and he urged the company to take action as Europe heads into more elections.

WhatsApp is rolling out a feature to set view once mode to voice notes on iOS and Android beta

https://wabetainfo.com/whatsapp-is-rolling-out-a-feature-to-set-view-once-mode-to-voice-notes-on-ios-and-android-beta/
OCTOBER 18, 2023
- WhatsApp is introducing "View Once Mode for Voice Notes" to enhance privacy.
- Users can share voice notes with this feature, making them unsaveable, unforwardable, and unexportable.
- To use this feature, beta testers must install the latest WhatsApp beta for Android or iOS.
- During voice note recording, users can tap an icon to enable "View Once Mode."
- This mode prevents recipients from exporting, forwarding, saving, or recording the voice note.
- It adds an extra layer of privacy and control for sensitive information.
- Currently available to some beta testers, it will roll out to more users in the coming days.

☐ Meta is bringing its Telegram-like broadcast channels to Facebook and Messenger

https://techcrunch.com/2023/10/18/meta-is-bringing-its-telegram-like-broadcast-channels-to-facebook-and-messenger/
October 18, 2023
- Meta is bringing its Telegram-like "broadcast channels" feature to Facebook and Messenger after rolling it out to Instagram and WhatsApp earlier this year. The company announced today that the feature is coming to the two platforms in the coming weeks.
- The feature lets creators and public figures share one-to-many messages to directly engage with their followers. Channels support text, images, polls, reactions and more. With broadcast channels, only the creator of the channel can send messages, but viewers can react to messages and vote in polls.
- Meta is currently testing the ability for Pages on Facebook to create broadcast channels, and expects to roll this out in the coming weeks.
- Once they have created a broadcast channel and shared their first message, their followers will receive a one-time prompt that will ask if they want to join.
- Some people may welcome the new feature on Facebook and Messenger, but others not so much. On Zuckerberg's Facebook post announcing the expansion, one of the top comments reads: "I miss how each app used to be unique." Some users may not see the need for the same feature on all of Meta's apps. For instance, if you're in someone's broadcast channel on Instagram, you probably don't also need to be in their Facebook one and receive another set of notifications.

WhatsApp will soon let you stay logged in to two accounts at once

https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/19/23923113/whatsapp-stay-logged-in-two-accounts-meta
Oct 19, 2023

- WhatsApp is introducing a new feature that allows users to switch between two different WhatsApp accounts on one device.
- This feature will make it easier for users to manage conversations across multiple accounts.
- It will be particularly useful for those who have one account for work and another for personal use.
- To set up a second account, users will need a separate phone number and SIM card or a phone that accepts multi-SIM or eSIM.
- WhatsApp will send a one-time passcode via SMS to the second account for verification.
- After verification, the app will work for both accounts on a single device.
- This feature is rolling out in the coming weeks, enhancing user convenience.

☑ FCC greenlights superfast Wi-Fi tethering for AR and VR headsets

https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/19/23923015/fcc-6ghz-approval-very-low-power-devices-apple-google-meta
Oct 19, 2023

- The FCC unanimously approved plans by several tech companies to use the 6GHz band for wireless devices on the same day it voted to move forward with restoring net neutrality rules.
- The rules will also allow devices to "use higher power levels" so long as they're geofenced to keep from interfering with actual licensed 6GHz usage, and the FCC will be taking comments on other ways it can expand 6GHz spectrum usage by technology devices.
- A September _Bloomberg_ report pointed to some of the kinds of devices the FCC's affirmative vote could open up, including in-car connections, mobile virtual or augmented reality devices, and more.
- Several tech companies, including Microsoft, Google, Apple, and Meta, petitioned the FCC to let them access the 6GHz band in 2019.
- The decision could benefit some of the more difficult projects those companies have been working on, such as AR glasses. Both Apple and Google have had trouble in that arena, as has Meta – which has released smart glasses, sure, but not of the reality-augmenting variety. Opening up extra spectrum gives the companies (and any others that want to) a little more connectivity freedom than they had before.
- We commend the FCC's decision allowing companies like ours to use new wireless technologies to build the next wave of computing," Martin said. "This is a shining example of a government regulator working with industry early to build for the future."

Supreme Court Lifts Limits for Now on Biden Officials' Contacts With Tech Platforms

https://www.nytimes.com/2023/10/20/us/supreme-court-social-media-biden.html
Oct. 20, 2023

- The Supreme Court has allowed Biden administration officials to continue contacting social media platforms to combat misinformation, temporarily pausing a ruling from a federal appeals court that restricted such interactions.
- The court has also agreed to hear the administration's appeal in this case, setting the stage for a significant test of the First Amendment's role in the internet era.

- Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr., joined by Justices Clarence Thomas and Neil M. Gorsuch, dissented from the court's decision, expressing concerns about government censorship of private speech.
- Solicitor General Elizabeth B. Prelogar argued that the government has the right to express its views and persuade others to take action.
- The case involves the government's efforts to persuade companies to remove posts related to COVID-19, election fraud, and Hunter Biden's laptop.
- The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit had ruled that government officials had likely violated the First Amendment in their attempts to convince social media companies to remove content.
- The case raises questions about the intersection of free speech and technology, with the court also considering cases related to social media content removal.
- The Supreme Court's decision to lift the restrictions on administration officials is temporary, pending a final ruling, which may not occur until late in the spring of the following year.

Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses review: Instagram-worthy shades

https://www.engadget.com/ray-ban-meta-smart-glasses-review-instagram-worthy-shades-070010365.html

October 20, 2023

- The Ray-Ban Stories were the most polished smart glasses I'd tried, but with mediocre camera quality, they felt like more of a novelty than something most people could use.
- After a week with the company's latest $299 sunglasses, they still feel a little bit like a novelty. But Meta has managed to improve the core features, while making them more useful with new abilities like livestreaming and hands-free photo messaging. And the addition of an AI assistant opens up some intriguing possibilities. There are still privacy concerns, but the improvements might make the tradeoff feel more worth it, especially for creators and those already comfortable with Meta's platform.
- Just like its predecessor, the Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses look and feel much more like a pair of Ray-Bans than a gadget and that's still a good thing. Meta has slimmed down both the frames and the charging case, which now looks like the classic tan leather Ray-Ban pouch. The glasses are still a bit bulkier than a typical pair of shades, but they don't feel heavy, even with extended use.
- The glasses themselves now charge wirelessly through the nosepiece, rather than near the hinges. According to Meta, the device can go about four hours on one charge, and the case holds an additional four charges.
- My other minor complaint is that the new charging setup makes it slightly more difficult to pull the glasses out of the case.
- If any of that makes you uncomfortable, or you're interested in using the shades with non-Meta apps, then you might want to steer clear of the Ray-Ban Meta smart glasses.
- If you're a creator or already spend a lot of time in Meta's apps, though, there are plenty of reasons to give the second-generation shades a look.

☐ Meta Details Efforts to Remove War-Related Disinformation

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/meta-details-efforts-to-remove-war-related-disinformation?utm_campaign=%5BTI-AM%5D+The+Informat&utm_content=131&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cio&utm_term=32&rc=hm8aii

October 20, 2023

- In a blog post Friday, the social media company said it had set up a "special operations center" staffed with Hebrew and Arabic speakers to monitor Meta's apps and had so far removed or flagged 795,000 pieces of violating content.

- The company noted that Hamas is banned from its platforms, adding that, "we remove praise and substantive support of them when we become aware of it, while continuing to allow social and political discourse – such as news reporting, human rights related issues, or academic, neutral and condemning discussion."

☑ Meta's Habitat 3.0 simulates real-world environments for intelligent AI robot training

https://siliconangle.com/2023/10/20/metas-habitat-3-0-simulates-real-world-environments-intelligent-ai-robot-training/
OCTOBER 20 2023

- Researchers from [Meta Platforms Inc.'s](#) Fundamental Artificial Intelligence Research team said today they're releasing a more advanced version of the AI simulation environment Habitat, which is used to teach robots how to interact with the physical world.
- Along with the launch of Habitat 3.0, the company announced the release of the Habitat Synthetic Scenes Dataset, an artist-authored 3D dataset that can be used to train AI navigation agents, as well as HomeRobot, an affordable robot assistant hardware and software platform for use in both simulated and real world environments.
- In a [blog post](#), FAIR researchers explained that the new releases represent its ongoing progress into they like to call "embodied AI." By that, they mean AI agents that can perceive and interact with their environment, share that environment safely with human partners, and communicate and assist those human partners in both the digital and the physical world.
- Habitat is a [catalog of virtual environments](#) such as office spaces, homes and warehouses that can be used to train and refine AI-powered robots to navigate in the real world. The virtual environments within it are constructed with meticulous detail using an infrared capture system that goes as far as measuring the exact shape and size of objects such as tables, chairs and even books. Within these environments, researchers can train robots to complete complex, multistep tasks that require the ability to see and understand their surroundings.
- Habitat 3.0 builds on those existing capabilities with support for both robot and humanoid avatars, enabling human-robot collaboration on many different tasks. For example, humans and robots can work together to clean up a living room or prepare a recipe in the kitchen. With this, FAIR says, it's opening up new avenues for research into human-robot collaboration on a range of diverse, realistic tasks. The human avatars within Habitat 3.0 are said to be extremely realistic, with a natural gait and movements to enable the most realistic low- and high-level interactions, FAIR said.
- FAIR said Habitat 3.0 will reduce the time it takes for robot AI agents to learn something from months or even years to just a few days. It will also enable far more rapid testing of new models in safe, simulated environments, without risking anything.
- The Habitat Synthetic Scenes Dataset, called HSSD-200, will also help to accelerate embodied AI research, since the 3D simulations of real world scenes are critical for training. FAIR explained that HSSD-200 is superior to previous datasets it has made available because the 3D scenes mirror physical-world scenes much more accurately than before.
- Finally, FAIR introduced a new [HomeRobot library](#), which is a hardware and software specification for researchers wanting to create a physical robot to put their Habitat-trained models to use in the physical world.
- Its designed specifically for Open-Vocabulary Mobile Manipulation research, which refers to robots that can pick an object in any unseen environment and place it in a specified location. To do this, robots must be able to perceive and understand new scenes they come across.

☐ How Meta Plans to Incorporate AI Into Its Products

https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai/meta-plans-to-incorporate-ai-4ba569e3?mod=followamazon
Oct. 20, 2023

- Cox talked about Meta's plans for wrapping artificial intelligence into its products, its introduction of chatbots played by celebrities such as Naomi Osaka and Snoop Dogg, and the potential of AI to help businesses.
- AI also has been a very important part of our products for a long time. If you look at Reels and TikTok specifically, one of the reasons these products are so successful is because of the application of machine learning and sparse networks on the problem of recommending content. And that goes all the way back to 2017.
- Llama, Meta's large language model, was launched in February. Llama 2 was launched in June. We've continued to open-source more work that's been coming out of our AI team. So we're trying to get products out the door.
- We recently announced that in WhatsApp or Messenger or Instagram, you will be able to chat with a Meta AI. You can ask it anything you want. It is tuned for safety and security, so it won't get into nasty conversations with anyone.
- We did a partnership with Bing for search. Once you have it connected, you can ask it about stuff that's going on now, and you won't get something that's six months old or nine months old. That is one of the types of problems you need to solve to make these useful.
- We researched how do you make these chatbots engaging? What is it that works for people? And there are a lot of people who want it to have some personality. They don't want it to feel like a robot.
- So we chose a few verticals where there's a lot of conversation.
- Having anything that doesn't make it clear to people what's going on is a problem. In the product, we're very open about communicating in the chat thread, when you start the thread, in the interactions that it's an AI.
- Our AI assistant is called Meta AI, and it's similarly neutral. It has a neutral tone. It has a neutral personality. It's tuned for dialogue. But I also think there's room for more expression and more playfulness.
- This is going to be opened up to creators and most important for businesses. There are over 100 million businesses using WhatsApp.
- For me, one of the most profoundly impactful applications in the near term for AI is helping businesses be more effective.
- https://www.wsj.com/video/events/metas-ai-roadmap/D8AD06F0-BCB8-4615-8FF6-B7DD3E1CE228.html
    - Meta has people dedicated to responsible AI, to regulate the fairness and bias that the platform might have to ensure that its equal in general.
    - Have people in the policy teams that talk directly to the government.
    - All these apart from the development and the infrastructure teams. Says it's a big effort.
    - Not all models will necessarily be opened sourced in the future
    - ▇ Taking into account that the new AI personalities will have conversations with users, can this be used for advertisement? Cox does an example of someone who is into fitness that might consult their program with the AI and which shoes to buy. Advertising opportunities? How do you avoid bias? How would the user be able to tell when the AI might recommend something that is not being paid? Sponsored posts??
        - Could also be a more smooth way to advertise in messaging?

☐ Inside Meta, Debate Over What's Fair in Suppressing Comments in the Palestinian Territories

https://www.wsj.com/tech/inside-meta-debate-over-whats-fair-in-suppressing-speech-in-the-palestinian-territories-6212aa58?mod=followamazon

Oct. 21, 2023

- After Hamas stormed Israel and murdered civilians on Oct. 7, hateful comments from the region surged through Instagram. Meta Platforms managers cranked up automatic filters meant to slow the flood of violent and harassing content.

- But still the comments kept appearing—especially from the Palestinian territories, according to a Meta manager. So Meta turned up its filters again, but only there.
- "What we're saying and what we're doing seem completely opposed at the moment," one employee posted internally, according to documents viewed by The Wall Street Journal. Meta has publicly pledged to apply its policies equally around the world.
- The social media giant has been wrestling with how best to enforce its content rules in the midst of the brutal and chaotic war.
- Meta relies heavily on automation to police Instagram and Facebook META -0.31%decrease; red down pointing triangle, but those tools can stumble: They have struggled to parse the Palestinian Arabic dialect and in some cases they don't have enough Hebrew-language data to work effectively.
- And when Meta turns to human employees to fill the gaps, some teams have different views on how the rules should be applied, and to whom.
- The company handles relations with Israel from Tel Aviv, led by an executive who once worked for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Meanwhile, a Dubai-based human rights policy team covers the Arab world including Palestinian territories. Those teams often disagree on content in the region, according to people familiar with the matter.
- Normally, Meta only begins to hide such comments when its systems are 80% certain that they qualify as what the company calls hostile speech, which includes things such as harassment and incitement to violence.
- As part of "temporary risk response measures"—emergency calming efforts of the sort that Meta has previously deployed in wars, potential genocides, and the Jan. 6, 2021, U.S. Capitol riot—Meta cut that threshold in half over a swath of the Middle East, hiding any comment deemed 40% likely to be inflammatory, the documents show.
- That change reduced the hateful comments in Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt and several other countries enough to make Meta's safety staff comfortable, according to a post on an internal message system by a product manager involved with it. But in the days following, comments from the Palestinian territories that met Meta's definition of hostile speech remained high on Instagram.
- "Therefore, the team decided to temporarily further reduce the threshold," the product manager wrote, lowering the bar to hide comments from users in Palestinian territories if Meta's automated system judged there was at least a 25% chance they violated rules.
- Meta has blocked hashtags, limited livestreams and restricted images of hostages.
- [Meta has long had trouble building](#) an automated system to enforce its rules outside of English and a handful of languages spoken in large, wealthy countries. The human moderation staff is generally thinner overseas as well.
- That is in part because the company's system wasn't initially trained to understand the differences between different Arabic dialects, and performed more poorly for the Palestinian dialect, [according to a 2022 report](#) Meta commissioned from outside consultants.
- In September, the company told its Oversight Board that the goal of "having functioning Hebrew classifiers" was "complete." But earlier this month the company internally acknowledged that it hadn't been using its Hebrew hostile speech classifier on Instagram comments because it didn't have enough data for the system to function adequately, according to a document reviewed by the Journal.
- In a separate incident, Meta internally declared a site event—an urgent problem requiring immediate remediation—because Meta's automated systems were mistranslating certain innocuous Arabic language references to Palestinians, including one that became "Palestinian terrorists," another document shows.
- An investigation found the problem was due to hallucinations by a machine learning system.

Meta Puts VR to Work
Source: Patent Drop Newsletter
 Oct. 23, 2023

Meta has filed a patent application titled "Work in VR" that focuses on improving the work experience in a virtual reality (VR) environment. The patent addresses issues related to interoperability, privacy, and conferencing within shared VR environments. It introduces a system for private conferences, enabling a subset of users to participate without disrupting the entire environment. Users can join these conferences from various devices, including AR and VR devices, laptops, and mobile phones. The patent also outlines an extended reality shared workplace that includes visual displays of colleagues and real-world objects. Meta's focus on using VR for work applications could be a potential revenue source, especially as it faces financial challenges in the metaverse space. The patent aims to address the issue of isolation in VR and improve interoperability between devices.

☐ Meta is promoting Threads posts on Facebook and there's no way to opt out

https://www.engadget.com/meta-is-promoting-threads-posts-on-facebook-and-theres-no-way-to-opt-out-202057606.html

Mon, Oct 23, 2023

- The social network is promoting its newest app by cross-posting Threads posts to users' Facebook feeds, the company confirmed Monday.
- It's a familiar move for Meta, which regularly uses the Facebook feed to promote new features, including those from its other apps.
- But unlike those efforts, it seems that Threads promotions on Facebook are not optional.
- Meta began testing the promotion of Threads posts on Instagram in August, but the move to put posts on Facebook without providing an opt-out feature, seems to be more controversial.
- Some users are pointing out that they use Threads much differently than Facebook and may not want their Threads posts to be put in front of their Facebook friends.
- When Threads reached 100 million sign-ups shortly after it launched, Mark Zuckerberg remarked that the growth had happened with "mostly organic demand" and that the company hadn't "even turned on many promotions yet." (Interestingly, that post has since been deleted.)
- Threads' initial explosive growth proved to be short lived, however, with engagement dropping considerably in the weeks that followed. Anecdotally, the service feels much more lively in recent weeks, and downloads have started to once again tick up, according to a recent report from *Insider*.
- But a report from analytics firm SimilarWeb, which tracks web traffic, suggests the company still has a lot of ground to make up.
- "In the US, where Threads attracted the most attention, September Threads usage on Android was down 40% from where it was in July," senior insights manager David Carr wrote in the report. Given those trends, and that Meta has been steadily adding new features like post editing and keyword search, it's maybe not all that surprising the company would now be trying to juice Threads' growth, even if its tactics for doing so are unpopular.

Instagram Tests Verified-Only Feed

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/instagram-tests-verified-only-feed?utm_campaign=article_email&utm_content=article-11561&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sg&rc=hm8aii

Oct 23, 2023

- Instagram is testing a feed option that shows only posts from accounts that pay for Meta Verified, a subscription service that authenticates users' identities among other perks.

- The new feature could be a draw for people who want more visibility on the app, but it's unclear how many people will be part of the test, or ultimately how many users will choose to turn that toggle on.
- Meta Verified, which starts at $12 per month, also offers customer support for paying accounts, although creators have complained about support agents being unable to adequately address their issues, The Information previously [reported](#).

☑ TikTok is testing 15-minute uploads with select users

https://techcrunch.com/2023/10/23/tiktok-testing-15-minute-uploads/
October 23, 2023

- The new option increases the video upload limit on the app from 10 minutes to 15 minutes.
- TikTok initially gained fame for being the most popular short-form video platform, but has slowly been embracing long-form content. The company expanded its [maximum video length to 10 minutes](#), up from three minutes, back in February 2022. Before that, the limit was 60 seconds after initially expanding from 15 seconds.
- Currently, if a video is longer than 10 minutes, creators will direct viewers to a "Part 2" video. With this expanded time limit, creators may no longer have to create an entire video series when sharing content.
- The change puts TikTok in even more direct competition with YouTube.
- In the past, TikTok was seen as the platform for short-form content, while YouTube was seen as the home for long-form content. The past few years have blurred the lines between the two companies as TikTok embraces longer videos and YouTube adopts shorter videos with Shorts.
- It's worth noting that TikTok has also inched further into YouTube's territory with a [horizontal full screen mode](#) that's being tested in select regions.
- It's likely that not everyone will welcome the new video time limit. TikTok is known for short and entertaining videos, so that's probably what people go to the platform for, not necessarily long videos.
- TikTok did not say if or when it plans to roll out the change to everyone.

Xreal's Air 2 glasses put a big screen on your face and ship in the US next month

https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/24/23928925/xreal-air-2-pro-ar-glasses-pricing-availability-preorders-open
October 24, 2023

- Xreal is accepting preorders for its latest augmented reality glasses, the Xreal Air 2 and Air 2 Pro.
- The glasses are set to be released in November in the US, UK, Germany, France, and Italy.
- The base model starts at $399, while the Air 2 Pro starts at $449.
- They feature Micro OLED displays with a 1920 x 1080 pixel resolution and a brighter image compared to the first-generation Air glasses.
- They are about 10% thinner and lighter than the first-gen version and come with improved temple and nose pads for a comfortable fit.
- The Air 2 Pro offers dimming control using electrochromatic glass.
- Both models are set to ship in mid-to-late November in the US and UK and in December in the rest of the European market.
- Unlike many AR glasses, they do not feature cameras for tracking or recording the user's surroundings.
- They are designed to function as a large floating screen in front of the user's face.
- They can be connected to a wide range of devices via USB-C or HDMI output.
- They are compatible with devices like Valve Steam Deck, Asus ROG Ally, Nintendo Switch, Xbox, PlayStation, iOS, Android, PCs, and Macs.

- Users can choose from graphite gray or carmine red glasses and opt for adhesive skins available in six colors.

Automattic is acquiring Texts and betting big on the future of messaging

https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/24/23928685/automattic-texts-acquisition-universal-messaging
Oct 24, 2023

- Automattic, the company behind WordPress.com, Tumblr, Pocket Casts, and more, is acquiring Texts, a universal messaging app, for $50 million.
- Texts serves as a central hub for various messaging apps, allowing users to log in and manage conversations from platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn, Signal, iMessage, and more in one place.
- The app also offers features like AI-generated responses and summaries but primarily focuses on unifying inboxes into a single interface.
- Automattic's CEO, Matt Mullenweg, considers this acquisition the company's entrance into a new realm of messaging, making it its third core area of focus alongside publishing and commerce.
- He believes that open-source communication is a fundamental human right and that Texts aligns with his vision, emphasizing the importance of decentralized and open-source messaging networks like Matrix.
- Texts' unique approach relies on on-device encryption, which Mullenweg sees as a more ethical alternative to cloud-based solutions, and this approach may have implications in the ongoing debate on messaging app interoperability.
- Automattic plans to continue developing Texts, including completing the mobile app, and exploring potential pricing models, which could include both free and paid versions.
- Mullenweg envisions a future where messaging plays a significant role in online interactions, especially as more social interaction moves from public-first social networks to group chats.

☑ States Sue Meta Alleging Harm to Young People on Instagram, Facebook

https://www.wsj.com/tech/states-sue-meta-alleging-harm-to-young-people-on-instagram-facebook-f9ff4641?mod=djemalertNEWS
Oct. 24, 2023

- A coalition of 41 states and the District of Columbia are filing lawsuits alleging that Meta Platforms META -1.76%decrease; red down pointing triangle has intentionally built its products with addictive features that harm young users of its Facebook and Instagram services.
- The lawsuits, in federal and state courts, say Meta misled the public about the dangers of its platforms for young people. The states also allege that Meta knowingly has marketed its products to users under the age of 13, who are barred from the platform by both Meta's policies and federal law. The states are seeking to force Meta to change product features that they say pose dangers to young users.
- The lawsuits follow failed settlement talks with Meta, according to people familiar with the situation. They come after a joint, multiyear investigation led by Republican Attorney General Jonathan Skrmetti of Tennessee and Democrat Philip Weiser of Colorado.
- "We're disappointed that instead of working productively with companies across the industry to create clear, age-appropriate standards for the many apps teens use, the attorneys general have chosen this path."
- Calling the suit a vital battleground for teen mental health, Weiser and Skrmetti highlighted the bipartisan nature of the effort. They pledged that the states would invest heavily in the litigation, comparing it to other landmark state actions over products deemed harmful to public health.

- According to the federal suit, Meta has maximized the attention that teen users spend on its platform in ways the company knows often come at the expense of their mental health.
- "Despite overwhelming internal research, independent expert analysis, and publicly available data that its Social Media Platforms harm young users, Meta still refuses to abandon its use of known harmful features—and has instead redoubled its efforts to misrepresent, conceal, and downplay the impact of those features on young users' mental and physical health," the suit claims.
- Meta has said it has rolled out a number of features to improve well-being for young people and enhance parental controls over how their children use the product.
- Among those records were hundreds of pages of internal research into teen users' behavior, and Meta's efforts to make its platform more alluring to them.
- Based on focus-group user experience work and surveys of hundreds of thousands of Instagram users, Meta's researchers concluded that for most users social media likely didn't pose significant risks. But for a substantial minority of teens with existing mental health vulnerabilities, they wrote, Instagram posed risks.
- According to Meta's internal research, the problem was most pronounced among young women.
- In the wake of the Journal article, [Meta suspended plans](#) for a version of its Instagram app tailored to children. But the company pushed back against the claims of harm, calling the Journal's reporting misleading and saying that on 11 out of 12 potential well-being issues teenage girls said that Instagram was helpful.
- The federal suit alleges that, in the wake of the Journal's reporting and the allegations by Haugen, the company offered false reassurances to parents and took steps to muzzle its own research staff.
- While specific examples of Meta's alleged cover up are redacted in the filing, in an interview Weiser said they included disbanding internal research teams and restricting employee access to data. He called the steps an effort by Meta to protect its business model of maximizing user engagement.
- Tuesday's suits follow extended discussions between the states and Meta regarding a possible settlement that would have required the company to acknowledge the alleged risks of its products and limit specific design features that the states concluded were aggravating existing [mental health issues](#) for young users.
- The talks failed, Weiser said, because Meta was unwilling to alter its products in ways that would reduce compulsive usage.
- The coalition of attorneys general have also been pursuing similar lines of inquiry regarding Meta's social media competitors, with Tennessee and others currently seeking to compel TikTok to produce internal records related to teen mental health in court. It isn't clear if those inquiries could lead to litigation.

☐ Meta's Threads Draws Power Users Seeking Alternative to Elon Musk's X

https://www.wsj.com/tech/metas-threads-still-lags-behind-musks-x-but-platform-is-growing-again-3bd05bbd?mod=djemTECH
Oct. 24, 2023

- Samad is one of about 10 million daily active users globally, including [many who have flocked to Threads](#) as an alternative to [Elon Musk](#)'s X, in search of what they describe as civil discourse. Many power users of the emerging service cited that as one of the platform's central virtues, even as they [continue to want new features](#) such as trending topics and hashtags.
- Such demands for more immediacy on Threads are at the heart of the challenge Meta faces as its new microblogging product begins to grow again after [a slowdown following its](#)

<u>launch</u>, when more than 100 million users signed up in less than a week. While Musk has called himself a free-speech absolutist and eschewed <u>content moderation</u>, Threads has taken steps to manage some discussions carefully, such as preventing searches for Covid-19.

- As X has frustrated some users with <u>rapidly changing policies, features and rollbacks</u>, Threads has seen new engagement from frequent users hungry for a newsy alternative, especially during important news moments such as the current one with <u>the Israel-Hamas war</u>. Usage on Threads increased 13% during the week of Oct. 9 compared with the previous three-week average, according to analytics firm Sensor Tower. X saw an approximate 3% increase that week compared with the prior three-week average.
- ⭐ Last September, Twitter held more than 99.9% of the microblogging monthly user-market share, according to global monthly active user estimates from Sensor Tower. As of this September, X's market share dropped to less than 82% while Threads has gained nearly 18% of the market.
- Threads' U.S. daily user base of 1.4 million, a figure closely followed by advertisers, is still far behind X's 29 million, according to Sensor Tower.
- While many Threads users continue to use X, some say they get more responses and interactions with their posts on Threads, even with a smaller follower count.
- Meta executives have said they don't intend to amplify news on the site but are working on features such as trending topics and hashtags, which could be released soon. From the outset, Meta Chief Executive <u>Mark Zuckerberg</u> and others have focused on creating a civil environment.
- But some Threads users say that more news is exactly what they want to see.
- "We're not anti-news, news is already on Threads," Mosseri posted on Threads in October. "We're simply trying to avoid overpromising and under-delivering to an incredibly powerful group, which is a mistake we've made as a company many times in the past."
- "It doesn't have that level of content yet," Kocher said, noting some content gaps such as sports. "If you refresh it at 6 a.m. on a Sunday, there's not going to be a ton of new stuff."

☐ Instagram May Bring Back Cash Bonuses for U.S. Creators

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/d57ace?utm_campaign=article_email&utm_content=article-11465&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sg&rc=hm8aii
October 25, 2023

- Instagram head Adam Mosseri hopes to bring back cash bonuses for creators, which it previously paid based on views of their short-form Reels.
- The company first rolled out the program in 2021, but ended it in the U.S. in March to the disappointment of creators.
- Instagram's parent company Meta Platforms was also going through layoffs and experiencing budget cuts, so it couldn't afford to run the program in the U.S., an expensive market, Mosseri explained.
- Instagram has since moved the bonus program to South Korea and Japan, where it rewards creators for Reels and other formats, such as photo posts.

☐ Meta Limits Comments on Posts About Israel-Hamas Conflict

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/meta-limits-comments-on-posts-about-israel-hamas-conflict?utm_campaign=%5BTI-AM%5D+The+Informat&utm_content=131&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cio&utm_term=32&rc=hm8aii
October 25, 2023

- Meta Platforms will limit comments on some public posts about the Israel-Hamas conflict, a temporary measure aimed at protecting people in the region "from potentially unwelcome or unwanted comments," the company said Wednesday.

- The company has also made it easier for Facebook users to delete comments in bulk and lock their profiles.
- The changes follow [earlier announcements](#) about the company's steps to moderate war-related content and after some social media users accused Meta of suppressing posts that expressed support for Palestine. "We apply these policies equally around the world and there is no truth to the suggestion that we are deliberately suppressing voice," the post said.

☐ European Commission Formally Requests Information from Meta, TikTok

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/european-commission-formally-requests-information-from-meta-tiktok-on-content-moderation-amid-israel-hamas-war?utm_campaign=%5BTI-AM%5D+The+Informat&utm_content=131&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cio&utm_term=32&rc=hm8aii

October 25, 2023

- The European Commission [sent](#) Meta Platforms and TikTok a formal request for information under Europe's Digital Services Act on Thursday, asking for more information on content moderation measures the platforms have taken amid the Israel-Hamas war.
- The Israel-Hamas war is the first major conflict to have broken out after the enactment of Europe's Digital Services Act, which sets new standards for content moderation and transparency by very large online platforms.
- The European Commission has used the war as a chance to flex its muscle under the DSA for the first time, warning that the platforms could face financial penalties amounting to up to 6% of their annual global revenue if they are found to be noncompliant. The platforms will have to respond to the Commission's questions on their war response and other content moderation provisions by later this month.

Apple Has Discussed Using Vision Pro for Mental Health Diagnosis, Treatment

https://www.theinformation.com/articles/apple-has-discussed-using-vision-pro-for-mental-health-diagnosis-treatment?utm_campaign=article_email&utm_content=article-11573&utm_medium=email&utm_source=sg&rc=hm8aii

Oct. 25, 2023

- Such features would tap the device's array of cameras and sensors to measure a person's facial expressions, using them to detect depression, anxiety, stress or post-traumatic stress disorder, the people said.
- The Vision Pro could display images and sounds that might improve the wearer's emotions, one of the people said. Various rules restrict companies from marketing medical functions in their devices without an OK from regulators.
- A "flat affect" or emotionless expression can be a sign that a person has schizophrenia, autism, depression, brain damage or even PTSD, for example. Members of Apple's Vision Products Group, including its leader, Mike Rockwell, have devoted extensive time to discussing the healthcare possibilities of the headset and have hired health experts to explore such features for the device, one of the people said.
- Therapeutic functions could be especially important in the case of Vision Pro, a product that will initially cost $3,500—14 times the price tag of the cheapest Apple Watch.
- The idea of using headsets to treat mental health disorders isn't a new one. For years, researchers [have studied](#) the use of virtual reality headsets to [diagnose and treat phobias and PTSD](#) in patients—for example, by exposing military veterans to combat simulations.

- Joe Jerome, a visiting professor at the University of Tampa who previously worked on augmented reality and VR policy at Meta Platforms, said the new sensors available on the latest headsets has made it easier to explore health and wellness uses for the devices.
- It couldn't be learned whether Apple will include mental health features in the initial Vision Pro, which it has said will go on sale next year, or in future models.
- Its employees have also discussed using the Vision Pro to sense weight fluctuations in a person's body and to evaluate a person's movements over time; the latter information could be used to screen for ailments such as Parkinson's disease, the people said.
- In the near term, those functions are unlikely to appear on the headset. Apple cut full body tracking from the Vision Pro several years ago because engineers couldn't make it reliable enough (The Information [previously reported](#) that Apple told developers full-body tracking wouldn't be available when the Vision Pro ships next year.).

Meta's Reality Labs loses $3.7 billion in third quarter as Zuckerberg's big bet keeps bleeding cash

https://www.cnbc.com/2023/10/25/metas-reality-labs-loses-3point7-billion-in-third-quarter.html
OCT 25 2023
- Revenue in the virtual reality and augmented reality division dropped 26% from $285 million a year earlier to $210 million. Analysts were expecting sales of $299.3 million and a $3.9 billion operating loss, according to StreetAccount.
- While Meta is pouring billions of dollars a quarter into VR and AR to try and turn Zuckerberg's dream into a reality, the market remains nascent. Developers who attended Meta's recent Connect conference for mixed reality told CNBC that [Apple's upcoming entry into the VR market](#) could catalyze the industry and push it into the mainstream.
- In June, Meta [debuted](#) the Meta Quest+ VR subscription service for users who want to access two new games each month. The subscription service costs $7.99 a month and works with the Quest 2, Quest Pro and Quest 3 VR headsets.

Zuckerberg says Threads has almost 100 million monthly users

https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/25/23932473/mark-zuckerberg-threads-100-million-monthly-users-earnings
Oct 25, 2023
- Meta's competitor to Elon Musk's X has hit "just under" 100 million monthly users since it was released in early July, CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced Wednesday during his company's quarterly earnings call.
- "We're now getting to the point where we're going to be focusing on growing the community further. From what we can tell, people love it so far."
- Meta launched Threads in July. While it was fairly barebones to start, the company has swiftly added a lot of welcome features, including [a web app](#), [the ability to search for posts](#), and [an edit feature that you don't have to pay for](#). The app remains unavailable in Europe due to Meta's uncertainty about its ability to [comply with new regulation there](#).
- In a [Threads post on Wednesday](#), Instagram chief Adam Mosseri said that "I'm hoping we can land support for Europe, [early Fediverse progress](#), better Instagram integrations, and trends in the next few months."

Meta's Q3 Revenue Rises 23% in Return to Healthy Growth Rate

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/metas-q3-revenue-rises-23-in-return-to-healthy-growth-rate?utm_campaign=%5BTI-

Oct 25, 2023

- Facebook owner Meta Platforms reported 23% higher revenue of $34 billion, a return to robust growth rates after nearly two years of weaker expansion caused by an anemic ad market, Apple's ad targeting changes and competition from TikTok.
- The company's operating profit margin doubled to 40% while net income nearly tripled to $11.6 billion.
- The company forecast that payroll expenses would grow next yar as it hires people "to support priority areas," while its metaverse and AR/VR division Reality Labs would "increase meaningfully" operating losses in 2024.

X's Tumultuous First Year Under Elon Musk, in Charts

https://www.wsj.com/tech/xs-tumultuous-first-year-under-elon-musk-in-charts-71656f81?mod=followamazon
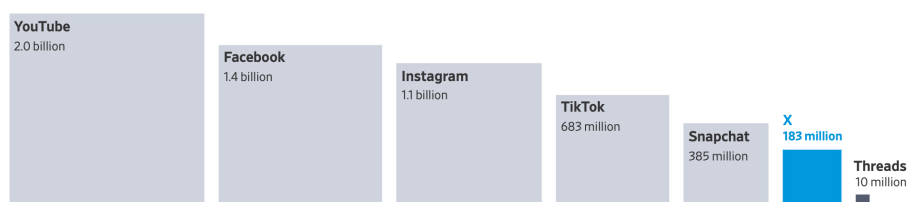
Oct. 25, 2023

- The company is struggling on a number of metrics, according to third-party data, including attracting users. It is trying to rebuild its advertising business after that revenue plummeted post takeover, and the platform also has been navigating content-moderation challenges after Musk loosened such rules.
- Musk has defended the company's trajectory, recently posting that it is "growing fast."
- Musk has said X is thriving, posting in August that the platform hit records for "user-seconds" in recent months.
- Third-party data are less optimistic. X's daily active users via mobile apps dropped by 16% in September compared with the month Musk took over, according to an analysis by research firm Sensor Tower.

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  Daily active users on mobile apps globally, change from October 2022
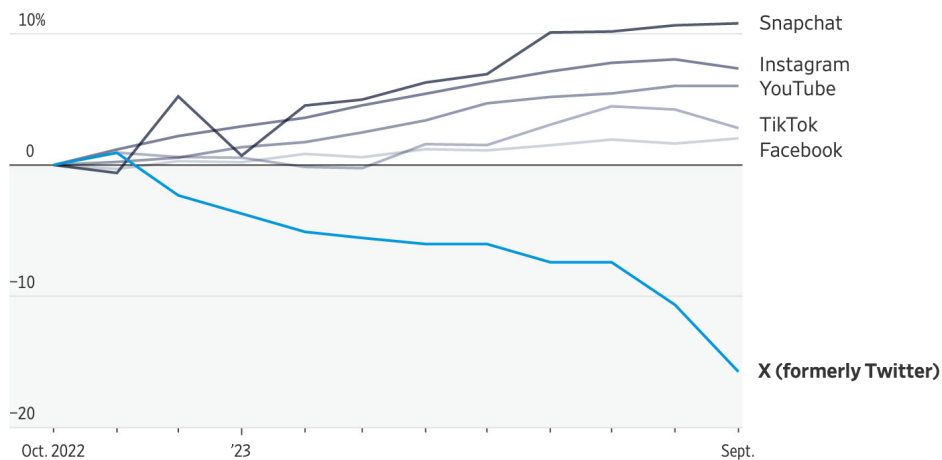
  Note: Change is based on monthly averages
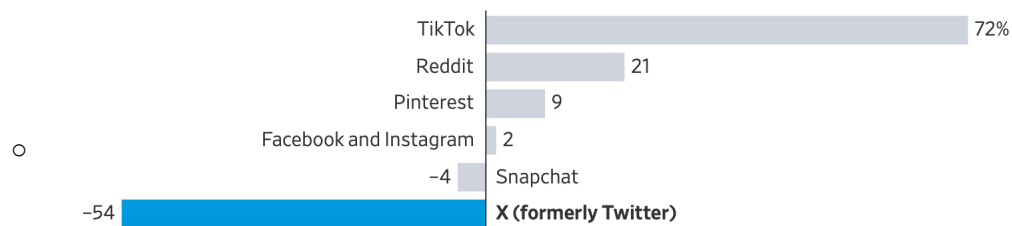 Source: Sensor Tower

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  Daily active users on mobile apps, average for September 2023

  YouTube 2.0 billion
  Facebook 1.4 billion
  Instagram 1.1 billion
  TikTok 683 million
  Snapchat 385 million
  X 183 million
  Threads 10 million

  Source: Sensor Tower

- Twitter saw a rise in demand after Musk completed his acquisition, with an increase in the number of new users downloading the app, according to an analysis by Apptopia. More recently, downloads dropped after <u>Musk suddenly renamed the platform</u> to X in July. People searching for "Twitter" didn't necessarily know the app was now called X, said Tom Grant, vice president of research at Apptopia.
- Current and former employees say remaining engineers <u>are stretched thin</u>. Many users have complained about noticing more glitches lately, though other users have applauded Musk's stewardship of the platform. Technical problems also occurred before Musk took over.
- X Corp. CEO Linda Yaccarino has begun <u>painting a more positive picture</u> of the state of the business, saying last month that 90% of the top 100 advertisers from last year are back.
- Other signs are weaker, particularly in the U.S. ad market. Many large agency executives say they have yet to see a large-scale return to X and that some brands are returning to the platform but spending much less. Musk said last month that X's U.S. advertising revenue was down 60% since the acquisition.
  - ■ The ad spend has been increasing a lot in TikTok as per the graph below

U.S. ad spending on each platform, change from a year earlier

Platform	Change
TikTok	72%
Reddit	21
Pinterest	9
Facebook and Instagram	2
Snapchat	−4
X (formerly Twitter)	−54

Note: Compares gross spend tracked through invoices from major ad agencies and holding companies in September 2022-August 2023 with the same period in the prior year.
Source: Guideline

- Musk has laid out ambitions for the site to expand beyond social media into digital banking and much more.
- Several asset managers significantly <u>wrote down their investments</u>. Cathie Wood of ARK Investment Management said in July that she is bullish on the platform's long-term outlook.
- Since purchasing the company, the billionaire and already-frequent user is engaging even more. Musk has become the most followed person on the platform, and his posts also often ignite controversy among users and advertisers. Earlier this year, after Musk told employees his posts deserved more attention, engineers wrote a piece of code that <u>helped boost his tweets</u>.

Amazon Has So-So Quarter But Advertising Shines

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/amazon-has-so-so-quarter-but-advertising-shines?utm_campaign=%5BTI-AM%5D+The+Informat&utm_content=131&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cio&utm_term=32&rc=hm8aii

Oct 26, 2023
- Advertising continues to be Amazon's fastest-growing business line, growing revenue 26% year-over-year to $12.1 billion in the third quarter, Amazon reported Thursday.
- The growth rate was the highest in a year and helped offset anemic growth in other Amazon divisions.

Amazon's Ad Growth Driven Mostly by Search, Not Video

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/amazons-ad-growth-driven-mostly-by-search-not-video?utm_campaign=%5BTI-

Oct 26, 2023

- Growth in Amazon's advertising business is being driven primarily by merchants paying to boost their items in search results, while spending on video ads for streaming services is slowing down, the company's chief financial officer said on Thursday.
- His comments suggest that despite Amazon's efforts to expand its video ad business in streaming—including by producing commercials for brands in exchange for spending commitments—its growth continues to be in the older part of its ad business tied to e-commerce
- That part of Amazon's ad business has been scrutinized by the Federal Trade Commission, which argued in an antitrust lawsuit filed in September that Amazon's ability to "degrade the quality of its shopper-facing search results" without "losing sufficient business to change its behavior" is evidence of its monopoly power.

TikTok Streamers Are Staging 'Israel vs. Palestine' Live Matches to Cash In on Virtual Gifts

https://www.wired.com/story/tiktok-live-matches-israel-hamas-war/
OCT 26, 2023

- **TIKTOKKERS ARE USING** a little-known livestreaming feature to cash in on the huge interest in the Israel-Hamas war despite having no links to the crisis. TikTok, meanwhile, is taking up to 50 percent of the earnings.
- In the days after Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, TikTok creators have been engaging in "live matches" on the platform where one creator plays the role of Israelis and the other that of Palestinians, while encouraging—and often shouting at—their followers to continue to donate expensive gifts. The side with the most gifts after five minutes wins the battle.
- Some of these gifts cost hundreds of dollars each, and several livestreams WIRED observed in recent days have continued for multiple hours without a break.
- The creators can cash out their winnings for real currency, but only after TikTok itself has taken a major cut of the earnings.
- As the humanitarian crisis in Gaza continues to worsen, social media platforms have been accused of allowing disinformation to fester while platforms including TikTok have been accused of silencing certain viewpoints. Now TikTok appears to be profiting off their users' fascination with Israel and Palestinians, and allowing creators who may not be from Israel or the Palestinian territories to earn money off the conflict.
- The strange phenomenon means that the TikTokkers participating need to encourage their followers to donate as many gifts as possible in order for them to "win."
- Virtual gifts are purchased with TikTok's in-app currency, known as coins. The cost of coins vary depending on how many you are buying, but you can buy 70 coins for less than a dollar.
- The gifts range from stickers of roses and the TikTok logo, which cost just a couple of coins, up to animations that take over the full screen that cost up to 45,000 coins. Purchasing enough coins to buy the most expensive gifts on TikTok can cost over $500.
- After a user donates the gift to a creator during a battle, those gifts are then converted into Diamonds, which creators can then cash out for real currency.
- However, the full value of the gift is not transferred to the creator, with TikTok taking a significant slice of each gift donated. TikTok says that it "shares with creators 50 percent of its net revenue from virtual items, after deducting the required payments to app stores, payment processors, and any other adjustment required under our terms and policies."

- But even small purchases can quickly accumulate. In January, people spent $6 billion in-app on TikTok, according to a report [released by Data.ai,](#) a mobile market trends firm
- It can be a lucrative business, with some TikTokkers claiming they are [making up to $30,000 a month](#) from live matches. Meanwhile, those who are sending the gifts are also reporting that they can easily become addicted, [leading to financial and emotional problems](#).

Meta's Dispute Over Addicted Kids Reignites Age-Proofing Fight

https://news.bloomberglaw.com/privacy-and-data-security/metas-dispute-over-addicted-kids-reignites-age-proofing-fight

Oct. 26, 2023

- A lawsuit [brought by California](#) and more than 30 state attorneys general against Meta Platforms Inc. for allegedly enticing children onto Instagram and Facebook with addictive features will likely accelerate an already roiling national debate over how internet companies should limit access by minors to harmful content.
- The lawsuit alleges that, in addition to harming young users' mental health, Meta violated federal children's privacy law by failing to get parental consent to collect data of users younger than 13. Instead, the company relied on what the state attorneys general are calling a faulty age-gating process to keep young users off the platforms, all while turning a blind eye to evidence of significant numbers of too-young users
- Pressure from lawmakers on companies to better shield young users from harmful content has created a flood of opportunities for companies that collect forms of identification or use advanced facial recognition, known as age estimation, to verify a user's age. But the industry's growing reach has sparked concerns from privacy groups about the untested nature of the technology and data security concerns. Laws requiring the technology have attracted scrutiny from tech industry and civil liberties groups, leading to First Amendment challenges in courts against several states over laws requiring age verification on social media and adult websites.
- The federal Children's Online Privacy Protection Act doesn't require platforms to verify the ages of users. Rather, the law requires platforms to obtain parental consent to collect data from users under 13 if they have actual knowledge those users are using the platform or if the platform is targeted toward children.
- The attorneys general's complaint alleges that while Meta says it doesn't allow users under 13 to join the platform—thereby removing its requirement to collect parental consent—the company essentially ignores the presence of younger users. Meta "routinely obtains actual knowledge that users on Instagram and Facebook are under 13 years old" and targets features and advertising toward young users, making it responsible for ensuring it has parental consent, according to the filing.
- Several states have already turned to age verification as a solution to growing concerns about how online content can affect children's mental health.
- Industry and free speech critics say such laws violate user's First Amendment rights.
- This week's lawsuit against Meta makes an end-run around state legislatures and puts the question directly into the hands of the federal courts, just as lawmakers and regulators are [seeking to update](#) children's online privacy laws for the modern age.
- The complaint's suggestion that Meta could have turned to tactics like collecting users' student IDs, raises serious "privacy implications," says Sanchez.
- Critics have raised concerns about how age-verification companies store and use biometric data collected from users, as well as potential concerns over the accuracy of the face-recognition technology. The Federal Trade Commission is currently [considering a proposal](#) that would allow companies to offer age-estimation tools under COPPA to verify that an adult has consented to a minor's online use.

- If Meta is found to have been negligent, the court could require the company to choose between strengthening its age-gating methods through means like age verification, or implementing verifiable parental consent, said Woods.
- Meta may already be heading toward such a solution, regardless of how this lawsuit plays out. Last year, Instagram began testing new ways to verify users' ages, including using technology to estimate a user's age based on a video selfie or allowing users to upload a driver's license.
- Though the case is focused on Meta, its effects could be much broader—and other platforms with potentially underage users should be on alert, said Woods.

X launches two new subscriptions to boost your replies

https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/27/23935317/x-premium-basic-subscriptions-reply-boost-no-ads
Oct 27, 2023
- X, the platform previously known as Twitter, has introduced a new $16 per month Premium Plus plan that lets subscribers pay more to get the biggest boost for their replies.
- Not only does the plan offer the "largest reply boost," but it also removes ads from your For You and Following feeds, according to a page detailing the features of the subscription.
- In addition to Premium Plus, X also introduced a new "Basic" option for $3 per month. However, this plan doesn't let you pay your way to verification – it doesn't include a checkmark – and subscribers will only receive a "small boost" to their replies. It also doesn't include reduced ads or access to X's media studio.
- Both new plans are currently available to purchase only on the web. The standard Premium subscription costs $8 per month if purchased directly.

Meta wants Threads to be the 'de facto platform' for online public conversations

https://www.theverge.com/2023/10/27/23935436/meta-threads-platform-online-public-conversations
Oct 27, 2023
- "I do think the long-term aspiration is to be the de facto platform for public conversations online, which is about cultural relevance as much as it is about the overall size of Threads."
- He's encouraged by Threads' prospects, saying that "I think we have a chance of surpassing them," even if X has "got a big head start and we've got a long way to go."
- Right now, Mosseri is trying to keep the Threads team "focused on improving the core experience every week."
- I'd argue it's doing a pretty good job keeping up that pace, recently adding things like polls and GIFs this week and a free edit feature you don't have to pay for earlier this month. "Little by little, I think we can continue to build momentum and get there," he said.
- He said that while the company has work to do to improve the Threads web app, there's "way more usage of Threads on iOS and on Android" than on web and that the web version is "not our primary focus."
- Mosseri is also looking for ways to better integrate the teams working on both Instagram and Threads.

Instagram head says Threads API is in the works

https://techcrunch.com/2023/10/27/instagram-head-says-threads-api-is-in-the-works/
October 28, 2023

- Instagram head Adam Mosseri said today that a Threads API is in the works. This will give developers a chance to create different apps and experiences around Threads.
- "We're working on it. My concern is that it'll mean a lot more publisher content and not much more creator content, but it still seems like something we need to get done," Mosseri said in a post.
- Historically, news publications have relied on third-party tools and integrations with different social networks to automatically post on platforms like Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. With the lack of availability of APIs on newer platforms like Threads, publishers have to manually post content, which is not ideal for news organizations posting a bunch of articles per day.
- While Mosseri is concerned about publishers pushing an overwhelming amount of content through API integration, creators also need different tools to post various types of content. It also makes it easier for developers to design features suited for a specific platform if there is the option for an API integration.
- The Threads teams have shipped many features in the last few months post-launch. However, if there is a third-party app ecosystem in place, developers can ship features users are looking for.
- What's more, Meta and Mosseri have talked about integrating Threads with the fediverse. So an open ecosystem with a well-maintained API would be a good step toward getting to that goal.

X Introduces $16 "Premium+" Subscription Tier

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/x-introduces-16-premium-subscription-tier?utm_campaign=%5BTI-AM%5D+The+Informat&utm_content=131&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cio&utm_term=32&rc=hm8aii

October 28, 2023

- The company on Friday unveiled a "Premium+" ad-free tier of service costing $16, in addition to a new Basic tier for $3 a month that carries the regular amount of ads but offers users a "small" visibility boost for their replies.
- The company on Friday unveiled a "Premium+" ad-free tier of service costing $16, in addition to a new Basic tier for $3 a month that carries the regular amount of ads but offers users a "small" visibility boost for their replies.
- Since Musk bought the company then known as Twitter exactly one year ago, its U.S. ad revenue has fallen by as much as 60% year-over-year, Musk has said.
- Independent researcher Travis Brown estimates that less than 0.5% of Twitter's daily active users have signed up for Premium, Bloomberg reported earlier this week.

☑ Meta To Offer Ad-Free Subscriptions for Facebook, Instagram in EU

https://www.theinformation.com/briefings/meta-to-offer-ad-free-subscriptions-for-facebook-instagram-in-eu?utm_campaign=%5BTI-AM%5D+The+Informat&utm_content=131&utm_medium=email&utm_source=cio&utm_term=32&rc=hm8aii

October 31, 2023

- Meta Platforms will begin offering subscriptions for ad-free versions of Facebook and Instagram next month, the company announced Monday. The move comes in response to new regulations in the region that affect how tech companies use personal data.
- The company said in a blog post that users in Europe will have the option to subscribe for €9.99 ($10.60) per month on the web or €12.99 ($13.79) for iOS and Android devices. People who do not subscribe will continue to see ads.

Inside TikTok's Livestream Expansion: Tipping Contests, Creator Support

Nov. 1, 2023

- TikTok executives are hoping these livestreams can be an enormous business, perhaps even bigger than the advertising that now drives the app, given the potential of livestreams to generate tipping revenue and a cut of sales from live shopping.
- Other big social media firms, most obviously Facebook owner Meta Platforms, have tried without much luck to make livestreaming a big business.
- TikTok is approaching livestreaming with a detailed blueprint for success, developed in part from years of experience in China—where TikTok's parent ByteDance is based—operating Douyin, an app similar to TikTok.
- Staffers have turned streams into contests, allowing creators to stream side by side in a split-screen view and compete to receive the most gifts from viewers in a short time.
- At the same time, TikTok offers intense hands-on support for creators who stream live, more than other media companies, according to one talent agency executive who works with creators.
- In the third quarter, TikTok users sent more than $250 million worth of digital gifts to U.S.-based TikTok livestreamers, according to a person with direct knowledge of the matter. That figure—calculated after Apple or Google has taken a 30% commission standard across in-app purchases—was nearly 20% higher than the second quarter's haul of $214 million. TikTok keeps half of this money, which amounted to $125 million in the third quarter.
- Internally, staffers have raised concerns that live hosts have an incentive to make content that is oversexualized or low-quality in other ways that could hurt TikTok's reputation.
- Complaints about such content could feed persistent political pressure for a ban on TikTok. That campaign, based on national security worries about TikTok's Chinese ownership, may have disappeared from the headlines but remains a live issue.
- For most other tech companies—with the exception of Amazon's Twitch—livestreaming has largely been a bust as a business.
- As recently as this summer, only a minority of TikTok users were watching livestreams, according to a person with direct knowledge of the matter.
- There's a limit to the amount of money short videos can bring in as an advertising-based format, although TikTok is trying to build up shopping on short videos as well. Several companies, including Meta and Snap, have struggled with how to sell ad space between short clips without driving viewers away.
- Live streams, in contrast, have better built-in moneymaking qualities.
- For instance, TikTok built features to encourage tipping, including a "battles" feature, a concept imported from TikTok's Chinese sibling app, Douyin, which shows streamers in a split screen competing against each other for the most tips in a certain time period.
- To help creators adapt to the live format, TikTok works with thousands of creators directly, including by running online courses where employees share best practices with creators on everything from camera setup and lighting to what activities perform well on livestreams and how to gracefully encourage gifting by viewers.
- TikTok also works with talent agencies whose creators stream live on the platform, a way to extend its reach beyond the creators it works with directly and an attempt to replicate the agency model popular with Chinese creators on Douyin. Agencies get a cut of TikTok's share of livestream revenue, Diaz said.
- He said other tech platforms were less hands-on and more focused on recruiting creators.
- Like other social media apps, TikTok's algorithm decides what content to show its users based on what it learns about the type of video clips they like. The same approach determines what livestreams TikTok shows people. But the company has also developed

internal tools to increase TikTok Live's viewership by driving traffic to individual livestreams it judges to be high quality, according to three people with direct knowledge.

- Staffers on TikTok's operations teams have access to these tools, which they can use to funnel more traffic toward a specific creator, according to three people with direct knowledge of the situation. The TikTok team overseeing the app's short-form videos have similar tools.
- TikTok's back-end tools allow employees to promote livestreams based on viewers' characteristics, such as how much money they spend on gifting, according to a person with direct knowledge of the situation. There are no options for targeting users based on demographics, the person said.
- TikTok's focus on turning livestreams into a big moneymaker appeals to creators. Diaz said TikTok had plenty of creators "who are not household names, who would not be pulled out of a Forbes 30 under 30, who were not making waves in any other way, who were absolutely making tens of thousands if not hundreds of thousands of dollars per month on gifting on TikTok."
- But building a livestreaming business has pitfalls. Streams of people being shot turned up on Facebook Live, for instance. TikTok Live has already garnered a reputation for hosting sexual content. A Forbes investigation from 2022 found that it had hosted hundreds of livestreams, if not more, of young girls stripping and showing sexualized content in exchange for gifts.
- TikTok technology monitors still images, sounds and motions from a livestream and flags them for potential violations, a TikTok spokesperson said. Human moderators work in parallel with that process, constantly watching flagged content. Livestreams that violate TikTok's guidelines can be removed by automation or human moderators from TikTok's For You page and Live feed or taken down entirely.
- In some cases, Live staffers have tried to direct traffic toward amplifying content they deem "good," one of the people said, meaning engaging videos with high sound and image quality that steer clear of "borderline" sexual or uncomfortable content. TikTok has also sent some users on the live feed questionnaires asking if a given livestream makes them feel uncomfortable, with the goal of further refining what kind of content its algorithm should be promoting, the person said.
- TikTok also lets streamers set filters on what comments are allowed on their livestream and assign a moderator to their livestream to mute and block users while the streamer is broadcasting.

Meta will stop forcing your Threads posts onto Facebook and it can't come soon enough

https://www.engadget.com/meta-will-stop-forcing-your-threads-posts-onto-facebook-and-it-cant-come-soon-enough-174835068.html
Nov 2, 2023

- The company appears to be working on a new privacy setting so Threads users can opt-out of having their posts cross-posted to Facebook and Instagram feeds.
- The feature comes barely a week after the company acknowledged that it was promoting users' Threads posts in Facebook feeds in an effort to boost Threads.
- Notably, it appears as if Meta still intends to automatically enable cross-posting as a default setting.
- The back and forth over the feature comes as Meta has steadily ramped up its efforts to boost Threads growth.
- Mark Zuckerberg recently said he sees a path for the app to become Meta's next billion-user service. But in order to reach that many people, the company will need to lean hard on its other apps to attract new sign-ups.

Facebook will let creators test different versions of Reels

- Creators on Facebook are getting a handful of new tools on the platform – including the ability to test how different Reels perform against each other.
- The most notable new feature is a Reels A/B testing tool.
- On Reels, creators will be able to set up to four different thumbnails or captions for a single video in a test. According to images of the feature, different versions will be shown to separate groups of a creator's audience for 30 minutes. At the end of the testing period, the version with the most plays will "win" and show up on the creator's profile unless they change it. The feature is available on mobile for now, and Meta says that, in the future, it may also offer AI tools to generate captions and thumbnails.
- On a creator's professional dashboard, they'll now be able to see how all of their posts are performing and take actions like hiding posts from their profile or moving them to the trash.
- Creators will also get a bit more data on how their content is doing on Facebook: the platform will give users a 90-day view, up from the previous 28 days.
- Other new data points include how a reel performed relative to a creator's other videos, a viewer retention metric that shows when audiences dropped off, and view counts that include replays of a reel.