

Should companies be using the social media app Threads?

Meta did a great job launching Threads last summer: the teasers, the waitlist, the 'number' assigned to your profile signifying when you became part of the community... It was all very exciting.

Temps de lecture : minute

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And in the short-term, it worked - Threads had a 'blockbuster' launch, gaining 150 million downloads and 100 million active users in the first few days after launch - but sign-ups and usage then plateaued. As we know by now, it takes more than a great launch to create a loyal user base for a new social platform.

Does Threads have the staying power to live up to its launch moment?

Zuckerberg continues to have high hopes for Threads however - saying that one day, it could become a 'one billion-person conversation app'. And 'conversation' is the key term here - unlike Instagram, which is photo and video orientated, Threads is a predominantly text-based social networking platform, built around discussion and more akin to Twitter / X.

And it's no surprise that Threads launched at a moment when user sentiment and loyalty towards X was at an all time low - it seemed the door was wide open for another platform to take up the position of the 'number one social media app for public discourse'. As well as its hotly anticipated launch, Threads had a few other tricks up its sleeve.

Its integrated ecosystem allows users to seamlessly connect with their audiences across different Meta-owned platforms. Most importantly, the platform's posts have a unique advantage—they appear in the Instagram news feed, potentially broadening reach and engagement and providing a practical use-case for brands incorporating it into their social media strategy.

It could be argued however, that Threads still has a way to go to distinguish itself from established networks, and brands seeking new and effective channels for communication will find it challenging to allocate resources to a platform that appears to offer little beyond what is already available. The lack of unique features, and a smaller, overlapping user base, compared to other platforms, further contributes to its limited appeal.

Will Meta's attempt to keep Threads 'positive' backfire?

As such, today, X is still ahead in terms of global user numbers - but in the US at least, Threads is catching up. The platform recently announced that it's overtaken X in terms of daily active users in the States and recently announced over 150 million monthly users globally - suggesting steady growth.

With all the negativity around X, Meta has generally attempted to position Threads as a similar but essentially different alternative e.g. all the great content and conversation you're looking for, with none of the hate speech and harassment. Or, to put it in their words: 'a positive and creative space to express ideas.' Zuckerberg also referred to it recently as a 'friendly discussion-orientated app' and now we know one of the ways he's betting on to keep it that way.

Just recently, both Instagram and Threads have quite literally put limits on

users seeing political content via the platforms. Settings on the majority of user accounts have been automatically set to 'limit' political content, meaning users have to 'opt in' via their content preferences to see the hard stuff - news that is. This could be viewed as both a smart move or a terrible one, depending on which way you look at it - smart because it may save Threads from going in the same direction X has in recent years, or terrible because it could mean that Threads turns out to be.. well, a bit dull.

Swerving political or news-based discussion might work well in the short term and reassure brands, but for users, a 'conversation' app where challenging topics are limited, may in the long run lead to a sanitised and 'safe' but ultimately less engaging experience. And let's face it, Meta can't focus on one audience group at the expense of the other, or eventually everyone loses.

So what should the next move be for Threads?

To enhance Threads' appeal to both brands and users, Meta would benefit from focusing on introducing some further unique features that set the platform apart from its counterparts and competitors. Specialised tools catering to diverse industries, interactive features that encourage community-building and robust analytics could all be potential avenues for improvement.

One recent update that may prove eventually to be game changing is Threads finally rolling out a beta of its fediverse integration in key markets. This will allow users to cross post and view reactions from other 'federated' platforms such as Mastodon, as Threads will be compatible with open, decentralised social networking protocol. We'll of course have to wait and see whether this has the desired impact but it seems to be a step in the right direction.

In the evolving landscape of social media, Threads is still in the process of carving out its distinct niche, however. While its integration with Instagram provides a silver lining, its functionality needs to evolve further for the platform to continue to increase engagement and loyalty. As we approach a year since its launch, it remains to be seen whether Threads can overcome its current challenges and emerge as a genuine go-to platform for brands and users alike - and it may need to step out of its comfort zone to get there.

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