

MEDIA IMPACT REPORT

Twitter Rebrands to X

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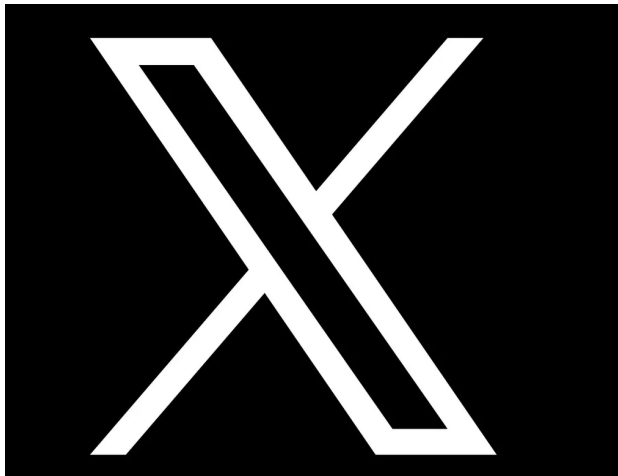
Twitter Rebrands to X

By [Shuree Jones](#), Group Director, Paid Social & Influencer Media

He's done it again. On July 23, Elon Musk, the much-maligned still-somewhat-new owner of Twitter, officially rebranded the social platform to "X."

The announcement came suddenly, with a series of tweets from Musk over the course of a weekend. While the Twitter website stayed live without a redirect, the platform name and iconic bird logo swiftly changed to the new X branding.

Tech reporters were quick to point out that Musk had signaled a potential brand change back in April, when he [changed the name of the company from Twitter Inc. to X Corp.](#) Twitter CEO Linda Yaccarino backed the rebrand in a series of tweets, saying it is the start of a move to push the app in new directions.



"X is the future state of unlimited interactivity—centered in audio, video, messaging, payments/banking—creating a global marketplace for ideas, goods, services, and opportunities," Yaccarino wrote. "Powered by AI, X will connect us all in ways we're just beginning to imagine."

This marks the latest in a series of big swings from Musk since his takeover of the social platform last year, some of which [we outlined in our November 2022 issue of the Media Impact Report](#). Advertisers



had become weary of the platform in the months following the takeover, due to what some perceived as Musk-led volatility after a string of mass layoffs, changed parameters around account verification, and a looser approach to content moderation. Musk confirmed in July that the platform's ad revenue had nearly halved, and competition was knocking with the record-breaking launch of Meta's Threads platform.

Opportunities for Brands on X

While we agree that a volatile platform can be difficult to manage, particularly during a major transition, we encourage brands to ultimately refer back to their brand identity and communication strategy when determining how to navigate organic presence on X. In terms of ad spend, audiences are still active on the platform, and because major advertisers like Unilever, Coca-Cola, and Chipotle have pulled their ad dollars, there could be ample runway to test new strategies on the platform at a lower cost.

One thing is certain though—this rebrand marks the end of a significant era in social media. Here's hoping Musk and team can develop X into a multi-faceted platform that can serve audiences the way Twitter once did. Maybe then advertisers will confidently come back on board; X marking the spot.

Hanging On By A Thread: Will the New Threads Updates Help Combat the Usage Decline?

By [Shatesha Scales Flanigan](#), Supervisor, Paid Social

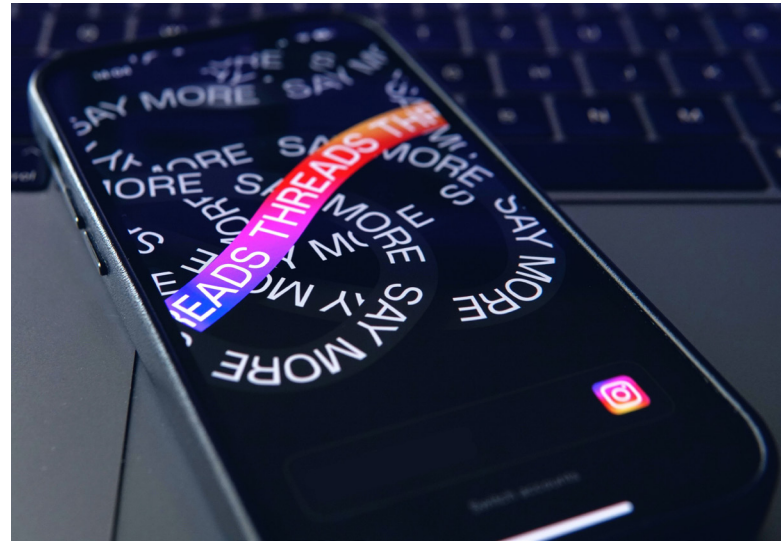
The reviews are in, and after a successful launch of securing 100 million users in five days, did Threads hit its peak already?

The platform is down from its height of 44 million active daily users days after launch to just eight million daily active users as of July 31. If you're looking at it on a macro scale, then yes, it's not looking great for the X (formerly known as Twitter) alternative. However, when you compare it to the trajectory of other social platforms, yes, the buzz has died down. Yet, despite the decline, its daily activity alone is still ahead of total users for any of the alternatives in the marketplace, such as Mastodon and Bluesky, for now.

TikTok joined the competition and launched its text-based feature in July instead of releasing a stand-alone app. But while it has daily active users to compete with the other competitors, unless they can offer the breaking news real-time feed feature, they're no closer to being a true X contender than any other app.

Meta's Done this Before

This isn't the first time Meta dabbled in launching a new stand-alone clone app of a big competitor. Remember Lasso? If not, you're not alone. Facebook quietly launched the TikTok 'copycat' app in 2018 after all the buzz surrounding TikTok forced them to return to the drawing board to keep up with the competition. Ironically, besides an official tweet around the launch from the product manager, it barely got any publicity from the company. Meta shut it down in July 2020 after it failed to gain momentum. Eventually, the company launched its Reels feature as a placement in addition to feeds and Stories in the already popular Instagram and Facebook apps. Lasso and other similar apps failed because users weren't interested in a new app when they already had one that worked. But with the uncertain atmosphere of X, Meta capitalized off the moment of turmoil. They



launched Threads at the right time, which helped escalate the publicity because users were desperate for something different. However, not all features on Threads were ready with the launch. So while they had the users, Threads left the people in limbo while the team raced to catch up to the unexpected demand.

Can Threads Make the Cut?

Like all social platform launches, usage inevitably declines after the initial launch. And while an 82% decline is steep, Meta has claimed that Threads will be here for the long haul and is willing to wait it out. After all, TikTok launched in the U.S. in 2016 but didn't take off until 2020, during the critical turning point of a global pandemic and threats of banning.

Meta's said their focus "will continue to be on improving the consumer experience by building new features, dialing in performance and improving ranking. Some specific features we're focused on include improving search (e.g., keywords), launching a more robust experience on web, and adding accessibility features."

So far Meta seems to be listening to user feedback. They recently released a new batch of features:

- **A “following” feed** which shows posts only from people you follow with the most recent content showing up first. This is in addition to the existing “for you” feed experience.
- **Automatic translations** of Threads posts in feed based on the language they’re written in and the language settings of the person viewing it.
- **The introduction of new categories** in activity feed so you can filter notifications, including Follows, Quotes, and Reposts, and adding the Follow button on your followers list to easily follow back.
- **Organic support of a paid partnerships tool**—more details on this are coming.

Time will tell whether Threads will make a lasting impact on the social media ecosystem or if it will fail like Meta’s other stand-alone app attempts. If they switch the goal from “the next Twitter replacement” and continue to lean into the age of a decentralized web, they’ll be more likely to survive. The potential is there. Users are patiently waiting around to see what Threads can offer.

And let’s face it; people are still on X because of a lack of alternatives and too many social apps to log into daily. We have already witnessed the fragility of platforms and the frustration of wanting to leave a platform but wanting to retain your followers and community. Content creators will continue to be essential for how we consume information and content, so the ability to follow these users across platforms will be monumental for the industry and brands. Users are ready for a decentralized web, but the options need to be simplified. Threads already possesses the users and platform to connect people to the next wave of social, but the question is, will they?

Whether Threads hits its tipping point and morphs into the next big social platform or gets shut down like other Meta stand-alone apps, brands should continue to seize the moment. Though infrequently, users are still actively seeking fresh content. Now is the time to continue engaging and experimenting in direct conversation with them while the pressure is still low.

How will new social platform behaviors change how sports news is shared?

Content will continue to shift to Threads as ESPN and other outlets try to reach the audience who left X permanently, but X will continue to be the top app for breaking news until Threads creates a breaking news feature or trending topic section on their app. For example, ESPN has 47 million users on X vs. 1.9 million on Threads. We expect to see ESPN consistently post sports news on X since the audience is there. Engagement is down, however. Engagement is higher on Threads based on the followers, but they’re slower to update content—they post on Threads every few days vs. multiple times a day on X. It will be interesting to see how Threads fares during the NFL season and how their content strategy begins to shift as the season progresses. It looks like they’re still growing their audience and testing what content works best on this platform with the current features.

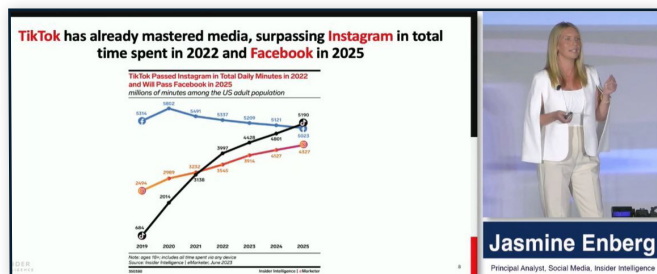
Exploring the ANA Digital and Social Media Conference: Insights and Takeaways

By **Ryan Gilbert**, Vice President, Digital Media

We recently had the privilege of attending the ANA Digital and Social Media Conference in Carlsbad, California. This event offered a diverse array of topics that captured the rapidly evolving landscape of digital and social media. From TikTok's innovative strategies to the intricacies of programmatic advertising and the increasingly important role of creative, the conference delivered a multifaceted exploration of the digital landscape. There were three trends covered that we think will continue to capture the attention of marketers this year.

1. TikTok's Continued Growth: Advertising Best Practices

One standout theme of the conference was the discussion surrounding TikTok's meteoric rise and the need for brands to develop a messaging strategy that conforms to the platform. For maximum impact, brands should be developing content specifically for TikTok. This means using platform-native features to



receive preference by its algorithm, embracing the LoFi nature of the platform—ensuring content is not over-produced, always shooting on iPhone, trying different story-telling styles and tapping into a culture squad that can watch for what's relevant and trending. Brands should embrace experimentation on the platform, being careful not to be too precious with their assets. When posts don't hit it's fine, nobody cares. So there's little risk in experimentation. The brands that are winning on TikTok are having fun with their content. Tapping into trends on TikTok at times means including unlicensed content or audio. A variety of brands from ESPN to United Airlines mentioned that there's a wide

range of legal involvement when using trending TikTok content. Sometimes it's "ask for permission" and other times it's "beg for forgiveness" assuming you want to keep up with the speed of the platform.

2. Social Creative: Why it Matters

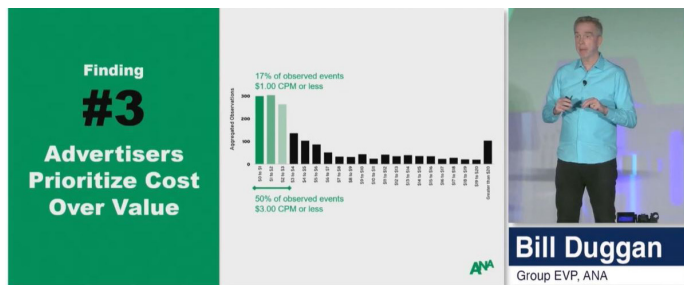
Several speakers also mentioned the fascinating paradigm shift that positions creative as an integral part of their media targeting strategies. Brands like California Pizza Kitchen emphasized outcomes over audience segmentation, urging creative and media teams to forge a symbiotic partnership that allows creative development to move at the speed of media. Rain the Growth Agency has consistently seen success allowing platform algorithms to optimize creative delivery toward the most receptive audiences. This approach also allows brands to gain interesting audience insights by analyzing who is responding best to each unique creative asset.

Creative testing and iteration is critical in identifying assets that will create a lasting impact on audiences. It's also important to consider that assets developed for a specific platform will almost always perform better than creative that is developed and cut to conform to several different channels or platforms.

3. Programmatic Precision: Navigating the Landscape

Amid the conference buzz, programmatic advertising emerged as a focal point of discussion. The ANA recently published the results of their 2023 programmatic best practices report that saw participation from dozens of brands. The findings made it clear that the industry needs to keep a continued watchful eye on the structure, platforms, partners and inventory involved in programmatic ad campaigns.

To ensure brands are receiving quality ad experiences in programmatic, teams should be considering site inclusion lists rather than the more common exclusion list approach. Brands participating in the ANA's report



saw their ads run across an average of 44,000 sites. Partners who hand-selected several hundred sites saw better average ad quality and performance. Brands can also avoid made-for-advertising websites with this approach. Exclusion lists have always been a popular approach for programmatic plans, but taking this a step further will guarantee a higher level of ad quality.

Another highlight of the report—brands benefit by prioritizing value over cost and CPMs. The report

noted that 50% of observed programmatic events came at a CPM of \$3 or less. However, ad quality and performance was strongest when a brand's average CPM was above the \$3 mark.

The need to negotiate direct data access contracts with all primary supply chain partners was another critical finding in the report. Accessing log-level data (LLD) from every adtech vendor and stitching that data together will inform where value is hiding and where there is no value at all, helping brands to make more informed decisions.

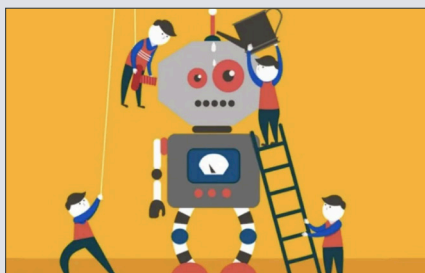
Looking Ahead

As the conference drew to a close, these noted trends stood out as focus points teams need to pay close attention to going forward. We have seen the importance of all these noted trends first-hand in our experience with brands and will continue to explore these categories going forward.

/QUICK HITS



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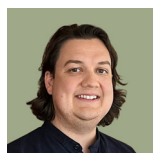


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