



Untangling Threads: Recommendations for Business

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On July 6, 2023, Meta introduced Threads, the latest alternative to Twitter, as “a new way to share with text.” In the seven hours post-launch, ten million users signed up to the platform, including several high-profile streaming services, media outlets and other brands.

It is likely many brands will find Threads relevant to their digital strategies as it is a platform on which their audience will be active. Any Instagram account will automatically have a handle reserved on Threads, so if a company is already on Instagram, we recommend trying Threads.

Should you be using Threads?

Opportunities:

- It is possible to set up the account and leave it dormant while gaining more understanding of how brands are using the platform over the coming weeks, before developing a tailored strategy.
- We expect additional high-profile brands to join the platform in the coming days, particularly as those verified on Instagram will retain their verification on Threads.

Considerations:

- As with any new platform, the question is whether the millions of new users will continue to use Threads and spend active time on the platform.
- Once active, there is currently no way to delete an account without deleting Instagram as well (though it is possible to *deactivate* a Threads account). This also poses questions about what happens if an Instagram account is compromised, so we recommend using all usual security features (such as two-factor authentication) and not widely sharing passwords.
- It is not possible currently to sign up without an Instagram account, although we expect this to change as the platform develops.

What is Threads?

Threads is a standalone app that allows users to publish short updates, including text of up to 500 characters, links, photos and videos up to 5 minutes long. Users’ feeds include posts from people and accounts they follow on Instagram or Threads, as well as recommendations for new accounts. At the time of launch, Threads was available in more than 100 countries on iOS and Android, but not on desktop.

Threads is much more closely aligned with Instagram than Twitter, despite the interface being more similar to the former. This means that the natural audience base will be completely different, from demographics to behaviors.

At present, Threads can only be accessed by leveraging an existing Instagram username to sign up. Once active, users can choose to follow all the accounts they follow on Instagram and can fully customize their profiles separately from their Instagram accounts.

In a bid to enable “positive, productive conversations,” Threads allows users control over who can mention or reply to them, as well as a feature to filter out replies that contain specific words. As with Instagram, Threads users can unfollow, report, block or restrict profiles; choices that are mirrored on both platforms. While similar in interface to Twitter, the key difference is that at this stage hashtags are not active.

Threads and data privacy

Despite launching in the US and UK, Threads is yet to launch in Europe. Sources suggest that Meta is taking more time to consider privacy and broader regulatory requirements in the EU.

Potential for opensource

Meta’s plans for Threads include making it part of the fediverse – essentially a social network of different, connected servers operated by third parties that all talk to each other. This means Threads users could find and talk to users on other platforms, like Mastodon, all without leaving Threads. While the app does not currently support this, their intention to introduce an opensource aspect is potentially significant. Once live, this functionality would enable users to leave Threads without losing their audience because their audience could follow them easily to another server.

Verification and Paid Advertising

Verification and paid advertising are both key features for businesses on other platforms, to prevent impersonation and amplify content towards target audiences.

At this stage, it appears verification is automatically pulled through from Instagram, where users are able to go through the Meta verified process. This is a key differential feature from Twitter, where any user can pay for a blue check, which has led to widespread impersonation.

Paid advertising is less clear at this stage. Meta has indicated that they will not monetize the platform this year, yet we may see advertising available in the future, likely using targeting parameters available for Instagram and Facebook.

To continue the conversation

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