

A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the award of a Master's degree in Management from the Nova School of Business and Economics

Threads:

How should Threads customize and position itself based on the consumers' perception and preferences regarding the social media landscape in the European market?

Exploring Consumers' Social Media Brand Associations: A Perceptual Map Analysis

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Abstract

The project explores how Threads, a social media platform by Meta, can establish itself based on consumer perceptions of the social media landscape. This thesis analyses challenges and opportunities presented by the introduction of "Threads," positioning it as direct competition to Twitter/X, and other competitors such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. The findings contribute to formulating effective strategies for Meta to navigate the competitive social media environment and position Threads successfully. Investigating consumer perceptions in Europe, the thesis evaluates seven key attributes of popular social media applications using a perceptual map.

Keywords: Threads; Social Media; Perceptual Map; Consumer Behaviour; Data Collection

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1. Introduction¹

Since the early 2000s, the use of social media has drastically changed the way people communicate with each other and build and maintain relationships. Since the introduction of Facebook in 2004, new social media applications intended to improve or even change the way people interact online have been continuously introduced to the market (Dijck, 2013). Every introduction to the market presents challenges and chances, as every application is proposing a slightly different way in which the geographical gap between consumers can be closed with the help of the internet. However, the introduction of the social media application Threads developed by Meta, who also developed Facebook, is a special case within the vast field of social media applications. According to Afolaranmi (2013), Threads represents the first application that was developed by Meta not as a standalone project, but as a direct competitor to an already existing application, namely Twitter, which is now called X. This was a reaction by Meta to the replacement of X's previous ownership, which caused some changes in the application's policies, subsequently causing a lot of users to leave the application. This development was noticed by Meta and measures were taken, with Threads being introduced to the market not long after.

This special case of introduction creates specific opportunities, but certain challenges as well. In the following paper, the challenges will be addressed, and strategies to mitigate potential problems, as well as take advantage of potential chances, will be formulated. Thus, this paper attempts to answer the question how Threads should position itself upon entering the European market according to consumer perceptions and preferences. This will be done by carefully analysing the social media application landscape of today to provide reasonable strategies for Threads to position itself within this environment.

¹ Group Part

This analysis aims to answer the question:

“How should Threads establish itself based on the consumer perception of the social media landscape?”

To accurately analyse the situation and formulate reasonable and effective guidelines for the successful establishment of Threads in the market, several tools and techniques are used. First, a short background introduction is provided, entailing a definition of Threads; a summary of the timeline from pre-launch to launch; a swift look at the European market; and a comparison with Twitter/X. Following that, the relevant literature, which was used for the background analysis of this paper, is put into context, and analysed. Then, the qualitative research is detailed in the following, focusing on preliminary research such as interviews with industry experts and a first survey.

After that, the actual mapping of the social media application landscape begins; with the help of another survey and SPSS, a perceptual map is created, in which Threads can be located and compared in its position to the other social media applications. The result aids in understanding the image of Threads in consumers’ minds and subsequently helps with the formulation of an effective strategy. Towards the end of this paper, a conjoint analysis is carried out to better understand the consumers’ preferences on a social media platform, along with a willingness to pay analysis of customers, and certain application specific scenarios. This will further aid in the development of a strategic approach for Meta with which Threads can be positioned in a more beneficial manner considering what customer prefer the most. In the end, a short conclusion together with the limitations and a future outlook are presented.

2. Literature Review²

Market Research

Threads vs X

When doing market research, one of the most important points is knowing direct competitors. As Threads had clear similarities with X (former Twitter), it was clear that these commonalities had to be studied and understood. However, it was also important to gather knowledge about the differences they had, and what made Meta's new platform different from the rest.

To aid with these necessities, a study by Afolaranmi (2023) was used.

The author mentions that Threads was an attempt to address the trend of users who were leaving X amidst the controversies associated with the platform after Elon Musk's takeover. Hence, the similarities found. However, he also goes deeper in the discussion of the key differences between both social networks, allowing for a better global understanding of the market, and the options for Threads' possible differentiation strategy.

Other social networks

Market research includes the collection of all sorts of information, and in this case, it involves gathering facts and data about other social media platforms.

TikTok is one of them, and papers by Highhouse (2022) and Lee (2023) helped investigate its unique features and advantages as a social media platform, such as its personalized and raw content, discoverability, and algorithm that allows new or smaller creators a chance of being discovered. The studies also note that entertainment is the dominant motivation for using TikTok, and that the app fosters a unique influencer culture. Additionally, the first document highlights the potential of the social network in offering new perspectives and increasing the diversity of content available.

² Group Part

Another important study used was written by Dijck (2013), and it goes over the social media ecosystem and its history, as well as over some platforms from this environment, such as Facebook and Twitter.

Concepts

Perceptual Maps

In marketing, perceptual maps are graphic aids that plot goods, brands, or services according to the characteristics and perceptions of consumers. They assist companies in gaining insight into how customers perceive their products and services in comparison to those of rivals. These maps support targeted customer segmentation, product refinement, brand positioning, market gap identification, and well-informed strategic decision-making. In essence, they give marketers a comprehensive picture of how customers view various products within a market, which helps them create strategies that effectively address customer demands and differentiate their brands in crowded markets.

A study by Gigauri (2019) was used to better understand the methodology, as it provides an overview of the concept of perceptual mapping and its applications in marketing research. It discusses the different methods of creating perceptual maps, such as multidimensional scaling and factor analysis, and explains how these maps can be used for brand positioning, market segmentation, and concept development. The article also highlights the benefits of using perceptual mapping for achieving business success, such as increased customer loyalty and profitability.

Additionally, papers from Kohli & Leuthesser (1993), Nigam & Rajiv Kaushik (2011) and Ayaz, et al. (2009) were also accessed, as they offer more content on the same subject. Furthermore, the last two apply it to real case scenarios, providing a different and more objective view on the matter.

Moreover, it was helpful to have Greenacre, et al. (2022)'s paper available, allowing for the consolidation of statistical knowledge, because this document goes into detail on the Principal Component Analysis (PCA), a widely used statistical method for analyzing multivariate data, providing a comprehensive review of PCA, including its definition, geometry, and interpretation of numerical and graphical results.

Conjoint Analysis

In Marketing, conjoint analysis has become a potent technique for breaking down and comprehending consumer preferences. One of the goals of this work project is to conduct a thorough analysis with a focus on how it may be used to shape product features and pricing policies.

The main objective of this part of the literature review was to closely examine the nuances of conjoint analysis by reviewing important research publications. Furthermore, in these papers, the practical use and implications of conjoint analysis are discussed from both academic and industrial contexts.

Bryan Orme (2002) paper's primary goal is to give management guidance on how to understand and communicate the findings of conjoint analysis, in addition to helping understand quantitative data, and it was undoubtedly useful for the analysis and interpretation of the results. It discussed practical implications and explained concepts, such as, part worth utilities, conjoint importances, and shares of preference, in a detailed manner, allowing for a deeper understanding of the analysis itself and further underlining the importance of this methodology for our main research question.

Another important paper was from Restuputri, et al. (2022). Although its focus is on logistics, it has very good insights into the benefits of using this methodology and additional reasons to why it should be used for our research.

It states that conjoint analysis is a priority process to balance trade-offs among limited alternatives and that compared to other methods, such as, evaluating single product attributes of importance by rating scale, the rank ordering of product attributes, and multidimensional measurement, the results obtained by the conjoint method are more detailed, reliable, and easier to understand.

Choice of attributes for the survey (conjoint analysis)

Price

Including “Price” as an attribute in conjoint analysis aims to gauge its impact on consumers' decisions to register or subscribe to social media platforms. Even though most apps in this category are completely free, the initial rationale behind considering “Price” as a feature stemmed from discussions on potential shifts in user behaviour towards paid models within social media, and further exploration is necessary to establish its relevance to user subscription choices.

Studies such as Sindermann et al. (2020) shed light on the implications of the current data business model and its negative effects on user privacy. Despite the potential benefits of a monetary payment model, their findings suggest consumers may not readily accept paying for social media services due to a lack of concern about privacy implications or a misunderstanding of data usage.

Paasonen's work (2018) explores the intersection of affect, data manipulation, and pricing in social media, highlighting the implicit costs associated with using platforms that ostensibly offer free services. This exchange involves users granting ownership rights to their data and material in return for access to platform features, implicating a form of indirect pricing.

Although it is clear that pricing may have a big impact in the decision of joining a new social media platform, it is interesting to study if different combinations of features can alter this.

Therefore, to explicitly tie these discussions to user subscription behaviour, further investigation is warranted to ascertain if willingness to pay or alternative pricing models influences users' decisions to register or subscribe to social media platforms, hence the inclusion of Price as an attribute on the conjoint analysis.

User Interface

The User Interface (UI) of social media platforms significantly influences users' experiences. Hayes' (2014) research emphasizes that users highly value aesthetics, ease of use, and customization in social media applications. This suggests that a thoughtfully designed and user-friendly UI might significantly influence user retention and subscription behavior.

Additionally, Chen et al.'s (2020) study accentuates the importance of addressing common UI issues and engaging with users to provide timely updates. This underscores the critical role of UI improvements in retaining users and fostering a positive user experience. By employing conjoint analysis to understand user preferences regarding various UI elements, this research endeavors to uncover the specific features that contribute to enhancing user experiences and potentially drive subscription behavior.

Privacy

Privacy considerations also wield a substantial influence on users' decisions in interacting with social media platforms.

The main document analysed for the choice of this attribute discusses the privacy risks associated with third-party apps on Facebook. It highlights the high-volume information exchange activities on Facebook, which introduce a variety of privacy risks for Facebook users.

Some of these issues are the lack of control of their personal information, and the risk of third-party apps extracting identifiable user information from the platform and sharing it with advertising companies.

Although this paper is mostly focused on the “Data storage protection” level, it was still important to raise awareness for possible privacy issues regarding social media platforms, because if it happens with Facebook, it can happen with any other platform. Moreover, both *Threads* and Facebook are owned by Meta, further increasing the risk.

Another article used in the research was written by Hirawan & Al-Rasyid (2020), and the article discusses the advantages and disadvantages of using social media, as well as the risks associated with sharing personal information on these platforms.

The writers also offer suggestions for preserving privacy and safeguarding private information when utilising social media. In particular, the essay discusses issues including how social media affects job searches, the dangers of disclosing personal information online, and the best ways for companies and organisations to use social media to learn more about its clientele.

The possibility that unauthorised people or entities would get and utilise personal information is one of the key privacy issues. This might include less formal material like images or posts on social media platforms, as well as more private information like financial or medical records.

The challenge of managing who has access to and visibility of your information on social media is another issue. Although privacy options are available on many platforms, consumers may not be aware of who may view their information and find these settings to be complicated or challenging to use. In addition, users may be left open to exploitation due to the lack of clear laws and safeguards for informal information shared on social media platforms, since such information can be used for nefarious activities like identity theft or stalking.

Overall, these discussions underscore the potential influence of privacy considerations on users' decisions when interacting with social media platforms. By assessing different levels of privacy through conjoint analysis, the intention is to comprehend users' preferences regarding privacy features and their potential impact on subscription behavior.

Content feed algorithm

Analyzing the “Content Feed Algorithm” within conjoint analysis aims to unravel its substantial influence on users' decisions regarding registration or subscription to social media platforms. Narayanan's (2023) comprehensive overview of social media algorithms reveals their wide-reaching societal impacts, including the formation of “filter bubbles” and “echo chambers”, and potential harm to democracy and individual well-being.

This research underscores how algorithmic content curation shapes users' experiences, as further discussed by Swart (2021) in the context of news feed curation on social media platforms. Evaluating user preferences towards content feed algorithms through conjoint analysis can provide valuable insights into features that might significantly influence subscription behavior.

Character limit

Character limits impact communication on social media platforms. Mitchell et al.'s (2018) study on Twitter's character limit alteration illustrates how such changes can profoundly affect communication patterns and linguistic evolution within online social networks, as well as the consumers' reaction to the change, showing a respectable impact on its user base.

Understanding users' preferences regarding character limits through conjoint analysis can offer insights into how these limitations influence user engagement and potentially impact subscription behavior, guiding decisions regarding platform design and functionality.

Media sharing options

Diverse media sharing options reflect evolving content preferences. While conventional media formats such as images and videos, and more recently, live streaming (something that was previously exclusive to Twitch and, later, YouTube) have been prevalent, Bajaj and Singh's (2022) study on the rising consumption of podcasts during the pandemic showcases shifting trends in content consumption patterns.

The increased popularity of podcasts during the pandemic suggests a potential shift in users' content preferences. Through conjoint analysis, examining users' preferences for various media sharing options can shed light on how diversified content formats might influence subscription behavior.

Third-party app integration

Third-party integration is a common theme nowadays, especially regarding social media. There is at least one third-party app for each existing platform, but some social networks support them more than others. In Threads' case, the integration between its platform and Instagram is a big focus of the service it provides.

Most people know the benefits of utilizing third-party applications. However, the risks and downsides of using them are most probably unknown, or not given enough importance.

Wang et al.'s (2011) discussions emphasize the associated privacy risks with third-party apps, emphasizing the need to comprehend their influence on user behavior and perceptions of platform usability and safety. By exploring users' preferences concerning third-party app integration through conjoint analysis, this research seeks to uncover the significance of this feature in driving subscription behavior and how users perceive the inclusion of an extensive third-party integration versus its inexistence.

Consumer behaviour and market characteristics

Willingness to pay

We came across an interesting Harvard Business Review (HBR) study while using our survey results to make an analysis of how people feel about paying to use social media. It's a well-known journal that gives advice and opinions on many business and management issues. People know it for the high-quality study papers, case studies, and articles that are often written by top academics, business leaders, and management experts.

The HBR piece "Research: How People Feel About Paying for Social Media" is about how people feel regarding paid social media models. This kind of study looks at things like how much people are willing to pay for social media services, whether they prefer subscription-based or ad-supported models, and how these models affect the user experience and engagement. They put students into groups based on their political views, which also gives interesting insights. It's also interesting to compare these answers to the ones from our survey, since they are not exactly the same.

This kind of study is helpful for designing the business strategy, as it helps digital marketers and social media businesses understand how people use and the preferences they have for digital products. Furthermore, it helps with market insight, by giving useful information about how social media's use and money-making methods are changing over time; and with policy making, by letting regulators and politicians know how people feel about digital services and revenue models.

How consumer perceive quality

Ladari's 2019 study uses a review of literature to come up with a conceptual model that says: service quality is positively related to consumers' emotions; service quality is positively related to consumers' plans to behave; and consumers' emotions are positively related to their plans to behave. The model also says that emotional happiness plays a role in how service quality affects people's plans to behave.

Freemium model

Freemium is a new way to do business that is mostly used in the software and mobile app markets. It lets you give a free basic version of a product or service along with a paid version. There needs to be scientific analysis and proof of the rising number of successful freemium businesses. This research (Lucht,F. 2019) looks at the main idea of the business plan, focusing on the advantages of having paying and non-paying customers.

Another paper, written by Mäntymäki, et al. (2019), looks at what makes people who use freemium services decide to switch to premium payments and stay with them. It looks at the emotional, practical, social, epistemic, and economic values that lead to these choices using consumer value theory as a guide. A lot of factors are looked at, such as how much people enjoy the service, how annoying ads are in free subscriptions, how common it is, how socially connected it is, how easy it is to find new material, and how much premium subscriptions cost.

Advertisement effect

This abstract talks about a study that looked at how well internet ads worked after the Internet bubble burst. It looks at how different kinds of ads affect how people see things, especially how they can hide information and how much control users have over them. The study looked at 258 students and used statistical methods like analysis of variance and structural equation modeling to find links between the types of ads, how annoying they are, how well people can recognize them, and how they feel about websites and their plans to visit again. Because of the results, a different model was made to better explain how ads are recognized (McCoy, et al. 2008).

Scenario simulation

Recent studies had to be used to understand the present and past state of the social media market in order to create a scenario.

DataReportal's "Digital 2023 Global Overview Report" is an annual study that looks at how people use digital, social media, mobile, and internet technologies around the world. This report covers a lot of ground, such as the number of users, how they act online, and trends in how people accept technology.

Several things make this study useful, such as, helping with planning, since this information can aid companies and marketers plan their internet and social media marketing; and providing information from a market analysis, to help businesses find new possibilities by giving them information about new opportunities. Moreover, it helps with understanding user behaviour, providing very important data for researchers and lawmakers who want to know how people use technology, because it helps them make decisions and policies about digital media and communication.

The "Business of Apps" report usually has a lot of information about the app business, like how many users there are, how much money the apps make, how the market is changing, and how the apps compare to each other. Most of the time, this kind of study covers a lot of different apps, from social media and games to health and productivity apps.

This study is helpful for app developers, marketers, and investors because it gives detailed information on how apps are used, how they are growing, and how much of the market they hold. For strategic decision-making, businesses use this data to make smart choices about developing apps, marketing plans, and investment possibilities.

Also, competitive analysis means knowing how your rivals are doing and what strategies they are using. This is very important for businesses that want to get ahead in the app market.

These rules are very important to make sure that targeting people on social media is done in an honest and legal way, in line with GDPR's strict rules for user privacy and data security.

The key points from the guidelines document include: Targeting Mechanisms, Risks and Data Protection, Legal Basis and Roles, and Joint Controller Arrangement.

Targeting on social media has gotten smarter by using personal information that users give, and information that they unknowingly provide. This includes info from third parties and data brokers that help with ad targeting.

The rules stress the dangers that could come up for users' rights and freedoms, like not being honest, being discriminated against, manipulation, and influencing political processes.

A lot more is clarified about shared roles and responsibilities under EU's data protection law, especially when it comes to processing data for targeting reasons.

Then also not academic sources like journals have been used such as the "New York Times" which is a well-known and trusted news source that covers a wide range of topics, including technology.

A report called "Facebook Meta Subscription Europe", which was posted on their site, talks about Meta's plans and progress in the European market, mentioning how they're adding subscription options to their social media services.

This post is useful for understanding market strategies, by transmitting an idea of how big tech companies, like Meta, change to fit different local markets; and it also provides a regulatory impact analysis, showing how rules, especially in the EU, affect how tech giants work and what tactics are used. Additionally, it delivers insight on some industry trends, supplying a bigger picture of what is happening in the digital and social media industries, especially when it comes to making money and keeping users interested.

Threads: Insights from Preliminary Analysis and Research Perspectives

Preliminary analysis

A preliminary analysis is crucial to determine the methodology.

The goal of Creswell's 2014 book is to assist researchers in creating a proposal or strategy for a study. Before creating a study plan or proposal, there are a few basic factors that must be addressed. These factors include choosing a suitable research design, evaluating the literature to place the planned study within the body of current literature, determining whether to incorporate a theory into the study, and utilizing ethical and well-written methods right from the start.

This book can be considered complementary with the one of 2006. It's helpful to understand how to manage data, what type is used and how to combine it. It writes about mixed methods research at the time that qualitative research had achieved legitimacy and writers were advocating for its use in the social and human sciences.

Sampling

Non-probability convenience samples are the norm in developmental science, despite probability samples' superior generalizability. This is likely to continue since most probability samples are not well-suited to investigate developmental questions and probability samples are prohibitively expensive. Rather than concentrating on methods to completely remove or drastically decrease the use of convenience samples in developmental research, it is suggested how to enhance their benefits in terms of comprehending both population impacts and subpopulation variations. It is contended that homogeneous convenience samples offer clearer generalizability in comparison to conventional convenience samples, even if all convenience samples have less clear generalizability than probability samples. Consequently, homogeneous convenience samples should be regarded as a good substitute for conventional or heterogeneous convenience samples when researchers are forced to use convenience samples (Jager, J., Putnick, D. L., & Bornstein, M. H. 2017).

Survey Research

The paper written by Evans, J.R. and Mathur, A. (2018) aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the development of online survey research since 2005. Future directions and current conditions in online research are also discussed.

Online surveys, their advantages and disadvantages, the literature on various online survey topics, and online survey best practices are the main topics of this retrospective. Additionally, it is stated that future directions are centred on new non-survey technologies and approaches, as well as developing survey technology and procedures.

3. Exploring consumers' social media brand associations: A Perceptual Map Analysis³

3.1 Methodology

The previous sections detailed the historical developments in the social media sector and the direction the preliminary research was hinting at. A careful look at the history of social media expansion in Europe and consumer behavior in the digital age combined with the outcome of the preliminary research led to the formulation of the main question. This key question is how consumers perceive the social media landscape of today, as answering this question will be crucial for figuring out how Threads can fit into that landscape, and at the same time differentiate itself from other applications. Differentiation is especially important with regards to the application X, formerly Twitter, with which Threads might have a lot of overlap in terms of attributes as it was intended as a direct competitor (Afolaranmi, 2023).

To understand the perception of the current social media market by consumers, it is helpful to investigate the differences in the images of the most successful social media applications. The underlying idea is to get consumers to rate products, services or brands based on the subjective associations they invoke. To get a better grasp of the consumer perspective on the various social media applications in terms of the associations made by the consumers, a survey was designed to aid in the creation of a perceptual map. The perceptual map as a tool is crucial for determining a brand's positioning in the market because it showcases customers' views and opinions on brands, products, services, or attributes (Gigauri, 2019).

Within the perceptual map, key impressions, and attitudes towards certain brands by the consumer market can be positioned in a geographical manner, where each brand or product is positioned at a certain "perceptual space", which is optimally different from the one of the competitions, to create a unique value proposition (Kohli & Leuthesser, 1993).

³ Individual Part

To understand the consumers' perception of the social media landscape of today and to find gaps in the market, in which Threads could successfully position itself, creating and understanding a perceptual map is crucial. The main questions of the survey therefore all revolved around the topic of subjective impressions of the different social media applications made. In addition to that, it is also important to mention that the understanding of these impressions and of a specific perceptual map can significantly increase a company's ability to safeguard loyalty and retain current consumers (Nigam & Rajiv Kaushik, 2011). So, the insights gained from a perceptual map are not only relevant for the market entry strategy of Threads but might also turn out to be helpful for the long-term strategy of Meta to keep existing customers.

3.2 Data Collection

To create such a perceptual map of the current social media landscape, it was decided to ask participants in a survey to provide their impressions of several social media applications, namely Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X, and Threads. Once the survey design was successfully finished, gathering as much data as possible was the following, fundamental step. A multi-channel approach was employed to reach out to people from the survey creators social circles on several platforms like WhatsApp or Instagram and ask them to complete the survey. The time period in which the data was collected spans from the 18th of October to the 1st of November. Straightforward instructions on how to correctly fill out the survey were provided to each participant. First, however, it was important to ensure that the participants were aware of the Threads application and its features, as it was just recently launched, and, by the time the survey was conducted, not yet available on the European market.

As most of the survey respondents would consist of people from the social circles of the conductors of the survey, which are predominantly European as well, and therefore probably not familiar with the new application, a few informative screenshots of the Threads application were added at the beginning of the survey, which can be found in the appendix under 'informative screenshots'. These screenshots showcase the login page of Threads, the settings and the 'likes' function, a function with which the user can search for keywords, and a post sharing function. Then, the participants are also asked if they had even heard about the Threads application before starting the survey, to get a general overview about how popular it already is among the consumer base.

In figure 1 one can see that almost a third of the users had never heard about the application before, which indicates two things. First, that Meta could profit from intensifying its advertising efforts regarding their new application, and second, that the assumption that a significant number of people would need some explanatory pictures to build an impression of the application was indeed justified. There is no need to rule out certain participants for their demographic or other attributes, as this study is concerned with the opinion of participants of all ages and backgrounds. After all, the target population is the whole spectrum of social media application users. However, it must be stated that as most of the participants came from the social circles of the conductors of the survey, they would be mostly European and from a younger age group ranging from approximately 20 to 30 years old.

These participants provide the most valuable insight regarding European consumers, while the few non-European participants can provide great insight regarding the functionality of the application as they already had a chance to use it. Adding to the sample characteristics previously discussed, like ensuring that all participants had a basic understanding of the Threads application and its intended use, the most important sampling factor for this study was the sample size.

As Sharpe, Sharpe, Veaux, and Velleman (2018) explain, once the number of participants, namely the sample size, surpasses 30, the Central Limit Theorem will cause the average of the variables from the sample to approximate the average of the same variables in the overall population. In addition to that, a normal distribution will be approached by the shape of the sample with regards to the variables, and the standard deviation of the sample will follow the same pattern as the average of the variables, approximately being equal to the standard deviation of the overall population. Thus, responses provided in the survey can be investigated with the aid of statistical tools.

Although the creation of a perceptual map, as it is exploratory in nature, normally aims at providing deeper understanding of a market without performing statistical tests to investigate a certain hypothesis, future research can only benefit from ensuring sample sizes are statistically significant (Bhattacharyya & Dasgupta, 2014). It was possible to gather 111 responses for this survey, which provides enough information to create the perceptual map and ensures that certain trends in the data are statistically relevant. When asking about the perception of the different social media applications, it was decided to focus on seven different, subjective impressions about the applications which were based on the results from the preliminary interviews and the extensive literature review. This allows for a thorough analysis of the consumers' viewpoints on the different available social media applications and a relatively precise estimation of the marketplace.

The next step is then to correctly assume Threads' position in said space and create strategies to move to a more beneficial position. The first impressions asked for in the survey constitute the perceived enjoyability of the use of the applications, the perceived engagement during the use of the applications, and the user-friendliness of the applications. These impressions help in understanding how the actual use of these applications feels to the consumers. This feeling can be influenced by the companies through working on the user experience by improving software.

The second impressions asked for in the survey are the perceived degree to which people share their personal lives on the applications, the emotional connection with the applications, the perceived innovativeness of the applications, and the perceived privacy and data security of the applications. These impressions are not only influenced by the application itself, but also by the image of the company behind it.

According to Ayaz, Karthikeyan, Vignesh, Teotia, and Singh (2009), Meta can change these impressions not only by working on their data security and innovations, but also by improving their public image. Ayaz et al. (2009) found that the perception of a brand or product is usually influenced by various factors like personal experiences, the social media presence, advertisement, and reviews. There is no indication that the social media market should be an exemption here, which means firms have the power to influence consumers' perception at least to a degree with the use of ads and public relations. In the next step the survey participants are asked to provide an assessment of the magnitude of their impressions of each of the applications, evaluating each application on a scale from one to five, one being the lowest and five being the highest score. In addition to that, there was also a trick question included in the survey, where a specific answer had to be given, otherwise the answers of this participant would be ignored. This trick question was included to ensure that participants are paying attention when answering the survey and not just randomly selecting answers.

3.3 Survey Results

Analyzing the survey responses belonging to the seven different categories of associations makes it evident that Instagram is a clear favorite in almost all categories. However, there are differences in the positions of the applications in relation with each other which will be summarized and interpreted in detail in the following. Starting with the enjoyability of the use of the application, Instagram is the clear winner with over 50% of the respondents rating it with the highest score of five points for enjoyability, followed by TikTok which received almost 35% five-point ratings. However, TikTok also received a far higher one-point score than Instagram, with 16,7% of survey respondents giving TikTok a one-point rating compared to only 0,9% for Instagram. Facebook received by far the highest one-point rating for enjoyability with 38%, followed by Threads with 21,3%.

Overall, the enjoyability rating of Threads is comparable to the one of Twitter, as its one-point ranking is higher than Twitter's of just under 15%, but so is the five-point ranking with 7,4% for Threads compared to 4,6% for Twitter. There cannot be found any significant outliers for the four- and three-point ratings, which span from 27,8% for Instagram to 15,7% for Facebook, and 30,6% for Threads to 14,8% for Instagram, respectively. The two-point ratings show far greater differences, almost a reversion of the five-point rankings, with Instagram and TikTok being rated with two points by only 3,7% and 5,6% of the respondents, respectively, and Twitter being rated with only two points for enjoyability by the highest number of respondents, namely 30,6%. Moving on to the perceived engagement and interaction users experience when using the applications, it becomes evident that the overall shape of the different ratings is almost identical to the one for the first category of enjoyability. Here, however, TikTok is leading the five-point rankings with just under 42% over Instagram with almost 40%, while Facebook received by far the most one-point ratings, with over 40%.

Even though TikTok is in front of Instagram regarding the five-point ratings, regarding the four-point ratings Instagram exceeds TikTok with one third of the ratings compared to only 18,5%. Threads and Twitter are both a little ahead of Facebook in the engagement and interaction ratings, with Threads receiving 6,5% five-point ratings compared to only 5,6% for Twitter. The four-point ratings and three-point ratings are comparable for both applications, with percentages around 15% and 30 %, respectively. However, the ratings for both applications regarding one and two points are somewhat reversed, with Threads receiving 18,5% of the votes for the two-point rating and almost 30% for the one-point ratings, and Twitter receiving almost 26% of the votes for the two-point rating and over 22% of the ratings for the one-point rating.

The survey results for user-friendliness almost look the same as the preceding ones, with the only difference being that for user-friendliness, the survey participants clearly judge Threads to be ahead of Twitter. Instagram is clearly viewed as the superior application in terms of user-friendliness with almost 40% of five-point ratings and over 30% four-point ratings, while TikTok received 38% five-point ratings but only slightly over 20% four-point ratings. While Threads received the highest number of one-point ratings in this topic with slightly over 22%, ahead of Twitter and Facebook, who both received 21,3% one-point ratings, Threads also received far more five-point ratings, namely 12%, while Twitter and Facebook only received 5,6% and 1,9%, respectively. In addition to that, Threads also received far less two-point ratings than the two, with under 15% compared to around 25% for Twitter and Facebook. Facebook also received by far the most three-point ratings when it comes to user-friendliness with 37%.

When analyzing the data about the survey participants' perception of how much of their personal life people share on the different social media applications, it becomes evident that Threads received the lowest rankings here, with almost 26% one-point rankings, over 23% two-point rankings, and only under 4% five-point rankings. Twitter was only rated slightly more personal however, with 18,5% one-point ratings, close to 27% two-point ratings, and the same number of five-point ratings. The number of four-point ratings is also comparable with 19,4% for Threads and 22,2% for Twitter. Instagram is rated to be the most personal application by far, with over 46% of five-point ratings, 25% of four-point ratings, under 5% of two-point ratings, and no number of one-point ratings. The ratings for TikTok and Facebook are comparable, with nearly 28% and 17% five-point ratings, 25% and a little over 21% four-point ratings, and close to 16% and slightly over 24% two-point ratings, respectively. Both applications received 8,3% one-point ratings from the survey participants. The fact that Threads is rated lower than Twitter with regards to this aspect is surprising considering that Threads tries to evade extreme political content and focus more on personal content to share with friends and family.

The rating distribution for the perceived amount of emotional connection during the application use resembles the ones for the first three categories, with Instagram being clearly judged as the application which arouses the most emotional connection, followed again by TikTok. Although the numbers for five-point ratings are similar with 30,6% for Instagram and even 31,5% for TikTok, Instagram received significantly more four-point ratings with 33,3% compared to only 13,9%. The number of one-point ratings is also significantly lower for Instagram, with under 5% compared to over 18%. Facebook received by far the highest number of one-point ratings and the lowest number of five-point ratings, with over 41% and under 2%, respectively.

Threads and Twitter received similar rankings again, with Threads being rated slightly higher in terms of emotional connection; Threads received 9,3% of five-point ratings in comparison to Twitter with only 4,6%, both received 9,3% four-point ratings, and while Twitter only received close to 27% one-point ratings compared to 33,3% for Threads, it also almost received close to 30% two-point ratings, while Threads received only 18,5%.

Continuing with the results about the perceived level of innovation and uniqueness of each media application, it becomes evident that although the response distribution shape assumes the one of the question prior, TikTok is a clear favorite among the survey participants when it comes to innovative power. Thus, it received over 42% five-point ratings, over 15% four-point ratings, and under 18% two-point- and 7,4% one-point ratings. Instagram was also perceived to be very innovative and unique by the survey participants with almost 15% five-point ratings and 37% four-point ratings. It received under 17% two-point ratings and under 3% one-point ratings as well. Facebook was perceived as the least innovative and unique of the five applications, which is surprising considering it was the first on the market (Dijck, 2013); it received almost 28% one-point ratings, over 24% two-point ratings, and only 8,3% four- and five-point ratings. Nonetheless, Threads was judged as not being very unique or innovative by the participants as well, with only 1% more five-point ratings than Facebook, under 18% four-point ratings, close to 20% two-point ratings, and 31,5% one-point ratings.

Twitter was perceived only slightly more innovative and unique than Threads, which again is surprising as Threads is very similar in its intended use and was introduced to the market as a direct competitor many years after Twitter's initial release (Afolaranmi, 2023). With 7,4% and 16,7% it received slightly less five- and four-point ratings than Threads, but also only 12% one-point ratings. However, with almost 28% it also received significantly more two-point ratings than Threads in this category.

The answer distribution of the last question about the perceived level of data security and privacy of the applications is the one with the smallest degree of fluctuations, which makes sense considering none of the companies is publicly known for their caution with regards to dealing with user data. TikTok received the worst rating with over 40% one-point ratings, over 20% two-point ratings, and only 9,1% and 6,4% four- and five-point ratings, respectively. This is not very surprising considering the influence the Chinese government still seems to have on the application (Highhouse, 2023).

The fact that Instagram was judged as the most secure and private, but still only received 5,5% five-point ratings and around 20% four-point ratings together with over 22% one- and two-point ratings each shows the general distrust the survey participants seem to have towards social media applications regarding data security. Facebook was judged to be almost as unsecure as TikTok, with less one-point ratings, namely just over 27%, but also less five-point ratings, only 1,8%, and additionally almost 32% two-point ratings. Although Threads received over 26% one-point ratings compared to just 17,3% for Twitter, overall, it is perceived to be slightly more secure than Twitter, which is caused by Twitter receiving with 40% almost double the number of three-point ratings that Threads received, and with 10% four-point ratings less than half of the amount for Threads. With 29.1% it also received slightly more two-point ratings than Threads with 25,5%.

In the following a summary of the response analysis of the survey will be provided and after that the perceptual map, which was created on the base of said data, will be presented. According to the respondents on the survey, Instagram is the clear favorite in all categories except for the one about innovation and uniqueness, where TikTok is perceived to be slightly more innovative and unique by the participants of the survey.

This is not surprising, as TikTok, even though it was released to the public significantly later than Instagram or YouTube, was the first larger application to make extensive use of short videos in their content display, so called TikToks, a method which Instagram and YouTube later copied with Instagram reels and YouTube shorts (Lee, 2023). Facebook is perceived by the survey participants as placing last in each category except for the one about how much people share about their personal lives on the applications, where only Threads is perceived to be less personal, and in the category about privacy and data security, where only TikTok seems to be less secure.

Threads could be judged as unpersonal because it is the last application to appear on the market and a significant portion of the participants are not familiar with its use and have no definite image of the content shared on the application. This becomes clear when looking at the answer distribution of question six, where almost half of all participants indicated they had not heard about the application before the survey.

Furthermore, as a direct competitor it is supposed to be relatively close to Twitter in its intended use, and Twitter was judged to be the second-most unpersonal application out of the ones in the survey (Afolaranmi, 2023). As already mentioned, the fact that TikTok is perceived to be less data secure than Facebook and the other applications could be caused by the influence the Chinese government seems to have on the application and the general distrust many people have it (Highhouse, 2023). Overall, it becomes evident that Threads is judged to be extremely similar to Twitter in all seven categories covered in the survey. This is not surprising given the fact that it was intended as a direct competitor (Afolaranmi, 2023).

3.4 Principal Component Analysis

The lack of fluctuation in the overall negative opinions about the data security and privacy of the different applications is well displayed in figure 2, the correlations matrix. Here, one can clearly see that except for Privacyandsecurity all variables are very strongly correlated with each other, except for PersonalUnpersonal, which still shows strong correlations with the other variables, while there is no correlation between Privacyandsecurity and any of the other variables. As already mentioned, this can probably be explained by the fact that none of the applications in question are famous for protecting their users' data. Unsurprisingly, user friendliness and enjoyability, and emotional connection and engagement appear to have the highest correlations with each other; after all, the more user friendly an application is the more the user can enjoy it and the more engaged the user, the more he or she will be emotionally connected. As the seven variables displayed in the correlation's matrix are too many to incorporate into a perceptual map, it was decided to employ principal component analysis to reduce them to fewer components with the help of the computer program SPSS.

Principal component analysis is a statistical procedure which allows the reduction of data sets containing numerous intercorrelated variables into a few, essential independent variables called principal components (Greenacre et al., 2022). These major components summarize the information provided by the variables in a reduced form. This is commonly illustrated with the help of a visual map in which the components are described as the x- and y-axis, and in which the original variables can then be added to illustrate the relationship between these variables among themselves and between these variables and the components. The number of components needed equates to the minimum number of components necessary to accurately describe the maximum amount of variability in the data set.

In figure 3, the scree plot, it can be observed that only the first two components provide significant explanation of the fluctuations in the data set and are therefore necessary to incorporate into the component score coefficient chart. Figure 4, the component matrix, which shows the weight each variable has on either of the components, further underlines this point; all variables except for Privacy/Security are well explained by the first component, while Privacy/Security is covered by the second one. In the resulting chart in figure 5, the component score coefficient chart, the phenomenon of all variables except for Privacy/Security being strongly correlated with each other can easily be deduced by observation.

Here, it can be clearly seen that all variables except for Privacy/Security are located towards the right end x-axis, with PersonalUnpersonal being slightly distanced from the others but still being placed in the same direction. Privacyandsecurity however is located at the top of the y-axis far away from the other variables. Thus, component two can remain named Privacyandsecurity, while the factors that are represented by component two can be summarized under the umbrella-term UserExperience. This also makes sense considering that consumers usually rarely experience data security, or a lack thereof, while they are using an application, but instead receive information about this topic from the news and other media.

Therefore, the separation of these two components can not only be justified by common sense, but also by the data outputs, and is useful considering the research question. Having determined the two components which accurately describe a maximum of the variables in the data set from the survey, it is now possible to evaluate each of the social media applications based on the scores they have for each of the two components and illustrate these relationships with the help of a chart. The resulting graphic is the perceptual map displayed in figure 6.

3.5 Perceptual Map Results

In figure 6, the perceptual map, it is possible to observe the impressions the participants of the survey have of the different social media applications immediately. The geographical locations of the points representing the applications on the graph showcase the respondents' perceptions about them. Instagram, having been judged the superior application in almost all of the different questions from the survey, is located in an advantageous position to the right of the x-axis and close to where the location of the cluster of variables, the user experience component, would be located in the component score coefficient chart. TikTok, having been judged similarly to Instagram in many aspects, is almost as far right located, but severely lower on the y-axis, which must be caused by the significantly lower rating this application received in the data security and privacy aspect. Facebook, the application which has been rated the lowest in almost every question, including privacy and data security where it was judged the worst after TikTok, is located far to the bottom left.

An interesting observation that is also resembled in the survey answers is that Twitter and Threads are located almost at the same location, which makes sense considering the similarities between these two applications in terms of their intended use. However, Threads is located slightly higher on the y-axis, which means that it is perceived to be safer in terms of data security and privacy than Twitter by the survey participants, however, it is also located slightly more to the left on the x-axis, which means Twitter is seen as slightly superior in most of the other attributes summarized by the UserExperience component. Meta should try to build on the more positive reputation Threads seems to have in comparison to Twitter regarding their safeguarding of data. First and foremost, it is crucial to determine if the positive impression the participants of the survey have about Threads in this regard are justified and based on stricter data privacy or if they are merely caused by a better image.

If the latter is the case, Meta should support that image by satisfying the need for a more secure Twitter by actually improving their data security. If the participants' impressions are, however, indeed caused by actual advantages regarding data security Threads has over Twitter, it could be useful to reinforce that image in peoples' mind with a targeted ad campaign. In any case, Threads should be transparent about its data usage to ensure users know what their data is used for and by whom to increase confidence in the application. This becomes even more important in the European market, where data security laws are generally stricter than in the US for example and people are therefore naturally more concerned with these issues. Improving on this component, the Privacy and security of the application, could potentially turn out to be a more straightforward task in comparison to efforts aiming at improving the other component, User Experience. This is because on one hand the topic of data security and privacy can be addressed by implementing or adjusting internal regulations on how data will be collected, stored, and distributed. On the other hand, factors that affect User Experience such as engagement and emotional connection are influenced the most effectively by changing the underlying algorithm of the application, which would constitute a more time- and resource intensive task. However, even though it might be less feasible in the short term, determining ways in which Threads can improve the User Experience component could lead to a significant advantage over the main competitor Twitter.

In conclusion it can be said that Meta should engage in promotional activities to move Threads towards the upper right position of the graph by improving data security and consequently its image first, and possibly even adjust some features to make it e.g., more user-friendly or engaging. The fact that Instagram is located so beneficially proves that Meta has the capacities to program and market an application that is perceived better in the attributes tested for than other applications.

Possibly, Meta could even further leverage Instagram's popularity to support the success of Threads. This has already been done to a certain extent by inviting all active users of Instagram to join Threads via a direct message, but this strategy could possibly be improved. For instance, Meta could initiate collaborations between the two applications, where users must install both applications on their devices to receive all the benefits or hire some of the most popular influencers on Instagram to promote Threads. The possibilities are almost endless, especially for a company like Meta, which already owns several very successful applications and has the financial means to create an extensive ad campaign.

3.6 Demographic Results

A few demographic questions were placed towards the end of the survey to better understand the demographic characteristics of the participants. Providing the demographics of the population which was interviewed will help in future research by making it possible to extrapolate the data for certain age groups and nationalities and allows for cross-cultural comparisons. For the first demographic question pertaining the age of the respondents, five different age groups were available as answer choices for the respondents, namely under 18 years old, 18 to 24 years old, 25 to 34 years old, 35 to 59 years old, and over 60 years old. Participants from 18 to 35 years old were divided further into two small age groups on purpose, as most respondents were expected to be in this age range due to the fact it is the age range of the survey creators as well. For the second question, which was asking for the gender of the respondents, the answer possibilities were 'female', 'male', 'non-binary', and 'prefer not to say'.

During the analysis of the survey's demographic results, it becomes evident that the participants' age ranges from under 18 to over 60 years old, but the majority of the respondents is either 18 to 24 years old, namely 54 respondents, or 25 to 34 years old, namely 46 respondents. The age distribution is skewed to the right, as in total, a little more than 90% of the respondents are aged between 18 and 34, which is not an issue for the analysis however as this age group tends to be interested in applications and technology more than older age groups in general and should therefore be in the focus of Meta when marketing Threads. This age distribution is not surprising considering that most participants stem from the social circle of the creators of the survey who are in the same age groups. Regarding the gender distribution it must be stated that the majority of respondents is male, with 65 males responding to the survey in opposition to 42 females, roughly a 60/40 distribution, which is more male-oriented than the general European population which consists of slightly more women than men (Statista, 2022). There exists one non-binary respondent, and three respondents preferred not to indicate their gender.

When analyzing the countries of origins of the respondents, it is hard to overlook that most of them come from Italy, namely 31 of the respondents, or Germany, namely 23 of the respondents, which is not surprising again as those are the home countries of the creators of the survey. However, the rest of the respondents come from all over the world. Participants from the UK, the US, Venezuela, Croatia, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Papua New Guinea and many more countries around the globe have responded to this survey, which can only be beneficial for the credibility of its results. It must be noted though that 88 out of the 111 respondents, close to 80%, are from European countries, so in the future it could provide further insight to focus on respondents from other continents like Asia or South America.

4. Discussion⁴

4.1 Limitations

Regarding the limitations it must be mentioned that most of the respondents across all the surveys conducted have a European background, thus providing deep and meaningful insight into the consumer perspective on Threads in Europe, but not significantly increasing the understanding of the customer base in other continents. This is an aspect future studies could focus on. Furthermore, the age distribution of the respondents was very much skewed to the right, which is great to gain insight on one of the generations which is most familiar with social media and will make up most of the customers in the future anyways but excludes large parts of older generations. This is another important limitation which future research could build upon by e.g. excluding younger generations from surveys to increase the knowledge about the elders' perspectives or comparing them to younger age groups. Moreover, even though the sample size is large enough to make statistical relevant claims, it would be great to have a larger sample, possibly even from just a single country or statistically significant populations from several countries, to compare the differences in opinions. After all, European residents are not homogenous in their taste.

4.2 Findings

This research underscores the influence of social media and how Threads after the launch can be competitive in the social media landscape thanks to consumers' perception.

We used a mixed-methods technique, which combined qualitative and quantitative research to get a good picture of the problem. Qualitative insights were gained from talking to workers who are also customers. This laid the groundwork for collecting quantitative data through surveys.

⁴ Group Part

Early talks with a number of experts yielded important information about Threads. When the app came out, it filled a need in the market that Twitter had, especially when the service was down. Its early success wasn't just due to hype; it was also due to smart use of Meta's user base and the fact that it worked with Instagram.

The purpose of the poll was to find out how people felt about Threads compared to its rivals. This meant looking at demographic information, app usage, and which features people liked best. Notably, Threads' user growth dropped significantly after the original phase. This shows that the app needs new and different features to stand out.

One of the most important questions is how people see the current state of social media. The answer to this question will help us figure out how Threads can fit into that scene while also setting itself apart from other apps.

Using principal component analysis to make the perceived map, which showed where each social media app was thought to be, was very useful. This map showed that Instagram was the leader in most areas and TikTok was the most innovative.

In most categories, Instagram stood out as the clear winner. TikTok was known for being innovative. Facebook got the worst scores overall, except when it came to sharing personal information and privacy/security.

In every way that was looked at, Threads was seen as similar to Twitter. But it was thought to be a little safer when it came to data protection and privacy. The study shows that Meta could use this idea to help Threads do better in the market.

Passing through the conjoint analysis we have been able to understand what features consumers prefer and what is their willingness to pay a monthly subscription. From our survey respondent highly prefer a free model instead of paying even a small amount per month, on the other hand we confronted our study with a different survey from HBR that highlighted that college student

are inclined to pay to use a social media. Moreover, from our survey it is relevant how an app needs interactive features such as integration and innovation.

Since Threads is not available in Europe we also put relevance on the regulation about gdpr, because it's a crucial topic for Thread's feature.

It's still not clear how Threads might affect the market. It will only be successful in the long run if it can offer unique features and a strong reason for users to stay, compared to other platforms like Twitter.

4.3 Future Outlook

Future outlook studies aim at identifying emerging opportunities and challenges in light of long-term trends. The future outlook of Threads, it is uncertain from what we analysed from our research due to several factors such as competition, user retention, regulatory framework and subscription model.

Meta group can rely on an enormous user base and it can be a consistent factor for both Threads short and long term growth. Moreover There is an expansion on user demographics, there's been a significant increase among 65 years old ("Social Media."Gale Opposing Viewpoints Online Collection, Gale, 2021.") at the same time the continuous growth in social media users and the anticipated expansion to over 5.85 billion users by 2027 suggest a landscape ripe for technological innovation and adaptation. (Alison Zeller 2023 "The Future of Social Media (2023-2026)")

While these trends are certainly in favour for a possible Threads consolidation among competitors' social media, on the other hand as we underlined in our work there is room for features integration and innovation to attract more users. Also, data protection rules for now are blocking Threads expansion and Meta group plans.

Overall, there are opportunities and a strong base for Threads to establish itself as a new preponderant social media, at the same time due to a strong user decrease, features, competition, and regulation for its future growth there is still uncertainty.

5. Conclusion⁵

To establish a new social media application in the market is a task of high difficulty that bears many challenges. Even a company like Meta has to focus substantial means on such an endeavour in order for it to succeed. Thus, it is of major importance to find an answer to the research question “How should Threads establish itself based on the consumers’ perception of the social media landscape?”. As this paper showcased competition in the social media market is fierce and the challenges Meta faces are not insignificant, but employing the right strategy regarding marketing and positioning, and emphasizing the most important features and attributes will be crucial to guarantee success. Those strategies include establishing a web version of Threads in addition to the mobile version already available and launching the application in the EU as well as soon as possible while recognizing the various laws and regulations there. Furthermore, possibly adapting Twitter’s search algorithm to enable the search for specific topics by users and utilizing Instagram’s leverage and taking advantage of third-party application integration to gain a more advantageous position on the perceptual map closer to that of Instagram. In general, however, the application should remain free for use, with a minimalistic interface, unlimited characters for posts, and the possibility to not only post text but also GIFS and videos. Focusing on those aspects we believe Threads can have a bright future ahead and establish itself within today’s social media landscape.

⁵ Group Part

6. Bonus Study – Addressing Misinformation on European Social Media:

Insights and Strategies⁶

This comprehensive study delves into the complex landscape of misinformation and fake news within European social media, with a specific focus on Threads, Meta's social network. All data used in this bonus study was taken from Statista and can be found on an article from Amy Watson, written in 2023. These datasets provide a multifaceted view of the current state of misinformation, public perception, and the challenges faced in identifying and managing fake news.

Global data reveals varied trust levels in news media, with noticeable regional differences in perceptions. For instance, in 2023, the trust in news media was highest in Finland at 69%, while Greece reported the lowest at 19%. This variation in trust is influenced by diverse factors such as political climate, media freedom, educational levels, and historical context. The disparity in media trust across regions underlines the complexity of addressing misinformation globally, as each region presents unique challenges and requires tailored approaches.

In the European Union, the prevalence of misinformation is alarmingly high. In 2022, 10% of respondents reported encountering disinformation very often, 18% often, and 33% sometimes. This widespread occurrence of misinformation underscores its pervasive nature within the digital environment and highlights the ease with which it spreads through social media networks. The development of effective mechanisms to identify and counteract false content is therefore critical. Moreover, the public's ability to identify false news varies significantly, a reflection of the diverse levels of media literacy across the population. In a 2022 survey, only 17% of respondents totally agreed, and 45% tended to agree that they could effectively identify false news.

⁶ Group Part

This finding indicates a notable gap in media literacy, as a considerable segment of the population lacks confidence in distinguishing disinformation. Contributing factors to this variation include differences in educational background, digital literacy, and exposure to various information sources. The data shows how urgently programmes that improve media literacy and foster analytical and critical thinking abilities are needed, particularly in this day and age where digital media has a big impact on the information environment. This strategy is crucial for preventing the spread of false information as well as for enabling people to critically assess news material.

Furthermore, as seen by the significant dissemination of erroneous information about health, social media algorithms play an important role in amplifying disinformation. In 2020, 57.7% of the misinformation recommended on Instagram worldwide related to the coronavirus, followed by 21.2% on vaccines, and 12.5% on elections. The responsibility of social media platforms like Instagram and Threads, in curbing the spread of false information through their recommendation algorithms is therefore significant. This emphasises how algorithm development and application need to take ethics and responsibility more seriously.

Additionally, the broad opinion appears to be that fake news in Europe will only become worse in the future. Of those questioned, 32% expected the situation with false news to worsen, 34% believed it would remain the same, and 23.6% felt it would improve. This suggests the need for ongoing vigilance and adaptive strategies.

In addition, echo chambers and filter bubbles in digital environments are significant contributors to the spread of misinformation. These digital spaces allow users to engage with content that aligns with their views, often at the exclusion of opposing perspectives. This selective exposure can reinforce misconceptions and false beliefs, creating a fertile ground for misinformation to flourish.

It's also worth noting that the impact of misinformation extends beyond individual beliefs and attitudes, affecting broader societal and political dynamics. False information regarding political events, public figures, and policy debates can significantly influence public perception and democratic processes. This underscores the critical need for media literacy and informed engagement in digital spaces, as mentioned earlier.

Addressing the challenges posed by misinformation requires a multi-pronged approach. Therefore, the recommendations for Threads include:

1. Enhancing media literacy through the development and support of initiatives that help users identify and understand misinformation.
2. Increasing algorithmic transparency and control to allow users more influence over their content feeds and to avoid echo chambers.
3. Establishing partnerships with fact-checkers and credible news sources for content verification, particularly in sensitive areas such as health and politics.
4. Simplifying the process for users to report misinformation and ensuring transparency in the actions taken by platforms in response.
5. Conducting awareness campaigns to educate users about the prevalence and impact of misinformation, emphasizing the importance of critical evaluation of content.
6. Regularly auditing and adjusting algorithms to minimize the spread of false information, adapting to the evolving nature of misinformation tactics.
7. Tailoring strategies to address region-specific misinformation challenges, considering the unique media consumption patterns and literacy levels across different European countries.

In conclusion, this bonus study highlights the critical need for concerted efforts to address misinformation on social media platforms. The dynamic nature of digital misinformation demands adaptive and comprehensive strategies. These recommendations aim to foster a more informed, critically engaged online community, enhancing the integrity of information dissemination across social media platforms in Europe. The fight against misinformation is not only a technological battle but also a societal one, requiring collaboration, education, and proactive measures to safeguard the digital information landscape.

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Appendix

Figure 1: Prior Knowledge about Threads

6. Had you heard about the **Threads** app before this survey?

[Weitere Details](#)

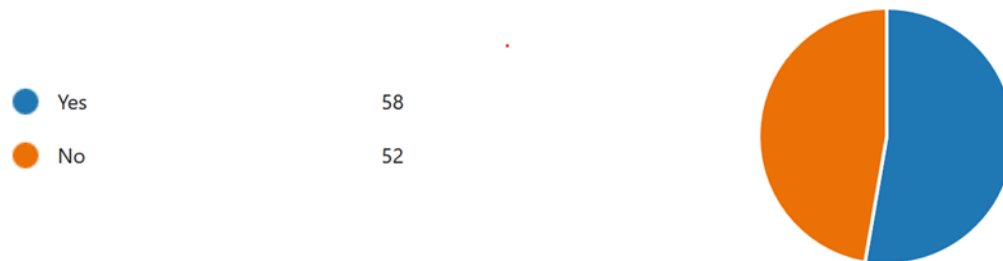


Figure 2: correlations matrix

Correlation Matrix ^a								
		Enjoyability	Engagement and interaction	User friendliness	Personal – Unpersonal	Emotional connection	Innovation and uniqueness	Privacy and security
Correlation	Enjoyability	1.000	.988	.996	.853	.988	.940	.064
	Engagement and interaction	.988	1.000	.988	.837	.996	.938	.169
	User friendliness	.996	.988	1.000	.823	.994	.921	.129
	Personal – Unpersonal	.853	.837	.823	1.000	.834	.737	.070
	Emotional connection	.988	.996	.994	.834	1.000	.912	.209
	Innovation and uniqueness	.940	.938	.921	.737	.912	1.000	-.135
	Privacy and security	.064	.169	.129	.070	.209	-.135	1.000

a. This matrix is not positive definite.

Figure 3: scree plot

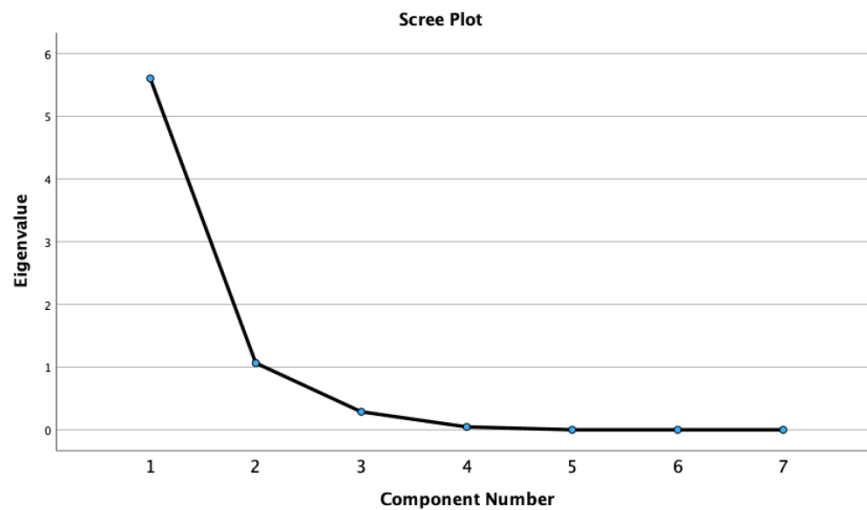


Figure 4: component matrix

Component Matrix^a

	Component	
	1	2
Enjoyability	.996	-.043
Engagement and interaction	.995	.057
Emotional connection	.992	.101
User friendliness	.990	.023
Innovation and uniqueness	.938	-.250
Personal – Unpersonal	.874	-.012
Privacy and security	.109	.993

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 2 components extracted.

Figure 5: Component Score Coefficient Chart

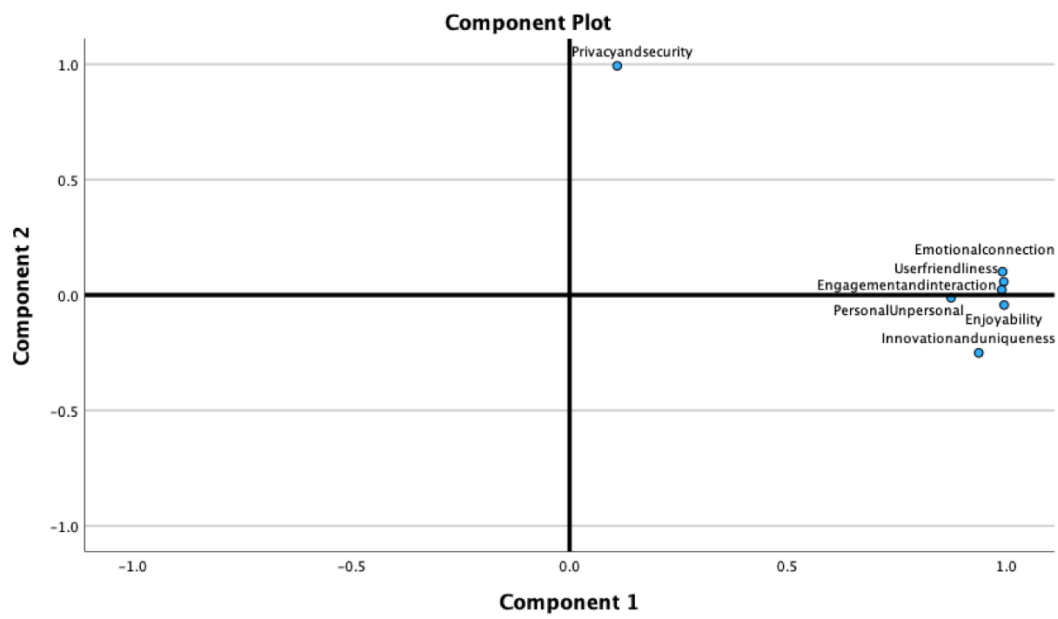


Figure 6: Perceptual Map

