

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?

Individual title:

Threads by Meta:

Redefining Social Media Dynamics, Challenges, and Unique Features. Professionals' opinions and social media users' perceptions.

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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 perceptual maps, conjoint, and scenario simulations.

GROUP PART:

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.

This analysis aims to answer the question:

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

¹ Group part

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. Background²

This chapter aims to introduce the background and to define relevant concepts and topics of discussion about Threads. This part holds significant importance in comprehending the relevance of the subject being studied.

² BACKGROUND: GLORIA

2.1.1. Defining Threads

“Threads is where communities come together to discuss everything from the topics you care about today to what’ll be trending tomorrow. Whatever it is you’re interested in, you can follow and connect directly with your favorite creators and others who love the same things—or build a loyal following of your own to share your ideas, opinions, and creativity with the world”; according to the Threads Guide 2023, that’s the description for the Threads app.

In July 2023, Meta, formerly known as Facebook, launched Threads, a novel social media application that marked a significant departure from conventional social media platforms. This text-based communication app emerged onto the digital scene with palpable excitement and anticipation, positioning itself as Meta's response to a more "sanely-run" Twitter alternative.

Threads was meticulously crafted to foster intimate, private conversations and shared experiences among its user base. At its core, Threads functions as a versatile platform where you can express yourself using a variety of multimedia options, including text, images, videos and GIFs as well as interact with other users by reposting, liking and replying to their posts; facilitating messaging, photo sharing, and voice messaging within an exclusive network of friends and contacts. The platform accommodates posts with a generous limit of up to 500 characters and video content up to 5 minutes in length offering users the flexibility to express themselves with depth and nuance. Despite sharing a visual resemblance style with Twitter's app in terms of its dashboard, Threads distinguishes itself by prioritizing a more personal and casual atmosphere for communication, emphasizing one-on-one and small group interactions. This strategic focus aims to meet the escalating demand for private and personal exchanges in the realm of social media.

Threads is directly linked to Meta’s most known image-sharing platform Instagram. Users easily gain followers because they keep their Instagram usernames following the same accounts. According to Robert Hart from Forbes and according to the App Store listing, Threads is poised to operate as a complimentary service, with users providing personal data in exchange. This aligns with the established model seen in numerous widely used applications from Meta and various other free online services.

This background is crucial for understanding Threads' initial positioning and functionality, laying the groundwork for evaluating its success and potential challenges.

2.1.2. Pre-launch of Threads

It was in the air that Meta was about to launch Threads, its Instagram-based Twitter competitor, right as Twitter was suffering from major technical issues that had caused it to rate limit tweet views, making the site about as broken as it's ever been under Elon Musk (Paul Tassi, 4 Jul 2023).

Finally, after months of rumors, Meta announced the launch date. Starting July 5, internet users could download Threads, an app that tries to market itself as the sane alternative to the chaos of Twitter under Elon Musk. (Matt Novak, 2023).



Figure 1: Invite ticket.

Despite that, a few days before the launch day, people could pre-order their “invite ticket” along with the exact time of the launch in your region. There was a QR code that led people to the app store to get the app. It also showed the profile name, as one could keep the existing Instagram name for Threads (Paul Tassi, 4 Jul 2023).

The pre-launch details offer insights into the contextual factors surrounding Threads' introduction, contributing to an understanding of its early success and reception. This information is essential for evaluating the impact of Threads on user behavior and market dynamics.

2.1.3. Launch

According to Forbes, sign-ups on Threads rival crossed 2 million within the first two hours of its launch, growing to 5 million in the next two hours and doubling again to 10 million at the seven-hour mark, Zuckerberg wrote on Threads. Furthermore, Threads appeared to be off to a strong start as seen by the more than 30 million sign-ups it received in a single day, among them were a few billionaires, pop stars, and politicians. According to the journal “Time”, early adopters included public figures like Bill Gates, Shakira, and Oprah Winfrey, along with brands like Netflix.

Threads officially made its debut, sparking a media frenzy as it aimed to take on Twitter and other social media giants. Threads made a significant impact upon its launch, securing the title of the most downloaded app on its launch day according to NBC Bay Area, making it the fastest-growing platform in history. The goal of the app was to give users a more structured and orderly experience as opposed to Twitter's hectic and frequently overwhelming feed. The app's launch was met with excitement, and it was the most rapidly downloaded app in its first week. Meta's new app Threads saw an explosion of new users in its first few days. Threads is believed to have signed up more than 100 million users in less than five days, according to data from Quiver Quantitative, and according to data provided to TIME by Sensor Tower and data.ai, Threads was the most downloaded non-game app on a launch day in the past decade (Simone Shah, 2023).

The key to Threads' potential success, as noted in Forbes, lies in its interoperability, suggesting that this feature may play a crucial role in its growth and competitiveness.

In addition, Adam Mosseri, the head of Instagram, said in an interview with The Verge that Twitter's "volatility" and "unpredictability" under Musk is what gave Meta the opportunity to compete with Twitter. Twitter under Musk has become borderline unusable, suffering in terms of talent, user experience and declining ad revenues, and it only gets a little bit better if you sign up for the paid Twitter Blue. If there ever was a moment for a competitor to emerge, it was in that moment with Threads (Paul Tassi, 4 Jul 2023).

Moreover, the introduction of Threads coincides with a period during which Twitter has received backlash for implementing unpopular alterations to its user interface, all while grappling with substantial technical challenges. On the other hand, as reported by Forbes, Meta is no stranger to emulating products and features from its competitors, a practice that has yielded varying degrees of success. The widely popular "Instagram Stories," that were launched in 2016, directly mirrored a Snapchat feature, allowing people to share videos and images that vanish from their feed after a 24-hour period. Meta continued this trend in 2020 with the introduction of "Instagram Reels," essentially a clone of the TikTok format. "Facebook Marketplace", resembling an online classifieds platform similar to Craigslist, has also garnered significant user adoption. Beyond its track record of replicating

successful features, Meta's substantial global user base represents a crucial advantage over Twitter. Notably, Threads, an extension of Instagram, benefits from its parent platform's impressive user count of 2 billion—approximately eight times larger than Twitter's user base (Siladitya Ray, 2023). Understanding Threads' successful launch and the circumstances surrounding Twitter's challenges forms the basis for evaluating its impact. This sheds light on the factors contributing to Threads' initial success and sets the stage for investigating its subsequent decline.

2.1.4. Decreasing of success

Initial reports suggested a rapid surge in user engagement and downloads, but subsequent articles from Forbes revealed that user retention has been a challenge for Threads, with significant drops in user engagement being reported. Mark Zuckerberg hinted that less than half of Threads users have continued to use the platform, pointing to retention issues. The platform appeared to have faced challenges in holding users' attention, leading to speculations about its future viability. **In the beginning, the platform's mobile-only nature was noted, and its ability to adapt to users' needs and preferences is questioned** (John Brandon, 2023).

In fact, two weeks since its July 7 peak, social media app Threads has experienced an almost 70% decrease in its daily active user count, as reported by market intelligence firm Sensor Tower. At that moment, two weeks later, the average daily time spent on the app was four minutes, which is down from its launch day peak of 19 minutes and Threads' daily active users stood at around 13 million, down from 44 million in the week it launched, according to Sensor Tower. According to William Skipworth, a Forbes writer, the two social media platforms operate not really differently, but Threads doesn't have certain notable functionalities of Twitter, including topic search and, at the beginning, the desktop functionality.

The decline in success, as reported by Sensor Tower and Mark Zuckerberg's acknowledgment of retention issues, directly addresses the research question. It prompts an exploration of the factors contributing to this decline, such as user engagement, app functionality, and potential shortcomings compared to Twitter.

Commented [TMdPGM1]: Maybe it would be better to put it in past tense ("was" instead of "is"). What do you think? @Gloria Rota

Commented [MOU2R1]: Yes

2.1.5. Web version

User engagement with Meta's Threads app has experienced ups and downs, resembling a roller-coaster journey. It achieved a remarkable milestone of 100 million downloads within a span of five days. Subsequently, many of the early users deserted the app in the ensuing weeks. According to digital data tracker Similarweb, the number of active users dropped by 80% in one month.

Threads was initially only available on mobile devices, but in order to save Threads, a web version was imminent, and it was launched on the 22nd of August 2023. The launch of the web version was seen as a potential solution and a strategic move to enhance its accessibility and user base and to the app's struggles with user engagement, as it would make the app more accessible to users who prefer to use social media on their desktop or laptop computers.

The majority of people communicate mostly on desktop computers, especially on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. During the day, the interaction on social media is via browser, where it's easy to share content and switch between apps. The option to keep a Threads page open in one's browser is likely to boost use and engagement among participants, allowing users to promptly share content they discover or generate in other tabs. Besides making it easier to share content on Threads, it will also make it easier to share Threads posts with other people via messaging apps, e-mail, sites, etc. This will bring returning and occasionally new users to Threads. (Roger Dooley, 2023).

However, it remained to be seen whether the web version would be enough to revive the app's fortunes.

2.1.6. European market

Threads was launched in more than 100 countries, for example including Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. However, the release of the new app in the European Union did not go smoothly. It was postponed because there was regulatory uncertainty about how the app would use personal data. This is because of the European Union's Digital Markets Act, which includes provisions for sharing user data across multiple platforms. According to Syed

Armani, it is necessary to wait for approval from the European Commission, the executive arm of the European Union, before Threads can be launched in EU countries.

The DMA prevents large companies, in this case like Meta, from using personal data it already has about a user, such as their name and location, in its products for targeted advertising without the user's consent (Makena Kelly, 2023). Within the European Union, such communication among social media platforms has been prohibited.

2.1.7. Compared to Twitter

Various Forbes articles provided insights into the platform's potential, highlighting its competitive edge against Twitter. This led to widespread speculation that Threads could indeed become the new Twitter, especially given the chaos that was engulfing Elon Musk's social media ventures. Threads was perceived as a promising alternative, potentially offering innovative features while capitalizing on Meta's resources.

Threads sought to revolutionize the way people connect with their friends and acquaintances online. The app was initially presented as a response to the changing social media landscape as well as the changing user's preferences. As a direct competitor to Twitter, Threads offers a refreshing alternative to the traditional microblogging model.

Threads has some similarities with Twitter, such as allowing users to post short messages, like Twitter's tweets and following other users to see their posts in a feed, similar to Twitter's timeline. However, Threads' user experience also has some unique features and differs from that of Twitter in several keyways.

The new app, launched by Meta, positioned itself as a distinct and separate space where users could connect on a more intimate level. In contrast to Twitter, known for its often-heated political discourse and news sharing, Threads introduced a unique approach to online interaction aiming to be a platform for sharing personal moments, thoughts, and experiences with friends and family, by prioritizing personal and casual conversations over political or hard news content, which sets it apart from Twitter.

The platform includes a functionality called "Groups" enabling users to create and join groups based on shared interests. This feature allows users to see more content that is relevant to their interests and engage with like-minded individuals.

Additionally, according to a Forbes article, Threads has a different algorithm for recommending content compared to Twitter. While Twitter's algorithm is based on engagement and popularity, Threads' algorithm is designed to show users content that is relevant to their interests. Machine learning is used to analyze users' behavior and interests and then recommends content based on that analysis.

According to Siladitya Ray from Forbes, timeline is the main difference between the two apps, as Meta's app only displays an algorithmic timeline, in a similar way to Facebook and Instagram, and offers no option for a Twitter-like reverse chronological time showing the most recent posts.

The algorithm-driven timeline also displays posts made by accounts that the user does not follow, something that Twitter only restricts to its alternate "For You" timeline.

When the app was launched, Threads was a mobile-only experience without any mentions about a desktop or web browser experience. Unlike Twitter, which also lets users to leave comments, follow individuals, and make posts on its website, Threads users were initially limited to using it only through its mobile application. With mobile-only access, Threads aligned with the shift towards on-the-go communication and the rising importance of mobile devices in people's lives.

Threads lacks the inclusion of hashtags, a significant component of Twitter's identity that has transcended to other social platforms like Facebook and Instagram. This absence on Threads is notable as the platform does not enable users to search for specific content. Consequently, Threads does not incorporate a "trending section," and content discovery relies solely on Meta's algorithmic determinations (Ray S. 2023).

However, that will change soon. On the 16th of November, Mark Zuckerberg wrote on Threads that Meta is testing a way to categorize posts with a tag.

Hashtags are in the developmental stage and not fully operational; the test started in Australia with more countries coming soon. The customary procedure for generating a tag involves prefixing a word

Commented [MOU3]: @Tomás Marques Goulão Martins
you think is better now?

Commented [TMdPGM4R3]: Yes :)

with a hash symbol, resulting in the word appearing in blue text without the hash, similar to the functionality of mentions on Facebook. To explore specific subjects, users can enter a hash symbol followed by a keyword into the search field to retrieve a compilation of pertinent posts, mirroring the process on Instagram. Currently, the system is constrained to a solitary tag per post, ostensibly implemented to deter the excessive use of hashtags. However, it is noteworthy that this restriction might undergo alterations, as Meta has conveyed that the feature is still undergoing refinement.

2.2. Meta

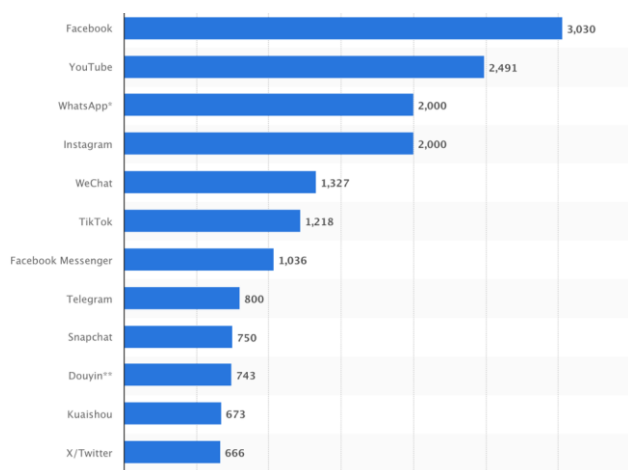
Meta, the force behind the Threads app, holds a prominent position in the global social media scene. Formerly known as Facebook, the world's largest and most successful social media service boasts approximately three billion monthly active users in 2023 (Statista, 2023). Meta has redefined digital connectivity through influential platforms like Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Oculus, each offering unique social media experiences.

Under the leadership of visionary Mark Zuckerberg, Meta has transcended conventional social networking, concentrating on shaping the metaverse. This strategic shift led to the rebranding of Facebook to Meta, symbolizing a move toward immersive, interconnected experiences that integrate augmented and virtual reality. The rebrand mirrors Meta's adaptability and commitment to global innovation.

Meta's influence extends globally, driven by a forward-thinking approach and a dedication to pushing technological boundaries. Serving as the driving force behind Threads, Meta leverages unparalleled expertise and resources, positioning the app to make significant contributions to the ever-evolving landscape of social media, communication, and digital interaction. Threads, seamlessly integrated into the Meta ecosystem, embodies the company's steadfast commitment to technological innovation, shaping the future of digital connectivity.

2.3. Social Media Landscape

In the past few years, social media has undergone a notable transformation, shifting from a basic tool for collaborative content creation and sharing to a substantial and integral part of the present media landscape. (Evans & Bratton, 2008; Weinberg, 2009). Facebook, YouTube, and MySpace were the major influencers that introduced innovative modes of interaction and communication into our understanding. After these new social platforms set the first steps, many different ones were created e.g. Twitter, Instagram, TikTok. According to Statista (2023), the top five worldwide platforms are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and WeChat.



Source: Statista 2023

Adapting to the dynamic shifts in the social media landscape presents inherent challenges. To effectively navigate this evolution, it is imperative to remain focused on integrating innovative features, crafting personalized user experiences, and strategically positioning oneself within the competitive space. By doing so, businesses can proactively respond to changing trends, ensuring a resilient and forward-thinking presence in the ever-changing world of social media.

According to Statista (2023), the global count of social media users has surged to a record-breaking 4.95 billion individuals and it is projected to increase to, approximately, 5.85 billion users by 2027. These individuals aren't exclusively associated with a single platform either. In the current digital

environment, the average user participates on six to seven platforms each month. This emphasizes the crucial necessity for a comprehensive, multi-platform strategy in this field.

FACEBOOK

Functioning as a social networking platform, Facebook facilitates easy connections and sharing of content among family and friends online. However, in 2022, Facebook witnessed a decline in users as new generations shifted their focus to new app like TikTok and YouTube.

INSTAGRAM

Instagram, a social networking service centered around photo and video sharing, offers a seamless way for individuals to connect and share moments with family and friends online.

TIKTOK

TikTok was launched in 2016 and is already very popular today. It is an app where people can create, watch and share short videos recorded from mobile phones.

TWITTER

Twitter serves as a microblogging and social networking service where users engage in posting and interacting with messages referred to as "tweets."

2.4. Social media in USA

According to Statista, there are 308.27 million social media users in the US in 2023, and most of these have more than one account. In the United States, major global platforms like Facebook and TikTok maintain dominance, resulting in a more uniform popularity of platforms nationwide. As for the content itself, there are subtle variations in content trends across different regions within the country.

Social media serves as a conduit for self-expression and promotion in the U.S. culture, with a distinctive emphasis on social connections. In America, differently from Europe, people use social media to nurture relationship they already have and especially to expand their social networks, informing themselves about trends and events in society. The American perspective on social media is deeply intertwined with cultural values such as individualism, freedom of speech, and self-

expression. Users perceive their social profiles like mirrors reflecting their accomplishments, their identities and what they like.

2.5. Social media in Europe

In Europe, a plethora of different cultures and languages within a compact geographical area compared to the expansive landscape of the United States. This diversity significantly shapes the nature of shared content and the choice of social media platforms for communication.

Certain European nations exhibit a preference for regional social media platforms. For instance, VKontakte is widely utilized in Russia, while XING enjoys popularity in Germany. This regional variance contributes to a highly segmented social media market in Europe, posing challenges for companies seeking to establish a foothold.

In Europe, the primary use of social media revolves around nurturing relationships they already built, while in other regions, there is a stronger focus on promoting oneself and creating personal content. The main priority for European users is to keep in touch with their friends and people they know in their real-life circles. This kind of approach fosters a sense of "digital togetherness," allowing individuals to participate virtually in the lives of others, even if they are physically distant.

TikTok, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, give unique participation in the different platform and address different aspects of Europeans' lives.

TikTok has a big imprint in Europe, captivating a diverse and youthful audience with its distinctive short-form video format and engaging creative challenges.

User-Generated Entertainment: The reason of its success is the reliance on user-generated content, allowing Europeans to embrace the role of content creators. People compete in dance challenges, create comedy skits, and do karaoke.

Creativity Free: It stands as a creative haven for many users from Europe, providing a platform to express themselves through different comedy skits, music, dance, and more. The content creation is accessible to everyone thanks to its user-friendly design

making it accessible to everyone.

Challenges: Concerns about the potential impact on mental health and data privacy is still a current issue. However, TikTok is still a big part in the European people.

Facebook still has a robust presence in the European market, extending beyond traditional networking into realms of e-commerce and social impact. It serves as a multifaceted platform connecting different people, social causes as well as businesses.

Marketplace: Facebook transcends its role as a mere social networking platform by providing e-commerce and marketplace services. This expansion enables users to engage in local buying and selling activities seamlessly.

Social Impact Initiatives: Facebook, in Europe, has emerged as a significant player in fostering social impact campaigns and movements throughout Europe. From contributing to disaster relief efforts to facilitating blood donation drives, the platform showcases its instrumental role in driving positive change.

YouTube is one of the most widely embraced social media, meeting the escalating request for diverse content based on videos across multiple genres.

Diverse Creator Landscape: Europe has witnessed the ascent of numerous YouTube creators producing content in local languages and spanning a broad spectrum of topics. The authenticity and relatability of these creators deeply resonate with European audiences.

Impact in the Education: It is a robust learning platform, offering a wealth of educational content covering different topics like cooking, language learning as well as DIY. Watching educational videos makes one gain new skills.

Monetization: European creators have the opportunity to monetize their content through the YouTube Partner Programme and it has become their career and full-time job. This shows the potential of digital entrepreneurship.

Instagram holds significant influence in Europe. The emphasis on images and the user-friendly interface has earned Instagram the affection of a platform for the creative sharing of life's moments. In Europe, the *visual storytelling* remains a compelling force, as users skillfully document and share their daily experiences through videos and pictures, transforming mundane moments into captivating content.

Influencers' Impact: It is notably strong in Europe's diverse niches, including wellness, travel, as well as fashion. Influencers wield significant power, establishing lucrative partnerships with brands and shaping consumer behavior and trends.

E-commerce: E-commerce features are adeptly incorporated. Discovering, exploring, and purchasing products without exiting the app is possible for the people who live in Europe. It has effectively evolved into a virtual marketplace, enhancing platform's utility for both content creation and commerce.

2.6. Challenges in the European landscape

The challenges confronting the evolving landscape of social media platforms in Europe encompass issues related to data privacy, misinformation, and the impact on mental health. Striking a harmonious equilibrium between fostering innovation and promoting responsible digital engagement is imperative.

Privacy of the Data: Platforms are under pressure. They must adopt transparent practices in handling user data. This is because nowadays there is more demand for stricter data protection regulations due to increased awareness of data privacy.

Misinformation: Tackling the pervasive issues of fake news and misinformation is a significant undertaking. European platforms are dedicating resources to artificial intelligence as well as mechanisms of fact-checking to combat the spread of misinformation.

Mental Health: To address growing concerns about mental health, platforms are incorporating features that encourage responsible usage. Digital tools about well-being aim to assist users in achieving a healthier balance in their online interactions.

As Europe's digital influence expands, it is apparent that social media will continue to be an integral aspect of daily life. The way in which Europeans traverse this changing terrain, whether as users, businesses, or within the broader societal context, will define its future impact. The social media scene in Europe portrays a lively continent where diverse traditions, cultures as well as languages come together in an era of digital advancements, facilitating the interconnection of individuals and ideas across geographical boundaries.

3. Literature Review³

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 as 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.

³ Group part

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.

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 on 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 behavior, 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 (2018) 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 centered on new non-survey technologies and approaches, as well as developing survey technology and procedures.

7. Discussion⁴

7.1. 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 Group part

7.2. 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.

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.

7.3. 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.

8. 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

9. 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. 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

⁶ Group part

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.

INDIVIDUAL PART:

4. Preliminary analysis⁷

The Preliminary Analysis phase assumes an important role in the identification of critical factors underpinning the two primary analyses within this research project: the Perceptual Map and the Conjoint Analysis. Throughout this phase, the primary objective was to cultivate a deeper comprehension of both internal and external perspectives, thus facilitating a more comprehensive and authentic assessment of the market of interest and customers' perceptions.

4.1. Research mission

The research aims to collect high-quality data on consumers' preferences and perceptions of new Threads apps, social media in Europe and the potential behind them.

According to Statista (2023), consumers and businesses use social media all around the world as a means of communication and sharing information, with Northern and Western Europe having the

⁷ PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS: GLORIA

highest rates of social media adoption. Users in Europe are spending increasingly more time on social media as markets have grown reliant on online networks.

So, as in the European Market social media has a significant influence on people, communities, and enterprises, it provides a particular setting for any digital platform seeking widespread adoption, with its different cultures, languages, and consumer habits. Therefore, marketing professionals, business owners, and policymakers have a lot to gain by comprehending Threads' potential for success in the European market.

4.2. Our research

Research designs are plans and procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis according to Creswell (2014). Selecting a specific strategy, entails selecting a research design and research methodology. Research methods involve the forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods research are three possibilities as research approaches (Creswell, 2014). Mixed methods were used, which involve both collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell, 2006).

By mixing the datasets, a better understanding of the problem is achieved, more complete evidence is provided for the study of a research problem, and the interpretation of the data is facilitated compared to using one of the two datasets alone. (Creswell, 2006).

So, in the research, in order to have a clear and comprehensive understanding of the problem being addressed, qualitative and quantitative research were used.

The journey started with examining the qualitative part (first technique), evaluated through preliminary interviews with professionals who are also consumers to set a foundation for RSQ 1.

The next step was the quantitative part (second technique). It involves the processes of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and writing the results of a study. Specific methods exist in both survey and experimental research that relate to identifying a sample and population, specifying the strategy of inquiry, collecting, and analyzing data, presenting the results, making an interpretation, and writing

the research in a manner consistent with a survey (Creswell, 2014). It was carried out using 1 distinct survey in order to collect subjective general data shaped by the participants' perspectives.

As mentioned before, the methodology part is divided in 2 parts. The first one includes the preliminary interviews, along with an overview of the first survey design. This part lays the foundations for the second part, the survey. It concentrates on carrying out a descriptive statistical analysis of the survey, which will act as a foundation for the creation of the multidimensional perceptual map and conjoint analysis.

For each of the two analyses, we will describe the main sections through which the questions were created, and the results obtained from the sample of respondents.

4.3. Phase 1 | *Qualitative analysis - Preliminary Interviews*

In order to establish a solid foundation for the study, it was crucial to solicit the insights of experts. Through structured interviews, the objective first was to collect wide opinions and gradually gather more in-depth data. The data collected from these interviews would encompass aspects of the social media competitive scene, drivers of consumer behavior, and the choices people make when selecting social media platforms. It would provide a comprehensive view of Threads' position in the market and its potential impact on the social media landscape.

4.3.1. Methodology

The first step was to better understand the situation and thoughts of the respondents starting with one to one in-depth interview: each component of the group tried to find a person who could answer questions involving the topic of Threads.

In this sense, qualitative market research has been developed through interviews directed at four people who were supposed to be interested in the topic. Qualitative market research consists of a bunch of questions, with the same script for all, divided under broader topics, through which it could

be possible to gather data and collect answers regarding the reasons why a person should use Threads and the reasons that could push the person to avoid it.

Interviews, in which the open method was used, are meant to freely extract opinions and experiences from respondents through targeted questions, with the aim to enrich data and have a better understanding of the whole topic.

The interviews were conducted in two different ways: Teams meeting and email. The duration of each interview was between 10 and 20 minutes and four persons differing in gender, age, country and background were taken into consideration, with the aim to come out with rich and different data.

Some questions have been created concerning the subject matter and it has been divided in macro topics to simplify the work of analysis; so, the script was divided into five sections:

- i. Short presentation and demographic data (gender, background and professional situation),
- ii. Question about the launch of the app (to understand if there was something special about the launch),
- iii. Questions on success and drastic decrease (to analyze the great success and the immediate decrease),
- iv. Attributes and features (main differences with Twitter)
- v. Market insights (impact on the market and future predictions).

The questions are shown in the table below:

<i>Presentation of yourself</i>
<i>As an expert, what do you think about the launch of new app threads? Is there something special about the launch?</i>
<i>Was it the first app to be released on this large scale that's just a copy for an already existing one?</i>
<i>Why was it so successful the first weeks, was it hype or there is more?</i>

<i>Why do you think the growth rate decreased so drastically after the initial growth phase?</i>
<i>Are there any significant differences to Twitter (X)? If so, what are they?</i>
<i>Where do you see Threads in the near and far future?</i>
<i>What impact will it have on the market as a whole?</i>
<i>Do you think it needs more features/further differentiation comparing it to twitter(X)?</i>

Table 1: Questions asked to interviewees.

The qualitative part is based on analyzing different participants' thoughts and opinions about the new social media Threads and its launch. The goal is to interpret the respondents' observations and justify their opinions on the issue. The main objective is to gain insight and analysis regarding the. This inquiry seeks to understand the unique aspects that contributed to its initial success, as well as the factors behind the subsequent decline in growth. It also aims to assess the potential impact of Threads on the overall market and whether further differentiation or additional features may be necessary.

4.3.2. Participant background

ANDREA DENVER

Andrea Denver is from Verona, Italy. He has been living and working in the United States for the last 10 years. He has been based in NYC and he has been working in the fashion world being featured in numerous advertising campaigns, commercials, editorials and fashion shows. He holds a degree in Communication Sciences from the University of Verona. In the last few years, he has become an entrepreneur by opening two companies.

ALLISON CARTER

Allison Carter is a senior editor at Ragan Communications. She helped small businesses create and execute content strategies across several platforms. After working as an advertising copywriter with companies including Microsoft and Chase, she joined her hometown newspaper, the Indianapolis Star. Over seven years she was employed as a social media producer, writer, editor, and digital

strategist, helping figure out what audiences really want to read and keeping the legacy paper's digital strategies up to date. She also has a background in agency work, specializing in content and social media marketing.

FEDERICO CAPECI

Federico Capeci is from Milan, Italy and he is CEO and Cdo of Kantar Insights Division, leader in data management and part of the WPP group. He graduated in Economics, master Sda Bocconi, and he currently is a contract professor in Digital Marketing at the Sole 24 Ore Business School as well as in Market Research at the "Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore" in Milan.

KATIE McKIEVER

Katie Mckiever is from North Carolina; USA and she is a self-employed social media expert and communication/ personal brand consultant. Previously, she worked as a social media and brand journalism manager, and she graduated from the University of North Carolina. She also won the Content Coach and Speaker Award.

4.3.3. Insight

The common insights across these four interviews highlight several key points

Timing and Gap Filling: The launch of Threads is intriguing as it appears to fill a void left by Elon Musk's management after a very bad weekend for Twitter, which saw significant disruption that made the service unusable. So, the arrival of "Threads" was probably seen as an immediate response to the recent discontent of many Twitter users. It's intriguing about the Threads launch due to the empty market space left by Twitter before and after Musk's ownership and that's exactly what amazed about Zuckerberg's move because the goal of social media is to acquire incremental audiences.

Initial Success Factors: The initial success of Threads wasn't merely driven by hype but rather by Meta's ability to leverage its existing user base and influential profiles from Instagram. The integration with Instagram and the ease of account creation were crucial in driving early adoption.

Growth and Differentiation: The significant decrease in user growth after the initial phase is seen as a natural and expected development. However, the challenge lies in maintaining this growth and differentiating Threads from existing platforms like Twitter. The consensus is that Threads needs to offer more unique and innovative features to remain competitive.

Market Impact: The potential impact of Threads on the market is still uncertain, and it's too early to make definitive judgments. Its differentiation from Twitter (X) and its ability to offer a compelling reason for users to stay will be key factors in determining its long-term success.

Need for Improvement: There's a consensus that Threads needs substantial improvements and a clearer identity. It should aim to stand out and offer distinctive features, rather than just replicating what already exists on other platforms.

Threads' success hinges on crafting a unique value proposition by introducing innovative features, personalized user experiences, and strategic integration within the Meta ecosystem. Addressing discontent with Twitter and offering solutions to user pain points are crucial, emphasizing the need for Threads to stand out in a competitive social media landscape.

Further insights from one of the interviews highlight the Everett-Rogers innovation adoption curve. In the case of the Threads launch, Zuckerberg entered the early majority, going against the logic of the innovation curve that skips the segment of innovators and early adopters.

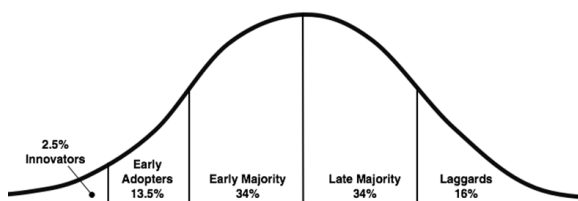


Figure 2: Everett-Rogers innovation adoption curve. Source: <http://blog.leanmonitor.com/early-adopters-allies-launching-product/>

4.4. Phase 2 | Quantitative analysis - Survey

The next step is to examine the quantitative data related to Threads through the online survey. The goal of this survey is to better understand the general thoughts and have a clear view of how

consumers perceive other social media, threads' competitors (Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Snapchat and BeReal).

4.4.1. Methodology

The survey was created with the free online tool called "Google Forms" in the English language and tested by sending the survey to some friends. Some small pictures were added (APPENDIX Figure 1-5), so in this way people who don't know the new social media could have a visual introduction.

4.4.2. Survey design

In preparation for the preliminary consumer survey, the primary consideration revolved around the design of the survey instrument.

The survey encompasses five distinct sections, each designed with specific objectives in mind:

- i. Awareness of the app (to understand the new social media's awareness and how people first learn)
- ii. App usage (to find out the usage range of the app)
- iii. Features and Social Media Ranking (consumer perspectives on the preferences of different apps)
- iv. Overall Feedback (to find what consumers value the most, improvements and missing features)
- v. Demographic Information (age, gender and country)

Since Threads is a new social media launched in July 2023 and is not yet available in Europe, the survey has a textual introduction with some pictures to raise awareness among people who are not familiar with the topic.

The awareness section seeks to gauge the extent of awareness surrounding the new social media application. The questions in this segment were designed to gather information on whether

respondents had ever heard of Threads and how they learned about the application, thus shedding light on its early adoption and dissemination.

Continuing over, in the app usage section respondents were interrogated if they ever used the new app and the motivation that brought them to use it.

For the features and social media ranking, these questions aim to understand the respondent's preferences when selecting a social media platform. The goal is to identify the most crucial features of the threads' competitors for the individual, providing insights into what aspects of a platform would make it more appealing. In summary, these questions aim to gather valuable insights into individual preferences and priorities regarding all the other social media rather than threads, helping to understand the elements that are most significant to users and to provide guidance on app selection and development.

Afterward, the goal and objective of the next questions are to gather constructive feedback and insights from users regarding the Threads social media platform. By asking users to share their perspectives on what might be lacking in Threads in comparison to similar platforms like Twitter or X, the aim is to pinpoint potential gaps in the platform's offerings and enhance its competitiveness. Additionally, inquiring about desired improvements or changes in a text-based social media platform allows users to voice their preferences and expectations, contributing to the platform's development and user satisfaction. Ultimately, these questions aim to facilitate user-driven enhancements and foster an environment of continuous improvement within the social media platform.

Finally, the demographics section provided us with ways to classify the participants by gender, age (under 18, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, over 65) and country.

4.4.3. Sampling

Considering the importance of a survey's respondents, the sample used to conduct a study is one of the most important elements of any research project.

Sampling strategies generally fall into two broad categories: non-probability sampling and probability sampling (Bornstein et al., 2013; Levy & Lemeshow, 2011). Probability sampling strategies are any

methods random selection, which assures that different members of the target population have equal probabilities of being chosen. Non-probability sampling strategies are any methods that do not utilize some form of random selection. By far the most common non-probability sampling strategy used is convenience sampling, where participants are selected in an ad hoc fashion based on their accessibility and/or proximity to the research (Jager, J., Putnick, D. L., & Bornstein, M. H. 2017). The latter method mentioned is the one used. Furthermore, according to Statista of October 2023, there were 5.3 billion internet users worldwide, which amounted to 65.7% of the global population; and of these, 4.95 billion, 61.4% of the world's population, were social media users and according to Evans and Mathur the rise of social media has facilitated consumer social interactions by leading them to use online social platforms to communicate opinions about products and exchange experiences. (Evans, J.R. and Mathur, A. 2018) Hence, this is the most convenient way to collect respondents' answers since they can be shared continuously, so it was decided to narrow down the field of respondents to only social media users. As the last step, the survey was shared on social media networks such as Facebook, Instagram and sent to WhatsApp. As a result, the survey was distributed to people who knew the researcher personally or were in his or her close social circle. The key advantages of convenience sampling are that it is cheap, efficient, and simple to implement. The key disadvantage of convenience sampling is that the sample lacks clear generalizability (Jager, J., Putnick, D. L., & Bornstein, M. H. 2017).

The survey was constructed and based on the data collected in phase 1 with the interviews and aims to gather approximately 100 participants. Overall, the survey acquired 78 respondents, of which 45 respondents knew the app before the survey. All 78 respondents were considered in this study because the primary objective of the survey was to gain comprehensive insights into perceptions and opinions regarding Threads' competitors (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok).

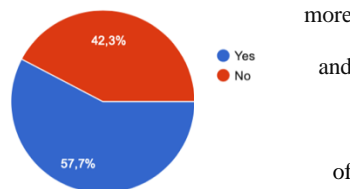
4.4.4. Results

The survey process began by gathering information about the participants' awareness of the app, their familiarity with its features, and the motivation that led them to engage with Threads. Subsequently,

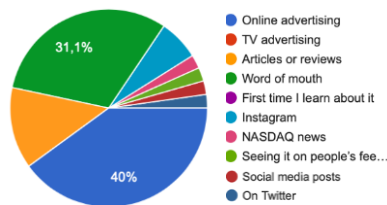
the survey delved into more in-depth qualitative questions regarding their social media preferences, willingness to pay, and their valuable and constructive feedback on potential improvements or changes. This information will serve as a cornerstone for shaping the future outlook.

For the analysis of responses, a weighted average metric was employed, assigning a double weight to extreme values (1st being the most important and 5th being the least important), a unitary weight to middle values (2 and 4) while central values received no weight. This approach accentuates the significance of extreme opinions, providing greater importance to strong and decisive viewpoints in the distribution. It's obtained that on average for a user it's more important with 1,33 news feeds, 2,46 groups, 3,69 messaging, and the last one with 4,23 profile customization.

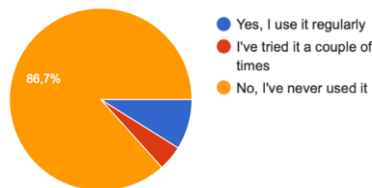
As a follow-up, according to the poll of 78 results, 45 (57.7%) of respondents had prior knowledge of the Threads app.



Then to these 45 respondents, it was asked how they first learned about Threads, respondents cited a variety of sources, including social media, seeing it on their feeds, online commercials, TV ads, articles or reviews, word of mouth, and mentions on platforms like as Instagram and Twitter, as well as Nasdaq news.



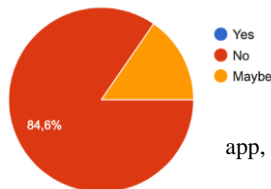
Interestingly, 39 of 45 (86.7%) of participants stated that even if they were aware of the new app Threads, they had never used it. The reason for this large amount of data is that the bulk of respondents are from Europe, where Threads is not yet available.



In addition, when further inquired about the main reasons for trying Threads or not, participants who knows or/and used the app expressed a variety of motivations; curiosity, recommendations from family or friends, professional or academic interests, dissatisfaction with other social media

platforms, or specific features and functionalities as factors influencing their decision. These results provide valuable insights into the awareness and adoption of Threads and the factors that influence users' decisions.

A notable 85% of the respondents expressed their lack of willingness to pay for exclusive features within the Threads app, while a more modest 15% indicated a potential willingness to do so.



For those respondents who answered affirmatively or expressed a possibility of being open to payment, their ideal payment model leaned heavily towards a one-time payment,



with 83% favoring this option. The remaining 17% indicated a preference for a monthly or annual subscription model. These insights provide valuable feedback for the app's developers, suggesting that a one-time payment option may be more appealing to potential paying users and it might be a more effective strategy for monetization, even though it was favored by a smaller percentage of the overall respondents.

The respondents expressed positive sentiments towards several features of Threads, including post sharing, the dynamic feed and algorithm, fact-checking mechanisms, and the sense of community. The ability to retweet without writing a single word and the platform's quick nature were also appreciated. However, there was a consensus that engagement on a visual level, along with missing features like hashtags and timely news updates, needs attention. Respondents highlighted the absence of a more personal chat function and suggested substantial improvements for Threads to distinguish itself further from Instagram and evolve into a unique platform. Various recommendations were made, ranging from adding more visuals to changing user acceptance processes and enhancing group features. Some concerns were raised about user safety and the inability to delete Threads without affecting Instagram. While recognizing the app's potential, respondents emphasized the necessity for ongoing improvements, particularly in terms of differentiation from other platforms and expanding globally.

What makes the survey particularly interesting is the geographical diversity of the participants. They represent various countries, including USA, Saudi Arabia, Argentina, Morocco where Threads is available so it's possible to get more trustable insights, and several European nations (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Morocco, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Switzerland). This broad international perspective provides valuable insights into Threads' potential for establishing itself in the European market, aligning with the RQ.

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