2023-2024

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# The Guardian view on Twitter’s rebranding: X marks an everything or nothing gamble | Editorial, *The Guardian*, 28 Jul 2023 .

# Elon Musk’s latest change to Twitter, the social media platform he has appeared intent on sabotaging ever since he was strong-armed into honouring his commitment to buy it, appears to be the most baffling yet. In place of a chirruping blue bird, he has substituted a “minimalist art deco” X, which was beamed across the facade of the firm’s San Francisco headquarters this week. Mr Musk, one analyst told the Guardian, had “singlehandedly wiped out over 15 years of a brand name that has secured its place in our cultural lexicon”. It’s hard to disagree. The blue bird had a charm that the ominous X does not. One graphic designer thought the new logo “unwelcoming and threatening”. In replacing the gentle invitation of a tweet with something more darkly anonymous, the world’s richest person might be expressing more than he intended.

# […] In business terms Mr Musk’s rivals are circling. Just a day after the rebrand news, the video‑sharing platform TikTok responded with its own announcement that it was expanding into text‑only posts. It joins Mark Zuckerberg’s Threads, which hit 100m sign-ups in its first five days earlier this month.

# The new logo is only the latest of a series of disruptions imposed upon Twitter’s millions of followers, who have seen their rights to a free authenticating tick withdrawn, and their access limited. Mr Musk’s insistence that the platform is holding its own has been contradicted by falling advertising, investors writing down their stakes, and by the market reckoning that subscriber numbers have also been in steep decline since his takeover.

# Mr Musk’s long-term aim is to reinvent loss‑making Twitter as a profitable X super-app where users will do all their finances as well as their socialising. His model appears to be China’s WeChat, which added payments, e-commerce and gaming capabilities on top of its messaging platform to become wildly popular. The aesthetic message of X seem to militate against that outcome. As a symbol, the letter is pumped up with contradictions: it’s the refusal of entry and a token of existence, at the ballot box, or in our genes. It both multiplies and signals absence.

# The designation “minimalist art deco” is also a muddle. The minimalist philosophy of paring everything down is the precise opposite of an app that does everything. The invocation of art deco, meanwhile, strikes a nostalgic note that harks back to an earlier era of industrial revolution in the 1920s and 30s. Perhaps what Mr Musk had in mind was the Chrysler building, that art deco monument to the automobile (Mr Musk is the CEO of the electric carmaker Tesla) that was briefly the tallest edifice in the world, until it was trumped a few months later by the Empire State Building. The fleetingness of its moment at the forefront of technological innovation may prove to be a cautionary tale. (475 words)