



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on November 30, 2023

## Musk vs. the Machiavellians: Is X's Victory Over Facebook and Instagram Real or Risible?

As you read this, X marks the spot.

That is, the spot for controversy and congregation, as the social-media platform is inspiring hatred from the iron-muzzle censorship crowd and participation from those seeking an online free-speech haven. And while X's (Twitter's) impending demise has been gleefully predicted by many, owner Elon Musk can now say that reports of its death "[are greatly exaggerated.](#)"

After all, the platform just beat out Facebook and Instagram during the most recent analysis of Google's top 100 organic search results.



Elon Musk/Wikimedia Commons

As Moneywise [reports](#):

Tesla CEO Elon Musk acquired Twitter for \$44 billion in 2022. Since then, he has implemented some major changes to the social media platform, including rebranding it as X, retiring the iconic bird logo and reducing its workforce by approximately 80%.

The transformation of X has met with mixed reactions, and some observers have been predicting the platform's decline, especially after Facebook and Instagram's parent company, Meta Platforms (META), introduced a rival app named "Threads."

A Google search for "Twitter is dying" yields numerous articles from high-profile outlets like TechCrunch, Vox, and Bloomberg, all featuring this viewpoint prominently.

But a recent post on X highlighted that the platform was leading in traffic generation via Google's top 100 organic search results.

... [The information] caught Musk's attention, who shared the post with his commentary, "Guess we're not dead yet," accompanied by the tears-of-joy emoji [tweet below].

Guess we're not dead yet ☹️ <https://t.co/gokmvwFMiw>

— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) [November 23, 2023](#)

The question is, though, does this reflect a long-term trend or just a radar-screen blip? Stating that "X's daily and monthly active users are still unimpressive," website TechChacho [makes the case](#) it may be the latter.

"If you Google search 'Twitter is dying', it shows several articles from major news outlets covering the topic of Twitter's (now called X) spiraling traffic," the site writes. "This has actually helped X beat Instagram and Facebook significantly in terms of traffic generated through Google. Bad publicity is still



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publicity after all.”

Another issue is that Google search results are, of course, *controlled by Google*; this means the search engine can easily suppress X's (or any entity's) Google-related traffic at a button's touch. Google engages in this type of censorship continually, mind you (I've caught the company suppressing my *New American* articles, for example). This translates into significant power, as [Google usage constitutes 91.94 percent of the global search market](#).

X has also lost more advertisers — i.e., *The Washington Post* and Disney — over a controversy in which Musk “came under fire recently for social media postings critics said were antisemitic and promoted conspiracy theories,” as Fox News [puts it](#).

For Musk's part, he's defiant, [telling](#) fleeing advertisers and critics — he called out Disney's Bob Iger by name — that they can go pound sand (though his phraseology was somewhat less genteel). Making his comments at the *New York Times* DealBook Summit on Wednesday, the billionaire also uttered quite a memorable line.

“What I care about is the reality of goodness, not the perception of it,” he [said](#). “And what I see all over the place is people who care about looking good, while doing evil.”

Speaking of which, the aforementioned Threads has not turned out to be the “Twitter Killer” the establishment had hoped for. In fact, the *New York Post* [wrote](#) last month that while at its July peak “Threads drew an average of 49.3 million daily active users on Android,” that “number has since dipped to 8.6 million — an 82% drop.” Threads may have recovered a *bit*, though, as TechChacho claims it doubled its daily and monthly active user base in October.

So what's the big picture? X's revenue has dropped precipitously, declining from a high of \$1.567 billion during 2021's Q4 to \$593 million during 2023's Q2. The company also ran suffering net losses in 2020 and 2021 (the last years [this site](#) has data for) and, in fact, has lost money *every* year from 2012 through 2021 except *two*. Makes you wonder how it stayed in business pre-Musk, huh (hmm...)?

Nonetheless, X's users did [increase markedly](#) during the last 13 years, rising from 40 million in 2010 to 401 million in 2022. Musk claims this figure has risen further, too, to 540 million in 2023's Q2.

Troublingly, however, Musk did indicate at the DealBook Summit that he'd let X fail if it was unprofitable; said, angrily (and understandably), that this collapse would be on the woke advertisers' heads; and stated that the market would then take those responsible to task. The accuracy of the prediction aside, an X failure would be tragic.

As one user [put it](#), “Meta is censorship. X is free speech. This is not difficult.” While not perfect, today's X is a *vast* improvement over its establishment-controlled former self. I say this, mind you, as someone whose X account is still “suspended” (I believe it has slipped through the cracks), but who, when posting under an [alternate account](#), experiences firsthand the greater freedom. You can breathe there now! Dissenting voices are, generally, welcome.

Another notable improvement is the “Community Notes” — input by users — which are affixed to misleading posts to add perspective. I've not yet seen one that was wrong (though there *could* be), and this is true market democracy in action. Apparently, a majority of social-media users, unconstrained by ideological, monetary, or reputational concerns, do a better fact-checking job than “professional” fact-checkers. Shocked?

Elon Musk certainly has the resources to keep even an unprofitable X going. One could only hope he



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realizes that having been a warrior for free speech will be a far greater legacy than having built electric cars. Remember, as with Donald Trump, the establishment is targeting X for a reason.



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