

Musk's X strips headlines from news links

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Elon Musk's social media platform X has stripped headlines from news articles shared by users, in a move likely to further worsen relations with media groups.

The tycoon has long railed against the "legacy media" and claims X, formerly Twitter, is a better source of information.

However, he said the latest change was for "aesthetic" reasons—news and other links now appear only as pictures with no accompanying text.

Musk took over Twitter last year in a \$44 billion deal and has since renamed it X, sacked thousands of staff and drawn criticism for allowing banned conspiracy theorists and extremists back on the platform, sending advertisers fleeing.

He has also banned—and reinstated—various journalists with mainstream outlets including the Washington Post and CNN, as well as appearing to delay posts from accounts including the New York Times.

"I almost never read legacy news anymore," Musk posted on Tuesday.

"What's the point of reading 1,000 words about something that was already posted on X several days ago?"

Souring relations

Some media groups have stopped posting to X altogether because of the rise in hate speech and the behavior of Musk.

AFP and other French news outlets launched a legal case in early August accusing X of copyright breaches.

When the changes to links were first mooted in August, Musk posted: "This is coming from me directly. Will greatly improve the aesthetics."

The changes appear to have been introduced gradually this week.

Instead of seeing a headline along with a picture, users now see only a picture with a small watermark.

The changes brought a good deal of criticism, journalist Tom Warren of The Verge website posting on X: "It's the latest in a long line of dumb changes on this platform."

Some users have already commented that it is now difficult to distinguish between news and other kinds of information, which is likely to raise questions about the trustworthiness of the site.

In September, the European Commission said X had a higher ratio of misinformation and disinformation than any other social media.

The souring relationship between media and tech companies is not limited to X.

Both Google and Meta have pushed back against laws forcing them to pay media companies to show stories.

The changes are having a real-world effect, with Axios news site reporting on Tuesday that referrals to media websites from X and Meta's Facebook had collapsed in the past three years.

Ads 'decimated'

Musk said in July the platform had lost roughly half its advertising revenue, though a month earlier he had claimed that almost all advertisers had returned and that 90 percent of bots had been removed.

According to a Media Matters report released Wednesday, most of the top 100 advertisers at Twitter in the weeks prior to Musk's takeover are spending dramatically less at the platform.

"Media Matters found that the company's ad revenue is still decimated," the report stated.

Since Musk purchased the company, it has earned 42 percent less ad revenue than before his tenure, according to Media Matters.

Market tracker Insider Intelligence estimates that X's share of the worldwide digital ad market has fallen nearly 28 percent to about a half a percent in the past year.

Musk has suggested charging all users of X, which would be the biggest shake-up since he took over the site, but experts say he might struggle to get most users on board.

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