

Social Media



A Gift from the Gods or the Work of the Devil?

Social Media connects people all over the world, but it also tends to degrade the quality of the conversations we are having while, at the same time, inserting a flood of attention-grabbing interruptions into our lives.

The algorithms are designed to reward clicks. Reliability goes largely unchecked. This leads to inward-looking social bubbles.

A study in 2018 found that fake news was spreading 70% faster than truthful news on Twitter. [wikipedia]

How and Why Does Misinformation Spread?

There's an insightful article here on the American Psychological Association's website.

It concludes that people are more likely to share misinformation

- when it aligns with personal identity or social norms
- when it is novel
- when it elicits strong emotions

And the result is 'echo chambers' that "bind and isolate online communities with similar views".

How and Why Does Misinformation Spread?

That same article notes that:

- Legacy media such as television, radio, and newspapers ... tend to have robust safeguards in place to prevent and correct false claims, whereas
- rapid publication and peer-to-peer sharing on social media allow ordinary users to distribute information quickly to large audiences.
- Hence, misinformation can be policed only after the fact (if at all).

How and Why Does Misinformation Spread?

According to Wikipedia:

“By July 2023, TikTok has become the primary news source for British teenagers on social media, with 28% of 12 to 15-year-olds relying on the platform, while traditional sources like BBC One/Two are more trusted at 82%, according to a report by UK regulator Ofcom.”

And,

“Many charities use TikTok for fundraising and education, especially with younger audiences, charities using TikTok include; Oregon Zoo, Shelter, Battersea Dogs and Cats Home, British Red Cross, American Heart Association, United Way, Catskill Animal Sanctuary and the Black Country Living Museum.”

The Good, the Bad, and the Clickbait

"Out of this anarchy, it suddenly became clear that what was governing the infinite monkeys now inputting away on the Internet was the law of digital Darwinism, the survival of the loudest and most opinionated. Under these rules, the only way to intellectually prevail is by infinite filibustering."

- Andrew Keen in *The Cult of the Amateur*.
Random House. [ISBN 978-0-385-52081-2](#).

The Good, the Bad, and the Clickbait

"Big Social Media has become so essential to our daily lives and our work that not only have we been willing to ignore the disenfranchised [moderator] workforce behind the machine, we have also accepted our own vulnerability to influence and exploitation. Advancements in algorithmic moderation will not save us; they will only enable us to give more of ourselves away."

- Jess Brough in this week's *New Scientist* magazine

What Is Social Media?

Wikipedia defines social media as:

“interactive technologies that facilitate the creation, sharing and aggregation of content ... amongst virtual communities and networks”

But, I suggest, the term “social media” is defined more by the ‘platforms’ that provide those services.

Popular Social Media Platforms

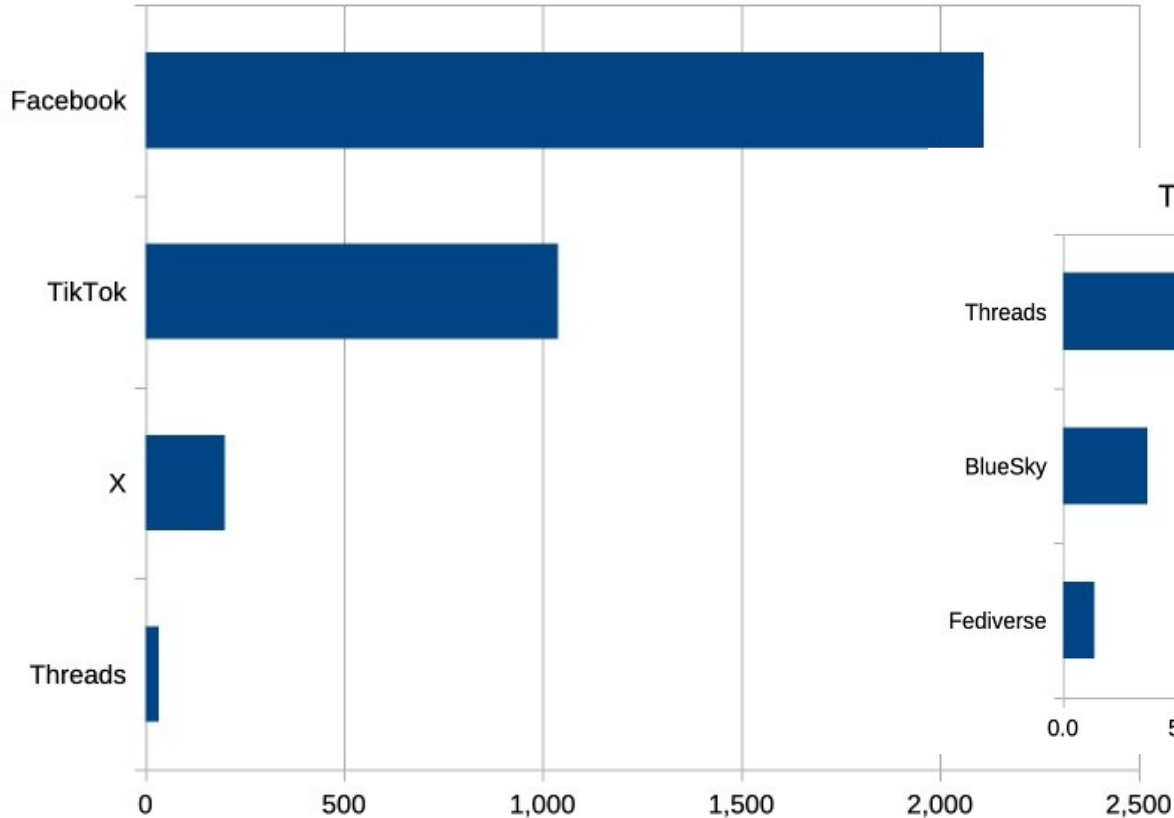
- Meta
 - Facebook, for keeping in touch with friends wherever they may be
 - Instagram, for sharing photos
 - WhatsApp, for instant messaging with friends and colleagues
 - Threads, for soundbites promoting you or your business
- X/Twitter, for soundbites promoting you or your business
- TikTok, for sharing short (look-at-me) videos
- BlueSky, for soundbites promoting you or your business
- The Fediverse (ad-free alternatives to the above)

Numbers (ish)

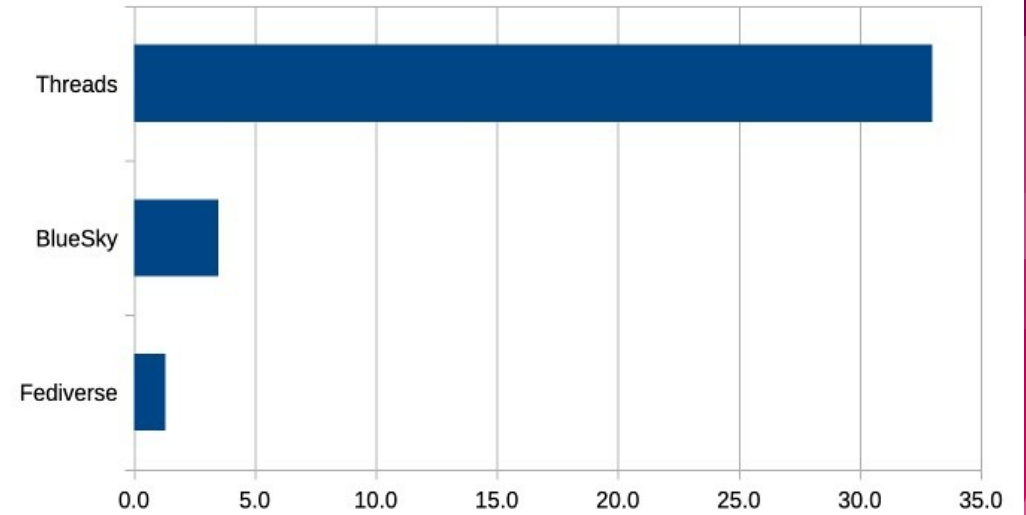
- Fediverse <https://fedidb.org/>
 - Number of users: 11,533,946
 - Active users: 1,331,826
 - Servers: 25,733
- Bluesky <https://backlinko.com/bluesky-statistics>
 - Number of users: 27,440,000
 - Active users: 3,500,000 - approx 3x fediverse
- Threads <https://backlinko.com/threads-users>
 - Active users: 33,000,000 - approx 10x bluesky. But all 3 available from fediverse.
- X <https://backlinko.com/twitter-users>
 - Active users: 200,000,000 - approx 6x threads
- TikTok <https://backlinko.com/tiktok-users>
 - Active users: 1,040,000,000 - approx 5x X
- Facebook <https://backlinko.com/facebook-users>
 - Active users: 2,110,000,000 - approx 2x TikTok
- Email <https://www.radicati.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Email-Statistics-Report-2023-2027-Executive-Summary.pdf>
 - Active users: 4,481,000,000 - approx 2x Facebook

In Charts

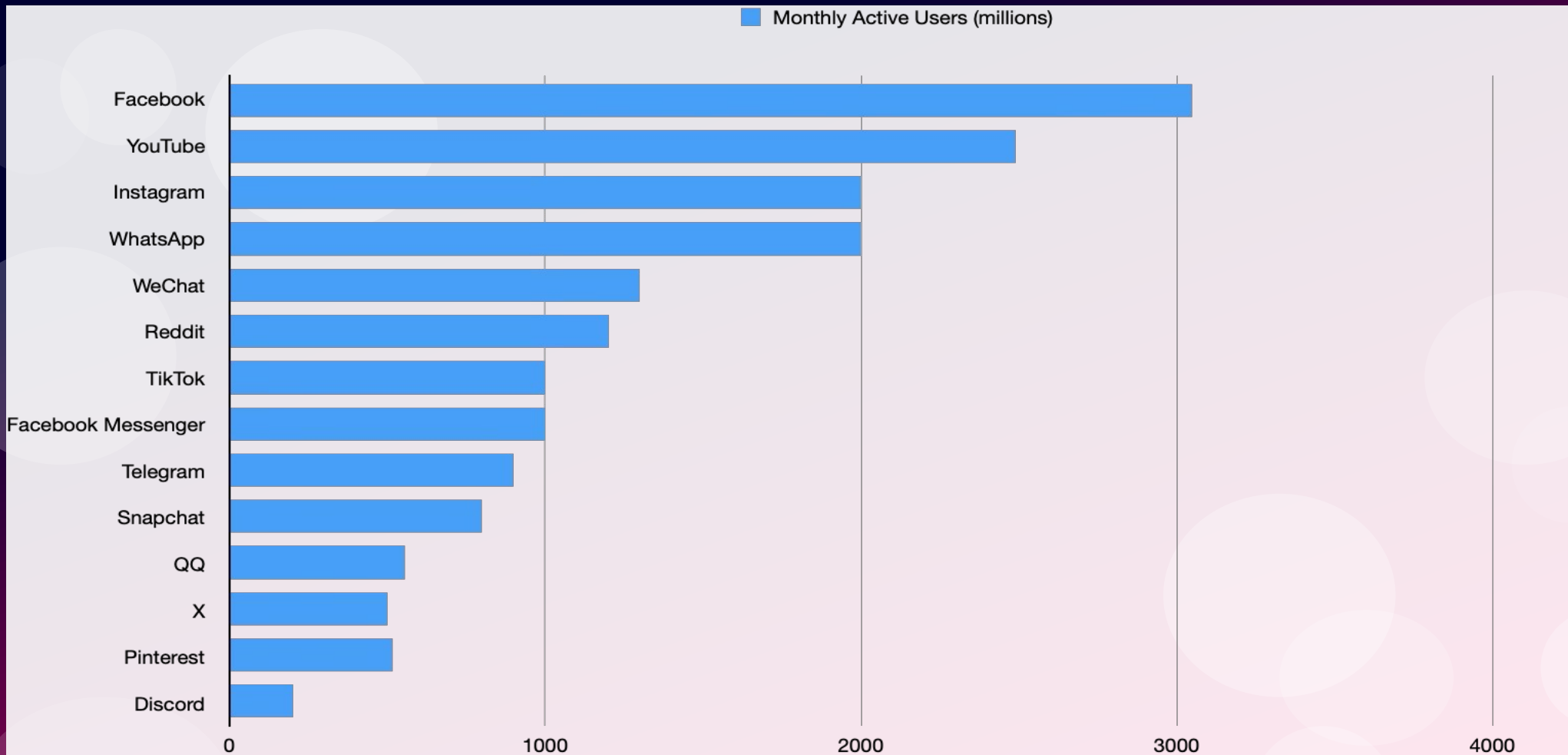
The Big Players (active users millions)



The Smaller Players (active users millions)

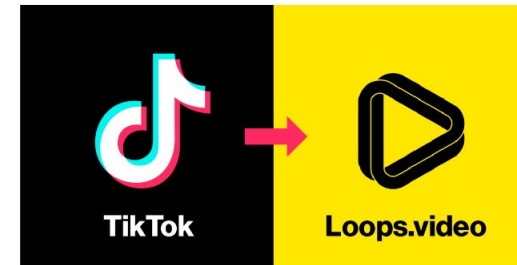
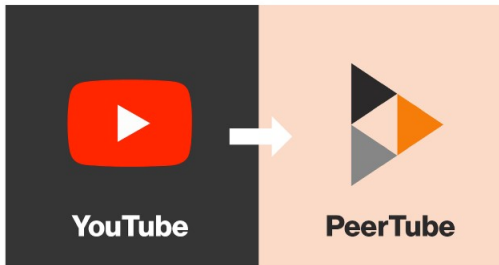
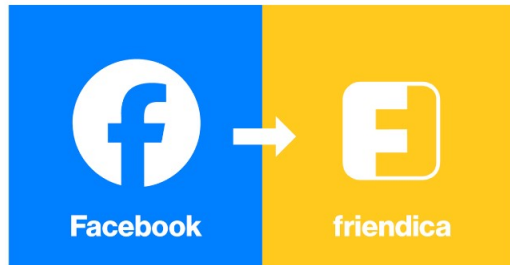
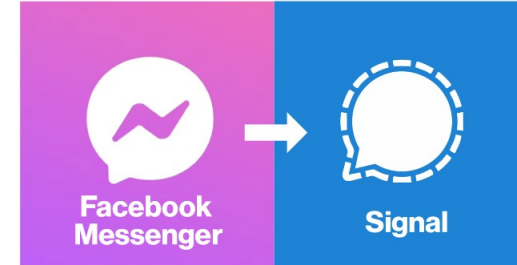
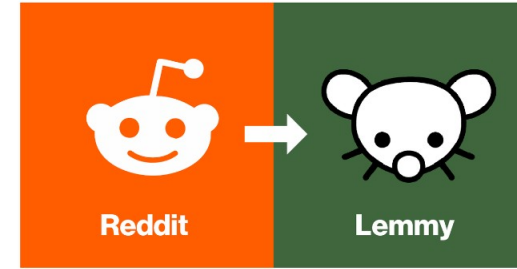


The 20 Most Popular Social Media Platforms



Alternatives to the Big Players

 **JOIN THE
FEDIVERSE**
#GLOBALSWITCHDAY



Facebook

- Are you on it?
- What do you think of it?
- What do you use it for?
- Would you miss it if it closed?

Other Social Media Platforms

- Are you on Instagram, X, WhatsApp, any of the alternatives?
- What do you think of them?
- What do you use them for?
- Would you miss them if they closed?

Thank you!

A vibrant, hand-drawn illustration of the words "Thank you!" on a black background. The text is rendered in a playful, bubbly font with thick outlines and various patterns and colors. The word "Thank" is on the top line, and "you!" is on the bottom line. The letters are filled with different colors and patterns: 'T' is red with a white zigzag pattern; 'h' is blue; 'a' is green with a white dashed pattern; 'n' is pink with a white dotted pattern; 'k' is yellow with black diagonal stripes; 'y' is orange; 'o' is purple with a white dashed pattern; 'u' is green. The exclamation point is red with a white zigzag pattern. Surrounding the text are several decorative elements: a yellow flower with five petals on the left, a red heart on the right, and two white swirls, one above the 'h' and one below the '!'.