TRT WORLD research centre

The Impact of the Acquisition of Twitter on the Global South

Ravale Mohydin



(Muhammed Selim Korkutata - Anadolu Agency)

The acquisition of Twitter by tech billionaire Elon Musk in October 2022 has been widely covered in international media as it holds tremendous potential and challenges for the global community. However, not enough has been written about its impact on the Global South in particular. Twitter 2.0, as Elon Musk calls it after the acquisition, has new upcoming features such as paid verification, changes to content moderation policies, enabling payments, advertising as entertainment, and more. These changes will have implications for millions of users, including those specific to the Global South. This policy outlook will analyse what these planned changes may entail for users in the Global South and make recommendations to enhance equity along with equality.

The opinions expressed in this policy outlook represent the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the TRT World Research Centre.

Introduction

TTech billionaire Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter, one of the leading social media platforms today, in October 2022 holds tremendous potential and challenges for the global community, particularly for the Global South. Social media in general has grown to the extent that it is not uncommon for most people to have a social media account today, and the phenomenon is not restricted to any region, country, race, or even socioeconomic class. Multiple factors have led to its growth, including in the sphere of news production and distribution. Social media as a source of news and information has had both positive and negative effects globally, including some specific to the Global South. Twitter 2.0, as Elon Musk calls it after the acquisition, has new upcoming features such as paid verification, changes to content moderation policies, enabling payments, advertising as entertainment, and more. These changes will have implications for millions of users. This policy outlook will analyse the impact of these planned changes on users in the Global South and make recommendations to enhance equity along with equality.

The Growing Importance of Social Media

The Internet can be said to power a virtual world that compresses space and time. The first form of the Internet originated in 1969, with ARPANET (Advanced Research Projects Agency Network) connecting four US universities together as a research tool. Even though the first Internet took at least three decades to reach the mainstream, social media took a relatively short amount of time to do so. Whether it is teenagers on TikTok, scrapbookers on Pinterest or professionals on LinkedIn, it seems that social media has become ubiquitous in our lives. This growth in social media can be seen in the numbers also. By 2022, almost 3 billion people use Facebook globally, with almost 1.5 billion users on Instagram. Tiktok is being used by 755 million people today, with Twitter having 450 million users.

Social media-based human interaction is primarily centred on the fact that human beings are essentially social beings and need socially relevant communication and information dissemination[1]. Value is derived from social connections whether it is linked to knowledge sharing or acquisition, friendship, co-creation, or entertainment. In terms of business, social media allows engagement with current and potential customers, brand awareness, brand elevation and product development or enhancement based on feedback. The rise of social media and its growing importance in our lives is not by coincidence. It is accompanied by significant changes in the world, powered by both innovation and disintegration of prior systems. These systems can range from governance to news media to social structures and definitions. As highlighted above, one of the reasons for the rise of social media is continued innovation of the Internet (particularly what that entails with the development of Web 3.0 in terms of its increasingly immersive nature) and its significant impact on human connectedness via social media. Social media can be expected to become more widespread as it becomes more immersive.

Another reason for the increasing traction of social media is the decline of traditional media. At its peak, what is today called the "prestige press" (the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Los Angeles Times, and the Wall Street Journal) and network television (ABC, CBS, and NBC) in the US were the main sources for news, with an average daily total paid circulation of US daily newspapers hitting almost 54 million USD in 1950. However, developments in media technology, particularly the Internet, seem to have democratised information and knowledge acquisition, leading to many traditional media outlets having to merge with new forms of media to accommodate the changing demands associated with a digitised media landscape. This type of new media has led to changes on two fronts: reproducibility and distribution. As mentioned above, the increasing incorporation of social connectivity is associated with both changes in reproducibility and distribution. In terms of reproduction of news, or even production itself, increased interaction between content creators and content producers on several social media platforms has resulted in a breakdown of monopolistic practices of mainstream news media organisations. Not only is it very difficult for mainstream media organisations to produce multiple forms of content (considering both television and digital outlets, and several digital outlets for specific social media platforms serving different demographics and regions), it is also difficult to control the flow of information from news producers to news consumers, with many consumers becoming creators of content also. Additionally, technological advances at very regular intervals have led to many news organisations having to upgrade their networks, journalistic practices, teams, and modes of operation. This has resulted in changes that have altered the nature

[1] Tracing the growth of social media as it increasingly incorporates and accounts for more social interaction, it is helpful to understand it through the lens of Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and Web 3.0, or the first, second and third generations of the Internet. The first generation - Web 1.0 - is the 'read only' version of the Internet and serves to only disseminate information, such as individuals or businesses' websites that showcase their knowledge, work or products, without user interaction. The second generation, Web 2.0, is characterised by interactive and dynamic user generated as well as AI generated content. Users can also be media creators. As per research, social media platforms have been built on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0. Taking this further is the third generation of the Internet - Web 3.0 - that is making data and communication even more interactive by enabling the web to read the users. The Metaverse, one of the key concepts of Web 3.0, is defined, by the Oxford dictionary, "as a virtual-reality space in which users can interact with a computer-generated environment and other users" - in other words, 3D social media, potentially becoming even more immersive and omnipresent in our lives than ever before. As time goes on and the world becomes more interconnected and the Internet continues to innovate: by 2030, the Metaverse alone is expected to grow to 5 billion unique users.

of journalists and even journalism itself: social media itself has become a source of news.

Not only has social media made news more accessible[2] as more and more people get their news on their mobile devices, they also "encounter the news rather than looking for it", in a process known as "incidental news", "as part of living in the media, rather than using the media". In the case of Twitter, its algorithmic and chronological logic does not differentiate between news and other forms of content on its platform. The Twitter algorithm determines all the highly relevant tweets and shows them on top, with all other tweets then showing in reverse chronological order, aiming to show users content they enjoy.

The digital news experience has become social, immersive, easy, and personalised, overall making it more enjoyable. This mostly explains the rising importance and relevance of social media as a source of news and information.

The Implications of Social Media as a Source of News and Information

Though the rising importance of social media is due to an upgrade in how news is experienced in the sense that it has become more social, immersive, easy, and personalised, the digital innovations have a downside. The algorithms of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter – which are supposed to be used to personalise the social media experience for users - can become harmful by becoming "automatic gatekeeper[s] to news consumers", while making news consumption biased towards a particular frame of news content[3].

Media news organisations were previously accused of employing a particular media bias in their news coverage, particularly news outlets that were dependent on viewership financially. With algorithms of social media platforms however, it appears that biases particular to an individual are amplified as the algorithms aim to present the user with content they would like and enjoy in order to retain that user for the sake of increased profitability of the for-profit social media platform. This leads to the creation of "echo chambers", which is, broadly speaking, any "environment where a person only encounters information or opinions that reflect and reinforce their own"[4]. Political echo chambers on Twitter are "so extreme that individual users' political leanings can be predicted with high accuracy: you have the same opinions as the majority of your connections", leading to extreme viewpoints. This chambered structure efficiently spreads information within a community while insulating that community from other groups. The extremism about socially charged and potentially divisive topics can lead to violence both online and offline.

Another consequence of online polarisation is the rapid spread of misinformation or "fake news", which is also connected with the rising traction of social media. Most people prefer and trust news from their "in-group" or networks of family, friends, colleagues et cetera. Such cognitive biases make social media primed for the spread of misinformation as users are inundated with information and take quick "mental shortcuts" by using cognitive biases to process all the information rapidly about what to pay attention to[5]. The glut of information found on social media can become harmful as one of the first consequences of the so-called attention economy is the loss of high-quality information. As Nobel Prize–winning economist and psychologist Herbert A. Simon noted, "What information consumes is rather obvious: it consumes the attention of its recipients."

Information quality is further impaired by social bots, which can also exploit human cognitive biases. In 2017 it was estimated that up to 15% of active Twitter accounts were bots. Bots can influence us by pretending to represent people from our in-group. Bots can also accelerate the formation of echo chambers by suggesting other inauthentic accounts to be followed, a technique known as creating "follow trains." As evidenced by research, social groups such as those found on social media platforms create a pressure toward conformity so powerful that it can overcome individual preferences, and by amplifying random early differences, it can cause segregated groups to diverge to extremes. On social media, people may confuse popularity with quality and copy others, in this context, sharing low quality information if others are doing it, particularly in their own social group. Such biases translate into an irresistible urge to pay attention to viral information

[2] As per Pew Research Center, half of American adults get news at least sometimes from social media, and almost a third (31%) of Americans regularly get news from Facebook. Twitter is used by about three-in-ten American adults (27%), and about half of its users (53%) turn to the site to regularly access news (Pew Research Center, 2022).

[3] According to Entman, media framing consists of "selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution". Other academics argued that the essence of the framing process is "to mobilise potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilise antagonists". Hence, the strategic purpose of framing is to orient the mass public towards a particular set of political objectives, with media frames demonstrating that news is a manufactured cultural reality, not an objective reflection of reality.

[4] Echo chambers can "create misinformation and distort a person's perspective so they have difficulty considering opposing viewpoints and discussing complicated topics". The Internet also has a unique type of echo chamber called a "filter bubble", that is created by algorithms keeping track of what users click on. These algorithms are then used by websites to determine content that may be interesting to a particular user, potentially hindering them from being exposed to new ideas or perspectives. On social media platforms, these algorithms do the same by suggesting content aiming for increased user engagement.

[5] This is enhanced by the fact that humans pay more attention to and are more likely to share information regarding increased risk, as well as that they are more likely to remember things that already fit well in with things we already know.

because "if everybody else is talking about it, it must be important".

Another important consequence of the increasing popularity of social media platforms, and perhaps a partial reason for it even, is that it provides "a two-way communication between news producers and news consumers through user-generated content (UGC)", with news consumers becoming news producers on such platforms and giving rise to journalistic terms such as 'participatory journalism', 'interactive journalism' and 'citizen journalism'. In this new age, it has become clear that the people have found voice on social media, and this is especially true for the younger generation as they "speak with each other". UGC has been associated with the ability to provide all angles of a story, and with the possibility of giving a voice to ordinary people on the ground dealing with big or small challenges. However, UGC is also not without consequences as the inherent checks and balances of news reporting in traditional media are absent and "questions pertaining to truthfulness, impartiality and credibility" are more difficult to answer. Thus, UGC can also contribute to the growing menace of fake news.

What Social Media Means for the Global South

To preface, social media platforms have become the first point of contact for many people in the Global South. In fact, millions of people may have first come into contact with the Internet itself due to social media platforms: With most of Facebook's users living outside of the West, and about 3 billion people out of those users, predominantly in the Global South, could not access the Internet reliably. In response to this, Facebook partnered with mobile carriers in countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines, and Pakistan to provide users free access to Facebook and a few other websites through its 'Free Basics' service. It was a part of the Meta Connectivity initiative to give users "access to communication tools, health information, education resources and other low-bandwidth services" at no charge, reaching more than 300 million people since 2013. At the end of 2018, Facebook announced that it had connected 100 million people to the Internet for the first time. Moreover, the use of social media platforms transformed the way brands and businesses could interact with their audiences and consumers in the Global South, which appeared to glorify Facebook's success even more. Thus, the utilisation of this digital infrastructure became the difference between a successful business and an unsuccessful one.

With that said, the biggest benefactor of Free Basics, or Internet.org as it is now known, has been Facebook itself as the platform extracts data from its users in the developing world and can unilaterally decide what to do with it[6]. According to Michael Kwet, it is a new kind of "digital colonialism" in which "instead of extracting oil or diamonds, Facebook extracts data". Local platforms of a similar nature have not been able to compete as locally based companies have not been able to feature their own software in Free Basics. Additionally, Facebook pushes its own or affiliated partners' products and services on its platform's Free Basics users, limiting both the quantity and quality of information that can be found, leading to legitimate concerns related to net neutrality[7]. Promoted websites and content does not differ much between countries, with much of the local news coming through Western (particularly American) channels and thus is coloured by that lens as well. This can be considered an effort to exert control over news narratives and framing, even if the end objective is to drive user engagement and profitability.

Political participation has taken on new forms on social media as people "pursue their political goals online" by sharing their political opinions, expressing dissatisfaction with governments by commenting on government officials' social media profiles, and participating in online collective actions against certain policies via, for example, the use of hashtags. In the past, such political participation meant significantly more resources needed to reach various hard-to-reach segments of society but social media enables more inclusive political participation. In the Global South, political participation via social media has been a game changer. Social media platforms have provided a voice to those who may not have had it before, leading to many people who may have not previously been a part of important political conversations to be heard. Social media has also given people access to information that they previously may not have had access to, whether it is local or global in nature. Events such as the Arab Spring and the role of social media have drawn much attention from communication researchers who have generally linked the advent of social media to greater democratisation in the Global South. Furthermore, potential and current politicians' use of social media can lead to the effective development of a political brand that otherwise may not have been possible without the use of significant resources needed for grassroots-level outreach.

With that said, even though social media platforms have led to greater political awareness and democratisation in the Global South, it has not come without consequences. In developing countries, even though this phenomenon is changing with time, most people who have access to and

[6] In March 2018, Cambridge Analytica, a data firm, misused personal data obtained from millions of Facebook users to influence the 2016 US general elections, evidencing that social media data can be used beyond product sales and services, compromising national security.
[7] Net neutrality is the concept of an open, equal internet for everyone, regardless of device, application or platform used and content consumed.
likely to remember things that already fit well in with things we already know.

benefit from social media are relatively wealthy and educated, leading to the risk of elite capture of social media platforms in the form of, for example, tech-savvy politicians tweeting to exclusively set news agendas to be highlighted and debated in mainstream media, avoiding any media or journalistic scrutiny of potentially more problematic issues. Besides that, democratisation of social media can also translate to the spread of fake news and violent narratives: in India, strategic campaigns and the dissemination of misinformation and propaganda on social media platforms by right wing political parties have resulted in alarming anti-Muslim violence and discrimination in the country. This points towards the need for content moderation on social media platforms, which has its own pros and cons.

Like anywhere else in the world, content moderation is required for content originating from the Global South to keep social media platforms safe and trustworthy for all to use. In its essence, content moderation is a social good. However, content moderation takes on a different meaning in the Global South at times, as it "faces double standards compared to the rest of the world". For example, research has shown that activists and researchers have limited access to social media data during elections and other political crises, or "employ discriminatory and unfair measures towards content" from the Global South, particularly the Arab world. Documented in 2021, "users posting pro-Palestine content noted their audiences' views and reach was decreased". Content moderation can also be automated, and can take place before or after users have posted content. "Platform bias" can also occur at the algorithmic level as algorithms can be adjusted to reduce the reach of certain types of content as was first reported in 2021 on both Facebook and Instagram. Additionally, all social media platforms were discovered to have different policies pertaining to the Middle East compared to Western countries. Palestinian activists, facing significant content related restrictions online in 2021, called it the "digital Apartheid". Platform bias can also include removal of content not aligned with "community standards" and deleting or restricting accounts that are deemed problematic. The "digital Orientalism" directed at pro-Palestine content, for example, has allegedly led to the silencing and effective censoring of the voices of millions of the Internet's Arab users along with their networks.

Twitter, on the other hand, had initially decided not to have any form of internal content moderation process. However, it later reversed course also following "The Twitter Rules", that were based on "the United States Bill of Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights", along with the "United Nations Principles on Business and Human Rights". Once a content review has led to a user being temporarily banned or when content has been judged to be violating above mentioned rules, users had to accept Twitter's decision. US laws and regulations enforce users to commit to Twitter's decisions, but Twitter can, as per law for private companies in the US, be sued by a user should they believe the decision is unfair. This protective agency is not available to users in the Global South, as US law is not applicable to them.

Significant problems of fake news and propaganda, platform bias, and a lack of transparency when it comes to content moderation related policy and its implementation are some of the issues of social media platforms. These issues must be addressed for users to really benefit from the positives of these platforms: easy access to information, political expression, social connection, and potential business profitability, if applicable.

The Tumultuous Twitter Acquisition

Enter Elon Musk and his much talked about acquisition of Twitter worth 44 billion USD. Elon Musk is estimated to be the world's wealthiest man. According to Musk, the reason he "acquired Twitter is because it is important to the future of civilization to have a common digital town square, where a wide range of beliefs can be debated in a healthy manner without resorting to violence".

Twitter was founded by NYU student Jack Dorsey and peers in 2006. Events like the Arab Spring showed how powerful Twitter could be when it came to giving people a voice. Twitter's business fundamentals, however, often appeared to be weak with fake accounts and scams hurting the company, whose core business was selling ads. That, along with controversial content moderation policies, drove Twitter to be "such a mess – it's as if they drove a clown car into a gold mine and fell in" as per Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Facebook.

The company has not been profitable in eight out of the last 10 years and "its content moderation policies and suspension of Twitter users became almost existential debates for free speech advocates". The crescendo was reached when Twitter permanently banned former US president Donald Trump in 2021, something Elon Musk never agreed with, calling it a "grave mistake" to de-platform "a sitting President [as it would have] undermined public trust in Twitter for half of America".

When Musk's large position in Twitter was disclosed in March 2022, he was invited to join the board. Over the following days, talks with Twitter's executives related to key issues, particularly the company's content moderation policies that Musk believed were too "heavy handed", broke down. Apparently out of frustration, he offered to buy Twitter. After a rather convoluted process that involved many back and forth rounds between Twitter executives and Elon Musk, along with their respective legal teams, the

sale was finally completed in October 2022 for 44 billion USD. It is important to note that Saudi royalty, the Qatari sovereign fund, and the CEO of Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange, along with a handful of US and Middle Eastern hedge funds, are a part of the investor pool that co-invested with Musk. The acquisition was covered widely in the media, with a plethora of news articles covering reasons why Musk may be interested in buying Twitter ranging from erecting a right wing-leaning political and media mega empire to simply creating a payment company out of Twitter.

Since taking over the reins, Musk has dismissed the company's board, fired the CEO and most executives, along with the teams working on content moderation. He implemented Twitter Verified, a membership subscription that can be bought for 8 USD (price adjusted for different countries, lower for the Global South) that will allow one to be verified on Twitter, a status previously reserved for celebrities, journalists, government officials et cetera. He called Twitter Verified the "great leveller", as everyone can be verified:

> "Twitter's current lords & peasants system for who has or doesn't have a blue checkmark is b*******. Power to the people! Blue for $8/month"

It was halted as it worsened impersonation on Twitter and resulted in financial losses for companies that were impersonated. It will apparently be reinstated again in November 2022 with different coloured verification checks for governments, companies, and individuals (including celebrities et cetera) after manual verification checks. Musk also reinstated the accounts of many controversial actors including Kanye West, Andrew Tate, Jordan Peterson and, after a Twitter poll that resulted in 52 percent of users responding in the affirmative, Donald Trump. He has refused to reinstate the account of conspiracy theorist Alex Jones and has made the removal of child abuse content from Twitter his number one priority.

The international media covered the acquisition widely, with many journalists and authors fearing for Twitter's continuity. However, as per Musk himself on 27 November 2022, Twitter is now actively recruiting again. Metrics such as new user sign ups and user active minutes are at an all-time high, records of hate speech impressions are lower and reported impersonation has fallen again. Calling Twitter 2.0 the "Everything App", Musk plans to relaunch Twitter Verified, introduce advertising as entertainment, along with introducing video, longform tweets, payments et cetera. Moving forward, Elon Musk has vowed to form a "content moderation council with widely diverse viewpoints" that would inform all content moderation related policies.

Impact of the Acquisition of Twitter on the Global South and Policy Recommendations

Elon Musk's Twitter takeover has been tumultuous, to say the least. Twitter Verification is reportedly slated to be rolled out again soon. Everyone interested in the service can pay eight US Dollars monthly to get manually verified and receive benefits, such as the coveted blue tick, and potentially having higher visibility and reach on the platform.

However, as fewer people from the Global South have easy access to social media, will the introduction of paid verification lead to even fewer people from the Global South on Twitter? What does this mean in terms of algorithmic justice? It can be assumed that if fewer people from a particular region are verified, their tweets will not gain the same traction or reach as wide of an audience as those in international locations further north. Worse, can only those who pay from the Global South access quality information and reach a wider audience inside and outside their countries and networks? What does this mean for elite social media capture in the Global South?

There appears to be little attention paid to what the Twitter verification feature means for the Global South, where, in some countries, eight US Dollars per month can mean a child's monthly school fee. Even if adjusted for the price according to country, would Twitter verification be killing equity for apparent equality of access and reach?

Saudi royalty and the Qatari sovereign fund are a large part of the investor pool that co-invested with Musk to enable the acquisition of Twitter. The abovementioned realms are hardly bastions of democracy, particularly in the Global South. One could presume that investment means a certain degree of influence on Twitter's direction, whether related to content moderation or what aspect of the platform to develop. What does this mean for human rights violations regarding freedom of speech? Will citizens of the Global South be able to freely exercise their right to political expression on Twitter?

On the other hand, Twitter's head of legal, policy and trust, Vijaya Gadde, an Indian-born American with links to the Hindutva[8]-based Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) who was responsible for many content moderation decisions, was recently fired by Musk. As per whistle-blower Peiter Zatko's testimony to the US Senate, Twitter had allowed a 'foreign agent' to be placed by the Indian regime in Twitter's office. It has been documented that both Kashmir and even Pal-

[8] Hindutva is the belief in the hegemony of Hinduism in India and the establishment of the country as a Hindu, rather than secular, state. likely to remember things that already fit well in with things we already know.

estine-related content has long been suppressed on Twitter. Does this signal that both Kashmir and Palestine will be provided with coverage as equal and non-preferential as that reserved for other political and military conflicts in the world? Would Twitter algorithms no longer reflect political biases and double standards? In an ideal scenario, the new management could push Twitter to pay greater attention to conflicts in the Global South as mainstream Western media does not tend to provide these conflicts with due coverage, particularly if they do not involve the Global North, i.e., the West.

Musk has emphasised that Twitter's content moderation council will host members with widely divergent viewpoints to create inclusive content moderation policies and decisions. Some countries in the Global South do not, at times, have the strongest safety records or laws to protect people from hate speech and slander. What does it mean for the security of life and property of citizens of the Global South with online hate easily spilling offline? Musk has sent some mixed indications so far. From retweeting conspiracy theories to cryptic signals to neo-Nazis, Musk's communication strategy has left much to be desired. On the other hand, Musk has shown a willingness to stand by some of the high-profile Twitter suspensions dictated before his tenure. A case in point is that of Alex Jones. The justification was because "[he has] no mercy for anyone who would use the deaths of children for gain, politics or fame", and, according to human trafficking and child abuse activists, Twitter is taking child exploitation seriously as child abuse-related content is being removed. While Musk has enforced certain boundaries about child safety issues, critics claim that Twitter's content moderation policy is now "wholly dependent on what side of the bed Musk wakes up on or how users respond to random polls". If proven to be true, that can be dangerous for democratic values anywhere in the world, not just in the Global South. It would be beneficial to have a clear content moderation policy as Twitter moves to expand and include more users as time goes on.

In terms of plans to include payments on the Twitter platform, presumably, to pay for products, services, or content, it appears, given that Binance, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange, co-invested with Musk in Twitter by contributing 400 million USD, that cryptocurrency may be the preferred, if not only, method of payment.

This approach can raise questions about inclusivity because many people in the Global South do not have the knowledge of or easy access to cryptocurrency-related infrastructure or cryptocurrency assets. Does this mean they cannot access token-gated products, services, or content? Additionally, if people from the rest of the world can charge and receive payments in cryptocurrency on Twitter (even from advertising that may rely on user impressions from the Global South), would it be fair to people from the Global South who cannot be paid for their creations or citizen journalism, but who form the bulk of the audience for others' content creation that they get paid for? This problem remains unresolved even when considering regular fiat payments when so many in the Global South remain unbanked or without any relevant financial infrastructure. Unless inclusive financial infrastructure (an example may be an option of mobile wallets) is in place and utilised in the Global South, content monetisation should not occur.

Connected to that, Musk has reiterated that advertising would be in the form of entertainment. It can be assumed that user data extraction for all users will continue and one of its uses will be targeted advertising, which is still Twitter's core business. Twitter is a privately owned company and can decide to do whatever it wants with user data. Enabling payments on Twitter likely involves identity verification, this, along with users paying to verify themselves to obtain a presumably better experience of Twitter can only mean richer, more accurate user data. From a business perspective, this can be very profitable but the likelihood of Twitter becoming increasingly more focused on getting this data and using it to make even advertising more entertaining could very well translate to greater social media addiction and consumerism on the user's end. This would not be the first-time advertising and entertainment is combined, but on such a large scale it can take away from the original mission of Twitter and may even appear jarring for users. For the Global South, with many countries' citizens not having the same privacy laws and data protections available to Western users, this can be problematic. A potential solution can be profit sharing from advertising revenue used as compensation for their attention, but then again, without proper payment infrastructure and awareness, Global South citizens will simply not benefit.

Elon Musk's Twitter acquisition has tremendous potential and challenges for the global community, and particularly the Global South. Given that the next wave of social media users is likely to come from the Global South, it would make good business sense to develop products and policies with them in mind, along with everyone else across political spectrums and socioeconomic strata.