

Twitter rebrand: Does X mark the spot?

 By [Karabo Ledwaba](#)

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Love him or hate him, Elon Musk is one of the most famous (or infamous) start-up founders the world has seen. His latest venture was the purchase of Twitter which he has now rebranded as X.

I speak to four marketing, design and branding specialists on what they think about his decision and whether it will have any consequences for the well-known social media brand.



Source: 123rf.

Thabang Lehobye, head of design at FCB Africa says the change can be negative or positive depending on how we look at it.

“The iconic, happy, chirpy bird logomark has been so embedded in our scrolling rituals that it is hard to imagine the platform without it. The same goes for the name, which has been part of our colloquial chat. The pair just made sense for a fun, informal chat-based platform that encouraged conversations with strangers (mostly, which ended in the ruffling of feathers and flying off swiftly). These brand assets were simple. Approachable — more human,” he says.

But on the other hand, the rebrand is a signal for change and repositioning of Twitter’s (now X) new product offering as an “everything app”, where users will be able to “conduct” their “entire financial world” on it and other new things.

He adds: “All this makes it apparent that it is no longer just about a tweet and retweet. A rebrand that Musk deemed necessary for a revolutionary approach would align with his other “techy” brands, perhaps even aligning them all together as endorsed brands in the brand architecture. Where this will be successful will depend on how successful the brand delivers on its promise, not necessarily the logo itself.”

Lehobye says equity plays a crucial role in any rebranding effort, and Twitter’s brand equity is significant and potentially valued at billions.

Risk is his brand

“ *In terms of brand value, it is a mistake that many brands cannot afford, except for Elon Musk. Risk is synonymous with his personal branding.* ”

Bogosi Motshegwa, founder and chief strategist at Thinkeneur agrees with Lehobye that risk and ambition is Musk’s brand.

“His biggest brand assets are his vision, audacious ambition, and the tenacity to make anything possible. So, therefore I think to only view X from brand marketing perspective might be short-sighted and an injustice to his DNA makeup. Is rebranding Twitter a good idea or a mistake? I think if it was anybody besides Musk doing this, I’d be inclined to think that it was a mistake, but since it is Musk, the answer is, I guess we’ll just have to wait and see. Like everything else he’s built, most people believed once his vision became realised,” adds Motshegwa.



Elon Musk rebrands Twitter to X

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Lehobye says the X rebrand feels cold and lacks personality, while the bluebird is distinctive.

“The total rebranding of Twitter for me is a nay. While rebranding signals a new direction for companies, it is essential to consider what is working or not. It is not like the platform is completely changing. For this, I would have recommended an evolutionary approach to the rebrand. To look at the most distinctive assets and find creative ways of moving along with them as we marshal into the new era,” says Lehobye.

Both Motshegwa and Lehobye say the biggest obstacle to the rebrand is people.

“People are highly emotional and are creatures of habits. We get attached to things and never want them to change, and as such, change always causes friction. If we were talking about an FMCG brand/product, that would require familiarity in a shelf space, I’d say we have a problem, because an FMCG product is naturally in a cluttered space where you’d need those distinctive assets for recognition. But we are talking about an app that’s already downloaded onto our phone. There’s truly no competition apart from the other major social media app. It’s a destination app,” says Motshegwa.

Always in the cards

TBWA SA CEO, Luca Gallarelli says he believes the rebrand is something Musk had always been planning.

“I didn’t expect Musk’s acquisition of the platform to be purely for vanities sake or because of his oft-promoted advocacy for freedom of speech. An evolution of the platform to something driven by greater utility with a commercial backbone felt like a logical next step. The branding also aligns perfectly with other companies under his management, so the shift to a more austere, tech-aligned identity also makes sense.”

Chief creative officer at TBWA SA, Carl Willoughby agrees with Gallarelli that the move makes sense.

"Musk faced some major challenges acquiring Twitter. Freedom of speech, and financial viability, were all things that needed fixing I guess. While I'm not a fan of Musk I can see there might have been some reasoning behind his madness. Personally, I think it would have been better to just rebrand instead of renaming. Perhaps the 'Threads' threat sparked all of this. In my opinion, they should have focused on fixing the existing issues first before even thinking about a name change. I mean, how will we retweet, will we re-X? I haven't quit Twitter yet as I'm curious to see how things unfold from the sidelines," says Willoughby.

Lehobye concludes: "I predict the [bird] icon will forever be embedded in our minds and define an era of human-to-human conversation. The bluebird will be as iconic as the legendary "I Heart NY" logo."

ABOUT KARABO LEDWABA

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