

# Verification goes unhinged amid Musk empire



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Elon Musk, billionaire and acclaimed “genius,” bought Twitter about a month ago for about \$44 billion.

Musk made the acquisition official by walking into the building with a sink then posting a video to Twitter with the caption, “Let that sink in.”

Unfortunately, this wasn’t going to be the worst or cringiest thing to happen with Twitter in the following weeks after his purchase.

Musk says he purchased Twitter for the sole purpose to “help humanity, whom he loves” and “not to make money,” according to an Oct. 27 Twitter post.

However, in the same tweet specifically addressed to advertisers, Musk promises that he will keep Twitter a safe space for them and thinks ads can “delight, entertain and inform.”

He finishes his statement by reassuring advertisers, not humanity, that “fundamentally Twitter aspires to be one of the most respected advertising platforms in the world.”

Putting aside the cringy pomp, circumstance and nice words, Musk buying Twitter is detrimental to both collective action and freedom of speech, and it is already causing more harm than good.

Before his purchase of Twitter, the blue check mark system was used to denote active, notable and authentic official accounts for companies, politicians and users, according to the Twitter website.

After the purchase, Musk decided to sell blue check marks for \$8 a month as a great “equalizer.”

This beautiful idea from the big brain



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY CONTRIBUTOR JULIA CLEMENT; SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS, THE ROYAL SOCIETY

himself was shortly followed by shitposts of Nintendo’s Mario flipping the bird, George Bush calling for the death of Iraqis and an announcement for free insulin, all with a blue verified check mark next to them.

Other notable shitposts included the banana company, Chiquita, announcing they had “overthrown the Brazilian government” and O.J. Simpson “refused” to lie and said he did “it,” according to a Nov. 14 Washington Post article.

The greatest effect from all this was Elli Lilly, a pharmaceutical company selling insulin, lost billions of dollars in market cap valuation as its stock dropped 4% after tweets from a parody account announcing that its insulin would be free, according to the Washington Post article.

Musk continues to fail to recognize, amid the entirety of Twitter making fun of him,

that he doesn’t know how to run a social media company.

Twitter at its base has always made money off of its users.

There is an axiom that is prevalent in the social media space that goes, “If you aren’t paying for the product, then you are the product.”

At the same time, how many other companies can say they were paramount in toppling authoritarian governments in the case of the Arab Spring?

The Arab Spring was a wave of pro-democracy protests and uprisings that took place in the Middle East and North Africa beginning in 2010 and 2011, challenging some of the region’s entrenched authoritarian regimes, according to Encyclopedia Britannica Online.

Social movements and mass protests like the Arab Spring, the hashtag #MeToo, the

Black Lives Matter movements and current human rights protests throughout Iran are all cited as being galvanized and organized on Twitter, according to a Nov. 22 NPR article.

People found a resource to organize and be heard, which turned out to be an effective means for political action and change.

This resource happened to be Twitter – I’m as surprised as everyone else – but nevertheless, it allowed people to hold power in their phone and change their world.

There is a chance that Twitter could continue to be a place for organization and change, but with the veracity of profiles in question and Musk’s clear attention toward advertisers over users, I find it hard to believe that Twitter has much longer on the app market.

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# TikTok is gentrifying my hobbies, experiences



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TikTok trends have a gentrification problem that has become toxic, overpricing low-income people out of hobbies that were once accessible for them.

Thanks to TikTok, thrift stores are no longer a place for low-income people to buy good clothes for cheap. Thrift stores are being gouged and raided by teenagers to sell vintage clothing on apps like Depop and Grailed, showing off their hauls in viral videos.

Many thrift stores now sell second-hand goods for exorbitant prices, especially vintage graphic t-shirts.

Going thrifting is no longer a cheap way to get nice clothes. Most thrift stores have increased their prices significantly, with many stores now selling popular used clothes for well over \$100.

Thrifting hauls are massively popular on TikTok. The hashtag #thrifting, has over 6.1 billion views on the platform with similar hashtags having incredibly insane popularity on the app.

There is an endless sea of teenagers and millennials showing off their hauls full of bags upon bags of thrifted clothes.

This is a far cry from the days I used to go to local thrift stores because there was a huge selection of cheap and great looking clothes everywhere you looked.

Nowadays, most thrifting consists of endlessly sorting through clothing racks and either finding nothing good in the entire store, or

every good item is almost selling for its original retail price.

Clothing is only the tip of the nasty trend of TikTok making things more expensive.

Photography, which is already an expensive hobby, has become even more ridiculously priced.

Film photography became a massive trend since the pandemic, when many people were stuck indoors looking for new creative outlets.

However, its popularity has turned what used to be a cheap and fun way to shoot photos, into a worldwide phenomenon.

This is because the supply of film simply isn’t built for its sudden massive explosion in use.

Most camera stores can barely stock color film and when it is available, it is exponentially more expensive than what it used to cost. Fujifilm announced last April that the cost of their film would be increasing by 25% in North America. This followed a similar announcement from Kodak.

Kodak Gold 200, a popular consumer film, which used to run \$10 for a pack of three, can now usually be found for almost \$12 for a pack of only one. Kodak and Fujifilm, the world’s largest producer of camera film, can’t keep up with the current demand of people.

Kodak announced that it is hiring new film technicians for the first time in 20 years because of its unprecedented popularity, according to a tweet from the film manufacturer.

Now that TikTok has outpriced thousands of photographers from shooting film, the new trend has become digital cameras which emulate the classic look of it, as a cheaper and more practical option.

The Fujifilm X100V, a classic-styled digital camera, became a massively popular camera because of influencers on TikTok showing their audience its capabilities of taking photos that resemble the look of film photography.



ILLUSTRATION BY KATIA KASOWER

Because of this, the camera quickly turned into a small phenomenon and Fujifilm had to make an official press release stating that orders greatly exceeded current production.

Almost overnight, prices on the camera almost doubled, from about \$1,000 to almost \$2,500. It became almost impossible to find online and became a fool’s errand to find in any brick and mortar retailer.

TikTok somehow made both forms of photography more expensive for everyone, especially hurting low income people that rely on cheap used gear to keep up with their hobby.

Used cameras as a whole

have increased in price to keep up with demand, which hurts photographers who rely on used gear to be cheap and plentiful. Now, because people want to be cool for their audience on the internet, more and more cameras are becoming unavailable to those who aren’t made of money.

Even things that aren’t hobbies have been over-popularized by social media trends.

The fans at concerts have also absolutely decreased in quality, thanks to many artists and bands blowing up on TikTok through audio clips and memes.

Nobody knows how to mosh respectfully

anyone. I’ve seen teenagers almost step on people who fell in the pit. Crowd safety is incredibly important, but seemingly has become overlooked in recent years.

With the way crowds have been at shows lately, I am scared of another incident like Travis Scott’s Astroworld Festival, where 8 people died because of a massive crush at the front of the stage, according to a Nov. 6, 2021 NPR article.

Don’t even get me started on the amount of people getting onto the stage at shows in recent months.

Everybody apparently forgot what the phrases “personal hygiene,” “personal space” or “basic respect” are, because every time I’ve seen a band that went viral on TikTok, the crowd was horrendous.

The amount of middle school and early high school students that are now seeing concerts for the first time is starting to absolutely ruin the quality of live shows, while also gouging the price of them.

In the last year, I’ve seen concert tickets increase in price exponentially, especially for bands. Last August, Ticketmaster started trending on Twitter as backlash to outrageous ticket prices. Prices for concert tickets have tripled since the mid 1990s, adjusted for inflation according to an Aug. 18 Time Magazine article.

Sometimes, it feels like I can barely keep up with all of these trends. Thanks to TikTok, I am constantly in fear of what will become the next popular thing.

One app single handedly made me afraid of things becoming popular. People on social media need to learn how to behave, and that chasing trends is not worth it when it makes experiences worse for everyone.

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