

Twitterverse atwitter over expanded tweet limit

September 27 2017



Twitter's test of an expanded 280-character limit is aimed at luring new users, but some of the social network's passionate loyalists fear the change will strip it of its unique appeal.

If implemented broadly, the longer tweets could profoundly change the nature of the one-to-many messaging platform which is popular with journalists and politicians but has struggled to boost its broader user base.

Twitter says the change may draw in more users and reduce the frustration faced by those who struggle to encapsulate their wit and wisdom within the 140-character limit.

But some members of the "Twitterverse" argue it would not be Twitter anymore if users are allowed to ramble.

"The 140-character limit has been a defining feature, forcing brevity and making streams of tweets very easy to consume," Jan Dawson of Jackdaw Research said in a blog post.

"Even just looking at the first few 280-character tweets I've seen from Twitter executives has broken up my feed and forced a mental shift in my consumption."

Writing in *The Guardian*, Australian novelist and commentator Dominic Knight said, "Brevity is the soul of Twitter. We don't need 280 characters to say that."

Many Twitter users—already notoriously skeptical of previous updates to the platform—heaped scorn on the idea.

"Twitter can't shorten my attention span for 8 years, then expect me to start paying attention to #280character tweets," one user wrote.

Another tweeter commented: "The world is fighting enough wars already. @Twitter should not add a war between brevity and verbosity into the mix, please no."

Twitter chief executive Jack Dorsey offered his defense of the move in a series of tweets.

Twitter expects and appreciates "all the snark & critique.... Comes with

the job," Dorsey wrote.

"What matters now is we clearly show why this change is important, and prove to you all it's better. Give us some time to learn and confirm (or challenge!) our ideas."

More space for Trump?

Many comments focused on US President Donald Trump, who uses the platform for policy announcements and for spontaneous remarks on many topics. Twitter indicated Trump won't be part of the test group.

"Do not give Donald Trump an excuse to tweet more nonsense," one user tweeted.

Another user wrote: "This new Twitter 280 character thing is huge - especially for Trump. Now he can say stupider things more bigly."

Some users said the change could have a positive impact by allowing for more detailed and complex messages.

"I find the character expansion on Twitter to be a great plus for the public sphere and activism," said Zeynep Tufekci, a University of North Carolina sociologist who studies Twitter as a tool for social change.

"While the brevity has its advantages, 140 characters was too little, and often lent itself to needless misunderstandings as people could not put in more nuance and context. I would even like to see Twitter put in a "click-to-expand" feature, perhaps for an additional 280 characters.

A "small group" of users will see the new limits before Twitter decides on rolling out the changes more broadly, the company said.

Some analysts said the change was unlikely to provide a major boost for Twitter, which has seen its user base stagnate and has failed to keep up with faster-growing social networks like Facebook and Facebook-owned Instagram.

Roger Kay, analyst at Endpoint Technologies Associates, said the new [tweet](#) limit does little to change the economic outlook for Twitter.

"They really need to get more users and to get more users they need to make the platform more accessible," Kay said, arguing that Twitter has a steep learning curve which makes it more difficult to use than competing platforms like Facebook.

"If you are not a Twitter aficionado and you open Twitter it looks like a waterfall, it's not very friendly to the untrained user."

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Citation: Twitterverse atwitter over expanded tweet limit (2017, September 27) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2017-09-twitterverse-atwitter-tweet-limit.html>

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