

Zuckerberg's role in Facebook rebrand may backfire, experts say

Major involvement in launch of Meta could saddle it with baggage from founder's primary venture



Mark Zuckerberg gives his keynote speech about the launch of Meta. Photograph: Meta Handout/EPA

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Mark Zuckerberg's effort to remove "negative associations" between Facebook and its parent company may be undermined by his decision to front the launch of its rebranding as Meta, experts have said.

Facebook's CEO announced the change on Thursday, revealing that the name Meta would encompass the social media network, Instagram, WhatsApp and the virtual reality brand Oculus.

Experts have questioned Zuckerberg's heavy involvement in Meta's launch, suggesting it could immediately saddle the brand with baggage associated with his primary venture.

Felipe Thomaz, an associate professor of marketing at Oxford's Saïd Business School, said: "The over-involvement from Mark is expected but rather harmful.

This is a brand movement, with opportunities to create new associations. Mark has a very strong but potentially negative personal brand.

“As intelligent and capable as he is, and as much as he is the figurehead and founder, he might have had more success away from the public/media lens during this brand restructuring.”

Facebook is in the throes of a series of public relations crises. Documents known as the [Facebook Papers](#), leaked this month, exposed the inner workings of the company, and the whistleblower Frances Haugen alleged that the firm placed profits before ridding its platform of hate speech and misinformation.

The rebrand is part of a broadening of the firm’s portfolio beyond social networking, particularly as it pushes on with plans to develop the “metaverse”, an online universe where people can meet, play and work virtually, often using VR headsets.

Zuckerberg starred in a promotional video that provided a glimpse into the digital world, featuring an avatar of himself.



Facebook gives a glimpse of metaverse, its planned virtual reality world – video

Sam O’Brien, the chief marketing officer at Affise, an online platform that links brands to influencers, said: “The association of Mark Zuckerberg with Facebook is a real issue. Everyone associates him with Facebook, you see him talking to the press, you see him talking to government. Even with a rebrand he’s still at the helm.

“I don’t think he should necessarily step back, but if it’s purely a play to remove the negative associations around Facebook, it’s likely to fail. Everyone knows who Mark is, we all had him on Facebook at one point.”



Mocking Meta: Facebook’s virtual reality name change prompts backlash [Read more](#)

The timing of the rebrand has also been questioned. One expert suggested Facebook should be listening to criticism rather than taking dramatic leaps.

Allyson Stewart-Allen, the CEO of International Marketing Partners, a business consulting firm, and the author of *Working with Americans: How to Build Profitable Business Relationships*, said: “It’s almost like they are flying blind. In some ways this almost reinforces what Frances Haugen has been saying: that the company doesn’t listen, it’s out of touch and it does what it wants to do when it wants to do it regardless of what’s going on in the wider environment.

“That isn’t listening. And this [rebrand] is a sign of it not listening. It almost smells of desperation. Sort of ‘let’s change the public conversation. I know, let’s hit the button on the rebrand, that’ll solve it’. Well, actually, no, it doesn’t, and it won’t.”

Facebook has been approached for comment.