

Elon Musk is wrong: research shows content rules on Twitter help preserve free speech from bots and other manipulation | The Conversation

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Elon Musk's accepted bid to purchase Twitter has triggered a lot of debate about what it means for the future of the social media platform, which plays an important role in determining the news and information many people - especially Americans - are exposed to.

Musk has said he wants to make Twitter an arena for free speech. It's not clear what that will mean, and his statements have fueled speculation among both supporters and detractors. As a corporation, Twitter can regulate speech on its platform as it chooses. There are bills being considered in the U.S. Congress and by the European Union that address social media regulation, but these are about transparency, accountability, illegal harmful content and protecting users' rights, rather than regulating speech.

Musk's calls for free speech on Twitter focus on two allegations: political bias and excessive moderation. As researchers of online misinformation and manipulation, my colleagues and I at the Indiana University Observatory on Social Media study the dynamics and impact of Twitter and its abuse. To make sense of Musk's statements and the possible outcomes of his acquisition, let's look at what the research shows.

[...]

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