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Pinterest: Terms of Service and Privacy Policy

Pinterest is a website that was founded almost 10 years ago as a social media site where you could post your interests and pictures for other people to see. Over the years, it has become increasingly popular, with hundreds of millions of active users expressing their ideas and creativity through the platform. During this time of growth, they have created a Terms of Service to tell users what they can and cannot do, as well as create a Privacy Policy that protects users Privacy and data shared with the company. These two documents found on Pinterest's website will be analyzed to summarize the terms of each, and when they were last updated. Next, the Terms of Service and Privacy Policy will be reviewed to find and positive or negative aspects in the agreements, compared to a list of formulated ethics. Then, the documents will be compared and contrasted with the Electronic Frontier Alliance Principles, and finally, make sure that there are no instances where the websites policies violate any of the ethical codes discussed in class.

After reading the Terms of Service for Pinterest, which were last updated on the 1st of May in 2018, there are many things that Pinterest lays out that you are not able to do without consequence. To start it off, only the people who agree to Pinterest's Terms of Service are allowed to join, where they must continue to follow the rules. You must also be over the age of 13, and if you are a business you must use a commercialized business account. In regard to the content allowed on Pinterest, any form of pornography, spam, or harassment is allowed

(Pinterest). When things are posted on Pinterest, you retain the copyrights, but anyone has the ability to use the content that is published, including Pinterest. Security is also mentioned, as Pinterest would like to keep everyone safe on their website, as well as any laws, violations, or liabilities that may occur. Pinterest also reserves the right to terminate your account for any reason, and if you have any feedback or criticism, direct it to the appropriate place. Then comes Pinterest's Privacy Policy, which was updated more recently, as of the 1st of January in 2020. The policy starts off by listing the ways that they collect data from its users, and there are many different places where the data comes from. The most common data collected is the data that comes from the user, which is personal information like your name, email, phone number, and anything you comment or post. Then, the data that comes from the hardware and servers is collected, like when you are online, your location, and cookies. Pinterest also collects and stores data that comes from third-parties, like Google, sponsored content, and any other company Pinterest might work with. Pinterest states what they do with the data they collect, which is mostly used to create a more personalized experience for the user, including showing ads related to your interests, and to make sure the law is being followed, as well as improving Pinterest as a platform. Users have the ability to unlink possible Google or Facebook accounts if they do not wish to have data sent between them, and the ability to limit the information that is sent to other companies to use. Things like location can also be turned off, but it would be on the device's settings, not on Pinterest's website. The policy also reminds the user that any content that they post on their account is available to the public, for anyone to use, and that any data that is collected can be stored by Pinterest indefinitely, until they have no use for it. Once again, it is stated you must be at least 13 years of age to be a user of Pinterest. If the user lives in Europe or California, there are certain things that may affect you, like the data that is collected, and you can

request that data to be removed, and be informed of your rights under law regarding your data.

Finally, Pinterest lets the user know that the policy can be changed at any time, and if that happens, the user must agree to the new Privacy Policy to keep using the service.

There are many positive aspects to Pinterest's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy. One of the most beneficial is the protection that Pinterest gives from spamming, posting harmful content, or anything else that would not belong on a safe and monitored platform. On many websites, users can be subject to harassment or online abuse and moral degradation for their opinions, so it is nice to see that Pinterest prioritizes its users this way and protects them from these types of attacks. Other websites also might state that it is not allowed, but Pinterest goes above and beyond to say that the infringing accounts will be terminated, and that criminal action can be pursued if necessary. Another positive aspect of the Terms of Service is that your security is held to a very high standard, and Pinterest assures its users that when you use Pinterest, your data will not be stolen or used criminally in any way. They assure this with their state-of-the-art security measures, along with the user having the ability to have 2-factor-authentication so that people who do not own your account do not have access to it. This, paired with the ability to report if your account has been tampered with or accessed without your permission to Pinterest, and they can look in to the case and determine if there was a security breach, and formulate a plan to punish the attacker. These terms keep you protected from unwanted activity on your account, as it is a reflection of your personal life and its choices, and since the account is owned by you, it is yours to use under Pinterest, and that privilege should not be taken away unnecessarily. A negative aspect of Pinterest's would fall under the Privacy Policy. In it, there are many statements and paragraphs from Pinterest ensuring that your data will be kept safe from unwanted parties, but they allow much of the data to be given to "approved" third parties. When

agreeing to the Privacy Policy, you agree to give Pinterest the ability to license your data to third parties, which are called "...affiliates, advertisers, partners and other third parties we work with" (Privacy Policy). But Pinterest does not tell you who exactly is receiving your data. One could only blindly trust Pinterest's judgement, and hope that the data does not get sold or transferred into the wrong hands, but as a user, we will never be able to know who sees our data. And that becomes a problem from many reasons, as your data isn't truly private, and since Pinterest doesn't give an exact number of the amount of companies they work with, your data could be sold around the world, multiple times over. This obviously is not something that you want to happen, but to be able to use Pinterest, this is the sacrifice in privacy that you must make, along with many other social websites out there. Many of these policies reflect good, ethical rules to prevent bad things from happening, but there are also some ethical ideas such as privacy that are broken, leaving the user to make hard choices that they never knew existed.

When looking at Pinterest's Terms of Service and Privacy Policy next to the Electronic Frontier Alliance Principles, you can see that the intentions are there to make the website as close to their own high ethical standards. But from a company's perspective, that just isn't possible, let alone profitable. There has to be exceptions to the ideal rules in the EFA Principles to compensate for this, and in Pinterest's eyes, they are doing enough to satisfy their users. But as technology and its number of users grow, are they really doing everything they can to remain ethical? The number one freedom that is on the list is the freedom of expression. A big freedom at that, likely based upon the ideals of the US Constitution and other Libertarian influences. While Pinterest likely tries to hold true to this value, people doing things like spamming and harassing other users prevents the possibility of truly free expression, as it is a social media site that has to be catered to an audience that would not enjoy that interference. But I would assume

that Pinterest tries to live up to the freedom of expression as much as they can, so that they can stoke the creativity of its users and allow for a positive, wholesome environment. The next principle on the EFA list is security. Always a big concern for any internet website, security should always be valued very highly. Pinterest assures its users that everything regarding their personal data and sensitive information is secure, but in the day and age where security breaches happen out of nowhere due to careless human error or poor system optimization, it's very possible for breaches to slip through the cracks. It's not like big websites tell its users exactly how their information is secured either, as that poses security risk in itself, so what we have to do is what we do with every other large company, and that is to trust them. While that is not always the best option, that is just one of the many sacrifices we make on a daily basis to allow for our daily routines and practices. The third on the list is privacy, and not from big data collection or advertising companies, but from each other. Now I find this quite silly, as you shouldn't need to remain anonymous on the internet, but I do agree that you should have the option to at least be anonymous at any time. On Pinterest, they do a good job at this because as long as you don't post anything relating to your name or identity, and your username is unrelated as well, you should be in the clear, as it would be impossible to see who you really are. This is important because your life on the internet shouldn't necessarily impact your real-world experiences, so the ability to be anonymous on Pinterest is a great proof of concept for online anonymity. The fourth principle on the list relates to what I mentioned for the freedom of expression, and that is creativity. People should be able to do what they want, how they want, when they want, where they want, with who they want, for whatever reason they want, and while Pinterest limits that for obvious reasons, like supporting the creative DIY niche that attracts its users and keeps Pinterest true to its core values, traces of those ideas can be found in the ability to post whatever you want,

whenever you want, and so on, as long as they don't harm anyone else. Finally, the last on the EFA list is access of knowledge. Obviously, Pinterest is not a library, so it isn't a gain knowledge in that sense, but the ability to learn from others creativity is appreciated and encouraged on Pinterest, with that being one of the main purposes of the site. Nothing in the TOS or Privacy Policy restrict your ability to learn on Pinterest, and as long as that knowledge is allowed to be posted on Pinterest, it supports that principle and rewards its users with that knowledge.

To end off the ethical examination of Pinterest and its practices, I will finally take a look at some other ethical codes and see if there anything that Pinterest is possibly missing or purposely withholding. Most of the policies are similar in nature to the EFA Principles, but just go into more detail instead of giving a broad subject to compare to. However, one of the things that I would like to analyze is the System Administrator's Code of Ethics. I believe that this code focuses on people who control or have large influences in places where many people interact with websites and companies where ethical conduct could be disregarded. It picks those people out of the crowd who have responsibility over that area and tells them that they need to be liable for all of the shortcomings of the website, and that a small error or disregard of ethical codes on their part can lead to millions of people being affected, not just them. And that's what companies/websites like Pinterest need. Anyone can pledge to their own oath to do whatever, but at the end of the day there needs to be accountability, and I feel that the SACE is a good place to start. What the world needs are leaders, especially ones who act out of the good of the people, not ones who disregard ethical practices for their own self-interest. The Archimedean Oath is also a great start for the individual, who likely does not have a large influence in their position, but the accountability is still there, and is a step in the right direction. Pinterest, and the

thousands and thousands of other companies need to look to these ethical codes as an example, so that the world can be at least a little bit better than before.