

Media Literacy by Design Self-Assessment

Name of the platform: Pinterest

Date: 09th July 2024

Purpose of the document:

This document has been designed for online services¹ to demonstrate how their work and products align with the [Best Practice Principles for Media Literacy by Design](#). As you engage with this assessment, consider the following key areas:

1. **Proactivity, priority, transparency and accountability;**
2. **User-centric design and timely interventions;**
3. **Monitoring and evaluation.**

Ofcom recently became the UK's online safety regulator following the Online Safety Act 2023 (the Act) becoming law. Ofcom's media literacy work will make an important contribution to the implementation of the changes under the Act, in particular the changes to Ofcom's media literacy duties introduced by the Act. However, this work should not be interpreted as a statement of our policy on other guidance or our codes of practice under the Act or prejudice any further work to develop policy in relation to that Act. Whilst there are close links between the policy areas of media literacy and online safety, they are distinct. Our media literacy work, which includes these principles, is broader in scope than online safety, in terms of both the content and services to which it applies. In addition, as a voluntary initiative we have more discretion in the recommendations we make here than in the online safety codes. Our media literacy work goes beyond requirements specified in the Act to consider what more online services can do to support people to use, understand and create online media and communications in a variety of contexts.

With this in mind, materials submitted here may be repurposed for Ofcom's work under the Act.

We would like you to engage in a reflective process. This self-assessment form invites you to analyse how your organisation approaches media literacy on-platform (as part of the design process or through on-platform interventions).

- We specifically encourage you to identify potential areas for improvement you would like to focus on over the next few months. This approach allows us to better understand how platforms monitor and evaluate media literacy interventions on an ongoing basis, whilst allowing us to further encourage the adoption of the principles.
- We ask that you define what success looks like, and how this will be measured for each piece of work to promote media literacy on-platform. As per principle 11, we ask that you

¹ Platforms/online services include social media, search, video-sharing and gaming services.

establish media literacy outcomes and media literacy outcome indicators wherever possible.²

This self-assessment exercise is also an opportunity to share knowledge with a broader audience. Other services, academics, charities, and the general public can learn from what's currently working well and what challenges exist. We may wish to use some of the self-assessment completed to publish a summary of the work being undertaken by platforms. We would be in touch on the specifics before publication, however, it is worth flagging if there is anything commercially sensitive or confidential in your response at this point. Transparency and knowledge sharing has been [a recurrent ask from stakeholders](#). By fostering open communication and sharing insights, we can collectively enhance our understanding and drive positive change, leading to a collective commitment to media literacy.

In responding to the questions in this document, we encourage you to assess your practices and the extent to which they align with Ofcom's Best Practice Principles for Media Literacy by Design as part of actively contributing to a more informed and media literate society. We want to make knowledge sharing a formal aspiration for online services to ensure that everyone has clarity over the work that is being done and to foster collaboration between stakeholders.

Contact: If you have any questions about the Media Literacy by Design project, please feel free to get in touch with the MSOM team (makingsenseofmedia@ofcom.org.uk).

² Media literacy outcomes are ideally a benefit received by the target audience to be achieved as a result of the work. Media literacy outcome indicators are measurable pieces of evidence that allow users to track the change that has taken place as a result of their intervention.

Proactivity, priority, transparency and accountability

Please provide an example of how your platform already demonstrates adoption of at least one principle in this category. How is success measured (please provide media literacy outcomes and indicators wherever possible)?

Pinterest has demonstrated the principles of proactivity, priority, transparency and accountability through, for example, the development and evolution of our misinformation policies.

Pinterest was one of the first platforms to establish robust policies prohibiting misinformation, starting in 2017 with health misinformation, including anti-vaccination advice and false cures for chronic or terminal illnesses. We regularly review and update our policies to ensure they are current. As such, we've updated this policy several times to encompass more types of misinformation including misleading information about COVID-19 and election misinformation.

In 2022, we expanded our community guidelines to prohibit all ads and organic content from our platform that mislead the public about [climate change](#). We were the first major digital platform to have clearly defined guidelines against false or misleading climate change information, including conspiracy theories, across content and ads. Before developing the policy, we met with policy advocates, coalitions and members of academia to better understand the climate misinformation space and gather insights of what a meaningful policy could look like. These stakeholders told us that climate change misinformation is rooted in denying certain truths: climate change is real, caused by the actions of people, an urgent threat to humanity, and most importantly, solvable.

These policies are public and easily understandable and accessible in our Help Centre. We believe that one way to evaluate the success of these policies is measured by the number of users who viewed policy violative content prior to its deactivation. For example, in Q4 2023, 45% of pins deactivated for violation of our climate misinformation policy were seen by fewer than 100 people. In the case of health misinformation, 98% of pins that were deactivated for violating this policy were seen by fewer than 100 people.

From health care to climate denialism, Pinterest has made misinformation a priority, accepted responsibility for combatting it, and worked proactively and transparently to develop and promote new policies. Additionally, Pinterest's recommendation system prominently surfaces high-quality content and aims to limit the spread of low-quality content, including content related to misinformation.

Please provide an example of how your platform can make more progress to further demonstrate further adoption of principles in this category. How will success be measured (please provide media literacy outcomes and indicators wherever possible)?

When users search for content in sensitive categories or content categories prone to misinformation, we surface an advisory that connects them to additional context from authoritative bodies. We continue to improve these advisories, partnering with authoritative bodies to further connect users with important information and resources.

For the critical public health issues related to vaccines, we know how important it is for our users to receive accurate and authoritative information. So we created special search experiences for these topics. When users search for terms related to vaccines on Pinterest, we only show them content from approved public health agencies, such as the World Health Organization and the National Health Service.

In the weeks leading up to the July UK election, if users searched on Pinterest for terms related to the election, we showed an advisory pointing them to the Electoral Commission, to ensure they received accurate and reliable information, such as about where and how to vote.

We're continually reviewing and updating our policies and enforcement guidance to ensure they're current. The vast majority of content on Pinterest does not violate our policies. But guided by the principles of proactivity, priority, transparency and accountability, we evolve our policies with the current landscape and closely monitor for emerging risks.

To enforce our policies, we rely on a combination of human review and machine learning. Human reviewers provide cultural and linguistic expertise to ensure we are properly contextualising the content on Pinterest. Machine learning allows us to scale the important work of removing violative content across the globe, and we are constantly training and refining the classifiers that identify this content.

User-centric design and timely interventions

Please provide an example of how your platform already demonstrates adoption of at least one principle in this category. How is success measured (please provide media literacy outcomes and indicators wherever possible)?

Pinterest believes inspiration starts with inclusion. More than a moral obligation, this is a business objective, because as a visual discovery platform, Pinterest knows users must be able to see themselves reflected on our platform.

Our road to a more inclusive internet started with feedback from some of the over half billion people who search, save, and shop every month on Pinterest. These users said they were forced to “hack” our search tools to find content on Pinterest that looked like them. When searching, they had to add qualifiers like, “*plus-size* summer styles” and “*Black* prom hairstyles.”

What they really want is to be seen from the start without having to add qualifiers and filters. So, we set out on a multi-year journey of listening, learning, and building, and realised fairness and inclusion must be a central component of our AI product development.

In 2018, we introduced [skin tone ranges](#) to search, so people could quickly find makeup approaches that worked for their skin colour. Three years later, we added a first-of-its-kind [hair pattern search tool](#), so people could refine their searches by hair texture like straight or curly.

Feedback and adoption on those two products was overwhelmingly positive, but we knew these tools don't fully encompass the diversity of the Pinterest community. Our users still had to tap on a filter to see their skin and hair types represented on their feeds. Pinterest needed to do more for users without asking them to take an extra step.

In early 2023, we began to increase skin tone representation across Pinterest, surfacing more people of more colour without any effort required by users. It was a solid start, but we were still missing one of the most important elements of representation: **body types**.

In a country where nearly 70% of women wear a size 14 or above, we are still overwhelmingly being shown examples of unattainable body images in the United States. Over 75% of U.S. adults say the media promotes an unattainable body image. In the UK, according to the 2021 YouGov body image study, over half (51%) of Britons report feeling under pressure to have the perfect body. Women (61%) are significantly more likely than men (40%) to say this. They know this simple truth: A diverse feed requires diverse imagery and there's not enough online.

Building on what we learned from our skin tone and hair pattern tools, Pinterest introduced our [body type ranges](#) product in March 2024, a first-of-its-kind in the industry. The tool is powered by Pinterest's patent pending innovation, [body type technology](#), which uses shape, size and form to identify various body types in over 5 billion images on the platform. Pinterest internal teams partnered with external organisations and experts, including creators and users, to develop this technology.

With the roll-out of our latest innovations, we saw a 70% increase in users saving Pins from all four skin tone ranges. The number of daily searchers using hair pattern search has grown 41% in the last year. And we have already improved by five times the representation of different bodies on women's fashion related searches on Pinterest in the United States. While body type ranges for women's fashion and wedding related content search is available in the US and is currently being tested in Canada, we're optimistic about the feature's positive impact when it is released in the UK.

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Pinterest has plans to expand the reach of the [body type ranges feature](#) into new markets in the coming months, including the UK, and to expand it beyond women's fashion to include men's fashion.

More broadly, these innovations are steps towards our long-range goal to be the leader among platforms in producing inclusive and inspirational online spaces. Pinterest prioritises inspiration and intent in our product development, not unlimited views and time spent. We are proving what's good for humanity is good for the bottom line.

Earlier this year, Pinterest CEO Bill Ready challenged the industry to shift their focus from engagement to positivity, which he said is a winning business model. "I know this because we are building it here and seeing results," [Ready wrote](#) in *The Hill*, a US publication. Pinterest revenue was up 11 percent year-over-year as of Q3 2023. Pinterest users are engaging more than ever before and we saw a 20 percent year-over-year increase in Gen Z users between 2022 and 2023.

Monitoring and evaluating

Please provide an example of how your platform already demonstrates adoption of at least one principle in this category. How is success measured (please provide media literacy outcomes and indicators wherever possible)?

We monitor and evaluate every innovation to ensure that Pinterest is building a safe, positive and inclusive platform. Some of our findings:

- After launching **skin tone ranges**, we saw a 70% increase in users saving Pins from all four skin tone ranges in related feeds across the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand. (Source: Pinterest internal data)
- Pinterest remains an online oasis with nearly 2 out of 3 users saying they feel positive after interacting with Pinterest. This feeling increases with frequency as 76% of weekly Pinner's feel positive after interacting with Pinterest. (Source: Morning Consult, Positivity Study commissioned by Pinterest, January-April 2023, data collected in the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Canada)

One final example: [Research](#) conducted last year measured the effectiveness of a daily dose of inspiration among university students preparing for finals. Researchers found that just 10 minutes a day on Pinterest can buffer against burnout, stress and social disconnection among Gen Z.

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Our adherence to this principle is constant and we are continuously evolving our monitoring and evaluating methods in order to improve our efforts. It influences our user designs and interventions, which are developed and made public with the ethos of proactivity, priority, transparency and accountability.