

**ITPRD202A /103A Professional Issues in IT**

**Applied report on ethics issue (Assessment 1)**

Student Name:

Student ID:

Academic Year:

Grade Assessment Help

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 4

Representing the ethical implications of changes on X and its operation from the perspectives of 3 different stakeholders ..... 4

1. Ethical implications on X as an organisation (formerly Twitter) .4

2. Users of the X platform .....5

3. Society and public interest .....7

Conclusion ..... 9

Reference List..... 10

Grade Assignment

## **Executive Summary**

The report has focused on the acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk after public criticism of its security risks caused by content breaches. The applied report has focused on the ethical implications of the changes brought by Elon Musk after his takeover deal over Twitter. From the viewpoint of organisations, users and public interest, the advantages as well as disadvantages of these changes have been highlighted in this report. Additionally, various ethical frameworks have been applied in this report to highlight ethical issues caused due to Elon Musk's acquisition.

Grade Assignment Help

## **Introduction**

Fundamental ethical issues during organisational changes include technological abuse, safety issues, unethical accounting, data privacy, and information breaches. The report aims to demonstrate an argument based on the changes in policy and ethics in X, formerly known as Twitter. The report will cover the ethical implications of changes in the operation of X from the viewpoint of stakeholders considering the benefits and limitations. The report will further focus on the ethical justification of these changes based on ethical frameworks in an effective manner.

### **Representing the ethical implications of changes on X and its operation from the perspectives of 3 different stakeholders**

According to Scroxton (2022), the acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk with \$44 billion on 26 October 2022 has elicited tremendous changes across the world of social media platforms. The benefits and limitations of the changes to trust and safety from stakeholders' perspectives along with ethical justifications are going to be covered as follows;

#### **1. Ethical implications on X as an organisation (formerly Twitter)**

**Benefits:** According to the report by Reuters (2023), Elon Musk has reorganised the trust and safety team of X with a policy-controlling body after his acquisition of Twitter. The team is responsible for content moderation to limit the posting of misinformation or content on social media. After the acquisition of Twitter, the executive role of Elon Musk was very active in determining acceptable content for X. As per the ethical framework of Rights, an individual person has the fundamental right to freedom, health or privacy with the evaluation of behaviours and decisions (Schauer, 1992). Elon Musk is a self-declared endorser of individual rights to freedom of expression. He has stated that free expression must be reconcilable with the law and beyond the law he has opposed censorship. Elon Musk also wants to make Twitter more effective by including new features, developing user authentication, defeating spam bots, and making open-source algorithms to enhance trust (Livemint, 2022). According to The Verge (2023), Elon also wanted to

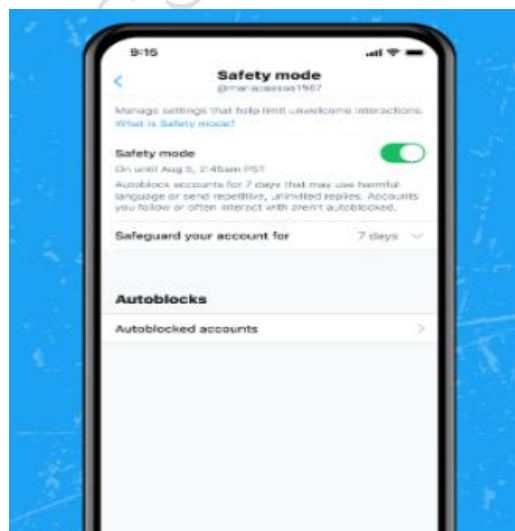
build an egalitarian, impact-focused and empirical culture in X, where a team member can get the metaphorical centre stage with a strong data-driven justification.

**Limitations:** Since the acquisition of Twitter by Elon Musk, the social media platform has been heavily criticised by advertisers due to lax protections (Reuters, 2023). As a result, the contemporary head of the trust and safety team, Ella Irwin resigned from the company one year after joining in June 2022 (Reuters, 2023). Therefore, after Irwin's departure, the platform has failed to retain advertisers as the brands worry about posting unsuitable content. Besides this, after the acquisition of Musk, X dramatically cut overall costs and eliminated more than thousands of employees (Reuters, 2023). Around 15% of employees who usually worked to protect election integrity, prevent illegal content and surface accurate information were also laid off by the company after Musk's acquisition (Livemint, 2022). The company also has encountered a high level of scrutiny from EU regulators for its content moderation efforts. As per the Virtue ethical model, an individual person can be guided through virtue ethics to resolve ethical issues without specific rules (Whetstone, 2001). As a result, Twitter pulled out of its voluntary agreement with the EU to prevent disinformation despite being committed to associating with future internet rules of the EU (Reuters, 2023). According to Livemint (2023), after Musk's acquisition of Twitter, the company saw a massive reduction in annual revenue as many advertisers pulled out their advertisements from the site.

## **2. Users of the X platform**

**Benefits:** According to X Corp (2023), the trust and safety team of X has developed an autoblock feature for users which is known as Safety Mode as shown in Figure 1. After the activation of the mode, platform X identifies potentially spammy behaviour or abusive content such as repetitive negative replies, unsolicited mentions or harmful language. Therefore, platform X flags and automatically block such harmful accounts from replying to the tweets of users. As a result, these

accounts will be restricted from interacting with users for 7 days due to the autoblock feature. According to the Deontology ethical framework, individual persons follow universal moral rules to distinguish right from wrong (Christie *et al.*, 2008). In this case, Elon Musk has also added a new feature named Community Notes, which allows users to add context in their tweets to combat misleading information on Twitter. According to Out-Smarts Marketing (2023), platform X has created a space for ‘witty’ content for its users that suits their brand style. As an example, fast food company Wendy’s has injected humour into its many posts and comments to attract more customers on X. However, wittiness is not acceptable on several platforms like LinkedIn (Out-Smarts Marketing, 2023). Additionally, platform X also has restricted users from writing with more than 280 characters to make them intentional with their words. Therefore, users can avoid being too wordy in terms of developing acceptable content on X unless Tweet Thread. Furthermore, platform X becomes effective for testing content ideas for business users before creating larger content. Therefore, users can develop a more creative and longer format of acceptable content on platform X in a safe way (Out-Smarts Marketing, 2023).



**Figure 1: Safety Mode in X/Twitter**

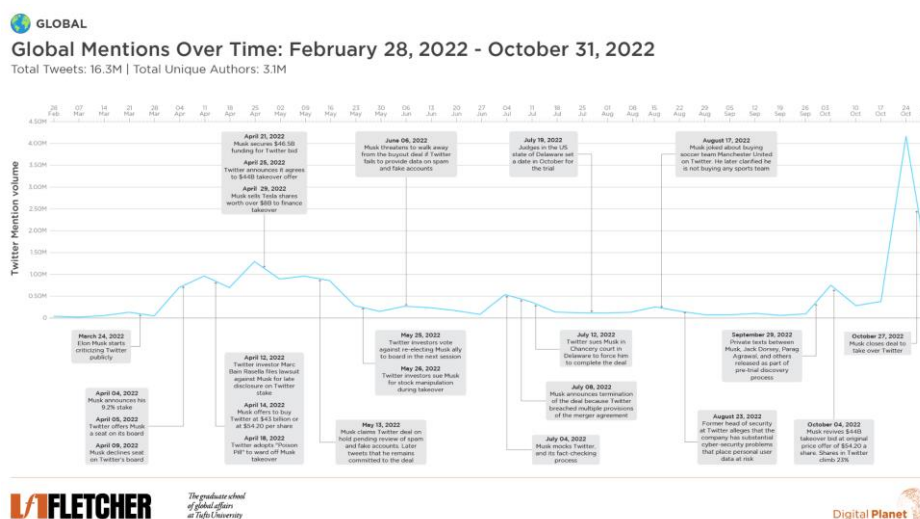
(Source: X Corp, 2021)

**Limitations:** According to Scroxton (2022), after Musk's acquisition, many business organisations and security leaders withdrew their active presence of platform X due to security risk factors. Red flagging by platform X might influence the decision of business leaders due to historical breaches whether they comply with the legislation of data protection or not (Scroxton, 2022). Besides this, due to 280-character limits, business users cannot post in-depth or detailed content, knowledge or perspectives. According to the consequentialist ethical framework, the moral value of individual persons entirely depends on the consequence of an act whether it is right or wrong (Christie *et al.*, 2008). According to Epstein *et al.* (2023), the consequence of a spam message on platform X can negatively affect the moral value of users which can raise questions regarding ethics and trust. After Musk's acquisition, platform X has become vulnerable to scammers and bots due to lax protections as claimed by business users. As a result, X does not prevent scammers or bots from cluttering the feed of users or imitating the accounts of business users. This could further affect the brand reputation of business users due to the negative consequences of spammers' acts.

### **3. Society and public interest**

**Benefits:** The core value of the trust and safety team is to defend as well as respect the voice of society. The core value of platform X is committed to privacy, transparency and freedom of expression. In this spirit, Elon Musk wants to publicly share how the trust and safety team makes decisions based on core values. The employees of the company usually handle the legal requests of users by reinforcing social actions through internal and external communications. The company has also committed to developing better relationships with activists as well as advocates across the world based on the principles of business and human rights of the United Nations. On 25 April, Elon Musk drew interest from society after publicly criticising Twitter and asking whether Twitter's algorithm must be made from open source or not. Around 82.7% of respondents agreed with the rules of free speech on Twitter. During a period of 8 months from 28th February 2022 to

31st October 2022, the team monitored the reactions of the public by analysing more than 16.3 million tweets. The reaction of society and public interests massively emerged with positive emotions based on the right to free speech. However, reactions of the public seemed to become more polarised after the announcement of a 9.2% stake by Elon Musk.



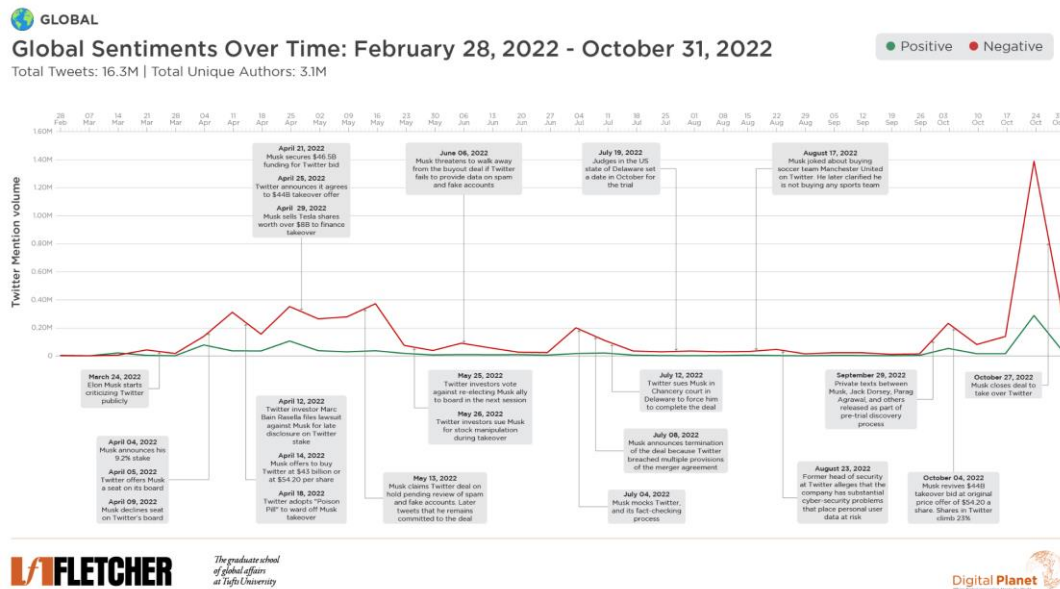
**Figure 2: Global mentions of the public over time on X**

(Source: Digital Planet, 2022)

**Limitations:** Despite having positive reactions in society across global locations, the sentiments of the public remained effectively negative after the takeover news of Elon Musk. Compared to Figure 2, Figure 3 shows that around 60% of the public was engaged during the revival of the takeover news of Twitter by Elon Musk. However, the ratio of chatter on the Twitter platform was concealed at the previous peak by more than three times past volume as shown in Figure 3. Indeed, the negative expression of the public and society exceeded their positive expression after the takeover deal was finalised by Elon Musk. Similar to the US, the public from the UK also sadly reacted to the takeover news of Elon Musk. Besides this, a US representative Adam Schiff criticised ‘Elon Musk was trying to utilise the legal action threat to punish a non-profit group’.



Furthermore, Elon Musk was heavily criticised by independent researchers as reported by Imran Ahmed, the CEO of the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH) (Reuters, 2023).



**Figure 2: Global sentiments of the public over time on X**

(Source: Digital Planet, 2022)

## Conclusion

Henceforth, the report has covered the benefits as well as limitations of the changes to the trust and safety team of Twitter from the viewpoint of Stakeholders. It has been identified that later public interest went against the takeover deal of Elon Musk. Although several benefits for users of Twitter have been highlighted, numerous risk factors might have damaged the reputation of business users due to ethical issues.

## Reference List

- Livemint, (2022). *'I simply mean...': Elon Musk explains what he meant by free speech for Twitter*. Retrieved on 30 August 2023 from: <https://www.livemint.com/news/world/i-simply-mean-elon-musk-explains-what-he-meant-by-free-speech-for-twitter-11651020116693.html>
- Epstein, R., Tyagi, C., & Wang, H. (2023). What would happen if twitter sent consequential messages to only a strategically important subset of users? A quantification of the Targeted Messaging Effect (TME). *Plos one*, 18(7), e0284495.
- Scroxtion, A. (2022). *Is Elon Musk's Twitter safe, and should you stop using it?* Retrieved on 30 August 2023 from: <https://www.computerweekly.com/news/252527432/Is-Elon-Musks-Twitter-safe-and-should-you-stop-using-it>
- Out-Smarts Marketing, (2023). *Twitter Pros and Cons: The Future of Elon Musk's Twitter*. Retrieved on 30 August 2023 from: <https://out-smarts.com/2022/11/twitter-pros-and-cons-the-future-of-elon-musks-twitter/#:~:text=This%20is%20one%20of%20the,can%20create%20a%20toxic%20atmosphere.>
- Digital Planet, (2022). *The Elon Musk—Twitter Takeover Saga: A Multi-Country Sentiment Analysis of Twitter Users (Updated October 31, 2022)*. Retrieved on 30 August 2023 from: <https://sites.tufts.edu/digitalplanet/the-elon-musk-twitter-takeover-saga-a-multi-country-sentiment-analysis-of-twitter-users-updated-october-2022/>
- Reuters, (2023). *Musk threatens to sue researchers who documented the rise in hate tweets*. Retrieved on 30 August 2023 from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/7/31/musk-threatens-to-sue-researchers-who-documented-the-rise-in-hate-tweets>

Reuters, (2023). *Twitter's head of safety Ella Irwin resigns*. Retrieved on 30 August 2023 from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/6/2/twitters-head-of-safety-resigns>

Reuters, (2023). *X reorganizes trust and safety team under Musk and CEO Yaccarino*. Retrieved on 30 August 2023 from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2023/7/31/x-reorganizes-trust-and-safety-team-under-musk-and-ceo-yaccarino>

Christie, T., Groarke, L., & Sweet, W. (2008). Virtue ethics as an alternative to deontological and consequential reasoning in the harm reduction debate. *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 19(1), 52-58.

Whetstone, J. T. (2001). How virtue fits within business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 33, 101-114.

Schauer, F. (1992). A Comment on the Structure of Rights. *Ga. L. Rev.*, 27, 415.

The Verge, (2023). *Extremely Hardcore*. Retrieved on 30 August 2023 from: <https://www.theverge.com/23551060/elon-musk-twitter-takeover-layoffs-workplace-salute-emoji>

X Corp, (2021). *Introducing Safety Mode*. Retrieved on 30 August 2023 from: [https://blog.twitter.com/en\\_us/topics/product/2021/introducing-safety-mode](https://blog.twitter.com/en_us/topics/product/2021/introducing-safety-mode)

X Corp, (2023). *About Safety Mode*. Retrieved on 30 August 2023 from: <https://help.twitter.com/en/safety-and-security/safety-mode#:~:text=How%20does%20Safety%20Mode%20work,from%20replying%20to%20your%20Tweets>.