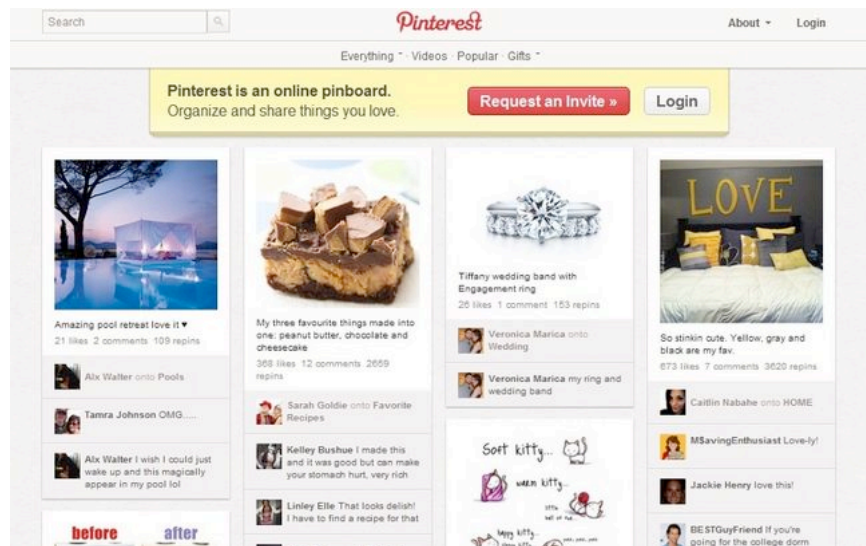


The real stereotype behind Pinterest



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A screenshot of social media site Pinterest.com.

You're being stereotyped.

One of today's biggest sites is mostly a woman's world. Women flit to Pinterest.com for all things girly — to share recipes, offer weight loss tips, make I-want books for their I-do's, and make lookbooks for their I-wants.

So, of course, Pinterest perpetuates a stereotype, but it's not a gender one.

It doesn't matter that the theme is cutesy. Facebook's scheme is blue and mostly women use that too. In fact, Nielsen, comScore and several other sources show females are the driving force behind the social web. Yes, women can drive.

For the unfamiliar, Pinterest is a social bookmarking site that lets you amass and share images on digital pinboards. More addictive than chocolate-coated crack, it's one of the quickest growing websites in history — comScore says it hit 10 million monthly visitors faster than Facebook.

But typecast as a feminine site (though almost a third of its users are men), it was time to send in the clones:

Manteresting.com and Gentlemint.com lure the guys. Instead of pinning they can, respectively, nail or tack their rugged fascination with beer, bacon and bears with no fur. (If only you could take a picture of flatulence.)

Still, the real stereotype at play here doesn't discriminate against gender.

We want what we don't have, and we want to portray ourselves in a way we wish to be perceived. Man — and woman — have done this for centuries. We aspire to acquire and Pinterest has hit the pin we use for our hopes on our heads.

Face it: Humans aspire to live vicariously through hopes, dreams, memes and The Food Network.

So while users may log in to Facebook and Twitter to connect (or brag) with others, Pinterest users pin for that which they pine, making it one of the top sites for driving traffic to retailers.

If you have a pinboard called “Sunglasses worth buying,” you’ll eventually take yourself up on a worthwhile deal.

Joallore Alon is a man-card holding Pinterest user and says the site has driven him to click-up Shopcastr.com, where you can window-shop – or screen-shop – at your (new) favourite stores.

To an extent these pinboard fantasies are made accessible. But what keeps you coming back is the inspiration for more.

Reagan Crause is a MANteresting dude and sums himself up as a slim, slightly nerdy gamer who likes to feel manly. “But in the world’s eyes, am no different than any young male nowadays.

“We all have our dreams of owning that expensive car, home, or even just building a great piece of furniture by hand.” And MANteresting is where Reagan (alter-ego @Jungle_ted) finds a great mix of fantasy and inspiration to get there.

Stephanie Johnston pins. She says it’s an opportunity to display yourself as something you’re not. “I look at some of the clothes or shoes my friends have indicated as ‘their style’ and know there’s nothing close to it in their closet.”

Then there’s the power of social discovery: things you never even knew existed before, such as bacon-flavoured dental floss, become things you must have. (Go ahead, google it.)

It’s partly social discovery, but also partly algorithm detection. That’s right: Pinterest has your desires pinned and will tempt you with popular items relevant to you.

Guys may nail or tack, girls may pin, but both make comments like, I want and I need, and both take action to share and like.

The only stereotype left to figure out is which one you’ll post: surround sound or a car stereo.

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