

3 Things that Make Pinterest a Little Clearer



[In this article](#) I expressed my exasperation with Pinterest, the visual, social bookmarking site that's [experienced explosive growth in recent months](#). Perhaps because of my gender and/or online habits, I just wasn't getting it.

Well, I received a ton of feedback (thank you, everyone!), so here's three things that I found helped make the purpose and value of Pinterest a little clearer.

(1) Gathering (rather than Hunting)

Many of the responses I received suggested that Pinterest fits more of a "gatherer" mentality - a trait that is [generally associated with females](#) (perhaps supporting why [97% of pinners are women](#)). Irrespective of gender, though, anyone who has a propensity for gathering or collecting is likely to find Pinterest to be a useful tool in curating the web.

If you like to collect and organize things (I used to collect stamps and coins when I was younger), Pinterest can be a fun, visual way to capture and store all that information that you scan as you surf the web. If you prefer the hunt, clicking your way from link to link, scrolling through pages of search results until you find just the answer you're looking for, Pinterest may not be for you. Well, it may not be for you as a pinner, but if you appreciate visuals, check out key number 2...

(2) Visual browsing

This theme came up again and again in the responses I collected: looking through pins and pinboards is like flipping through the pages of a [beautiful] magazine. That analogy makes sense, doesn't it? But this could be the key to bolstering the male adoption of Pinterest (were that a goal of the network).

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Visual/spatial research indicates that [men are visual learners](#). Puzzles, diagrams, maps, building blocks are among the things that males use to understand the world around them. Pinterest boards have a lot of those elements: the images selected for the pins are somewhat indicative of content, but not always, so there is some investigation and discovery required to get the value out of a pin. Also, the feature of being able to suggest organization schemes or boards is something I think men might like to do.

Besides browsing through the "magazine" of others' boards, the one main practical application people point to, and the one thing I've used Pinterest for most is...

(3) Research organization

I recently worked on a consulting project where I needed to develop a marketing strategy for a subject that was fairly new to me (channel partner marketing - that is, using your business partners as a communication channel to help market your products and services to current and professional customers). Creating a board for the project helped me bookmark blog posts, pages, and other information that I found while conducting my research. When I went back to work on the strategy, it was so nice to have an easy to manage folder with large visual tabs that I could refer to. It will also be great if I do another project on the same or similar topic and/or industry.

I used to use [Digg](#) a lot, but it doesn't seem to work as well as it once did. Pinterest is a great social bookmarking site that integrates well with today's browsers and has a simple and clean interface. Whether you're conducting research for a business project, planning a wedding or party, working on home improvements or decorating, or any similar project, Pinterest can be a good space for collecting and organizing the information you want to bookmark while surfing the web.

There are some people who are using Pinterest in other ways - to upload and catalog their own content (think about cataloging blog entries or your company's product and service sell sheets), to support search engine optimization, and more. However, I found that the three ways above - gathering, visual browsing and organizing research - seem to form the foundation that keeps Pinterest accessible, active and growing.

I hope this helped you appreciate Pinterest a little more, as it has helped me find value in a site that I otherwise was struggling to understand. Now, not only will I be able to enjoy Pinterest as a user, but I also will be able to build upon that foundation and help organizations add value to their marketing and communications strategies with this platform, and I hope you will also.

What did I miss? Please keep the conversation going! I look forward to hearing your comments, questions and suggestions. Thanks for visiting! Tell your friends :-)

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PS Please note that there are great concerns being shared in the news about [Pinterest as it relates to intellectual property rights](#). Proceed with caution when using Pinterest and keep an eye on how the story unfolds.