

What drives activity on Pinterest? First study on popular social network site

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Researchers at Georgia Tech and the University of Minnesota have released a new study that uses statistical data to help understand the motivations behind Pinterest activity, the roles gender plays among users and the factors that distinguish Pinterest from other popular social networking sites.

Led by Assistant Professor Eric Gilbert of Georgia Tech's School of [Interactive Computing](#), working in collaboration with Professor Loren Terveen from the University of Minnesota's College of Science and Engineering, the study reveals findings that could have implications for both academia and industry:

- Female [users](#) have more re-pins, regardless of [geographical location](#)
- Men typically have more followers on Pinterest than women
- Four verbs set Pinterest apart from Twitter: "use," "look," "want" and "need"

"Those four verbs uniquely describe Pinterest and are particularly interesting," said Gilbert, who runs the Comp.Social Lab at Georgia Tech. "Words encapsulate the intent of people, revealing the motivations behind their actions. You can use the word 'this' after all of these verbs, reflecting the 'things' at the core of Pinterest. Many press articles have

focused on Pinterest's commercial potential, and here we see [verbs](#) illustrating that consumption truly lies at the heart of the site."

Pinterest, which reached 10 million users faster than any other social network, revolves around the metaphor of a pin board: users "pin" photos they find on the Web and organize them into topical collections. Pinterest users can follow one another and also re-pin, like and comment on other pins. After examining more than 200,000 pins, Gilbert and his team were able to compile the first statistical overview of the site.

"We wanted to take a closer look at Pinterest because of its differences compared to other social media, including its focus on pictures and products and the large proportion of women users," said Terveen, a co-author of the study. "These findings are an important early snapshot of Pinterest that help us begin to understand people's activity on this site."

Understanding the motivations behind activity on Pinterest is key, not only for researchers but also for business wishing to utilize the site for marketing purposes. A recent market survey showed that a higher proportion of Pinterest users click through to e-commerce sites—and when they go there, they spend significantly more money than people who come from sites such as Facebook or Twitter.

"There are several [social networking sites](#) that marketers and advertisers can take advantage of these days," said Gilbert. "After conducting this research, if I had to choose where to put my money and marketing, Pinterest would probably be my first choice."

In addition to Gilbert and Terveen, the research team includes Ph.D. student Saeideh Bakhshi from Georgia Tech and Ph.D. student Shuo Chang from the University of Minnesota.

Their findings are summarized in the paper ["I Need to Try This!: A](#)

[Statistical Overview of Pinterest.](#)" which will be presented next week at the ACM SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems in Paris, France.

Provided by Georgia Institute of Technology

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