

Search, social & shopping: Pinterest turns 5

April 1 2015, by Barbara Ortutay



A pin signifies the Pinterest office in Japan on a map at the Pinterest office in San Francisco, Wednesday, April 1, 2015. The San Francisco-based venture capital darling celebrated its fifth birthday in March 2015. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

In its five short years of life, Pinterest has become 'the' place where brides-to-be create wish boards of wedding china photos and do-it-yourself home renovators bookmark shiny turquoise tiles for bathrooms. It's where people share ideas and ingenuity and get creatively inspired. And it's fueled a new way of searching for items that's even stolen traffic from tech giant Google.

The San Francisco-based venture capital darling was recently valued at \$11 billion. While its core audience has always been female, Pinterest says its popularity is growing faster than ever among men. It is winning in the all-important social-mobile space—the vast majority of "pinners" connect from mobile devices—and is enjoying a healthy expansion overseas.

As Pinterest celebrates its fifth birthday this week—hopefully with perfect bacon cupcakes topped with a single, artisanal beeswax candle—here are five things to know about the site and where it's headed.

WHO USES PINTEREST?

Pinterest had 79.3 million unique visitors in February (the latest data available), up 47 percent from a year earlier, according to Internet research firm comScore. The vast majority were women, but male visitors grew at a much faster clip: 62 percent for men versus 42 percent for women.

Enid Hwang is the company's community manager and the fourth employee ever hired at Pinterest. She wouldn't disclose what percentage of users are male but says Pinterest's male user base in the U.S. has doubled in the past year. She doesn't think Pinterest is for women any more than it is for men.

"At its most fundamental, we believe that Pinterest is a tool for unlocking people's creativity," she says.

Pinterest often gets lumped in with popular social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, but there are plenty of ways that it stands apart. Hwang sees it as more intimate and personal. While Facebook is about sharing what you did, read or saw recently with 400

of your closest "friends," Pinterest users pin stuff for their own inspiration and benefit. While others can see it, she says Pinterest people are "saving stuff that means a lot to them personally."

"MAN TRENDS"



A Pinterest employee walks past an installation on creativity wall at the Pinterest office in San Francisco, Wednesday, April 1, 2015. The San Francisco-based venture capital darling celebrated its fifth birthday in March 2015. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

Popular "man trends," as Pinterest put it recently, range from do-it-yourself home projects such as making a wooden couch sleeve for your drinks, to different ways to tie knots, to the world's best hiking trails. And then there's the more unusual.

"Last year, we noticed a trend of survivalists using Pinterest," Hwang says. These pinners found "creative ways of solving what they might do if there is a zombie apocalypse," she adds, or a more mundane natural disaster. There are Pinterest boards of basement fallout shelters, disaster preparation and the contents of survival backpacks.

After Pinterest introduced "Place Pins" in late 2013, the vast trove of pinners' travel-inspired boards became easier for people to find. Users pin photos, links and videos inspired by past trips or travel aspirations. Place Pins are designed to work sort of like an online travel magazine combined with an interactive map.

BY THE NUMBERS

— There are now more than 50 billion "pins" on Pinterest. One billion boards have been created.

— Headquartered in San Francisco, Pinterest has six international offices: in Britain, France, Germany, Japan and Brazil. More than 40 percent of Pinterest users are outside the U.S., up from 28 percent in 2013.

— About two-thirds of the content on its site was created by brands. "If we were in the magazine business, (that) would be 50 billion pages being ripped out and referenced," says Joanne Bradford, head of partnerships at Pinterest.



Pinterest market researcher Paul Pattishall works at his desk at the office in San Francisco, Wednesday, April 1, 2015. The San Francisco-based venture capital darling celebrated its fifth birthday in March 2015. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

— Earlier this year, Pinterest raised \$367 million that valued the company at \$11 billion. It says it may raise as much as \$211 million more, and plans to use the more than half a billion dollars for international expansion and other corporate purposes.

A NEW WAY TO SEARCH AND SHOP

Pinterest's penchant for exposing people to something new has turned its site into a learning and shopping hub that can be more useful than Google and other search engines for certain topics. Many people now go to Pinterest first when they are looking for ideas on planning a wedding, preparing an exotic dinner, planning a kids' birthday party or finding the perfect pair of shoes for a new outfit.

Pinterest co-founder Evan Sharp likens this phenomenon to "search without typing," making it particularly well suited for smartphones.



In this Nov. 13, 2014 photo, a Pinterest employee walks past the Lego wall at the Pinterest office in San Francisco. The San Francisco-based venture capital darling celebrated its fifth birthday in March 2015. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

DIVERSITY

The heat is on tech companies for lacking gender and racial diversity among their employee base, especially in the highest ranks. Pinterest is no exception. At the same time, the company seems to be doing better on this front than some of its Silicon Valley counterparts. According to statistics released last July, 40 percent of the company's employees are women. This compares with 20 percent at Apple Inc. and 30 percent at Twitter Inc. and Google Inc. Among Pinterest executives though, it's a

different story. Nineteen percent are women, compared with 21 percent at Google.

"We're not close to where we want to be, but we're working on it," wrote Tracy Chou, a software engineer and tech lead at Pinterest, in a blog post last July.



In this Nov. 13, 2014 photo, Pinterest co-founder Evan Sharp poses for photos at the Pinterest office in San Francisco. The San Francisco-based venture capital darling celebrated its fifth birthday in March 2015. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu)

© 2015 The Associated Press. All rights reserved.

Citation: Search, social & shopping: Pinterest turns 5 (2015, April 1) retrieved 19 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2015-04-social-pinterest.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.