

Pinterest's director of strategy on how consumers use its platform to discover and buy products

Article

Pinterest has always been a place to find inspiration. But now, with shoppable media formats and branded catalogs, the social media platform has become a one-stop shop where consumers can browse and buy all in the same session.

Here are three insights from Brittan Bushman, director of strategy at Pinterest, on how consumers are finding and buying products on Pinterest.

1. Searchers go to Pinterest with very specific ideas

The vast majority (96%) of Pinterest searches are unbranded, said Bushman during a session at Advertising Week New York 2023. This means that consumers turn to Pinterest to learn what kinds of products are out there, unlike traditional search engines like Google, where they go to refine their search for something they already know exists.

“We see our users turn to us when they’re going to redesign their living room or they’re thinking about [how to spice up their] wardrobe, but what does that look like?” she said.

This inspiration-led search behavior not only helps brands better target their ads through a deeper understanding of their customers, it also gives visibility into what’s coming in terms of the supply chain.

For example, Bushman noted that as the winter season approaches, there’s been a 500% increase YoY in people searching for a winter bedroom aesthetic, and a 200% increase in glam Christmas trees.

These highly specific insights can help guide a brand’s product assortment and pricing strategy, giving them an upper hand during the busy holiday season.

2. Consumers can’t always tell the difference between content and ads

What’s unique about a platform like Pinterest is that the interests of users and the interests of advertisers are aligned, said Bushman.

“Users are there to get inspired to buy something, and advertisers are there to inspire people to buy something, and so really it’s our job to just do really amazing matching,” she said.

And because of the rich consumer data Pinterest is able to gather from users, it can provide highly targeted, personalized ads that sometimes don’t even feel like ads.

“I was asking a friend the other day [how she uses Pinterest],” said Bushman. “And she told me her No. 1 piece of feedback for me was that she cannot save the ads [like you can with pins].”

3. Consumers use Pinterest to complement the in-store experience

“The other day, I was out and about with my husband and I bought this skirt,” Bushman said. “But I didn’t see anything in-store that I wanted to pair with it. So I turned to Pinterest and started searching for ideas.”

Bushman pinned a few ideas for shoes, but eventually closed the app and went back to her daily activities.

“But the next time I opened Pinterest, I saw a slightly different pair of shoes than the pair I had saved to my board, which were much more my style. And so I clicked on those and I bought them.”

What’s important for brands to note is that consumers aren’t just using Pinterest as a tool for general inspiration. They go to the platform for specific, concrete product suggestions, which they are ready to buy if the product is right.

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