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# Pinterest arrives in the UK market with impeccable timing

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In 2012, Pinterest's profile in the UK grew rapidly when they did away with invite-only registration and opened their doors to all-comers. As an intensely-visual platform where consumers curate content around their future plans and passion points, Pinterest's appeal to brands was immediately obvious. What was less obvious was why the site's owners wouldn't immediately invite brand investment by monetising exposure on the platform. Four years later, Pinterest are starting to court UK advertising spend and it looks like their patience will pay off. It's less that Pinterest itself has changed dramatically in this time frame, and more that the digital landscape has matured around it.

The most obvious change is that brands no longer need to be convinced in order for them to recognise the value of social channels. In 2012, it was still a reasonably bold step to invest in social and even then, investment would often be relatively light (IAB estimate the total social spend for the year to be at £328million). By contrast, in 2016 UK advertisers

are expected to invest approximately £1.2 billion into paid media on social sites. Clients have embraced the transparency and effectiveness of social, and become more understanding of its quirks as an advertising channel. In a lot of ways, Pinterest have skipped the nascent stages of social media as a channel, and is entering the market at a stage when clients are already comfortable with the advantages and potential challenges of the space.

Pinterest have also had the luxury of learning from the wins and losses of their peers. Facebook convinced many of us to pour budgets into building hordes of loyal followers, before performing an about-turn when they realised that this business model wouldn't prove sustainable. This did little to harm confidence in the platform in the long term, but it's hard to imagine it did them any favours either. I wouldn't dare claim that this was a deliberate tactic by Facebook; this example illustrates a more general point about the challenge of understanding how to pitch your product, when your product is defined almost entirely by the unpredictable interactions and behaviours of millions of people. By introducing shoppable ads in mid-2015, Pinterest seem to have a clear idea as to how they can justify advertising spend in a way that's both attractive to brands and also sustainable for the foreseeable future.

Finally, there's little doubt that we're on the cusp of a cultural shift away from open, public sharing and towards more personal, curatorial experiences. At the risk of contradicting myself, it always struck me as odd that Pinterest is often mentioned in the same breath as sites such as Facebook and Twitter when it really has more in common with Digg, Reddit, Tumblr. If consumers are moving away from social 'noise' in favour of a more intimate experience, Pinterest's 'catalog of ideas' tagline chimes with the fact that one can still have a fulfilling experience with the platform without making a single social interaction.

The platform still has its fair share of challenges; on one hand, the site needs to attract the high quality user-generated content that will ultimately become the lifeblood the site. On the other, they must find a way to effectively limit the use of copyrighted content on the site (a challenge that sites such as YouTube and SoundCloud have struggled to get a handle on). However, a lot of major hurdles have been avoided by Pinterest biding their time. They are

arriving in a market where clients are comfortable with spending in social channels, where their peers have highlighted the potential challenges of monetising, and where consumers are ready for a more personal experience. At least as far as those three points go, Pinterest's timing could not be better.

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