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VISION STATEMENT

How Pinterest Puts People in Stores

by David Sevitt and Alexandra Samuel

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“Showrooming”—a phenomenon whereby shoppers visit stores to examine merchandise in person before buying the items online—is viewed as a huge threat to brick-and-mortar retailing. The problem is thought to be so bad that at least one merchant has started charging people to browse in its stores.

Our research suggests that the threat is overrated. We asked nearly 3,000 social media users in North America and the UK about their shopping habits, and only 26% reported regularly engaging in showrooming. But 41% said they practice what we call “reverse showrooming”—browsing online and then purchasing in stores. Pinterest is an especially popular driver of in-store sales: 21% of the Pinterest users we surveyed said that they bought an item in-store after pinning, repinning, or liking it, and 36% of users under 35 said they had done so.

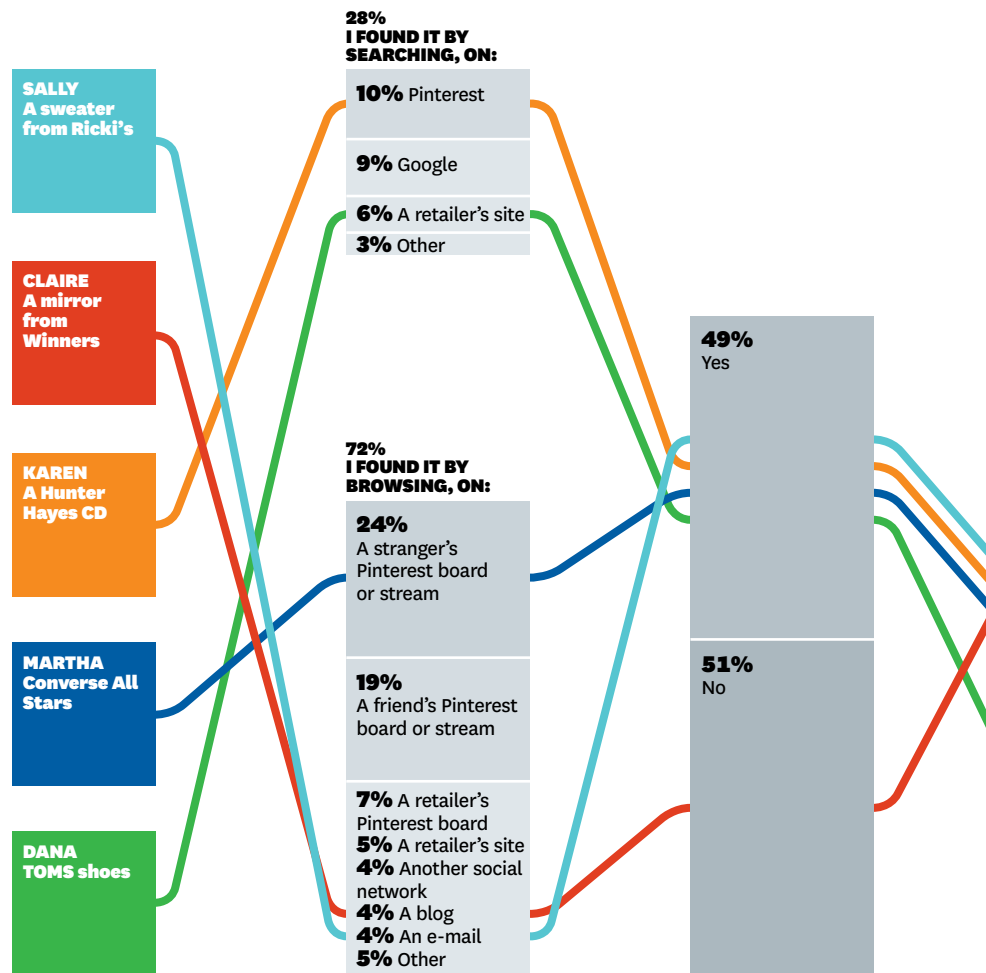
Instead of feeling threatened by showrooming, retailers should study their customers’ paths to purchase and use the insights gained to hone their online marketing efforts. We asked the Pinterest users described above how the web had figured into their purchases. We found a handful of typical paths, which are illustrated here.

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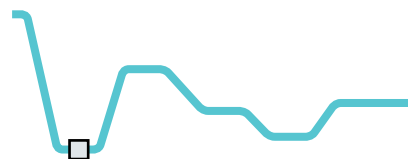
We asked shoppers who had pinned items on Pinterest before buying them in stores these questions:

How did the item come to your attention?

When you pinned the item, were you already thinking of buying it?



THE DEAL SEEKER



Sally uses websites and other digital tools to find good deals on clothes. An **e-mail message** containing a link to a different social site led her to pin a sweater, and she followed up with a shopping trip.

THE NONSEEKER



Claire wasn't looking for a mirror, but she found one she loved on a blog and pinned it. When Pinterest later alerted her to an in-store sale, she knew she had to have the mirror—so she bought it **that week**.



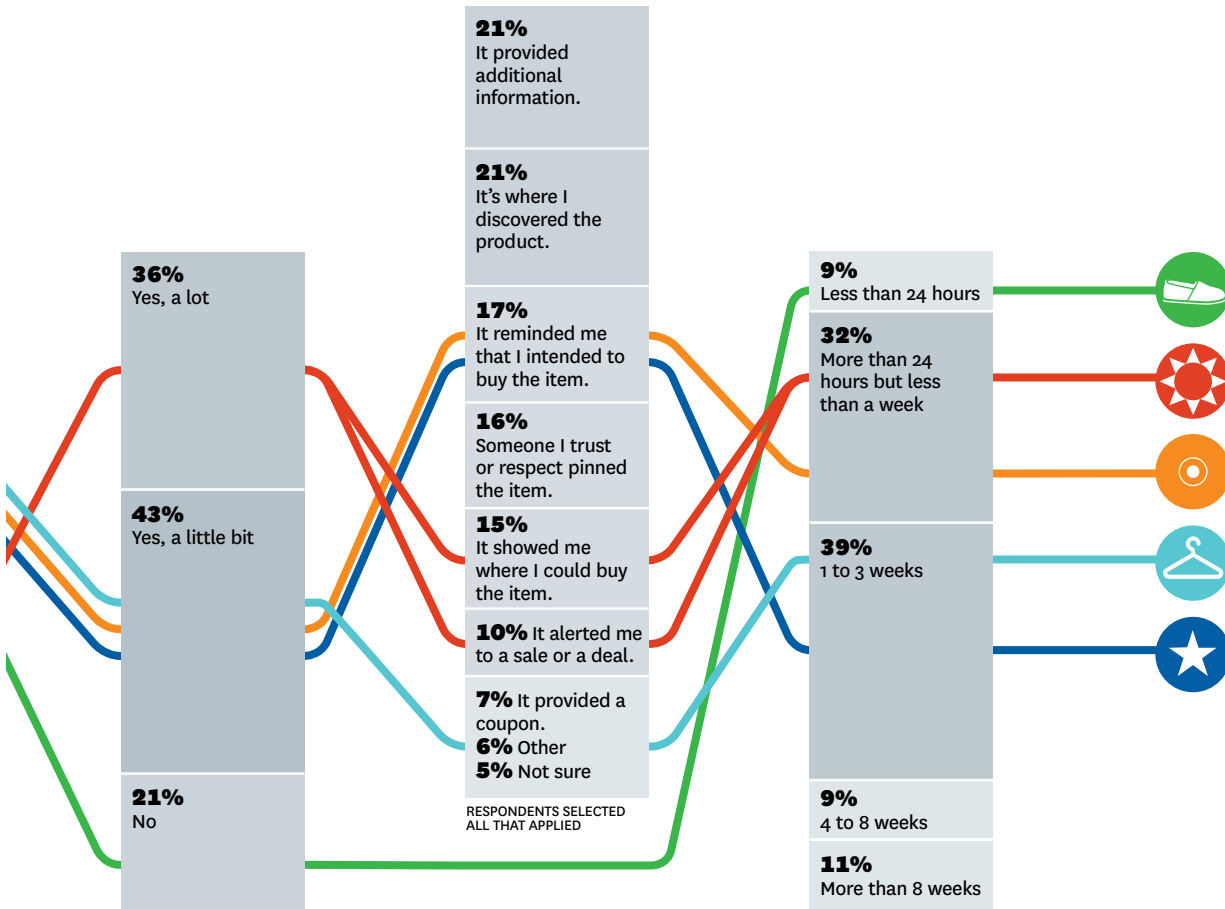
David Sevitt is the vice president of consumer insights at Vision Critical. Alexandra Samuel is the firm's vice president of social media and the author of *Work Smarter with LinkedIn* (Harvard Business Review Press, 2013).

Did pinning the item influence your decision to buy it?

How did Pinterest affect your purchase decision?

How much time elapsed between when you pinned the item and when you bought it?

OF THE 79% WHO SAID YES TO THE PREVIOUS QUESTION:



THE CATEGORY SEEKER



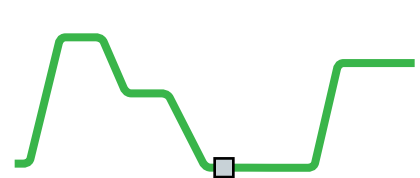
Karen likes music and uses **Pinterest search** to scout for it. Her pinboard serves as a shopping list: Seeing an album there reminds her to pick it up the next time she's in a music store.

THE INSPIRATION SEEKER



Martha found a pair of Converse All Stars by seeking inspiration on **strangers' pinboards**. She wasn't actively managing her wish list so much as casually browsing for ideas.

THE SOCIAL-PROOF SEEKER



When Dana was looking for TOMS shoes, she pinned a pair to let her friends know she's a fan. She uses Pinterest simply to save items and signal her interests to her circle; it **doesn't influence her shopping**.