"A million DIY projects."

The Netnographic Study of Pinterest as a Creative Community for Women

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Abstract

This qualitative study adopts netnographic method to critically explore one of the social media, Pinterest, as a creative community for women. Creativity is not only a current buzzword, but also one of the most fundamental pillars of the modern world. Nowadays, creative industries are emerging as a one of the basic industries. In many instances, creativity becomes a professional currency and a foundation of identity. In addition, creativity becomes embedded into everyday life, also through the advancement and continuous use of social media and other digital platforms that lower the threshold for participation in creative activities. Thus, the meaning of creativity is constantly being altered.

In this thesis, the concept of creativity describes in fact everyday creativity in its broadest delineation. This research focuses particularly on the act of providing media content to Pinterest, thereby creating unique collections of visual links. Community, in turn, translates into a group of people who participate in some online spaces, gathered primarily around some shared interest. Such an understanding of community does not imply the existence of any offline ties between its members. Within this framework, the research asks the major question about how creativity is mediated on Pinterest. The main question is followed by some more detailed sub-questions about affordances and constraints of Pinterest with regard to production, distribution and consumption of the content; the relations between creativity and consumption on Pinterest; and the ways in which the community of Pinterest is constructed.

The research results in five major results: (1) on Pinterest, DIY and Crafts is an overarching category, embracing diverse and, at times, unconventional content; (2) Pinterest challenges and alters traditional understandings of creativity and creative activities in such a way that it does not call for any physical act of making; (3) creativity on Pinterest is intertwined with, and very often anchored in, consumption; (4) on Pinterest, crafts refer not only to creating external objects, but also to modelling bodies and forming skill sets of users; (5) creativity is a binder of the Pinterest community: it brought pinners together in the joint effort of pooling knowledge, and it was the ideal that each user seemed to connect with.

The study is based on the volume of data obtained from Pinterest through participant observation. Participant observation, adapted to the circumstances of an online setting, is the core netnographic method of data collection. The data at hand were analysed through thematic analysis.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that in the contemporary world creativity has become highly relevant from the social point of view. The economic and social gravity is gradually moving towards creative industries, thereby underpinning the growing importance of the creative class (Florida, 2002). In a way, creativity has developed into the currency of the modern world: its most valued commodity, yet not purchasable, but coming from people (Florida, 2002).

At the same time, the emergence and further advancement of the Internet have opened the doors for numerous new forms of creativity and community. The promise to realise the urges to create and socialise is believed to reside in Web 2.0 and social media (Woolf, 2012). However, the technology at hand is very likely to have remediated the idea of both creativity and community. Therefore, it appears crucial to critically examine how these fundamental concepts have been altered through technology. In so doing, the present study focuses on one of the social media outlets, namely Pinterest – the top revelation of late 2011 and early 2012.

Although Pinterest derives many of its functionalities from other social media, some unique qualities differentiate it from other services of this kind. Content, instead of articulated network of relationships, placed in the centre, exclusively visual materials, and orientation towards sharing and inspiring rather than self-presentation, are the most salient features of Pinterest. Thus, not only the unexpected popularity (Agarwal, 2012), but also the innovativeness of the website renders it worth interest. And even though it might be hard to predict its future[1], Pinterest has already proved quite unique a phenomenon among social network sites, in that it encourages creativity and involvement in creative projects and is aspiring community – but does not provide a rich toolkit of building and maintaining ties.

The present research aims at exploring Pinterest, taking into account its uniqueness as a creative community for women. The analysis attempting to critically examine this claim will be guided by the general research question: How is creativity

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[1] Miller (2012: 235), however, claims that the business model and financial situation bodes well for Pinterest: "Fortunately Pinterest, while a relative newcomer to the social networking scene, looks to be around for the long haul. The company is remarkably well funded, having received a second round of funding (for $27 million) in October 2011. The company is valued at around $200 million."

mediated on Pinterest? Furthermore, to support the main research question the present study will also address the following series of the sub questions:

1. What are the characteristics and constrains of Pinterest in the production, distribution, and consumption of creative content?
2. How do women use Pinterest as a platform for their everyday creativity, and how are creativity and consumption intertwined?
3. How do individual participation and collaborative activities serve to construct the community of Pinterest?

The creative and community aspects of Pinterest still remain uncharted areas. The website has thus far been analysed and portrayed primarily as a marketing tool for businesses. However, also the buoyant and unexpected popularity of the service – especially among female users (Agarwal, 2012) – calls for further exploration. The basic premise is that through finding the answers to the above questions about articulation of creativity and foundations of community on Pinterest, the key to its appeal and significance to women can be revealed. Such knowledge might in turn contribute to the overall understanding of social media, and the longings they potentially satisfy.

1.1 Information needed to conduct the study

The present research critically studies Pinterest as a creative community for women. To address this issue, the main research question and the series of sub questions are asked to elicit the needed data. The information required is indicated by the theoretical framework and falls into four categories: contextual; demographic; perceptual; and theoretical.

Firstly, the contextual data concern Pinterest itself. This information comprises official statements regarding the website, e.g. mission and terms of use (Pin Etiquette). Analysis of these data seeks to provide the intended framework for participation (Gauntlett, 2011: 89) and is additionally underscored by general observation that environment might influence behaviour.

Secondly, the demographic data include publicly accessible information about pinners. The information is to be retrieved both from users' Pinterest profiles (and other social media profiles which were oftentimes linked to) and official statistics. This data

pursue understanding of who used the website, and serve to confirm that the pins analysed are indeed posted by women.

Thirdly, the perceptual data comprise the actual content posted on Pinterest, as observed and comprehended by the researcher. This information is to be retrieved from the news feed on the DIY & Crafts main page as well as from particular users' boards and profiles.

Finally, the continual review of the literature will accommodate the theoretical grounding of the research, and help to support the interpretations developed throughout the data analysis.

1.2 Structure of the study

The present thesis will start with providing a more comprehensive introduction of Pinterest, enumerating its most distinctive features and presenting guidelines for participation in the community. It will also determine the place of Pinterest in the media landscape, introducing the basics of social media, Web 2.0, and user generated content. At the end of the chapter a concise glossary of the most useful terms will be provided.

The thesis will then move on to constructing conceptual framework, relying on the available literature. As already indicated, there is no relevant literature on creative and community value of Pinterest as of yet. Thus, the study will adopt the more general notion of everyday creativity offered by Gauntlett (2011) and Burgess (2007), and apply it to the environment of Pinterest. Then, different conceptions of virtual community are going to be discussed (Licklider and Taylor, 1968; Rheingold, 1987; Jankowski, 2002). Theoretical background will also include the issue of the potential empowerment of women through different media channels, presented from the feminist standpoint (Ang and Hermes, 1991; Madge and O'Connor, 2006; van Zoonen, 1991).

Having established the theoretical background, the study will proceed to presenting the adopted methods. Firstly, netnography as a methodology of choice is going to be described, together with the rationale for employing it and the potential drawbacks stemming from this decision (Kozinets, 2010). Afterwards the discussion will move on to participant observation and its application as a method of data collection (Kendall, 1999; Kozinets, 2010). Finally, thematic analysis as a tool of

analysing the obtained data is to be introduced (Guest et al., 2012; Joffe and Yardley, 2004). The consequences of the selected methods will be pondered over, too.

The following chapter will present the core findings of this analysis. The results are going to be discussed under the five categories, which are consistent with the main themes identified over the analysis. They are also going to be considered within the context of the relevant literature, and juxtaposed with theoretical framework presented in the third chapter of the thesis. Finally, the brief conclusions are to be drawn, and recommendations for the follow-up research will be given.

After presenting the most compelling findings of the study, the discussion will proceed to assessing their relevance and offering a wider context for obtained knowledge.

2. What is Pinterest?

Pinterest, the latest smash among social network sites, is to be analysed throughout the present research. The case seems particularly enthralling for three reasons: (1) boosting popularity, (2) unusual properties (technological, e.g. exclusively visual content; unique objective – sharing inspirations), and (3) somewhat distinctive group of core members: overwhelming majority of pinners are women, and more than a half of all users are 35 or more years of age (Report: Social Media Demographics in 2012, 2012).

Firstly, it is an enormous popularity of Pinterest that draws attention. Although due to a recent jump in the publicity, the site may appear as somewhat new phenomenon; in fact it was launched for a closed, invitation-only beta testing as early as in March 2010 (Miller, 2012: 5). Still in this phase, in August 2011, Pinterest was ranked by *TIME Magazine* among 50 best websites of the year. Miller (2012) maintains that it was this acknowledgement to feed the site's later popularity. Indeed, the number of users had grown from 500,000 in June 2011 to over 11.7 million in January 2012 (Miller, 2012: 5). *Ipso facto*, Pinterest had become the fastest service to gain 10 million members, regardless of the possibility of acquiring membership via invitation only. Nevertheless, after a while Pinterest's heyday bubble seemed to have burst, with number of active users having declined to mere 8.3 million in April 2012 (Carlson, 2012). Carlson (2012), however, anticipates that the drop was only a temporal tendency soon to be reversed. Indeed, the end of 2012 saw the audience of Pinterest growing fractionally, but sustainably (Nielsen, 2012).

Secondly, not only is Pinterest popular but also engaging. Pinterest's users spend an average of 98 minutes monthly on the website, making it the third most engaging social network (Miller, 2012). Significantly, too, Pinterest has grown to be the third social network in the United States in terms of visits, overhauled just by the giants of Facebook and Twitter (Agarwal, 2012; Wasserman, 2012). One should notice that above trends have not yet spread globally, though.

Having discussed the popularity of Pinterest, the study shall now move to describing the service in more detail. First of all, as articulated on the corresponding microsite, Pinterest is "a virtual pinboard", which "lets you organize and share all the beautiful things you find on the web" (What is Pinterest, 2012). In other words,

Pinterest is a "visually oriented network" enabling its users to "share photos and other images they find interesting with their family and online friends" (Miller, 2012: 4).

Pinterest resembles then traditional corkboards, only with virtually limitless capacity. Pinboards established within the service often fulfil the similar function of a bank of ideas and inspirations. Accordingly, the most popular pin categories are: Food & Drink (15%), DIY & Crafts (10.8%), Other (7.7%), Home Decor (7.5%), and Women's Apparel (6.4%) (Repinly, 2012). Majority of these categories – except for nonspecific "other" and some of pins exhibiting women's clothing – fall into the class of creative activities. The most popular boards, on the other hand, demonstrate somewhat more "consumerist" approach, often presenting tangible goods, ready-made products that one can buy straight from the outlet. The respective categories are: Home Decor (11%), Other (10.7%), Art (10.7%), Design (10.3%), and Women's Apparel (7.7%) (Repinly, 2012).

It is also essential to observe that Pinterest offers several models of interaction between its members, namely, commenting, liking, repinning, and following. Albeit as much as 86.2% of time spent on Pinterest by the average user is dedicated to pinning (Repinly, 2012), approximately 80% of all pins are in fact repins (credited pins added to one's board directly from someone else's board) (Erickson, 2012).

On the flipside, obviously gregarious activities of liking and commenting account for merely 13.3% and 0.5% of time spent on Pinterest respectively (Repinly, 2012). Ultimately, following is a one-way relationship, meaning that all new pins added by a person followed are displayed on their follower's Pinterest homepage (Miller, 2012). Similar utility indicating a unilateral relation is probably best known from another social network, a micro-blogging service Twitter (Comm, 2010). Nevertheless, it is often claimed that even relatively one-way communication of somewhat limited sociability presents more value than the alienating time alternatively spent in front of the TV (Gauntlett, 2011; Miller, 2011).

2.1 Pin Etiquette and the mission of Pinterest

The stress laid on preserving the desired standards of behaviour within Pinterest seems to be a very distinctive quality of Pinterest, thus worth analysing. New member becomes aware of the existence of Pin Etiquette at the latest while reading the invitation

message, as it contains an excerpt from the list. Otherwise, the corresponding site is also easily reachable from the top navigation bar, with two clicks of mouse only (About > Pin Etiquette).[2]

Pin Etiquette, besides addressing user's manners, also aims at creating the warm sense of community between its members. In the same vein, the headline reads: "Pinterest is special because of the people who use it" (Pin Etiquette, 2012). Below, one can acknowledge that the following guidelines are the result of the collective effort of the users, and that they hope to "keep our community positive and to ensure that every pin is useful to other people" (Pin Etiquette, 2012).

The list consists of five points stating: "Be Respectful", "Be Authentic", "Credit Your Sources", "Report Objectionable Content", and "Tell Us How to Make Pinterest Better". Indeed, not only does Pin Etiquette aspire to regulate individual behaviours, but also to create friendly relationships between the users. As Miller (2012) advocates, following the etiquette guarantees both personal joy and satisfaction of pinning, and popularity among other users. According to Pin Etiquette, though, "being authentic to who you are is more important than getting lots of followers", and more beneficial in the long run.

Sharing ideas and inspirations, with simultaneous building of a network of relationships, is the main objective and mission of Pinterest:

> Our goal is to connect everyone in the world through the 'things' they find interesting. We think that a favorite book, toy, or recipe can reveal a common link between two people. With millions of new pins added every week, Pinterest is connecting people all over the world based on shared tastes and interests. (What is Pinterest, 2012)

Yet, also some other applications – somewhat less "pure" in terms of intentions – are invited. Firstly, Pinterest profile and pinboards can be used as vehicles of self-promotion:

> The kinds of things you pin can tell others a lot about you – what you like, what you find interesting, even your own personal style. It's all a matter of being

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[2] Although, for example, Facebook also has a special site dedicated to "Community Standards" it is not as exposed as on Pinterest. First, user has to scroll down to the very bottom of the page, then click "Terms", and then – finally – "Community Standards". The incorporation of etiquette into terms of use, instead of creating separate category, however, might be perceived as somewhat inattentive, too.

conscious of everything you do on the Pinterest site – from creating your profile to organizing your pinboards. (Miller, 2012: 168)

Such an application is consistent with the recognised tendency in the modern Western society to frame and express individual's social identity through material and immaterial consumption (Dalsgaard, 2008). Secondly, Pinterest boards might be used for some commercial purposes, such as selling items or marketing business (Miller, 2012). Despite being not exactly genuine, the above uses of Pinterest are neither disruptive: self-promotion usually serves artists and craftsmen, while merchandised products are anyway, more often than not, targeted at the core group of service users. Lastly, company derives most of its revenues from items sold or marketed through the website, at the expense of direct commercials, which are absent from Pinterest (Miller, 2012). Therefore, accepting few profit-oriented modes of usage appears not a high price to pay for Pinterest membership.

2.2 Pinterest in the social media landscape

The social component of Pinterest appears to be its essential attribute, as manifested in theoretical categorisation of the website as a "social medium" (Pelser, 2012), "social network" (Miller, 2012), or "social photo sharing website" (Agarwal, 2012). The notion of social media, as usually offered in the literature, is a catch-all term for various online services; therefore it seems logical to open it up first.

There are at least several various approaches to social media existent among contemporary scholars. For instance, while characterising the phenomenon, Burgess (2007) depicts it as a combination of social networks, online communities, and user-generated content. More technological definition, offered by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 61), describes social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content".

In the context of the above delineation, Web 2.0 should be comprehended as a platform on which the content is no more developed by a particular individual, but rather created in the collaborative manner by all users. Such a trajectory was enabled by the development in technologies, devices, and emergence of applications, jointly facilitating the creation of social spaces within the Internet realm (Castells, 2009). User-

generated content in turn signifies items characterised by the three primary features: publication on the open-access venue, or on the social network site available to the certain group; creative design by the end-user; and absence of links to any professional or commercial endeavours. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) also distinguish six various types of social media existent in the contemporary Internet: collaborative projects, blogs, content communities, social network sites, virtual game worlds, and virtual social worlds. The categories of social network sites and content communities appear to reflect certain properties of Pinterest most accurately.

Having all the properties attributed to any social medium, social network sites enjoy some additional distinctive features. According to a very straightforward definition given by Miller (2012: 4), a social network is "a website community designed for sharing and communication between users". Following more elaborate and technologically-oriented description provided by boyd and Ellison (2008: 211), social network sites are web entities enabling individuals to construct their profile – either public or semi-public – within a bounded system; to display the network of their connections with other users; and to examine lists of connections articulated by others within the system. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) expand this list with the instant messaging feature embedded in the environment.

Furthermore, social network sites can be empirically divided into two main types: those primarily articulating social relations existent offline (like Facebook, according to Miller, 2011a; and Kirkpatrick, 2010), and those that help strangers connect on the basis of shared interests or identities (boyd and Ellison, 2008). Pinterest, with its one-way relationships built around common hobbies and passions, falls into the latter category.

Yet another quality defining social network sites is "a network effect", indicating the growth in the service value with every node (user) joining the network (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Certainly, this is the case with Pinterest, which aspires to be both the universal collection of inspirations, and the social space linking like-minded people. The network effect is also consistent with the overall idea of the service: Obviously, more users mean more content, thereby higher usability for the community.

The attention, however, gravitates more towards one's own profile – or, more precisely, adjacent pin board – than an articulated network of connections. Similar

observation is true for other content sharing sites, like photo hosting network Flickr (Burgess, 2007), or video sharing platform YouTube (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Even the Pinterest profile itself is somewhat modest, with one main photo on display, and a little frame for short self-description, location and links to profiles within other social media. Clearly, then, the core of the page is constituted by the inspirations users share with others.

For its focus placed on the items posted, instead of network of social connections, Pinterest can be perceived as demonstrating some characteristics of content community, too. In line with Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) description, sharing the media items between users is the paramount aim of content communities. Likewise, Pinterest is introduced as a "virtual pinboard" that helps sharing "all the beautiful things you find on the web" (What is Pinterest, 2012). The sharing of content becomes then, *ipso facto*, the very foundation of any social interaction within the environment in question. In this way it resembles Flickr photo sharing service – analysed by Burgess (2007) – combining properties of both social network site and content community. In addition, modest profiles containing the most basic information only, correspond to the architecture of content community (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

In the course of above discussion, it was stated that Pinterest is an example of social media, manifesting the combination of features peculiar to social network sites and content communities.

2.3 Pinterest – Glossary of terms

This short glossary aims at explaining main terminology related to Pinterest. It is based on the book "My Pinterest" by Michael Miller (2012).

Homepage is the webpage that opens after landing on Pinterest, or that can be reached through the Pinterest logo at the top of any of Pinterest microsites. It can display various items, depending on the selection, e.g. Pinners You Follow, Everything, Popular. All pins appear in reverse chronological order, with the most recent at the top.

News feed is a homepage of a category, displaying the newest items pinned onto the boards assigned to this specific category.

Pin is an item posted onto one of the personal pinboards. Pinterest accepts only visual content; therefore, a pin has to be an image or video. A pin can be either found on another website – in that case it links back to the original website – or uploaded from own computer. Each pin is accompanied by a short description added by a pinner.

Pinboard, often referred to simply as a "board", is a collection of pins. It resembles a physical corkboard in that it is a "space" where a pinner posts items of interest. Each board is assigned to a specific category.

Repinning means pinning an item from another user's pinboard directly onto own board.

Having presented the preliminary characteristics of Pinterest and its place in the social media landscape, followed by a concise glossary of terms, the thesis shall now proceed to the discussion on the most vital theories and concepts that are believed to help address the research question.

3. Everyday creativity, community, and empowerment of women

The literature is to be reviewed in the continuous and selective manner in the course of the study. Firstly, it will serve to gain the tentative understanding of Pinterest, especially its unique features, and to narrow down the research questions. Secondly, to address the issues of interest, the main theoretical concepts incorporated into the research questions should be discussed. Hence, the present chapter will focus on introducing and elucidating notions of everyday creativity and virtual/online community, and ponder upon the overall opportunities that online media channels offer for women. The aim of the literature review is to understand how the three above phenomena intertwine, and what their potential significance on Pinterest is. Thirdly, over the later stage of the research, the literature review will provide support for interpretation and analysis of the data.

3.1 Everyday creativity

Before elaborating on the notion of creativity as particularly significant for the present research, some more general remarks ought to be made to highlight the social importance of the inventive endeavours.

The relevance of creativity for building and holding a community together is emphasised in Eger's (2006) vision of future cities. He states that, at some point, inhabitants of a city should "own" and carry responsibility for their place of residence, as well as be able to recognise and exploit "the vital linkages among art, culture, and commerce" (Eger, 2006: 18). Acknowledgement of art and culture as essential powers in the society should then convert cities into "creative communities" (Eger, 2006).

Peppler and Solomou (2011), in turn, argue that recent scholarship on creativity has identified the creative potential as a part of broad social processes, rather than residing in the individual. Furthermore, creativity helps to develop venues – both in spatial and emotional sense – that enable individuals to acquire confidence in themselves. Hence, the belief in empowering capability of creative endeavours holds (Miles, 2007).

The tenor ascribed to creativity has changed overtime. Traditionally, creativity has been associated with and attributed to an individual genius of sorts. Sociological

analysis elicits a model of creativity dependent on and composed of individuals, knowledge domains, and a field of informed experts (Peppler and Solomou, 2011). This approach, introduced by Csikszentmihalyi (1997), emphasises creative outputs as resultant from years of practice of particular domain, and emergent with the support of other people. Moreover, gaining a certain level of appreciation, preferably among experts in a respective field, is a precondition for any outcome to be recognised as creative: "Just as the sound of a tree crashing in the forest is unheard if nobody is there to hear it, so creative ideas vanish unless there is a receptive audience to record and implement them" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997: 6). Without question, such a definition sets a bar for creativity very high.

Creativity, however, should rather be acknowledged as pervasive and permeating various domains of everyday life. Thus, to embrace more usual creative practices Gauntlett (2011) develops a notion of "everyday creativity", encompassing especially activities resulting in producing media content which is effectively the major resource within Pinterest. Gauntlett (2011) argues that creativity is in fact an innate quality of every individual:

> Because we are inventive human beings, creativity is something we do rather a lot, and understood in this broad sense it includes everyday ideas we have about how to do things, many of the things we write and produce, acts of management or self-presentation, and even, of course, witty or insightful speech. (Gauntlett, 2011: 16)

Everydayness of creativity also means that it is liberated from the burden of elitism and institutionalisation. Instead, the inclusive power – commonness – of creative practices is accentuated. Thus, creativity can also be described as "vernacular", in a sense of being ordinary and ubiquitous (Burgess, 2007). By highlighting ordinariness of creativity, the attention is diverted from the uniqueness of the end product, and placed on the very mundane act of doing. Parallel features are embedded into the definition of practised culture, which is not "the realm of pure creativity idealised in notions of genius", but "is made and remade in almost imperceptible ways as well as occasional large bursts of innovation" (Calhoun and Sennett, 2007: 7).

In fact, as suggested above, creativity may be understood as a process through which cultural output, be it an object, text, or performance, is made (Burgess, 2007: 36). Remarkably, this process is unique in that it elicits feelings of joy and pleasure:

> Everyday creativity refers to a process which brings together at least one active human mind, and the material or digital world, in the activity of making something which is novel in that context, and is a process which evokes a feeling of joy. (Gauntlett, 2011: 76)

High contextualisation of everyday creativity is its distinctive feature. Precisely this aspect of the concept justifies the application of the term to Pinterest. Novelty in and relevance to the context, enables to perceive pinning (which in other conditions could be seen as secondary in relation to actual making) as a creative process of providing the content. As Burgess (2007: 32) puts it, "just as particular vernacular verbal expressions are indigenous to their temporal, social and geographical contexts, particular forms of vernacular creativity are grounded in contextual specificity". Everyday creativity as a concept should also be placed within the context: even though it is tightly intertwined with consumption and popular culture, everyday creativity and its outcomes carry some element of authenticity and purity (Burgess, 2007).

Everyday creativity has also a high social value, stemming from its potential to bind people and sustain community. Gauntlett attributes a great bonding power to the activity of creating, clearly exposed in the very title of his book: "Making is Connecting" (2011). In more detail, he argues that connecting occurs in three different dimensions: connecting things (materials, ideas, or both) in order to produce something new, connecting with other people and tightening ties and reinforcing engagement with social and physical environments (Gauntlett, 2011: 2). The last level in particular is derived from the philosophy of William Morris, for whom the sharing of art and craftwork within a community was one of the pillars nurturing a society (Gauntlett, 2011). If understood this way, the activity of making is the social glue – "cloud" of creative links connecting people to the others in unexpected and unplanned fashion (Gauntlett, 2011). Whilst bringing individuals together around the shared interest, creative endeavours equally integrate them into the society.

Creativity, similarly to the Internet and social media, is believed to have an inclusive and democratic potential. As Gauntlett (2011: 66) puts it, the craftworld "is a

place where fame, and comparative status amongst peers, is meant to be unimportant". Besides the sense of belonging, involvement in some creative projects offers feelings of satisfaction and happiness linked to cooperation and sharing. In other words, happiness "stems from having meaningful things to do", which are "especially valuable if they are not contained at the individual level but involve some form of sharing, cooperation, or contribution to other's well-being" (Gauntlett, 2011: 126). Similar view ushers in the ideology of communalism, thus presents creativity as a way to revitalise communities.

The Internet in general and Web 2.0 in particular have meaningful implications for the everyday creativity. Even though either of them can hardly be called a venue where crafts as such occur, they are both the new means of presenting actual (real-world) creative outcome, as well as new tools of communicating and connecting with like-minded people, discovering a shared purpose, and eventually building a community (Gauntlett, 2011). Likewise, albeit the desires to make and share, as well as to participate in communication, are not new to human nature, one may argue that online platforms indeed facilitate and support the development of creative communities fulfilling these longings (Woolf, 2012). Gauntlett (2011: 107) lists the following arguments in favour of digital platforms enhancing creativity and communality of makers: absence of gatekeepers, lack of geographical restrictions, and clearly defined purpose and framework of participation.

3.1.1 Pinterest as a tool and platform for everyday creativity

The emergence and development of the Internet and Web 2.0 are believed to enhance creativity and democratise access to tools and exhibiting venues. To achieve these objectives, hence obtain the status of a digital creative platform, online services ought to have some certain qualities. Gauntlett's (2011) examination of YouTube and Burgess's (2007) investigation of Flickr offer useful frameworks for analysing Pinterest as a creative environment within the web.

The three principal features of the archetypical digital creative platform are: framework for participation, agnosticism about content, and fostering community (Gauntlett, 2011: 89-95). The first attribute refers to the assumed, usually quite negotiable, model of involvement in the service. More often than not it defines, at least to some extent, the content expected (videos, photos, etc.). Most of all, participation is

based on the model of platform, that is "a database website, which invites people to add data as files, comments, tags, and links between different bits of information (notably user profiles and video content)" (Gauntlett, 2011: 89). Second feature, agnosticism about content, refers to the thematic freedom that digital creative services leave to their members (excluding maybe pornographic and abusive or offensive input). Finally, fostering community means that virtual creative environment should not only enable self-exhibition, but also encourage community-oriented behaviours, e.g. stimulate interactions between users.

Digital creative platforms tend to shift the attention from the actual artistic quality of contribution towards the network of ties and interactions surrounding the content. The core argument is that the content is primarily a means of establishing social connections, and only then a media of aesthetics. With regard to the photosharing service Flickr, Burgess notes:

> Beyond the collaborative construction and contestation of aesthetics within Flickr, the database structures, and the way they are navigated via the user interface, can be seen as an 'architecture of participation' that shapes the culture of Flickr so that social connection is primary, and formal aesthetics are secondary. (Burgess, 2007: 180)

Thus, community is both the defining property and ultimate objective of any digital creative platform.

Finally, Web 2.0 – hence digital creative platforms existent within it – might be perceived as the contemporary embodiment of the "tool for conviviality", the concept proposed by Ivan Illich (Gauntlett, 2011). By and large, such tools – both actively employed and passively acted upon an individual – should be perceived as inherent to any social relationship (Illich, 1973:22 quoted in Burgess 2007: 217). Conviviality is then, in Illich's definition, "individual freedom realized in personal interdependence and, as such, an intrinsic ethical value", implying autonomous creativity (Illich, 1973: 11 quoted in Gauntlett, 2011: 168). Analogously, tools for conviviality can be used freely and without any particular qualifications, by anybody who wishes to employ them as vehicles of self-expression. If transposed to Web 2.0, an online service might be then understood as a convivial tool "insofar as it offers the opportunity for free and unconstrained expression and sharing of ideas and culture" (Gauntlett, 2011: 172).

Apparently, Pinterest – together with other digital creative platforms – effectively meets these requirements, and shall thus fall into this category.

3.2 Pinterest – a virtual community or a me-centred network?

The idea of online communities is by no means new. As early as in 1968, Licklider and Taylor envisioned online interactive communities as communities of common interest, more often than not consisting of "geographically separated members, sometimes grouped in small clusters and sometimes working individually" (Licklider and Taylor, 1968: 37). They also speculated on a new mode of communication emergent within such an environment: "You will not send a letter or a telegram; you will simply identify the people whose files should be linked to yours and the parts to which they should be linked – and perhaps specify a coefficient of urgency" (Licklider and Taylor, 1968: 38). The latter quotation clearly portrays the idea of contemporary social network sites, however more adequately Facebook than Pinterest (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Licklider and Taylor's (1968) vision has been later embodied in the form of "virtual community". Rheingold coined the term to describe "a group of people who may or may not meet one another face to face, and who exchange words and ideas through the mediation of computer bulletin boards and networks" (Rheingold, 1987: 3). Rheingold (1987) also points to the existence of a certain social contract which all the community members subscribe to. With regard to Pinterest, this role is fulfilled somewhat literally by the set of rules collected under the name of Pin Etiquette (Pin Etiquette, 2012). Furthermore, the foundation of community lies in the mental and emotional connection (shared interests and values) rather than in common geographical location (Rheingold, 1987). The tapestry of activities and relationships that members of the virtual community might engage in without bodily presence makes a virtual community at least as real and attractive as an offline counterpart:

> People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind. You can't kiss anybody and nobody can punch you in the nose, but a lot can happen within those boundaries. To the millions who have been drawn into it, the richness and vitality of computer-linked cultures is attractive, even addictive. (Rheingold, 1993: 3)

The idea of virtual community has been further advanced, discussed, and challenged by many academics. Remarkable is enriching the concept with the dimension of shared beliefs and common practices, the circulation of which indeed nourishes and sustains dynamic of a group (Stone, 1991). This contribution to the discussion on virtual communities seems particularly vital for the present study, as Pinterest is believed to be established upon the set of shared beliefs and rules and constituted by creative practices of its users.

Also the potential of the Internet in general and virtual communities in particular to compensate for the lost feeling of togetherness in the offline reality is an important thread in the debate thus far. Putnam (2001: 171) addresses this issue in the following way:

> Communication is a fundamental prerequisite for social and emotional connections. Telecommunications in general and the Internet in particular substantially enhance our ability to communicate; thus it seems reasonable to assume that their net effect will be to enhance community, perhaps even dramatically. (Putnam, 2001: 171)

On the flipside, some of the newly emergent virtual communities (especially those not based on the offline network of relationships) tend to resemble what Putnam (1995: 71) labelled as "tertiary associations". He remarks that organisations of this kind are characterised by superficial engagement, and relatively weak ties between the members. Putnam (1995) also notices that in the groups stemming from the shared interest, participants often have relationships to same symbols, and common ideals, but sporadically to each other. Furthermore – as it is the case with support groups – "the social contract binding members together asserts only the weakest of obligations. Come if you have time. Talk if you feel like it. Respect everyone's opinion. Never criticize" (Wuthnow, 1994: 45 quoted in Putnam, 1995: 72). Especially the points about mutual respect resemble Pin Etiquette.

Liberation from spatial constraints, and focus on shared interests peculiar to virtual communities allows them to substitute for lost close-knit communities. Van Dijk (1998: 40) describes virtual community as not bound to certain time or location, but nevertheless serving "common interests in social, cultural and mental reality ranging from general to special interests or activities". He later distinguishes four characteristics

common to all, be it on- or offline, communities: (1) having members, (2) social organisation, (3) language and patterns of interaction, and (4) culture and common identity (Jankowski, 2002). In fact, these points are nearly identical with the features of creative communities (Gauntlett, 2011).

Drawing on the above listed qualities, virtual communities can be characterised as having somewhat loose ties, disregarding limitations of time and place, embracing well-developed paralanguage, and being heterogeneous and pluralistic in composition (van Dijk, 1998). However, as Jankowski (2002) notices, this ideal type fails to reflect actually existent cases. Nevertheless, this initial model may serve well to describe Pinterest as a community of approximately 11.7 million users (Miller, 2012), spread around various geographical locations and time zones, sharing specific vocabulary describing the patterns of interactions (pinning, re-pinning, liking, following, etc.) guided by the same Pin Etiquette, and collectively identifying themselves as "pinners" (besides some more detailed identities as e.g. artists or craftsmen).

The usefulness of the concept of virtual community might stem from the fact that it implies the technological support built on the top of previous forms of social interaction (Castells, 2001). As such, the online communication is more likely to enhance than exacerbate one's sociability. On the other hand, the term tends to elicit debates between "those nostalgic for the old, spatially bounded community and the enthusiastic supporters of Internet-enabled communities of choice" (Castells, 2001: 125).

Indeed, in the age of Internet-mediated communication one is no longer obliged to seek support from the communities they were ascribed beforehand (family, work place, neighbourhood, etc.), but instead might turn to the network they choose strategically. This state of affairs is interlinked with the main trend in the evolution of social relations, that is the shift from secondary relationships – associations – to the "personalised communities", represented by me-centred networks (Castells, 2001). Significantly, these secondary relationships have first replaced the primary ones, embodied in families and communities.

To highlight the transition from close-knit, traditional communities to me-centred networks, Wellman (2001: 1) offers the following redefinition of the concept: "Communities are networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability, support,

information, a sense of belonging, and social identity". Two points seem crucial in this description. Firstly, Wellman directly identifies community with me-centred network, thereby questioning validity of the former term. Secondly, the cultural component traditionally constituting communities is de-emphasised, or actually absent, in the definition. Thus, community is no longer perceived as an intrinsic value, but rather as a means of satisfying one's individual needs. Jankowski (2002: 38), citing Wellman's argumentation on advantages of this approach, notes that it "avoids individual-level research perspectives, focusing instead on the relations between the nodes or units of a network".

It is hard to separate the idea of community as a network from the notion of individualism. Similar view is consistent with the articulation of individualism as the religion and organisational way of contemporary societies. It might be maintained that individualisation stems from the hierarchy of values worshipping tangible goods. Whatever the reason, in modern societies the individual evolves into the basic unit of society, thereby replacing family, kinship group, or local community (van Dijk, 2006). Indeed, Castells (2001: 131) argues that networked individualism is "a social pattern, not a collection of isolated individuals". He also claims that one builds their network, guided by own interests, values, affinities, and projects. Castells evaluates a virtual community as the next stage in the evolution of network sustained in the virtual environment: "On-line networks, when they stabilize in their practice, may build communities, virtual communities, different from physical communities, but not necessarily less intense or less effective in binding and mobilizing" (Castells, 2001: 131).

Finally, it is easy to connect the idea underlying networked individualism with the "networking ideology", present in the offline world. The networking ideology is founded upon accumulating the biggest possible number of nodes in one's own network in order to bond otherwise distant networks (Marwick, 2005). And perceived this way, expansion of one's social network driven by a common sense can be viewed as an antithesis of communities, traditionally constructed for no personal benefit, thus it ushers to yet another outlook: theory of the network society.

3.3 Pinterest and the media of network society

Although critical exploration of Pinterest as a (creative) community, not as a social network, was set as a paramount objective of the present investigation, short overview of the conditions of the contemporary network society might prove useful. For its very nature, the emergence of the network society marks the end of community in its traditional reading. Nonetheless, Pinterest claims to be a community while simultaneously being a social network, thus brief discussion on the networks contributes to the better understanding of the service in question.

Organisation, together with forms of processing and circulation of information are the core interests of the theory of network society. According to van Dijk (2006: 20), the network society might be described as "a social formation with an infrastructure of social and media networks enabling its prime mode of organization at all levels (individual, group/organizational and societal)". Gradually, all the units of this structure are embraced and tied by networks. Similar outlook of the ubiquity and omnipotence of networks is expressed by Castells (1996 [1998]: 470): "The inclusion/exclusion in networks and the architecture of relationships between networks, enacted by light-speed operating information technologies, configure dominant processes and functions in our societies".

Organisation of societies around networks, obviously, has an effect on the form of community existent within them. In this way, networks can be comprehended as social counterparts of individualisation (van Dijk, 2006). Consequently, they are replacing communities as the basic form of social organisation, and primary source of social ties. Or, as advocated by van Dijk (2006), the new kind of communities appears, composed of individuals who – on the one hand – still live primarily with their families, abide within their neighbourhoods, and work in their organisations, but – on the other hand – often dwell in the larger and more diffuse networks. Paradoxically, networks "at the one side support globalization and socialization and at the other side localization and individualization" (van Dijk, 2006: 29). Finally, those are the very ties displayed that are becoming more relevant than the units that stay behind them. Blooming popularity of social network sites – perceived as extension or articulation of offline networks in the cyberspace – may be understood as an evidence of this trend.

The network society is also believed to invite certain kind of media. Generally, media are nowadays becoming more important than ever before. As Bolter and Grusin

(1999) note, media are currently employed as means of defining both personal and cultural identity of the individual. This double capacity of media as technical devices and representation of social identity situates the contemporary person equally as a subject and an object of media.

On the less abstract level, crucial technological changes in media have occurred. Basically, the new media enjoy potentially global reach, integrate various communication channels (textual, visual, etc.), and are highly interactive (Castells, 1996). Moreover, since founded upon individual-computer interactions, the new media encourage individualisation, whilst the networks linking particular computers stimulate collective activities. Finally, users of the new media are attracted by and gathered around one particular shared interest solely, otherwise being nothing but a heterogeneous grouping (van Dijk, 2006).

Above properties correspond to Pinterest quite accurately. Firstly, all the actions and interactions within the environment are computer-mediated. Interactions, however, occur between a pair (e.g. liking, following) or a cluster of users (e.g. commenting discussion) connected in and through the network. Furthermore, the architecture of Pinterest supports communication between members as well as helps them to engage more strongly in the community (Miller, 2012). Lastly, the whole community of Pinterest resides in the common flair for creativity, otherwise being an assemblage of heterogeneous individuals.

The shift from mass to network society indicates alternations in the mode of mediated communication, too. Following Castells's (2009) terminology, this newly emergent form can be referred to as "mass self-communication". According to the definition he proposes, mass self-communication is characterised by "the capacity of sending messages from many to many, in real time or chosen time, and with the possibility of using point-to-point communication, narrowcasting or broadcasting, depending on the purpose and characteristics of the intended communication practice" (Castells, 2009: 55). Additionally, its mass component resides in the theoretical capability to span a global audience; whereas self-communication pertains to a self-generated message, self-defined intended receivers, and self-selected content. Messages, receivers, and content are often retrieved from the networks which constitute the main channel of information circulation (Castells, 1996).

However, it can be maintained that a good part of senders participating in this process actually direct their messages primarily to themselves (Castells, 2009). Pinterest, in fact, supports precisely this mode of mass self-communication. On the one hand, the architecture of Pinterest encourages sharing, thus addressing content to others suggests, but at the same time it calls for collecting items that members themselves enjoy.

Also the status of the audience member has somewhat altered due to the inception of new media in conjunction with the novel mode of communication:

> With the diffusion of the tools that make participation possible in the processes of production, editing and distribution of information and content, the consumer becomes, at the same time, an active creator with the capacity to contribute and to share multiple visions of the world in which he/she lives. (Tubella, 2008: 235 quoted in Castells, 2009: 134)

Likewise, Napoli (2010: 509) observes that the emergence of social media has equalised the condition of an audience member with the status of traditional, institutionalised communicator, whence terms like "prosumers" (producer + consumer) or "produsage" (production + usage) originate. Some scholars even claim that the division between production and reception entirely disappears (Fuchs, 2010).

Alternatively, van Dijk (2006) notes that the attention in the network society gravitates towards demand-side, not the supply-side, i.e. shifts from producer to consumer, and from designer to user. Although they usually choose from the "preprogrammed menus", the audiences affect the items provisioned, and, consequently, might become providers themselves (van Dijk, 2006: 40). Certainly, regarding Pinterest, users – thus members of the audience – are the primary content suppliers, filling the initially empty platform with their pins (this technology has been explained in a straightforward manner on the example of Facebook in Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Ultimately, individualism – tightly intertwined with the network society – may be understood as the antithesis of communalism. Communalism is both the ideology governing more traditional societies and the longing of contemporary people (van Dijk, 1998). While individualism accentuates individual needs and desires as a driving force of one's behaviour, communalism emphasises the collective good of a community as superordinate to individual interests.

Discussion in this section provokes a crucial question: can a medium that is so closely connected with the circumstances of the network society be called a community at all? Thus, is Pinterest truly a community or just a computer-mediated social network?

3.4 Social media and communities

The idea that social media – as a special kind of conjoint public sphere – can restore the feeling of community in the contemporary societies has been already introduced and examined in the academic literature. Miller's (2011a) book entitled "Tales from Facebook" presents the results obtained through perhaps the most comprehensive study on the most popular social network (for data on popularity of Facebook see, e.g. eBiz MBA, 2013; and Conseza, 2012). This empirical research conducted in Trinidad allowed Miller to develop sort of an all-embracing theory of Facebook, focusing mainly on the communal aspect of the website. Taking into account all dissimilarities between Facebook and Pinterest, the present study will proceed to present the most essential conclusions of Miller's research, and critically transpose them to Pinterest.

The potential enjoyed by the service to revitalise – or, more accurately, to balance – sensation of the community among its users is one of the central threads in Miller's analysis of Facebook. On the basis of his anthropological research conducted among Trinidadians, he distinguishes two different roles of Facebook in relation to the community: relief for those who belong to very traditional, close-knit offline communities (the virtual ties are then perceived as looser and milder), and recreation of the very idea and sense of community among those living within more individualised environment (Miller, 2011a: 160). In case of Pinterest – with most of its users located in the Western countries, majority of whom originates from the U.S. (Alexa, 2012) – the latter stance is of a far greater significance. Indeed, as previously stated, individualism – hence relaxation of community – is the primary tendency driving interpersonal relationships in the developed societies, connecting people on the basis of personal interests.

Certainly, Facebook is an example of me-centred network. As Miller (2011a) argues, the site is, *inter alia*, a means of self-expression, self-creation, and presentation of one's life. In other words, Facebook is a channel of mass self-communication. On top of that, however, Facebook enables the individual to present themselves as "being in the

centre of the world" (Dalsgaard, 2008: 9). However, the difference between Facebook and Pinterest in this respect lies in the latter demonstrating some hallmarks of a content community, not social network site exclusively.

Useful at this point is the application of the concept of self-presentation to social media, as presented by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010). They argue that in any social interaction a person tries to reinvent their own image in order to control the impression they make on the others. Such a demeanour is, on the one hand, motivated by hope to gain some rewards; and on the other, by wish to create an impression consistent with one's own identity (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

There is also a tendency towards constructing and presenting self-image and social identity through material and immaterial consumption, including the web of relationships one is engaged in (Dalsgaard, 2008). In a similar fashion, Bolter and Grusin (1999) distinguish three components of individual's self: material, social, and spiritual. The three are manifested through primarily tangible goods (but also family) a person possesses, recognition and image of a person borne by the others, and the consciously networking person, respectively.

One of the crucial differences between social network sites and content communities lies precisely in the level of required and exhibited self-disclosure. Self-disclosure – "conscious or unconscious revelation of personal information" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 62) – is the main vehicle of self-presentation. As Kaplan and Haenlein (2010: 62) argue, social network sites are characterised by the high degree of self-disclosure – associated with me-centred philosophy – whereas content communities focus on the substance, thereby calling for minimal promotion of self.

Indeed, although Pinterest offers a possibility of building network of a kind – through previously mentioned "following" – it is not as explicit as in the case of Facebook. Furthermore, this is neither life nor personality of a pinner being on display in order to impress other users. Instead, contributing to the common pool of inspirations, hence collective good of the group, is in the limelight. In view of the above discussion, the claim about Pinterest's potential to revive the sense of community among its users appears justified.

Second key finding deriving from Miller's (2011a) study is that obeying the unwritten but intuitively sensed netiquette of Facebook is one of the pillars on which the

community within the service rests. Further, he claims that this code is cultural, thus peculiar to the one particular group, in this case, natives of Trinidad. In the light of this observation, it can be maintained that not only is Pinterest a community, but even a culture with its own set of rules, collected in the Pin Etiquette, and values imposed on the users.

Furthermore, social media enjoy the potentiality of inclusion and creating sense of belonging for those who previously suffered from social exclusion. Even though Miller (2011a: 169) notices that "[i]t is doubtful that Facebook is a panacea or can make all those who find relationships difficult suddenly more secure in this task", he is also aware that it might prove helpful. Furthermore, he maintains that social media will not replace face-to-face communication, but that offline relationships will benefit from the experience and confidence achieved thanks to online contacts.

Similarly, the argument about the inclusive potential of online community activities, especially owing to Web 2.0 can be formulated (Gauntlett, 2011). Gauntlett (2011) claims that communal gatherings used to be far harder to organise and tended to engage in particular outgoing and sociable people, often leaving others out. Popularisation of the Internet offers less gregarious individuals "a simple way of hearing about – and developing a sense of comfort and familiarity with – groups, activities, meetings and projects, making it considerably easier to overcome the emotional and psychological hurdles to participation" (Gauntlett, 2011: 114). However, one may argue that this inclusion is not limitless. The Internet in general and social media in particular might enhance the further socialisation of "those already strong in social contact, civic engagement and sense of community", while potentially forcing people poor in social skills to "further isolate themselves and to be excluded from the many opportunities the new media have to offer" (van Dijk, 2006: 169).

Lastly, Miller (2011a) identifies reciprocity as a driving force of Trinidadians' activity within Facebook, and thus a value sustaining community within the service. Actually, reciprocity is often assumed to be essential for keeping the culture existing and developing (e.g. Malinowski, 1922). Feeding the culture as a whole, exchange serves to sustain social relationships, too. As Miller (2011a: 210) puts it: "the gift is rarely voluntary. It is a relationship bonded by sequential obligation". Hence, Facebook users feel obliged to return a like, a comment, a poke, etc.

Also Pinterest provides some tools of direct reciprocity; however, they do not seem to be too heavily exploited. The toolkit anyway contains far less options than its Facebook's counterpart and is restricted to merely liking, following, and – most importantly – repinning. This last action is, as proved by statistics (Erickson, 2012), the most popular out of the three. Furthermore, no clear evidence of reciprocal relationships can be easily detected. Such a state of affairs might be perhaps attributed, again, to the secondary role of maintaining and managing relationships on Pinterest, subsidiary to publishing content. Moreover, the very relation of following is a one-way – similarly as on, for example, Twitter – as opposed to reciprocal Facebook friending. In other words, to become somebody's follower is an arbitrary decision not requiring approval of this person, whereas friendship – indicating a two-way connection – has to be accepted by both sides. This observation finds confirmation in the statistics regarding most popular pinners, who follow 331 other users on average, while being followed by over 1 million people (Repinly, 2012).

Reciprocity on Pinterest might, however, reside in someplace else than a relationship between any given pair of users. Indeed, Pearson (2007) acknowledges that a gift giving, instead of maintained network of relationships, might serve as a social glue binding community together. Quite plausibly, Pinterest resembles Napster in that it encourages a reciprocal exchange between an individual and the community (Giesler and Pohlmann, 2003). In other words, neither a pinner who posts a pin expects the other who benefitted from her action to add an equally useful content, nor a pinner who followed somebody else presupposes reciprocation, and so forth. It is rather assumed that such values can be obtained from the community as a whole, that is from any user. In terms of motivations propelling gift giving on Napster, Giesler and Pohlmann (2003) distinguish four basic catalysts, namely gifting as realisation, gifting as purification, gifting as participation, and gifting as renovation. The study will later try to determine which of the incentives might underpin gifting on Pinterest.

3.5 Women empowerment on the Internet

Having discussed the concepts of creativity and virtual community, the present study shall now continue with the critical examination of Pinterest as a place for women. This

subchapter will then present the research on women's usage of media channels, concentrating especially on the empowering potential of the Internet.

The Internet, permeating nearly every aspect of one's everyday life, might be perceived as carrying great possibilities of the women's empowerment (Madge and O'Connor, 2006). According to liberal feminism discourse, "stereotypes about the supposedly natural role of women as wives and mothers account for the unequal position of women in society" (van Zoonen, 1991: 35). In the light of the above, the big portion of female Pinterest users might find themselves in exceptionally difficult position: not only are they oppressed by the patriarchal society, but they can also be blamed for contributing to the preservation of such a social order. In the same vein, Pinterest itself ought to be perceived as serving – together with numerous other media – as an instrument maintaining stereotypical and patriarchal views on women and femininity (van Zoonen, 1991).

Regardless of the feminist stance, however, housework and childcare – subjects of a big portion of Pinterest content – in fact might often be undervalued in everyday life. Such an attitude may stem from the generally accepted stereotype of the home being primarily a site of leisure for men, and a working sphere for women (Ang and Hermes, 1991). Indeed, taking care of home by a wife is frequently regarded as her responsibility, thus as nothing to be thankful for. Similarly, crafts – rather tightly connected with housekeeping and seen as the inherently feminine and somewhat frivolous activity – are oftentimes reduced "to a ladies' pastime" and confines "women to modes of production that remain cooped up in the private sector of the home" (Hof, 2006: 364).

These stereotypical views are clearly articulated in statistics. Analysing his quantitative data, Bennett (1999) writes that:

> [o]ther [than gardening] activities directed towards maintenance of the home and family are significantly differentiated, with women focusing on family activities (making clothes, craft activities) while men are more engaged in maintaining the physical infrastructure of the home (DIY and home repairs). If this is not surprising, the distribution of other activities is somewhat more notable, with women – except for playing a musical instrument – more likely to engage in creative activities (writing, drawing, photography) than men while

also preferring more traditional games (board games, cards, chess) which typically involve the whole family. (Bennett, 1999: 45-6, cited in Bennett, 2002: 22)

Again, the perception of women's caretaking, creativity and familiarity as innate qualities, is very likely to make for the lack of appreciation of the effort that women put in performing housework. In other words, running a house by a woman might be considered natural and obvious, thus not worth being additionally valued.

In addition, motherhood and parenting – other popular topics on Pinterest – could be stressful, especially for new mothers. The transition into a mother has many consequences: it requires developing specific knowledge and particular skills (Madge and O'Connor, 2006); and – most of all – implies big changes in lifestyle. Woman has to quit, even if temporarily, her job; shift her priorities; and compromise her social life (Miller, 2011a). Such dramatic changes tend to influence self-esteem, usually lowering it. In addition, young mothers might suffer from stress connected to the feeling of incompetence and helplessness in the new situation as well as feel overwhelmed by the responsibility.

Nevertheless, one of the threads of the present study is that Pinterest in fact empowers its users. As discussed above, housework and childcare do not always find a full appreciation in the woman's offline environment. Thus Pinterest, while concentrating and praising any creative efforts that people undertake in their day-to-day lives, enjoys potential both to draw attention to the mundane housework and to grant it a bigger meaning.

Housekeeping should not be regarded exclusively as a constraint, but also as a possible source of creativity (Felski, 1999-2000). Both creativity and the very act of making have some potential to empower a "maker". The latter – understood as the embodiment of the former – is rewarding in the way it allows to "experience an individual sense of freedom and control in the world", and is therefore "not only a fulfilment of needs, but of desires – a process whereby mind, body and imagination are integrated in the practice of thought through action" (Margetts, 2011: 39). Thus, to create is not only to give life to objects, but also to perform and manifest one's own life. Making generates happiness and pleasure, which is then transmitted to the viewer through the outcome of the process, too (Margetts, 2011). Finally, as noted by Carpenter

(2011: 50), through engaging in the activity of creating, traditional gender-codes are often broken. In other words, women can escape restraining stereotypes and social pressures. In effect, through the display of empowering activities, Pinterest is likely to enjoy some enabling capability itself.

Equally, the website is hypothetically able to foster the community for women. Ultimately, creative aura together with alleged empowerment and community spirit could be a key to the popularity of Pinterest among women. In accordance with Hof's interpretation, the contemporary currency of scrapbooking (other peculiarly feminine activity) is based upon somewhat resembling premises: "Scrapbooking's concretely creative modes of production index the uniquely individual self, while its communal aspects cultivate a sense of greater belonging" (Hof, 2006: 364).

As already mentioned, Pinterest is believed to grant some sort of legitimisation for parenting. Irrespective of the value ascribed to the position of stay at home mum by the society in general, motherhood might be a source of high status within the creative community of Pinterest. Hof (2006: 371) makes an analogous observation concerning the community of scrapbookers. She also notes that such a conjuncture eventuates from the fact that an outcome of the creative labour is a "synecdochical extension of its creator", thereby figuratively identified with one's offspring (Hof, 2006: 371).

What is more, engagement with the media as such is actually on occasions claimed to bear some sort of empowering potential for women. The intrinsically feminine genre of romance can serve as an example. Radaway (1984) claims that the romance reading contains a component of resistance towards patriarchal culture. As summarised by Van Zoonen:

> [B]y the social act of reading romance, women signal a time out for their domestic and caring labour; and by taking up romances in particular with their omnipresent androgynous hero capable of nurturing woman herself, they deny the legitimacy of patriarchal culture in which such men are quite hard to find. (Van Zoonen, 1991: 44)

Such a finding is consistent with the view presented by Ang and Hermes (1991: 311). They argue that the empowerment through media consumption is incident to the active negotiation of meanings typical of the active audience. Nonetheless, one ought to be aware that the consolidation of women within Pinterest stems not only from the

consumption of the content itself, but also from its production and sharing, as well as relations and interactions built around the items published.

The empowering potential of media consumption is by no means crystal clear. For example, by the very action of reading a romance – consisting of "reconstruction of masculinity" – women comply with the patriarchal discourse (Ang and Hermes, 1991: 317). Similar ambiguity is identified by Madge and O'Connor in their study of one of the parenting websites:

> A paradox is evident here whereby this internet website was both liberating and constraining to women: it played an important social role for some women while at the same time it encouraged restrictive and unequal gender stereotypes. Thus the online environment is neither an egalitarian utopia nor a space devoid of communicative power. (Madge and O'Connor, 2006: 214)

One of the objectives of the present study is to determine whether or not a resembling contradiction exists within Pinterest.

This chapter provided the overview of the three crucial components underpinning the aim of the present research, namely the critical examination of Pinterest as a creative community for women. Thus, firstly, the concept of everyday creativity – acknowledging the activity of pinning as creative effort – was introduced together with its manifestations in the online environments.

Secondly, different views on the conception of virtual community were presented and discussed. The concept of virtual community was then juxtaposed with the notion of social network, and situated in the context of media specific to the network society. Lastly, the thesis of social media constituting communities was presented.

Finally, the discussion moved on to the significance of media in woman's life, and the empowering potential that the Internet might offer its female users.

4. Methodology

After presenting the theoretical framework underlying the present study in the previous chapter, this section provides a detailed depiction of the research methodology employed in the research. It outlines the rationale for both qualitative research design and netnographic methodology. Then it proceeds to the description of Pinterest as a site of the study. Afterwards, the methods of data collection and analysis are named and characterised: participant observation selected as a method of data collection, and thematic analysis procedure chosen to investigate the obtained data. Having described the methods employed in the study, the chapter presents ethical considerations linked to the research, and finally recognises the criteria of netnographic excellence and accounts for them through various strategies.

4.1 Rationale for qualitative research design

This is a qualitative study aiming at critical examination of Pinterest as a creative community for women. To begin with, the very term "qualitative" suggests "the emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured (if measured at all) in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 8). The latter is in turn a primary concern of quantitative studies, which aim at generating statistics (Dawson, 2009: 15) and explaining relationships between variables.

Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 3) define qualitative research as highly contextualised action that situates the observer in the world. This means that the qualitative research involves an interpretative and naturalistic approach. Need for the former stems from adopting the postpositivist stance, thus accepting that as socially constructed the reality can never be fully comprehended. Nor does the qualitative inquiry seek to explore some objective truth, but concentrates on the accounts of those under study. These stories are later interpreted and juxtaposed with "a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000: 19). The naturalistic character of the research implies that it has to be conducted in the natural setting of the object of interest, and – as far as possible – from the perspective of the people analysed (Creswell, 2009: 4).

Emphasis on exploration of meanings is also manifested in the definition of qualitative Internet research:

> [T]he study of the multiple meanings that emerge around the internet in a particular context. These meanings and experiences can relate to contexts of use (by individuals, organizations, networks, etc.) and / or to contexts of design and production processes. The task of a researcher involved in a qualitative internet research project is to inquire into those meanings and experiences and explore their significance. (Orgad, 2009:34)

The qualitative approach was chosen as the most suitable and presumably most beneficial for the present study for three main reasons. Firstly, the purpose of the research is to explore and understand the nature of Pinterest as a creative community, especially for women. The investigation does not aspire to reveal an absolute truth about Pinterest, but focuses on the website's creative and community aspects.

Secondly, Pinterest – the phenomenon under study – constitutes a very distinctive setting with norms and values of its own (e.g. Pin Etiquette). Beyond doubt, these guidelines and conventions influence the website users and their behaviours. Therefore, in order to understand the community of Pinterest, one has to partake in it. Qualitative approach, indeed, offers tools to do so.

Thirdly, critical exploration of Pinterest as a creative community for women cannot be conducted mathematically. It rather ought to be described and explained, hence studied in qualitative manner.

To sum up, the needs of the present study – implied by the research aim and questions – to appreciate context and setting, and to be explanatory and descriptive, substantiate the employment of a qualitative approach (Marshall and Rossman, 2011: 92).

4.2 Rationale for netnographic methodology

Within the framework of a qualitative approach, the netnographic design seemed the most appropriate for the study. It is essential to notice that the term netnography, not virtual ethnography as offered by Hine (2000), was chosen purposefully. As observed by Kozinets (2010), the latter implies some incompleteness of the effort as it fails to encompass the experience in its entirety, excluding its offline side. The distinction,

however, does not seem to hold anymore, since the on- and offline worlds have actually merged into one reality inhabited and lived by real people. This new world "includes the use of technology to communicate, to commune, to socialize, to express, and to understand" (Kozinets, 2010: 2). Then, the name netnography seems more congruent with this new reality.

Netnography can be defined as ethnography of online communities (Kozinets, 2010: 25). In practical terms, it means that this approach adopts all the most essential features and methods peculiar to ethnography, just applied to the field site located on the Internet. Ethnography handles "understanding a social group as its members understand themselves, to articulate the concepts they know tacitly but silently" (Baym, 2009: 183-4). The principal assumption here is that these meanings can be extracted through relatively close and lengthened contact with people (Tedlock, 2000: 456). Netnography, obviously, is based upon similar premise: "Netnography is participant-observational research based in online fieldwork. It uses computer-mediated communications as a source of data to arrive at the ethnographic understanding and representation of a cultural or communal phenomenon" (Kozinets, 2010: 60). Such a strategy facilitated exploration of the conditions and qualities of Pinterest, necessary for answering the research questions and accomplishing the objective.

In addition, much like ethnography, netnography focuses on culture and how it is collectively formed and maintained by the particular group (Marshall and Rossman, 2011: 19). Culture here serves as an umbrella term comprising social practices, actions, interactions, abstract ideas, meanings, relationships, languages, and symbols (Kozinets, 2010). Analysis of the above elements was believed to provide answers to the research questions.

The research aims at investigating Pinterest as a site of expressing and negotiating creativity and constructing a community for women. Indeed, ethnographic approach seems to suit just fine studying appropriation of technology: "This kind of methodology, with its focus on being true to lived experience and on examining how mundane realities come to be, is well suited for such sceptical examination of technologies" (Hine, 2009: 3-4).

The netnographic methodology, however, was selected for that it takes into account differences between online and face-to-face social contact, and that it

accommodates specific tools to research this altered experience (Kozinets, 2010: 5). Moreover, conducting research in the online environment offered additional options unavailable for in-person ethnographers, e.g. access to the past conversations and, primarily in case of Pinterest, content. At the same time, netnography secured the naturalistic approach vital for this study as it can "provide the researcher with a window into naturally occurring behaviours, such as communal discussions, and then enhance that understanding with more intrusive options such as communal participation and member interviews" (Kozinets, 2010: 56).

Overall, seeking to probe expression of creativity and manifestation of community on Pinterest, the study was suited for ethnographic methods. The researcher also believed that understanding of the phenomenon under study could be obtained only through prolonged contact with Pinterest users, assumption that resonated well with the basis of ethnographic approach. Thus, applying ethnographic methods adjusted to the online settings, namely netnography, appeared as a natural choice.

4.3 The research site

Pinterest was chosen as a site of study for two main reasons: its booming popularity in general and its acclaim among women in particular. These two facts guided the initial investigation of Pinterest. This tentative analysis, together with preliminary review of the literature, in turn, led to the idea that the success of Pinterest could be attributed to celebration of everyday creativity and fostering a community. On the basis of the above observations, the following main research question was formulated: How is creativity mediated on Pinterest?, together with a series of the sub questions:

1. What are the characteristics and constrains of Pinterest in the production, distribution, and consumption of creative content?
2. How do women use Pinterest as a platform for their everyday creativity, and how are creativity and consumption intertwined?
3. How do individual participation and collaborative activities serve to construct the community of Pinterest?

Secondly, the further narrowing of the site was informed by the research question and theoretical framework of the study in order to collect possibly the most relevant and richest data. Obviously, the interest in female users restricted the sample to women

using Pinterest. Next, for the emphasis laid on the creativity of participants, the category of DIY & Crafts was selected for analysis. After conducting the pilot study, it was ascertained that content which could be described as pertaining to everyday creative endeavours in the most straightforward manner was most likely to be posted in this particular section. The main page of the DIY & Crafts category was then analysed on a regular basis over the period of ten weeks. Thus, the sample consisted of approximately ten of the newest – at the time of collecting – pins on each day that data was retrieved. The boards onto which these pins were posted and the profiles of their authors also underwent the examination.

The sample was further enriched with the most popular pin and most popular board of the DIY & Crafts category, as of October 5th, 2012 (reported by Repinly, 2012). Examination of the above sought to enhance the knowledge of how the category of DIY & Crafts was understood by Pinterest users, i. e. items of which kind received credit. It was also conducted so as to reveal patterns of conversations happening on the website. Comments are generally not the most exploited tool of interaction on Pinterest, thus it was virtually impossible to obtain them from random postings. Nevertheless, the researcher believed that discussion was one of the essential manifestations of community; thereby conversations needed to be retrieved from somewhere.

4.4 Data collection

Participant observation was selected as a primary method of data collection. Participant observation shall be perceived as "a procedure for generating understanding of the ways of life of others" (Schwandt, 1997: 110) and "establishing a place in some natural setting on a relatively long-term basis in order to investigate, experience and represent the social life and social processes that occur in that setting" (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001: 352).

Since the critical investigation of Pinterest as a creative community for women was the aim of the study, participant observation that is expected to "lead to human understanding through a field-worker's learning to see, think, feel, and sometimes even behave as an insider" seemed very well suited for the research (Tedlock, 2000: 457). Also, one can argue that observation has some significant advantages over interviews: it provides direct information about human behaviours, not retrospective or anticipatory

testimonies of other people; observation permits the outside researcher to notice what the insider might take for granted; patterns might be recognised and examined over time; observation makes available participants who might not be otherwise accessible (Foster, 1996 in Mann and Stewart, 2000: 84).

Participant observation is also the basic tool of netnographic approach. Actually, participant observation in the online environment resembles a lot investigation into any other mediated space. After all, both involve "looking at people, their hustle and bustle, their conversations, and their artefacts and texts produced in and through different media" (Bakardjieva, 2009: 59). The importance of participant observation in the Internet research is expressed by Kendall:

> Much as my personal biases lead me in that direction, I would never have the audacity to suggest that all social research projects ought to include participant observation. Yet with regard to research on interactive on-line forums, I recommend just that. (Kendall, 1999: 57)

Participant observation is also definitely capable of conferring the researcher an insight into naturally occurring behaviours (Kozinets, 2010). Participant observation may also yield the most accurate interpretations, whether or not applied in conjunction with other methods, as time spent in the community most likely opens the way to norms and understandings guiding the community, and – ultimately – allows to see the participants' behaviours in the same manner they see them (Kendall, 1999: 70).

Netnographic observation is somewhat rigorous a process. According to Kozinets (2010: 96), participation should be active and visible to other community members. He also states that there is "a spectrum of engagement and involvement in online and related off-line communities" (Kozinets, 2010: 96). Adopting these basic guidelines, the researcher participated in the community of Pinterest in the following ways: observing the content on a regular basis and in real time, following certain users, and occasionally pinning own research-related items. This involvement notwithstanding, the investigator maintained the advised distance in order to secure the possible objectivity of her account (Schwandt, 1997: 111).

Also the prominence of fieldnotes for online participant observation is by no means lesser than for its offline counterpart. Keeping fieldnotes is essential for both recording and reflecting on happenings within researched space (Schwandt, 1997: 52-

3).While writing her fieldnotes, the researcher complied with the prescription of descriptiveness: "descriptive writing embodies and reflects particular purposes and commitments, and it also involves active processes of interpretation and sense-making" (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001: 353). She also adhered to the concept of fieldnotes comprising both observations about the activities of others, and her own endeavours, ideas, and speculations (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 2001). Due to the automatically transcribed interactions transpiring on the web, the relevance gravitates clearly towards reflective rather than observational notes: "In reflective fieldnotes, netnographers record their own observations regarding subtexts, pretexts, contingencies, conditions and personal emotions occurring during their time online, and relating to their online experiences" (Kozinets, 2010: 114). Nevertheless, observational notes must not be undervalued in netnographic participant observation either. They should include nuances observed by the researcher, however not visible in data itself (Kozinets, 2010: 115).

Data collected in the course of the research consisted of 23 screenshots of main board of DIY & Crafts category, containing approximately 250 pins altogether, and obtained on 23 days over the period of 10 weeks. Additionally, the researcher retrieved the volume of approximately 250 users' profiles and extracted information provided by the users regarding themselves. The body of data also comprised the content of subpages of the most popular pin and most popular board of the category in question at the time (as reported by Repinly, 2012). The content of both pages was converted to PDF format. Each of the above enlisted data components was instantly described and reflected upon in fieldnotes, whose volume totalled of 90 pages altogether.

4.5 Data analysis

Qualitative data – data dealing with meanings rather than numbers (Dey, 1993: 276) – intrinsically demand qualitative analysis. Babbie (2007: 394) defines qualitative analysis as "the nonnumerical examination and interpretation of observations, for the purpose of discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships". He also emphasises the high level of interaction between data collection and analysis; the two should be conducted nearly simultaneously. Substantially, qualitative data analysis contains the processes of arranging, reducing, explaining the data; interpreting and

making conclusions upon this data, and assuring these interpretations (Schwandt, 1997: 4-5). Schatzman and Strauss delineate the process of analysing as follows:

> For [a researcher], the option represents an *analytic* strategy: he needs to analyze as he goes along both to adjust his observation strategies, shifting some emphasis towards those experiences which bear upon the development of his understanding, and generally, to exercise control over his emerging ideas by virtually simultaneous checking or testing of these ideas. (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973 cited in Marshall and Rossman, 2011: 208-9)

Indeed, the openness towards emerging ideas seemed crucial for the present research. Initially, the analyst had only vague ideas about Pinterest as a creative community for women. Thus, the inquiry needed to have an exploratory character secured by qualitative data analysis.

Such an inductive approach – drawing more general conclusions from the case-specific data (Schwandt, 1997: 69) – to data analysis is also peculiar to netnography. On the whole, analysis pertains to close scrutiny of the entire corpus of data by breaking it into manageable pieces, and comparing these parts in various ways (Kozinets, 2010: 118). Due to the exploratory and inductive character of the present research, the analysis has to be data-driven. In other words, the analysis was based upon the raw information included in the data, rather than upon theoretically predetermined categories, as qualitative analysis "requires the analyst to create or adapt concepts relevant to the data rather than to apply a set of pre-established rules" (Dey, 1993: 58).

This exploratory nature of the investigation seemed best assured by thematic analysis. Firstly, thematic analysis enjoys a potential of capturing the complexity of meanings accurately (Guest et al., 2012), taking greater heed of qualitative character of the material than content analysis, while offering similarly systematic approach (Joffe and Yardley, 2004). Secondly, it is well suited for the analysis of a textual data set. As indicated earlier, the data for the present research consisted of the body of written fieldnotes concerning visual and textual content published on Pinterest.

Inherently, thematic analysis in a great deal depends upon researcher's involvement and interpretation. It "move(s) beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus(es) on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data, that is themes" (Guest et al., 2012: 10). Guest et al. (2012: 13) also state that the

paramount aim of thematic analysis is to portray and make sense of people's feelings, thoughts, and actions within a given context; the objective consistent with the goals of the present study.

Thematic coding is one of the major procedures constituting thematic analysis. Coding refers to the process of categorising data: "taking chunks of text and labelling them as falling into certain categories, in a way that allows for later retrieval and analysis of the data" (Joffe and Yardley, 2004: 59). A theme – basic unit in thematic analysing – in turn might be defined as a certain motif recurring in the data which captures the researcher's attention (Joffe and Yardley, 2004: 57). It can pertain either to something explicitly observable in the data (e.g. mention of a specific term), or to more veiled meanings (e.g. describing a feeling without naming it directly). Even in the former case, however, thematic analysis aims at discovering message concealed by the manifest theme (Joffe and Yardley, 2004).

As already mentioned, the process of data analysis applied in the present study needed to be data-driven, instead of concept-driven. In line with recommendation given by Joffe and Yardley (2004: 58), the role of theory in the data analysis underlying the present study was to inform the questions asked by the researcher, and to guide understanding of the answers elicited.

The coding unit applied in the study was one sentence, and the coding frame (the total set of codes) contained 5 codes. The data was coded manually, firstly using a pen and a set of colourful marker pens to dissociate chunks of printed fieldnotes. Significantly, the researcher decided that each unit could be later assigned to multiple categories in order to avoid arbitrary and artificial distinctions within the coding process (Joffe and Yardley, 2004: 60). This tentative phase yielded 15 codes. These initial textual categories were later merged into conceptual categories through the procedures of splicing (joining categories "by interweaving the different strands" to achieve "greater integration and scope"; Dey, 1993: 139) and linking ("identifying substantive connections between bits of data as a basis for identifying substantive connections between categories"; Dey, 1993: 276). This phase was conducted manually, but with word processing computer software, and resulted in the coding frame mentioned above. Memoing – noting reflections on the data and other remarks in the margins (Kozinets, 2010: 119) – was employed throughout the entire process of coding.

The four processes suggested by Kozinets (2010) followed next, namely abstracting and comparing, checking and refinement, generalising, and theorising. Abstracting and comparing encompassed sorting and sifting the materials to "identify similar phrases, shared sequences, relationships, and distinct differences" so as to build "the categorized codes into higher-order, or more general, conceptual constructs, patterns or processes" and "comparing looks at the similarities and differences across data incidents" (Kozinets, 2010: 119). Collecting more data in order to validate and better the foregoing understanding was the next step. Generalising comprised developing a small collection of interpretations that covered or explained the consistencies identified; whilst over theorising these generalisations were juxtaposed with the literature reviewed to construct a "new theory in close coordination both with the analysis of data as well as existing relevant body of knowledge" (Kozinets, 2010: 119).

4.6 Ethical considerations

The ethics of qualitative inquiry involves principles and responsibilities steering the writing up the fieldwork account, as well as the fieldwork itself (Schwandt, 1997: 41). Informed consent ("the principle that states that all research subjects should give their knowledgeable consent to being studied") (Sveningsson Elm, 2009: 70) is considered to be one of the ground rules. Nevertheless, in the case of the present study, this basic prescription was not executed. Substantially, informed consent grants the research participants a right to decide which information they want to share and under which circumstances. Data used in this research, however, was publicly available. In general, Pinterest may be characterised as a public environment (Sveningsson Elm, 2009: 75). Not only could all the Pinterest users access this information, but the profiles and boards (public by default, cf. Pinterest Support, 2012) were also open to unregistered visitors. Therefore, the researcher felt legitimate to assume that the decision to publish the data was tantamount to informed consent.

Also, it has to be noted that the data employed in the present study were not of a sensitive nature whatsoever. As it is going to be discussed later in more detail, both profiles and boards analysed included very little or no personal information and/or content. In addition, pins, comments, and captions collected were rather generic and

conventional (comments expressing admiration, captions describing the item displayed, etc.). This last circumstance by itself effectively prevents tracking back the users observed by the researcher. Nevertheless, the full anonymity of participants was additionally secured by omitting or alternating their user names.

Finally, the researcher was open as to her role: her academic interest in Pinterest was clearly indicated in the profile. She also pinned some content pertaining to her research, such as relevant books and call for the interviewees.

4.7 Evaluation standards

By adopting netnographic methodology, the present examination adhered to the excellence criteria attributed to netnographic research. As with qualitative research in general, these evaluation standards remain somewhat unclear. Nevertheless, the quality of the study must never be neglected or patronised. Especially in case the case of qualitative Internet research which, as Baym argues, is crucial for understanding the Internet and its mutual relation with culture (2006: 79 cited in Kozinets, 2010: 157). Baym also explains what requirements – in her opinion – a quality online research should meet:

> First, I argue that good work is historically grounded. Second, such work is focused. Third, whatever the ideals, given the focus, work must be judged in terms of what it is practical to accomplish. Fourth, a good researcher gains persuasive ability by anticipating others' counter-arguments and making the arguments for his or her own case explicit. Finally, good qualitative internet research makes its case by providing resonant interpretative frames that help us understand both what is new about new technologies and how research on new technology connects to other areas of inquiry. (Baym, 2009: 179)

Building on Baym's remarks, Kozinets (2010: 162) distinguishes ten criteria by which to assess the goodness of netnographic research: coherence, rigour, literacy, groundedness, innovation, resonance, verisimilitude, reflexivity, praxis, and intermix. However, observance of all of these criteria – some of which are mutually exclusive – is highly unlikely and perhaps even undesirable (Kozinets, 2010).

In line with netnographic recommendations, the general principles enumerated above were adjusted to the needs of this particular research. The rules enlisted below

were applied both throughout the process of actual execution of the study and over composing the final report.

Firstly, the criterion of literacy – "the extent to which the netnographic text recognizes and is knowledgeable of literature and research approaches that are relevant to its inquiry" (Kozinets, 2010: 165) – was secured by the extensive and continuous review of the congruent literature.

Secondly, the principle of rigour was guaranteed by the extensive reading of the literature on the methods applied throughout the study, together with the constant control over compliance with the standards of online ethnography.

Thirdly, while drawing conclusions from the analysis, the researcher adhered to the criterion of coherence, i.e. tried to maintain the high "extent to which each recognizably different set of interpretations in the netnography is free from internal contradictions and presents a unified pattern" (Kozinets, 2010: 163).

Fourthly, the process of interpretation was also informed by the precept of groundedness. In other words, it was assured that the theoretical representations indeed accurately reflect the data, and that the relations between data and theory are visible and credible (Kozinets, 2010: 166).

Fifthly, the present netnography also pursued the ideal of innovation, which implies moving beyond the already existent knowledge in order to discover and introduce new ways of understanding Pinterest and, perhaps, the related phenomena of creativity, online community, and women's empowerment on the Internet.

Sixthly, through the prolonged and active participation within the community of Pinterest, the researcher sought to satisfy the criterion of resonance, conveying to the readers "a personalized and sensitizing connection with the online community" studied (Kozinets, 2010: 167). Such a result could only be achieved through prior recognition and understanding of the categories peculiar to the Pinterest community.

Seventhly, linked to the above is the principle of verisimilitude. Meeting the requirement of verisimilitude means that "a believable and lifelike sense of cultural and communal contact is achieved" (Kozinets, 2010: 162). The present study aimed at satisfying this criterion by presenting real "utterances" (captions, self-descriptions, etc.), and sometimes authentic dialogues occurring between the Pinterest users.

Eighthly, the issues of reflexivity were acknowledged and dealt with in an open manner. Both the choices made by the researcher and the feelings the study evoked were incorporated into the fieldnotes, as well as into the final written account.

Ninthly, the very focus of the present study complied with the principle of praxis: activating and empowering social action (Kozinets, 2010: 171). Through exploring Pinterest as a creative community for women, the present study hoped to reverse the stereotype of "housework as trivial and inferior work" (Oakley, 1974: 94).

Finally, determined by the methodological choices was the decision not to pursue the criterion of intermix. In other words, due to the exclusively online character of the research, the representation did not take into account "the interconnection of the various modes of social interaction – online and off – in the culture member's daily lived experiences, as well as in its own representation" (Kozinets, 2010: 162).

5. Creativity and community on Pinterest

Having set the exploration of Pinterest as a creative community for women as the goal of the present study, the study shall now proceed to present how creativity is mediated and how community is constructed within the environment in question. In so doing, the chapter will firstly mark somewhat fluid and definitely broad scope of crafts as represented on Pinterest. Secondly, the resonance of the expression of creativity on Pinterest with the definitions present in the relevant literature will be discussed. The following section is to focus on the characteristics of creativity as opposed to consumption. Further, the idea of tailoring oneself through activity on Pinterest will be proposed. Finally, the role of creativity as a basis and binder of community is to be explored.

5.1 The boundaries of DIY and crafts on Pinterest

Firstly, it is crucial to observe how catch-all and diverse the content published on Pinterest is, even within a single category, namely DIY & Crafts. Pins published abreast tend to differ from cloth tutorials (showing the way of transforming a t-shirt into a tank top, as well as the other way round) to birthday card on sale to photography tips to cooking recipes. The sample recovered from the news feed on October 29th, 2012 reflects this versatility (Image 2.).

Starting from the left top corner, the pins depict: some wall decoration without any caption (only after going to the source, one can find out that it is actually a piece of toilet paper roll art); chocolate cakes described as "hot-cocoa-27"[3]; a colourful patterned cover, the image accompanied by the following description: "FREE Editable Chevron Binder Covers"; a white-pink "Keep Calm Bow Holder by BliiingItBaybee on Etsy, $ 12.00"; and a necklace and a pair of earrings with the caption that read "joyas recicladas" (Spanish: recycled jewellery). In a lower row, starting from left-hand side, there is a small box exemplifying a wrapping idea ("gingham ribbon and rosemary"), colourful rice grains ("White rice + food coloring + rubbing alcohol = Rainbow rice! Not as messy as sandboxes, but still just as fun! Pasta also!!!"), a new way of utilising an old dresser ("An old dresser, without the drawers!!! Brilliant storage idea!!!"),

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[3] Expressions in inverted commas are original captions provided by the users.

oranges and cloves ("Oranges and cloves add magical scent your home!"), and a tutorial on how to make a scarf from a t-shirt ("tshirt scarf").

Despite their heterogeneity, all the above examples fall into the – even conservatively understood – category of DIY & Crafts. According to Miller (2011b: 22), craft "encompasses both industrial labour and things that can be made at home, as a form of relaxation from a day spent at work: embroidered jewellery, quilting and knitting in the living room, messy stuff in the shed". In line with this definition, creating décor pieces out of toilet rolls, preparing chocolate cakes, and – most certainly – reusing metal elements in jewellery, can be classified as craft activities.

Arguably, also numerous pins covering the topics of hairstyle ideas and make-up inspirations belong to the DIY section in such a way that they can potentially trigger imagination and incite a person to work with their hands. For example, presenting a new and straightforward way of waving one's hair through simple braiding, twisting, and ironing with a hair straightener might indeed encourage a woman to try it herself, instead of getting her curls done at hairdresser's. This extremely broad and nearly overarching perception of crafts and do-it-yourself items acknowledges their pervasiveness in the contemporary life, in that it takes into account "the breadth as well as the depth of skill" and recognises "the way that all of us, every day, strive to do some things well" (Miller, 2011: 22).

Two continua are identifiable among the pins analysed in the present research: (1) practical – decorative value and (2) professional life inspirations – pastime projects. In principle, spectra seem more appropriate than binary oppositions, for them allowing for an item to be useful and aesthetically impressive at the same time. For example, there is something more than look to the post captioned "Tea Time", displaying quilted table cloth, which not only does decorate but also protects a tabletop.

However, the items clearly situated at the opposite ends of the first continuum can be also pointed to. Some of the examined pins have clear practical value: transforming an empty wipes container into plastic bags feeder ("Use empty Lysol wipes containers to keep plastic grocery bags! Keep in your car for wet swimsuits, dirty diapers, trash, etc. Totally portable, and she even shows you how to put the bags in so they pop out one after another!"); whilst other quite obviously serve purposes no different than decorative: e.g. reusing wine bottles as vases:

A great way to re-use your wine bottles. I simple just tape off the design I want and then spray paint. Let the paint dry and feel of the paint for a nice decorative vase!! If I need to touch up I just use a Q-tip and nail polish remover!!! So simple and cheap...I even made 50 of them for a friends wedding centerpieces...Just ask your friends, family or local bars/winery's to save bottles!!! - Click image to find more DIY & Crafts Pinterest pins.

Interestingly, both of the above examples are retrieved from the same "DIY" board, belonging to the same user. It might be considered yet another proof of diversity of content both within the main news feed (i. e. homepage) of the category, and within a single board.

The second continuum, professional – pastime, appears to be somewhat more problematic. To begin with, the distinction between professional duties and pastime activities is not at all obvious: in feminist studies housework accounted for professional duties and additional burden for women (e.g. Oakley, 1974). The research, however, should not turn a blind eye to actual users' attitudes. Therefore, relatively open enthusiasm towards the pinned content regarding household chores (e.g. "For the gross carpet here... in case i haven't pinned before???? Magic Carpet Cleaner ;-) Baking soda, vinegar, dishwashing liquid & warm water!!") blurs its perception as obviously professional and related to excess encumbrance. Nevertheless, the aim of introducing the spectra is not to situate each item within them, but to highlight the multiplicity and diversity of content.

Some of the analysed pins can be actually associated with professional life. For example, one of the profiles belongs to a teacher, her profession revealed by one of her pins: a sign that reads "Teaching: We are not in it for the income, we are in it for the outcome" with the caption stating "I am a teacher and I support this message :)". Indeed, she runs plentiful of boards orbiting around children-oriented educational materials ("Habitats", "Math/Numbers", "Reading/spelling", etc.). Also her most extensive pinboard is entitled "School" and consists of educational tips (e.g. ":) MUCH better than dots or dashes. Highlighters to teach handwriting.") and study aids (e.g. "Use this activity to help your students practice their spelling words as well as other skills! Download the document (in a Word file) and change").

In fact, her being a teacher is not a sparse instance within the explored sample. There is also a user with the self-description stating: "I love all beautiful things...my daughters...little kids ..my students . I am kindergarten art teacher....and I love it..:)). My blog is: http://xxx.xx". By virtue of having numerous boards, her interest seems to cover a very wide variety of content. Nevertheless, boards related to crafts and DIY prevail. She also has one – very well-developed – board dedicated to her professional life, entitled "Art teacher". This board is a collection of inspirations and ideas to be used in the classroom: e.g. "Lots of hand/foot art ideas."; or:

> Children get three pieces of grey drawing paper. They have to draw the same snowmen face or part of the face from different points of view: frontal, of the side, from above, from the bottom, upside down etc. The snowmen must be coloured with oil pastels. Of course the colours of all drawings have to be the same. Outline everything with black oil pastel. Glue the three snowmen close ups on a matching coloured cardboard.

On the basis of these cases, it might be argued that for teachers Pinterest acts as a professional tool. Their work is very often about creativity and inspiration, which Pinterest – ideally, at the very least – ought to offer.

Teachers, however, are not the only group utilising Pinterest for considerably professional purposes. As suggested by Miller (2012), the website constitutes an appropriate venue for artisans to sell and promote their handmade output. In like manner, one of the users owns the board entitled "Shop Handcrafted" onto which she pins pictures of handmade items (jewellery, clothes and toys) that can be purchased from her offline store. Information about the shop – name, location, and Internet address – forms a caption under each image. Similarly, Pinterest is employed by the user who on the board named "Shop" displays the crocheted pieces (children's hats, toys and pillows) she sells through the craft-oriented, web-based micromarket, Etsy.com. Overall, the two major professionally-oriented applications of Pinterest can be distinguished amid the researched accounts: as a tool of professional growth and inspiration, and as a channel of promotion or distribution.

As opposed to the thus far analysed content that rather unquestionably matched the idea of DIY & Crafts, some pins posted in this category challenge its traditional conception in somewhat unpredictable and controversial way. Even though Frayling

(2011: 33) notes that "the crafts have become a wide range of possibilities, a spectrum, and the more inclusive and varied and versatile, the better", incorporating – for example – the pin reproduced on the Image 3 into the scope of crafts still remains disputable. The pin contains a screen shot of funny iPhone conversation between some person and – presumably – their mother, accompanied by the caption that reads "ohh moms". Clearly, such a pin has no direct links to crafts or DIY.

Nonetheless, presenting no absolute value for the creative activities, that the content posted in DIY & Crafts category revolves around by default, does not preclude such posts from being beneficial for the community in more general terms. In allowing people to stretch the limits of initially imposed thematic categories, Pinterest grants some relative freedom to its users and, effectively, enhances their creativity – at the very least, at the level of interpretation of boundaries of pre-programmed categories. Thereby, the medium also satisfies the condition of agnosticism about content, identified by Gauntlett (2011: 89-95) as one of the three basic features characterising digital creative platforms.

5.2 Articulation of creativity on Pinterest

In critical examination of the creative character of Pinterest, the analysis shall now focus on understanding and articulation of creativity within the website. As discussed above, the meaning of crafts and craft-related activities applied to the service should be one of a fairly broad nature. Likewise, the presence of traditionally conceived creativity in the essential to Pinterest activity of pinning is easy to question.

The conservative, strict, and extremely demanding concept of creativity is voiced by Csikszentymihalyi (1996: 28): "Creativity is any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one". Activities occurring within Pinterest stand no chance of meeting the requirements of creativity defined in such a way. First and foremost, the fundamental act of pinning has a secondary and reproductive character: pinning is rather collecting than creating any original content. Let alone repinning, which does not even require searching the Internet but is limited to browsing through Pinterest resources exclusively. Very often the item even gets repinned together with original caption, without altering a single word.

What is more, posting a knitting tutorial hardly transforms the domain of knitting. Especially, if publishing a project does not necessarily mean executing it. Indeed, the abundance of the boards containing the word "projects" ("Sewing Projects"), "ideas" ("Crafty Ideas", "Ideas for Work"), etc., together with the common description suggesting pinning "for future reference" (e.g. "This site could be very dangerous! It has a million DIY projects! Pin now read later....and don't blame me if you become addicted to this one!"; "50+ DIY anthro, pottery barn and other knock Off tutorials. Pin now read later!"), undermines the capability of Pinterest to trigger or enhance creativity in the conventional understanding of the term.

In point of fact, in few instances the pinner claims to actually have realised the posted project, tried the cooking recipe, or used the cleaning tip. For one, certain user maintains the board called "Recipes I have actually tried" onto which she pins photos of ready dishes and links to recipes with her own commentary regarding the taste or preparation: e.g. "Italian Wedding Soup. I'd use less sausage or make tiny meatballs. It was good though. Make again." or "Creamy Mushroom Pasta w/ chicken Tried this. It was ok. I'd make it again with more veggies." This board, however, contains less than 20 items, while over 800 of remaining pins are collected as possible future inspirations. Another user has a board entitled "Made My Own", composed of four pins: two depicting crochet designs, and two displaying the pinner's recreation of the templates. Yet again, actually executed projects are only a small portion of all the items collected by the user.

From the beginning of the research it has been deliberately decided to employ the notion of everyday creativity so as to reflect the nature of the website more accurately. The delineation of the concept outlined by Gauntlett (2011: 16) encompasses activities as mundane as acts of management or self-presentation, and inventing new ways to conduct one's routines. Miller (2011b: 22) broadens this range with "being good at putting on make-up before going to work in the office", "spotting a promising football player", "planning an expedition that makes all the children equally happy", and "assembling just the right combination of clothes from your wardrobe". The present research reveals that the ultimate articulation of creativity within Pinterest in fact resembles picking and composing the proper outfit. Arguably, the website encourages

its users to create the best possible – interesting in terms of content as well as visually attractive – collections of pins.

In fact, visuality and aesthetical appeal are extremely significant qualities of Pinterest. Firstly, Pinterest is considered visually splendid (Miller, 2012). Indeed, its neat and tidy layout might stand out among usually messy, overladen, and overwhelming designs of other major social media. On the other hand, however, pinners have no say in customising their boards, and could only act within the limits of the template. Thus, the focus on the content, not form, is yet again reinforced. Secondly, the idea of Pinterest stated by the creators of the website is precisely to "share all the beautiful things" found on the web (What is Pinterest, 2012). Therefore, gathering beautiful and inspiring items to be displayed on a pinboard is in line with both architecture of Pinterest and its mission.

Furthermore, the ability to create beautiful and inspiring compilation is rewarded by the community of users. Within the material analysed throughout the study, the most comprehensive and multisided collections very often transpire to be the most popular – at least in terms of the number of followers. For example, one of the most recognised users is "A recent graduate and Kappa alumna who adores everything classic, charming, & preppy", who owns 38 boards onto which she has pinned nearly 7,000 items. Her collections range from "Keep Calm & Craft On" (craft and DIY projects) to "'Laughing cures a multitude of ills.' -- Audrey Hepburn" (collection of amusing pictures) to "Sitting Pretty" (stockpile of beauty tips) to "Wedding Cakes". This pinner is followed by the impressive number of nearly 9,000 at the time.

In general, Pinterest ought to be acknowledged as a creative environment. At the same time, a somewhat altered definition of creativity should be bore in mind. Pinners operate within given templates, thus creativity on Pinterest implies collecting and circulating already existent content rather than creating (or re-creating) any material items.

5.3 Creativity versus consumption

One more way to define creativity on Pinterest is to discuss it in relation to consumption (Burgess, 2007). On the very basic level, consumers are often regarded as "manipulated, mindless dupes, rather than as active and creative beings" (Mackay, 1997a: 3).

Reversely, undertaking creative activities implies at least some degree of activity (Gauntlett, 2011). Also the outcomes offered by consumption and creativity differ significantly: while purchasable goods are mass produced, glossy, and integrated into the whole product ecosystem, the fruits of craftsman's labour are "homey, authentic, small-scale, handmade and preindustrial" (Sterling, 2011: 67). Additionally, standardised commodities are believed to merely satisfy one's "false" needs – longings, which are in fact generated by advertising and marketing (Mackay, 1997a).

The similar opposition between crafts and consumption is clearly articulated in the title of the most popular board in the DIY & Crafts category: "DIY- Alternatives to the Infinite Marketplace" (Repinly, 2012). The idea of the "infinite marketplace" where everything is purchasable resonates with Sterling's notion of the "Total Work of Commerce" – "the gaudy background of modern high-tech production" (Sterling, 2011: 67). In other words, handcrafted objects are perceived as standing out against the pervasive ecosystem of commodities. In addition, the description of the analysed board reads: "Sometimes I need to do a 'hands on', 'do-it-myself', 'make-it-my own', but don't know how". This delineation points to the fact that due to the ubiquity of the off-the-shelf products, the user – and other people alike – very often does not have skills to work with their hands anymore. As expressed by Charny:

> Yet despite the value that exists in making, fewer and fewer people know how to make things they use, need or want; or even how these things are made. This is one of the unfortunate legacies of the Industrial Revolution that has shaped the world we live in. (Charny, 2011: 7)

The user seems to embody the natural need for creating. At the same time, she articulates the mission of Pinterest in her own words: that it is to inspire and to teach crafts.

The value ascribed to purchasable goods differs compared to their handmade counterparts. Due to the authenticity and candidness of handcrafted items, Pinterest users often express their high appreciation as gifts. For example, one of the users owns the whole board entitled "From Me To You: Creative Gifts". The ideas posted onto this board are, again, of a rather diverse nature: e.g. a pin described as "39 things to hang on your walls. Create a magnetic Scrabble board and have an ongoing game with someone you live with". More season-related is the picture of a crochet necklace pinned onto the

board named "Xmas present ideas". Self-made food is also commonly presented as a worthwhile gift: "Peppermint Stick Cocoa- great gift to have on hand for coworkers, hostesses, or neighbors!", "Cranberry Lime Vodka, cool gift for the holidays!", "Truffle Hot Chocolate Balls...makes hot chocolate when dropped in milk. A pile of these individually wrapped mounds with a mug would make for a perfect gift!", "Homemade Peppermint Marshmallows--great for Christmas gifts.", etc. One of the users shares her experience of actually handing a bunch of handmade sweets as a gift to her neighbours: "Christmas peppermint popcorn. {This stuff is like crack. I gave it as neighbor gifts and a few people even asked for more!}". In fact, the attributes of the handmade objects listed by Frayling (2011: 33), that is "the care with which they have been made, the fact that they have been made by one human being for another, the individual 'take', the use of materials and the thoughtfulness of their design: design with attitude" might be the reasons behind their popularity on Pinterest.

In some cases the line drawn between crafts and commerce is extremely clear. The description of a popular collaborative board – an open board which multiple users are entitled to pin on – includes the following statement: "Please do not use this board to pin any of your Etsy[4] items for sale and I am doing my best to eliminate spam, please email me to report anyone spamming this board, and they will be removed immediately!!".

Although Pinterest itself accepts trading within the platform (in fact most of its revenues are derived precisely from this activity) (Miller, 2012), and even though content taken from Etsy is generally very common and welcome on Pinterest, not all of the users are keen on coupling creativity with consumption. Etsy might be characterised as "the global micromarket for personal crafts" (Sterling, 2011: 68). In spite of its highly visible inclinations towards crafts, the website is primarily "a throwback to the way consumerism used to be, individuals buying from individuals, and re-creating old forms of virtual market bazaars" (Botsman and Rogers, 2011: 49). Even though more human and individualised, Etsy is nevertheless primarily about trade. Thus, for some pinners, capitalising (through Etsy) on purportedly genuine inspiration sharing on Pinterest seems unacceptable.

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[4] Etsy (www.etsy.com) is an Internet platform connecting buyers with independent creators of handcrafted objects (Botsman and Rogers, 2010: 48).

The content published on Pinterest "DIY & Crafts" boards is in general a mixture of handmade and commercially produced objects. For example, there is a photo of a tank top posted onto "Do It Yourself" board, accompanied by a caption: "now where to buy it?" Such an openly expressed will to purchase a product, not make it herself, is certainly a symptom of agnosticism about the content, i. e. allowing users to negotiate the boundaries of suggested categories and usages (Gauntlett, 2011: 95).

However, ready-made products often constitute a point of departure of further creative activities. This idea is clearly manifested in a pin displaying a knitted sweater designed by Sonia Rykiel ("Sonia Rykiel" is also the description), pinned on the board entitled "Knit". The user who posted the pin in question among other inspirational content and next to the quite open pro-knitting manifesto (see Image 4.) might treat this readymade sweater as an impulse for own creativity. Another example is a post picturing a photo frame made of clear glass block, with the caption revealing where the block can be bought. This purchasable item has been appropriated by gluing stones, adding some lettering and a bow on the top, though. Also, one user suggests the way of refashioning generic plates into a set of unique tableware: "Buy plates from Dollar Store Use a Sharpie and decorate...Bake at 350 for 30 min. Becomes permanent and safe - could do with quotes". Similarly, the picture of conventional hand soap bottles transformed into "Santa-tizers" (as named by the user) through replacing etiquettes with cut-outs imitating Santa Claus's costume, pinned onto the "So Crafty" board, illustrates a tendency to customise mass produced items.

Reusing (adapting previously used items for a new function), repurposing (converting a used items into another format or product, usually without any modifications), and upcycling (creative recycling, involving major alternations of a used item) are other popular ways of utilising commercial off-the-peg goods for somewhat more creative purposes. One of the pins prompts the ideas of reusing an old dresser as an additional storage space ("paint and reuse an old dresser in a new way. store your handbags: shelve your clutches & hang the rest"). The other pin instructs how to repurpose the remnant of toothpaste as a binder to hang a picture onto the wall, while yet another advises on upcycling old T-shirts into pillow cases.

The incentive to repurpose, reuse, or up-cycle is often financial. One of the pinners, for example, runs a board entitled "Save a buck ... or two!", which comprises

pins teaching how to reduce household expenses through working with one's hands. A post by another user presents the tutorial on making baskets in order to save money on purchasing them: "Make baskets out of cardboard boxes and twine. Great idea. Large baskets are so expensive. SERIOUSLY GENIUS!!". Craft items often serve to replace their commercially made counterparts: e.g. "Make your own coasters- 4x4 tiles ($.16 Home Depot); 4x4 scrapbook paper; adhere to tile with Mod Podge and let dry; Spray a coat of clear spray paint and let dry; attach felt pads to the bottom".

Involvement in the processes of budgeting and, most of all, actual creation (thus, production) appears to be at odds with the stereotypical – and obviously pejorative – view of a woman as "the main consumer in the family" (Oakley, 1974: 3; Mackay, 1997a: 3). Basically, consumption tends to be perceived as subordinate to production (Mackay, 1997a). Traditional ideas portray a household as a core unit of consumption, simultaneously defining a home as a feminine domain, while ascribing men to the privileged arena of professional career, thereby production. Manufacturing goods for own use might potentially reverse such a position of women.

Indeed, Pinterest users are often encouraged to redirect the gravity from consumption towards "production" for own use. This observation is confirmed by the comment posted under the gift bag tutorial, in which one of the users states that she "will never buy another gift bag!", but make her own instead. Similar declaration is expressed by the other user with regard to purchasable cake mix:

> Never buy boxed brownie mix again! So simple, so easy. Not just frugal but cuts out the unknown ingredients. Brownie Mix $0.30 /mix. 1 Cup Sugar, 1/2 Cup Flour, 1/3 Cup Cocoa, 1/4 tsp Salt, 1/4 tsp Baking Powder. Add: 2 Eggs, 1/2 Cup Vegetable Oil, 1 teaspoon Vanilla. Bake @ 350 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

Likewise, one user opts for replacing a commercially produced travel bag with a handmade counterpart based on a free design:

> **#SewingPattern**- stop paying tons of money for a mass-produced bag and make your own unique travel companion with this sewing pattern by Indie Designer xxx! Click the image for a closer look at this adorable bag and get the instant download of the pattern! Click "Repin" if you love**#sewing**!

Consequently, everyday creativity and activity it implies challenge the stereotypical view of a woman as consuming regardless of neither earning money nor producing commodities of any value (Oakley, 1974).

Finally, on a more abstract level, a fine line is identified between consumption and creativity as a means of self-expression. With regard to consumption, Schau and Gilly write:

> Consumption can be a self-defining and self-expressive behavior. People often choose products and brands that are self-relevant and communicate a given identity: "Consumption serves to produce a desired self through the images and styles conveyed through one's possessions" (Thompson and Hirschman 1995, p. 151). In this way consumers make their identities tangible, or self-present, by associating themselves with material objects and places. (Schau and Gilly, 2003: 385)

Hence, it can be argued that through consumption one's identity is expressed, and by displaying the goods they consume a person manifests their taste – often the basis of adhesion to some particular group or culture (Mackay, 1997a).

Likewise, Pinterest users express themselves, first and foremost, through the inspirations they publish, and, to a lesser extent, through their actual creative enterprises. Thus, a role of purchasable goods in that process is somewhat altered: usually the vehicles of self-presentation and self-expression, on Pinterest commodities act more as a go-between. In other words, the handmade objects through which the self might be manifested on Pinterest are often anchored in commercial items. So, the identity of a pinner is not expressed through the tangible goods she owns, but rather through the further activities she could perform with these objects. Such an observation resembles the conception of cultural appropriation: the idea that consumers are active, creative, and critical in their application of material items, and that through these adaptations identities are constructed (Mackay, 1997a).

5.4 Crafting the self

As discussed above, Pinterest might serve as a tool of self-expression and self-presentation. That is, it helps users to portray themselves as creative individuals in the eyes of others. However, pinners utilise Pinterest also to construct their ideal selves and

to connect to them. In that sense activity on Pinterest can allow a user to perceive herself as a person she would like to be.

At first, the most striking example of such an application of the website is the multitude of pins presenting weight loss programmes posted onto DIY & Crafts board. In one of the daily samples, as many as three out of eleven items pertain to slimming: "myths about weight loss. watch it!", "There is no better way to lose that fat than this…", and "Be able to tighten that bikini string a little tighter and still enjoy your favourite foods …!" (see Image 5.). Also, there is one board within DIY & Crafts category entitled "Weight loss" that contained 186 pins at the time. Significantly, it is the only board owned by this particular user. Provided that she has categorised this collection as belonging to DIY & Crafts intentionally, it might mean that a human body can indeed be perceived as a potential object of craft. And that with the help of knowledge and experience of Pinterest community, her body might really achieve a desired shape.

The interest in moulding their bodies and the readiness to do so, voiced by some Pinterest users can be attributed to the pressures, ideals, and stereotypes existent in the society. Firstly, the social attitude towards feminine build and shape is very specific:

> Wooley et al. (1979), followed by others (e.g. Brown 1985, 1989; Chrisler 1989), asserted that fat is a feminist issue because the culture at large allows for much less deviation from aesthetic ideals for women than it does for men, meaning that many more women than men end up feeling badly about their (normal and healthy) bodies, and thus engage their energies in all manner of corrective action, from restrictive dieting to eating disorders. (Fikkan and Rothblum, 2012: 575)

On the one hand, traditional views and archetypes of a woman enrooted in the society are a possible source of the attention paid by some pinners to their physical attractiveness. On the other hand, pursuit of an ideal body might stem from the very feminist rhetoric: creating the image of a "superwoman" in the women's magazines and advertising. Such an ideal highlights the role reversal and demands mastering of the three different realms: professional career, keeping a house as a successful mother and wife, and maintaining own body in a perfect shape (van Zoonen, 1991).

Furthermore, van Zoonen (1991: 36) assesses that trying to live up to the image of a "superwoman", real women risk discouragement or burn out syndrome. Perhaps in these cases the community of Pinterest acted as a support group of a kind. Firstly, it feeds some (even if somewhat superficial) reciprocal relationships: a pinner can find inspiration and motivation within the content posted by other members, as well as add own input to possibly help the others. Secondly, Pinterest may accommodate a feeling of belonging and offer support incident to knowing that there are others in a very similar position.

The perfect body, however, is not the only ideal that Pinterest helps its users to connect to. The other two crucial callings of a "superwoman" – namely, success in professional life and being a prefect mother and wife – are incorporated into a self-description of one of the pinners: "People Person. In ♥. Newly biznessWoman, wife, daughter, sister, friend & auntie-to-be. Beach & Details ♥er. PR blood type. Born & raised in Argentina, but living in AKL, NZ. Owner of xxx-Events". She clearly refers to herself being a wife (as well as a family person in general) and a businesswoman. However, most of the user's boards revolve around her profession as event organiser, putting her other roles aside: "Garlands!", "Beach wedding", "Bridal Shower", "B-Day Fiesta!", "Baby Showers", and – most of all – "xxx-Events". Through the description of this last board the pinner invites others to "Come in and enjoy my little creations! <3", since it displays a collection of photos taken during the events her company had organised (according to Pinterest indication, all of the pictures were manually uploaded by the user).

Apart from womanhood and professional success, family and household constitute the last domain of a perfect woman. In contrast to the above described user who only articulates the relevance of her role as a family person, simultaneously focusing her pinning activities on professional life, some pinners centre their content on parenting. For example, one of the users quite clearly orientates her Pinterest activities towards children: "Playroom Ideas", "Kid Snacks", "To Make for E & E" (E and E being her children's initials), "Parenting Inspiration/Ideas", "Preschool Crafts/Activities", and "Educational Ideas for the kids" are the most updated of her 23 pinboards. In fact, amongst the content related to children, suggestions concerning

playing, artistic activities, educational games, and items that could be made for children prevail.

However, some of the users compile the collections covering nearly all aspects of parenthood. Especially one pinner groups on her board named "Fun with Teddy and Marlene" (Teddy and Marlene being her children) the content ranging from food recommendations ("1 ripe banana + 2 eggs = pancakes! Whole batch = about 250 cals. Add a dash of cinnamon and a tsp. of vanilla! Top with fresh berries! Would make great crepes too!"; etc.) to sensory activities and development games (e.g. "HUNDREDS of playtime activities to stimulate your childs' senses and learning. Separated by age, newborn to 5 years"; "buttons and color matching- another great page for a "play book""). Her pins covered also parenting advice ("The Top 10 Things Kids Want Their Parents to Do with Them (based on 16 years of classroom polls). Such a good list of reminders of what matters most to our kids.", "Hopefully these tips will help my children! How to Raise Grateful Children. This is worth reading.", etc.) and – most importantly – sort of a basic "baby manual". The manual counselled on surviving the pains of teething and illness: "Baby Massage Tips to Relieve Discomfort from Colds and Teething", and on overcoming initial stress and worries: "52 challenges for rookie mums: a series of weekly adventures - Activity ideas to do with kids. Broken down by age ranges: 1-3 months, 4-6 months, 7-9 months, 10-12 months, toddler & preschooler... good to know for the future!". Finally, the pins collected within this board advised on developing child's basic skills: "A potty training specialist shares the basics of potty training as well as her secrets on how to potty train stubborn toddlers. Amazing resource for any parent with a toddler!". Arguably, having such instructions handy helps to reduce anxiety and boost self-confidence of new mums: even in case of "emergency" all the information is gathered in one place, thus can be easily and in no time browsed through. Being an exemplary mother is, in turn, one of the components of the ideal of a woman.

Except for rearing the children, household management is another popular topic related to the mission of becoming a successful wife. The "Creative Ideas" board belonging to one of the users is a mash-up of tips regarding housekeeping: organising (e.g. "In-wall, between stud storage for small bathroom items. Because no one likes to see them!! Genius!!"), decorating (e.g. "What a great idea. A bed canopy made from a

garden trellis."), straightforward household tips ("A binder with all the documents and emergency information you can grab at a moment's notice! {I have one, but might have to see if there's anything I missed!}"), and helpful utensils ("Scrap Trap Bin & Scraper - attaches to any drawer, use it while you are cooking to slide any peelings, shells, etc!").

In essence, the housekeeping tips posted on Pinterest come across as some kind of a "folk wisdom" that a woman would acquire throughout her life from her mother, grandmother, mother-in-law, and other significant female figures. Cleaning hints, for example, clearly reflect this observation:

> The best oven cleaner! Cover bottom of oven with baking soda, then pour
>
> vinegar so it's all wet. Let sit around 20 minutes or so then wipe all of it out with
>
> damp cloth or sponge. I leave my oven door open too. After drying you may see
>
> some white residue, wipe again.

The other instance was collecting recipes for homemade remedies (e.g. "Home Remedy for sore throat, hacking cough, tight congestion... Using this in the winter instead of all those mucus relief drugs and decongestants."). As a result of collecting such tips and keeping them handy, a Pinterest user might be equipped in knowledge and skills enabling her to sail through housekeeping duties, still feeling and looking attractive.

Furthermore, it can be maintained that Pinterest stimulates women to explore new areas of expertise within a household usually reserved for men. According to the statistics presented by Bennett (2002: 22), women usually tend to focus on "family activities (making clothes, craft activities)", while men are primarily preoccupied with maintaining and altering "the physical infrastructure of the home".

Some of the pins, however, point to some shifts in these traditional roles, e.g. that women have acquired an interest in dealing with "harder" household works. For example, one day brought three such pins posted right next to each other: a tutorial on converting a coffee table into a tufted ottoman, a bathroom transformation idea ("Master Bathroom!!! The color is great, it has the stone shower which I love. His and Hers sink is a most. The wood door is beautiful"), and an instruction on painting cabinets. Nevertheless, the specific nature of pinning should be borne in mind: they do not directly indicate doing, but are perhaps meant to inspire. One important change is, however, indisputably visible on Pinterest: women have gained some access and taken an interest in activities traditionally identified as belonging to the masculine realm.

Consequently, Pinterest can potentially offer knowledge that allows a woman to live up to the projection of superwoman. If not that, it at least enables her to connect to the ideal self: a physically attractive, independent woman, a successful professional, a mother who has aced parenting, and a wife flawlessly performing household duties. Amassment of all this diverse knowledge in one place bears a resemblance to traditional paper women's magazines. With regard to them, Oakley writes:

> In the social image of a woman, the roles of wife and mother are not distinct from the role of housewife. Reflection of this image in advertising, and in the media generally, portrays women as some kind of statistical mean of all three roles combined. A particularly clear presentation of this image appears in women's magazines, which show women 'how to dress, eat, housekeep, have their babies and even make love' all at the same time. 'In psychological terms they [women's magazines] enable the harassed mother, the overburdened housewife, to make contact with her ideal self: that self which aspires to be a good wife, a good mother, and an efficient homemaker.' 'Housewife' can be an umbrella term for 'wife' and 'mother'. Women's expected role in society is to strive after perfection in all three roles. (Oakley, 1974: 9)

Hence, Pinterest might be seen as a successor of women's magazines since it both reinforces ideals and stereotypes, and leads the way to live up to them. The novelty is, however, that the content of a glossy is no more imposed on the readers, but rather selected and organised by the users in accordance with their needs and tastes. Such flexibility, in turn, activates the users of Pinterest and enhances their creativity.

5.5 Creativity as a binder

The focus of the analysis has thus far been placed on the manifestation and meaning of creativity on the personal level, as well as on the significance of Pinterest for individual users. Keeping in mind the declaration of Pinterest being a community (Pin Etiquette, 2012) and its stated mission to connect people (What is Pinterest, 2012), the way in which this community is constructed shall now be investigated. This aim seems to be achievable through the exploration of the relationship between creativity and community within the website.

As stated earlier, creativity is believed to be a way of revitalising community in the modern world (Gauntlett, 2011). From the three levels of binding distinguished by Gauntlett (2011: 2) – connecting separate objects in a physical way, bringing together people involved in an act of creativity, tightening and reinforcing ties between a maker and their physical and social environment – linking like-minded people through the shared endeavour appears particularly relevant.

At the same time it is crucial to notice that even though Pinterest attracts a very certain group of people, content, rather than interpersonal relationships, is the very core of Pinterest. The statistics stating that even the most popular pinners have, on average, more pins (number of contents) than people they follow (number of one-way relationships) – equalling 2,757 and 355, respectively (Repinly, 2012) – confirm such a claim.

From the formal viewpoint, the aim of Pinterest is coincident with the objective of content communities: to share media content between the users (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 63). Similar goal motivates, in the terminology of Kozinets (2012:86), social content aggregators: "sites and services designed to help people communally discover and share Internet content, vote on it, and comment upon it". Sharing of potentially interesting content proves a sufficient point of departure of building a community of Pinterest. Especially due to the fact that the more direct manifestations of community, that is interactions, are considerably scarce.

Sharing of content potentially useful for others on Pinterest may be perceived as an act of gift giving (Giesler and Pohlmann, 2003). This kind of a gift, voluntary and not anticipating any direct recompense, can actually replace both engagement in online interactions and physical contact as a foundation of community (Pearson, 2007). Indeed, Giesler and Pohlmann (2003: 275) write about Napster that it "is built on individual contribution, big or small, of enough members and maintained by their gift exchange leading to a state of 'communal prosperity'". Remarkably, such an exchange of gifts more often than not occurs between a certain pinner and the community en mass, not between two individual users (Giesler and Pohlmann, 2003).

With regard to Pinterest, a stimulus sustaining gift exchange appears twofold: combining motives of purification and participation (Giesler and Pohlmann, 2003). The former motivation means that through sharing creative content, a Pinterest user nears to

the projection of her ideal self as a creative person. In turn, gifting as participation can be identified with a desire to belong and integrate into the community of creative people (Giesler and Pohlmann, 2003: 276).

According to Parks (2011: 108), information sharing is one of the most important features and pillars of any community. Pinterest is built around contributing ideas and content to the common pool, therefore it satisfies this requirement more than sufficiently. The action of information sharing is also relatively easy, and Pinterest provides the conditions necessary to benefit from such combined knowledge, that is "the [relatively big] size of the community, the [low] cost of sharing that knowledge, the clarity of what gets shared, and the cultural norms of the recipients" (Shirky, 2010: 140). Pinning a quilting tutorial or posting a cleaning tip obviously has a private benefit, but it also results in collective gain: it enriches experience of the others and enhances "the wisdom of crowds" (Tapscott and Williams, 2006: 208).

On Pinterest, the board named "Share Your Crafts!" is an obvious manifestation of joint, communal efforts and values. There are specific rules regulating acceptable contributions, and the explicit objective of the board is to collectively pool various ideas together. Furthermore, the description praises the contributors for sharing:

> Thank you for contributing your great crafts!! You have made this a wonderful board!! You may want to join "Share Your Crafts Two" also contact me to receive an invite: xxx@zzz.com and follow us on facebook and "like" American Craft Enterprises.

Indeed, the idea of engaging in the collective efforts through Pinterest renders considerably successful. At the time of writing, the "Share Your Crafts!" board consisted of nearly 110,000 pins posted by almost 3,500 users, and had over 80,000 followers. Like popularity might arise from fulfilling the four conditions enumerated by Shirky and quoted above: the community is big in size, the costs of sharing the knowledge are low (just few seconds and several clicks), there is a clear distinction as to what gets shared ("your crafts") and what does not ("ETSY OR ANY OTHER items for sale"), and there exists a relative cultural uniformity among the contributors (as well as amidst Pinterest users in general).

That case is also congruent with the accentuation of the relevance of sharing the user-generated content: "The phrase "user-generated content", the current label for

creative acts by amateurs, really describes not just personal but also social acts" (Shirky, 2010: 19). Therefore, sharing is clearly one of the qualities that make participation in Pinterest worthwhile.

As already stated, direct, public interactions between the users of Pinterest are rather rare. Especially few are conversations related to the content; in fact, an average pinner dedicates mere 0.6% of the time spent on the website to commenting posts (Repinly, 2012). Also, most of the pins do not receive a single comment, even though they might be repinned several times. Essentially, repinning turns out to be the paramount activity of pinners. Even if, statistically, pinning consumes over 83% of time spent on Pinterest (Repinly, 2012), it is critical to remember that as much as 80% of all pins are actually repins (Erickson, 2012). On the basis of the above observations, it might be concluded that the main relationships on Pinterest are created between a user and content, not between different users.

Arguably, Pinterest accounts are often to their owners more like albums full of press clippings rather than channels of self-presentation or expression. Firstly, most of the pinners do not even care to fill out their profiles thoroughly (most of them miss self-description or location, some are lacking a picture). Even though a majority of users use their real identity, it is more likely due to the convenience of registering with Facebook than because of the will to create or strengthen one's "brand" through Pinterest. The general absence of the maker's figure – overexposing of whom is listed by Miller (2011b) as one of the hallmarks of the contemporary crafts – is the core evidence for that. Pinners tend to express their plans on undertaking certain projects (e.g. "Someday I will do this!", "I will try this for sure now! Thanks for the tips!!"), or complimenting others ("This woman is an artist. 31 (million) ways to wrap presents. The whole website is unbelievable..."), instead of boasting about the outcome of own creative efforts, whatever these could be. However, the research proves that the above mentioned praising concerns the actual creators of the displayed items, thereby, inevitably, also people from outside the Pinterest community.

Secondly, membership in Pinterest hardly ever involves building any me-centred network (Castells, 2001). As previously stated, any forms of a direct interaction within the environment are scarce, and the basic relationship of following is one-way. Thus, Pinterest users neither expect reciprocity nor are equipped with the tools facilitating

acquiring the audience. In fact, all the examples of communication can be interpreted as manifestations of genuine helpfulness.

For instance, one of the users is apt to tagging other pinners (purportedly her offline friends) in captions of the posts she considered might have been useful for them: "Paper Feather Tutorial, with the cool book you got the other day **@Megan Xyz**", "**@Megan Xyz** and **@Cleo Abc** I'm making this for you!!", "How to clean a microfiber couch -**@Cleo Abc**", etc. Significantly, none of these pins is responded to publicly. Such a situation might be attributed to the special aura of Pinterest as a content community, celebrating actual substance of the service instead of a cloud of relationships surrounding it.

Such a paucity of self in the posts paired up with the invisibility and probable irrelevance of network results in a connection that at least some users have developed with creativity. Perhaps they are pursuing the ideal of a creative person in their everyday lives. Hence, this shared commitment to the "creative ethos" might be the force underpinning the community of Pinterest and its dynamics (Florida, 2002: 5). In the end "creativity has come to be the most highly prized commodity" of the modern world (Florida, 2002: 5).

5.6 Conclusions

The goal of the present analysis was to critically probe Pinterest as a creative community for women. The scrutiny was led by the main research question: <u>How is creativity mediated on Pinterest?</u> Furthermore, the analysis addressed the following series of the sub questions:

1. What are the characteristics and constrains of Pinterest in the production, distribution, and consumption of creative content?
2. How do women use Pinterest as a platform for their everyday creativity, and how are creativity and consumption intertwined?
3. How do individual participation and collaborative activities serve to construct the community of Pinterest?

The current research confirmed the significance of creativity for both the success and the very existence of Pinterest. On the one hand, the website is based on the premise that people cherish creative activities. On the other hand, Pinterest capitalises on this

innate urge to create in such a way that, thanks to celebrating and praising creativity, it constantly lures new users. The broad scope of creativity and multiplicity of roles it performs within Pinterest discovered throughout the study were, however, somewhat unexpected.

Firstly, the traditional understandings of creativity are not applicable to Pinterest. Pinners push the boundaries of DIY and crafts – activities unquestionably creative – to include projects covering various spheres of life, including e.g. weight-loss programmes and make-up tips. In fact, quite commonly DIY and crafts referred to crafting one's body, personality, or set of skills. Also a creative act on Pinterest is liberated from the necessity of performing any physically laborious efforts. Similarly, the creative output evolved from a tangible object into an aesthetic collection of digital pictures, or – more accurately – a set of hyperlinks leading to various worthwhile locations within the Web. Effectively then, the community of pinners redefined and customised the concept of creativity according to their needs.

Nevertheless, the ideal of creativity as articulated on Pinterest still remains in the complex interdependency with consumption. In most cases the line between the two is not particularly clear. Usually creative projects are either anchored in purchasable goods, as in upcycling and customising, or they demand some additional readymade elements, like threads and needles for sewing or colourful ribbons for scrapbooking. Remarkably, the identity of the pinner seems not to be grounded in the consumables but in the creative activities she could – at least potentially – perform using these objects.

As for roles that creativity performs on Pinterest, being the common denominator upon which the community is constructed is a paramount one. Truly, creativity is the only verifiable justification for the notion of Pinterest constituting a community. In fact, the ideal of creativity that all the pinners connect to is the link common to all users that binds them together. Otherwise, the paucity of meaningful relationships and explicit interactions between the users could effectively question the existence of Pinterest community.

All in all, the present research has revealed that Pinterest indeed might be described as a creative community of women, however neither in traditional nor in initially assumed meaning of this statement. Remarkably, Pinterest alters understanding

of creativity, founds its community on the unexpected basis, and rather than a shared venue provided for the users it is an entity built by and composed of its users.

6. Discussion

Having introduced the results of the analysis, the research shall now proceed to presenting the findings in the wider context, discussing their relevance, and acknowledging the major limitations of the study.

6.1 Pinterest as a creative community for women

Critical exploration of Pinterest as a creative community for women was selected as the aim of the present study. The analysis was guided by the major research questions, that is: How is creativity mediated on Pinterest?

Outlining the boundaries of DIY and crafts as understood and expressed on Pinterest was a worthwhile point of departure. The in-depth investigation of content posted onto the website revealed that items pinned were extremely diverse and did not necessary fit the conventional definitions of the two terms (Csikszentymihalyi, 1997). Also, the two continua within which the pins could be situated were identified: the value of the creative outcome fluctuated between usable and decorative, and incentive to undertake the project oscillated between professional and pastime. Such a broad understanding is coincident with the concept of everyday creativity (Gauntlett, 2011).

Further, it was unveiled that the very idea of creativity on Pinterest was pushing the boundaries of conservative delineation of the concept (Csikszentymihalyi, 1997: 28). Indeed, while traditional viewpoint linked creativity to an action and – most of all – propelling own hands, creative behaviour native to Pinterest was usually anchored in somebody else's effort and creation. Consequently, a significant portion of content posted on Pinterest can be described as "user-led" – repurposed and distributed by pinners – as opposed to user-generated (Burgess, 2007: 10). Often, the very act of pinning (several mouse clicks) constituted the creative output in its own realm, and no other offline action followed. The bottom line was that creative behaviour on Pinterest did not demand any offline follow-up: picking up just the right content in order to create interesting, aesthetically attractive, and usable pinboards was an ultimately creative performance (Miller, 2011b).

Thirdly, the crucial relationship between creativity and consumption detected on Pinterest was analysed. Overall, pinners seemed to engage with craft activities primarily

due to the innate human need to create, not only to consume (Woolf, 2012). Indeed, Pinterest seemed to take into account the current convergence between production, distribution, and consumption of the content (Burgess, 2007). The service allowed its users to circulate content through pinning, thereby generating creative outcome in the shape of novel collections of pins, and to consume items posted by others. Second reason for undertaking craft and DIY projects was the high value that handcrafted output had in comparison to its industrial counterpart. Due to their genuineness, handmade creations were, e.g. often perceived as perfect gifts (Sterling, 2011).

On Pinterest, off-the-shelf goods usually intermingled with handcrafted objects – both within one project, and as two pins posted abreast. This observation was in line with the perception of everyday creativity as being bound up with, not separate from, commercial consumption (Burgess, 2007: 33). Typically, one purchasable item would serve as an inspiration for a creative project, or a readymade element would constitute a part of a bigger craft activity. However, albeit most of craft enterprises and do-it-yourself projects embraced at least some purchasable commodities, the distinction between creativity and consumption was at times very clearly defined. This led to reversing the status of a female pinner as a consumer and contributed to highlighting her productive potential (Oakley, 1974). Finally, it was revealed that displaying creative visions which she possibly could have embarked on contributed to constructing and expressing the identity of a pinner. Indeed, each pinner created her identity in such a way that it reflected her creativity (Florida, 2002: 7), and then displayed this social identity on Pinterest (Bolter and Grusin, 1999). Such a finding was at odds with a usual way of articulating individual identity through products and brands (Schau and Gilly, 2003).

Subsequently, the investigation discovered that the prospective crafting did not only occur on the level of creating some external, tangible objects, but more often than not also involved potential moulding of a pinner's body and even shaping her mindset. Through figurative crafting of self, pinner could attempt to comply with the ideal of a superwoman imposed on her by advertising and women magazines (van Zoonen, 1991). Frequently, a user would post a link to a weight loss programme that might help her to remain attractive and preserve her womanhood. All in all, content posted on Pinterest commonly referred to stereotypically feminine activities – mostly concerning

housework and parenting – which skilful and flawless performance of very often constituted the basis of woman's identity and self-confidence (Oakley, 1974). Thus, a collection of carefully picked pins could open the door to living up to the stereotype of a superwoman. On the flipside, home-making was not only a constraint for women, but also an incentive to think and act in a creative manner (Felski, 1999-2000). Hence, most of the content published on Pinterest related to housework in one way or another.

Finally, the analysis determined that on Pinterest creativity served as "social glue" binding the community together (Gauntlett, 2011). The investigation of creativity on the group level revealed that content was usually at the centre of each user's presence and activities within Pinterest, not interpersonal relationships. In other words, sharing interesting pins and contributing to the common cause (that can be jointly understood as gift giving) was the main call of the pinner, rather than collecting followers and praises from other users (Giesler and Pohlmann, 2003). Thus, the content she posted oftentimes overshadowed the figure of an individual – the circumstance somewhat atypical in the contemporary world (Miller, 2011b). Resultant from it was the special link to the ideal of creativity that in fact constituted the most essential relationship that each user developed within Pinterest. Such a finding was coincident with the claim that within the groups of shared interest, members often nurture relationships to the same symbols and ideas, but rarely to each other (Putnam, 1995). Presumably, this "shared commitment to the creative spirit" sustained the dynamics of the community of Pinterest in the same way that it "powers our age" in general (Florida, 2002: 5).

Hence, the answer to the main research question, How is creativity mediated on Pinterest?, should be five-fold. Firstly, creativity on Pinterest is a vast concept, encompassing activities which traditionally exceeded its boundaries (Gauntlett, 2011). Secondly, creative act on Pinterest is very often secondary and anchored in somebody else's activities and usually happens exclusively online: composing a visually attractive and interesting content-wise collection of pins represents the ultimate manifestation of creativity (Burgess, 2007). Thirdly, the co-occurrence and interdependence of creativity and consumption characterises the perception of the former within Pinterest (Burgess, 2007). Fourthly, DIY and craft ideas posted on the website not only pertain to tangible creative output, but also to shaping feminine body and gaining on the ideal of woman

(van Zoonen, 1991). Fifthly, on Pinterest creativity acts as social glue, binding the users together (Gauntlett, 2011): the community of Pinterest is founded upon internal sharing and contributing creative content (Burgess, 2007: 130) and the main relationship existent within the society of Pinterest is the one between the user and the pursued ideal of creativity (Florida, 2002).

6.2 Pinterest as the creative community *of* women

The unexpected popularity of Pinterest was one of the paramount incentives to undertake the present study, and the great acclaim of the website among female users appeared as its especially intriguing aspect. The investigation divulged that the success of Pinterest might, to high degree, stem from combining the most vital features of other thriving media channels from across time.

From the traditional media, Pinterest bears some resemblance to print women magazines. That most of the content posted in DIY and Crafts category revolved around broadly-understood housekeeping and upbringing, as well as quite significant a portion involved beauty and fashion tips coupled with weight-loss programmes, echoes the structure of glossy magazines (van Zoonen, 1991). Similar is also the role of the two media channels: both help a woman to project her ideal self and offer some guidelines to achieve perfection. All the alikeness notwithstanding, Pinterest has one important advantage over traditional magazines: it is interactive, thus personalised. And this possibility not only to consume, but also to influence and control the content – in other words, to "produse" – activates a user and engages her creativity (Burgess, 2007; Gauntlett, 2011; Woolf, 2012).

In boosting and employing individual creativity, Pinterest embodies the ideal of the digital creative platform enabled by Web 2.0. As proceeding from the analysis, Pinterest satisfies all three conditions typical of such an environment: it provides framework for participation, is agnostic about content, and fosters a community (Gauntlett, 2011). It also meets the requirements of a convivial tool existent in the online environment: a platform that provides an opportunity of free and unrestricted expression, and facilitates sharing of ideas and culture (Gauntlett, 2011: 172). Therefore, through the activity on Pinterest a woman realises three inherent human desires: to share, to collaborate, and to create (Woolf, 2012). Indeed, she shares

interesting content, thereby creating own output in the shape of a beautiful collection of pins, and simultaneously contributes to the common pool of knowledge and information. Thus, to some extent, Pinterest resembles Flickr which is simultaneously "a showcase for one's own work, an exhibition of everyone else's work, a social network, and a learning community" (Burgess, 2007: 180).

Besides satisfying the longings innate to all people, Pinterest can offer some additional value especially for women. As other information and communication technologies, the service in question has a potential for empowering women through providing support, aiding information exchange, and thus for them to develop as creative and innovative persons (Madge and O'Connor, 2006). As discussed before, Pinterest allows women to more easily explore the domains traditionally ascribed to men (Mackay, 1997a). However, overwhelming majority of the content published on Pinterest relates to the stereotypically feminine activities and interests that potentially boost creativity (Felski, 1999-2000). Therefore, the role of Pinterest as a tool of empowerment is somewhat ambiguous: on the one hand, it really strengthens position and enhances knowledge and skills of women, but – on the other hand – mainly within the scope of traditional feminine roles. As a result, the stereotype of a "superwoman" is reinforced and further imposed on the users (van Zoonen, 1991). Such a finding is in line with Madge and O'Connor's (2006) observation about parenting websites.

Thus, it can be argued that the success of Pinterest stems not as much from creating something original, as from combining the most exciting features from already existent media channels and technologies. Discovering a perfect remix, however, demands some dose of creativity and, at the same time, provides an added value (Lessig, 2008). To that effect, the act of designing Pinterest very much resembles the philosophy of pinning: creating the unique collection on the top of elements prepared by somebody else.

However, it is crucial to note that – at least from the sociological standpoint – technology does not determine human behaviour, but the users appropriate the technology on hand. Technology as such is just a "physical artefact" designed to serve some human purpose, and it "does nothing without some surrounding human activity" (Mackay, 1997b: 265). Therefore, the community of users is increasingly to decide what the service "is 'for'" (Burgess, 2007: 10). The developers and creators of Pinterest

designed the affordances of the service and indicated some general guidelines as to what Pinterest is (What is Pinterest?, 2012) and how to use it (Pin Etiquette, 2012), but the users decided how to apply the technology at hand. Hence, it seems justified to modify the initial claim of Pinterest being a creative community (designed) *for* women into the informed assessment of Pinterest being a creative community *of* women actively engaged in appropriation of the provided platform.

Arguably, the appropriation of Pinterest as a creative community revolving around everyday creativity and home-making actually reflects the demographics of its users (Felski, 1999-2000). In fact, 79% of pinners worldwide are women, and 63% of all users are 35 years of age or more – thus purportedly more attached to the traditional values (Report: Social Media Demographics in 2012, 2012). Provided that nearly 50% of all Pinterest users are located in the United States (Alexa, 2012), thus originate from a fairly conservative society, the social view on and division of gender roles is also mirrored online.

6.3 Relevance of the study

The results of the present study are hoped to contribute to the knowledge in the two main areas: creativity, and Pinterest as an example of social media. Particular findings, however, are not restricted to the one of the above fields only, and oftentimes cut across multiple spheres.

Firstly, the findings of the present research confirm the central role of creativity within social media. The outcome resonates with the main strand of research attributing popularity of various social media to their potential to enable easier and more meaningful participation, and capacity to fulfil basic human desires to create, share, and collaborate (Woolf, 2012). Furthermore, creativity on Pinterest – similarly as on Flickr – seems to have a social value transcending individual needs of making or self-expression, in that communities can be potentially founded upon it (Burgess, 2007). The study also outlines the concept of creativity peculiar to Pinterest, which might be applied and adjusted to the circumstances of other social media.

Secondly, the investigation has also revealed that the community of Pinterest differs significantly from the traditionally depicted online community (e.g. Rheingold, 1987) in that it is not founded upon the network of interpersonal relationships and

interactions, but held together by creativity of the users. Precisely, the relationship between each user and her projection of creativity nurtures the community of Pinterest (Florida, 2002; Putnam, 1995). This knowledge could potentially complement the current understanding of online communities.

Furthermore, the results of the study are actually at odds with a default view of social media satisfying the three needs – of sharing, collaboration, and creating – equally (Woolf, 2012; Botsman and Rogers, 2010). Although that Pinterest indulges all the three desires goes without question, its users actually seem to value the three somewhat differently: for them, sharing of already existent content and collaborating in order to achieve a new, common goal appear to be subsidiary to the most fundamental act of creating. Such an observation might offer a valuable perspective on different social media actually serving different basic needs. In other words, any given social media outlet can concurrently perform various functions "but each of these dynamics can be foregrounded or backgrounded, depending on the interests and aspirations of each participant" (Burgess, 2007: 180). Conducting a comparative study of different social media outlets and classifying them according to the aspiration they primarily serve could be an interesting line of a follow-up research.

Further, the study questions the commonly acclaimed idea about democratising potential of the social media (Botsman and Rogers, 2010; Kirkpatrick, 2010) in such a way that it takes into account the possible impact they have on the offline reality. More precisely, Pinterest is believed to preserve the traditional gender roles, thereby reinforcing the patriarchal order in the society (Madge and O'Connor, 2006). Although maybe too radical a statement, it highlights the need of more critical analysis of the reportedly democratising and exclusive capability of social media.

The research sheds some light on the baffling popularity of Pinterest. At the time of writing, the literature on Pinterest was scarce and primarily concentrated on the marketing value of the website. Therefore, the present study offers an initial insight into the acclaimed affordances of Pinterest, of whose success overshadowed the majority of channels in the abundant social media landscape (Miller, 2012). The findings suggest that such an accomplishment is less the result of implementing a unique idea than of combining certain features of already existing media in order to feed the most basic needs and longings of the users (Lessig, 2008).

Furthermore, the present thesis might be a valuable point of departure for the follow-up research. Firstly, for projects with less limited time and financial resources, it could be useful to study similar issues, just employing qualitative interviews as a primary method of data collection. Interviews could help to verify and validate the results obtained in the current inquiry, as well as allow asking additional questions about, e.g. motivation behind activity on Pinterest or feelings this participation induces. The investigation could possibly be broadened to include other categories besides DIY and Crafts. Such a scrutiny should uncover different patterns contributing to better understanding of Pinterest especially, and platforms existent within Web 2.0 generally.

Secondly, the manifestation of creativity peculiar to Pinterest could be tested against other social media – particularly Twitter and Tumblr – or online communities. In the latter case, the meme-generating communities like I Can Has Cheezburger and meme-aggregators like 9gag might be exceptionally interesting.

Thirdly, the present research tackled briefly the issue of the identity of a pinner. This thread could be further developed and then probably incorporated into the broader exploration of the identity of the Web 2.0 user. It might prove useful as the issue of identity of the current Internet-user appears to be under researched and the vast knowledge accumulated in the era of Web 1.0 does not seem applicable anymore.

6.4 Limitations of the study

Obviously, the present study has certain limitations that need to be acknowledged. Some of the constraints stem directly from the methods employed, while the others result from limited time and financial resources that were available.

Firstly, the present research did not meet the criterion of intermix, one of the criteria of excellence for a netnographic research. Intermix implies reliance on both online and offline data, and the current study is grounded exclusively in the data retrieved from the online spaces. Orgad (2009: 35) defines online data as "materials obtained using what have been often described as virtual methodologies: methods implemented by and through the internet", in contrast to offline data generated through methodological procedures applied in offline settings. Arguably, the offline data serve to provide the context and reveal otherwise invisible facets of the phenomenon under

study (Orgad, 2009: 41; Kozinets, 2010: 172), thus excluding them from the analysis underlies some incompleteness of the present study.

Kozinets, however, allows for some situations in which online data are sufficient, namely studying "some phenomenon directly relating to the online communities and online culture itself, a particular manifestation of them, or one of their elements" (Kozinets, 2010: 63). Indeed, Pinterest is entirely web-based entity, and creativity shall be regarded as the integral part of the community. Nevertheless, relying on the online data exclusively gave the conclusions drawn from the present study somewhat more speculative character.

Likewise, depending on participant observation as the sole method of data collection constrained the present research in a meaningful way. Firstly, it possibly reinforced biases intrinsic to interpretations and enhanced the power of researcher's ideological stance. Secondly, the speculative nature of the conclusions was potentially amplified by them being set in the arbitrary interpretations of actions and interactions (Marshall and Rossman, 2011: 139).

Aware of these limitations, the researcher tried to recruit participants for the interviews in various ways (private messages as well as public announcements) but it was all in vain. Such a debacle might be perhaps attributed to the relatively short duration of the research: the period turned out to be insufficient to either establish mutual trust or to advertise the idea of the study. In the future it might prove fruitful to conduct similar research, just enriched with the data obtained through the interviews. Alike data can allow for feelings and motivations of participants, thus afford further verification of findings offered by the present investigation.

On top of the limitations regarding the data collection, there were the potential drawbacks of the technique of data analysis, namely thematic analysis. The general criticism towards the method points to the fact that "it abstracts issues from the way that they appear in life, organising material according to the researcher's sense of how it connects, rather than the inter-relationship of themes in the participant's mind or lifeworld" (Joffe and Yardley, 2004: 14). On the whole, it might be ascertained that employment of thematic analysis contributed to the overall speculative character of the interpretations and conclusions drawn within the present study. Nevertheless, in spite of its imperfection, thematic analysis was the best method at hand.

As already mentioned, also the relatively short duration of the study caused some limitations. Besides impossibility to recruit any interview participants, the main restraint attributable to the limited time was the scope of the research. Significantly, only one out of over 30 categories available on Pinterest, namely DIY and Crafts, was analysed. Naturally, then, the results obtained might not necessarily be generalizable to Pinterest as a whole.

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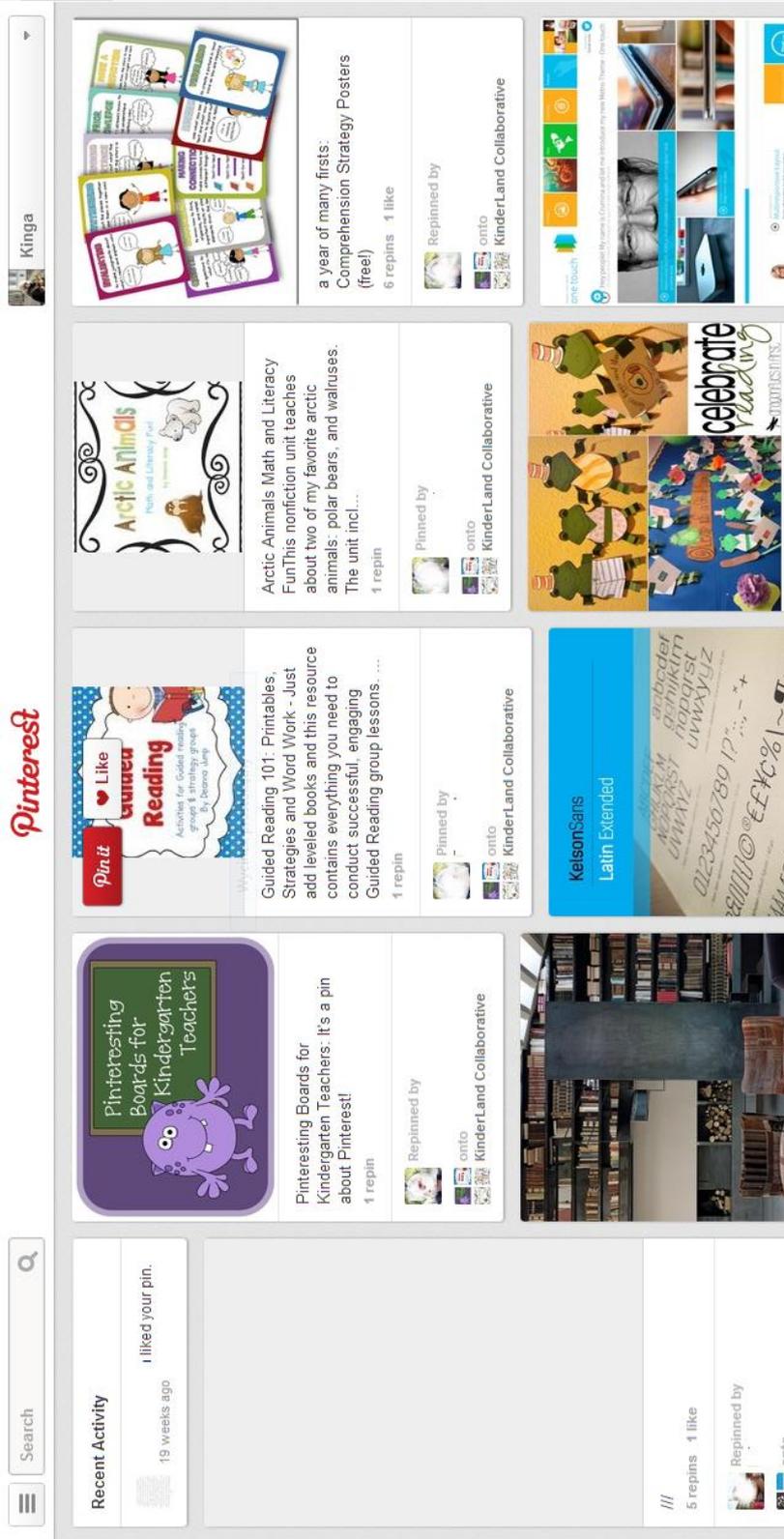
Images

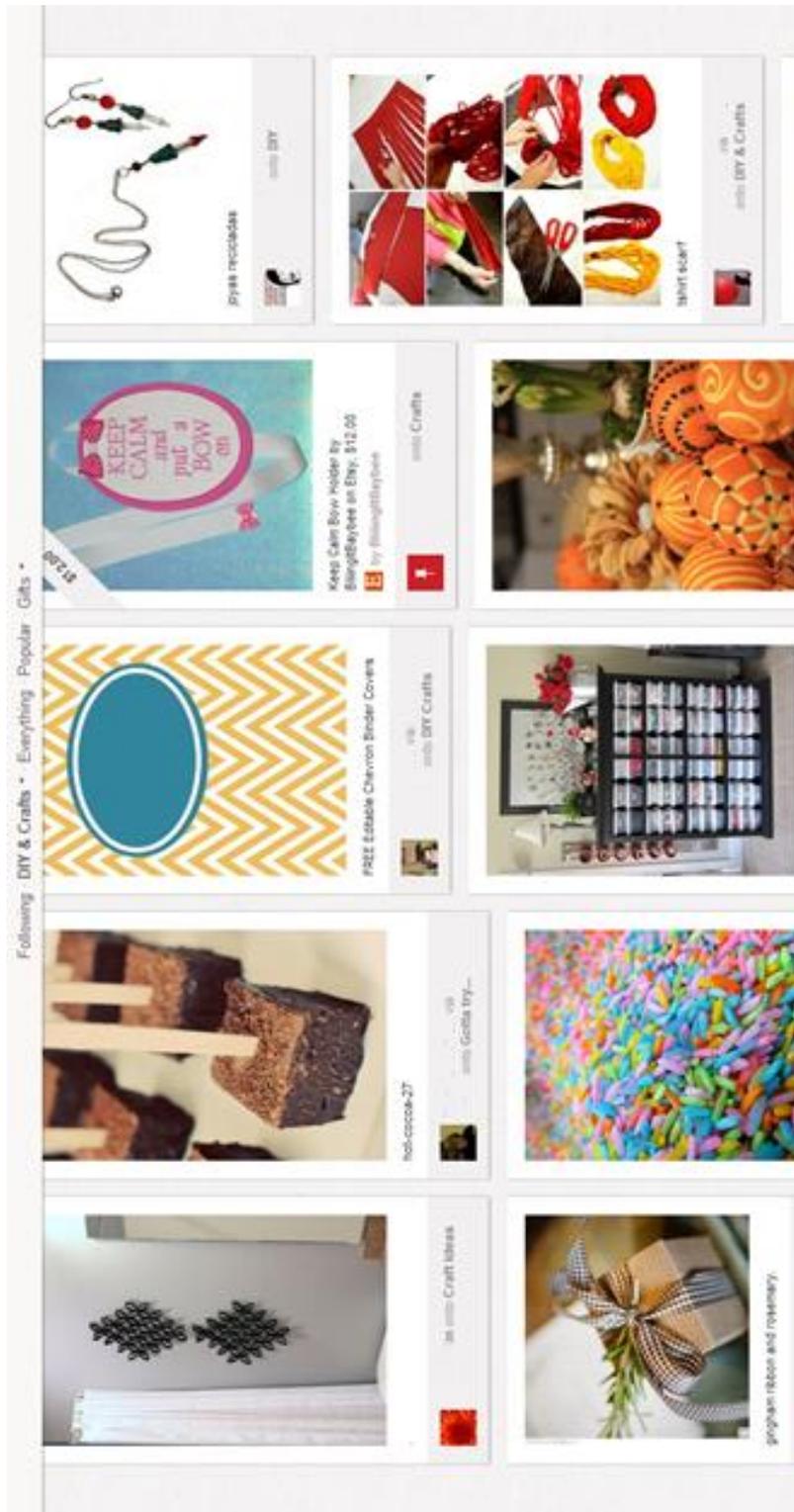**Image 1.** Screenshot of the Pinterest homepage (February 25th, 2013).

Image 2. Screenshot of Pinterest DIY & Crafts category (October 29th, 2012).

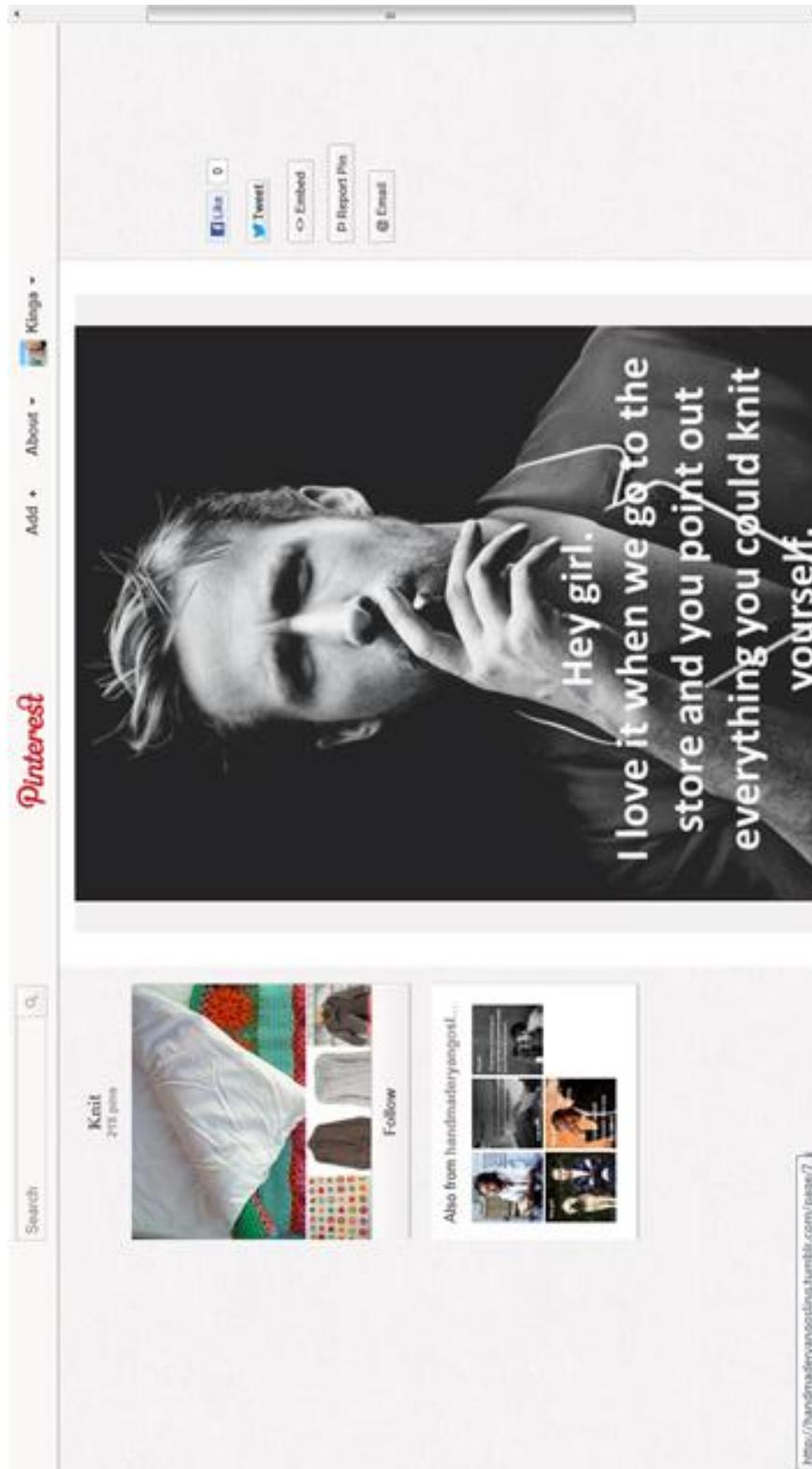**Image 3.** Pin posted onto the board entitled "Craft Ideas" on October 4th, 2012.

Image 4. Pro-knitting "manifesto" posted by one of the users.

Image 5. Screenshot of Pinterest DIY & Crafts category (October 9th, 2012). Marked are the pins about weight loss.