



Domain Monetization Must Move to Visual Social Content

[Alex Tajirian](#)

March 1, 2012

In this essay I outline the distinctive features of a new breed of interest-based social sites, and then recommend the adoption of these features for domain name monetization.

[Facebook's IPO valuation of about \\$100 billion](#) is the most obvious testament to the growing importance of social Web sites. But the explosion in this space over the past two years has been led by the [phenomenal growth of Pinterest](#). (For the evolution of social Web sites, see the [Eland Blog](#).) [Pinterest](#) is typical of the “pin-boards,” or social curation sites, with such features as:

1. Visual content driven by photo pin-ups.
2. A focus on users' particular interests. This makes for a markedly different focus and approach than Facebook, which focuses on deepening users' personal relationships. A site like Pinterest creates what technologists call an “interest graph,” in contrast to Facebook's “social graph.” For example, Pinterest uses the topics “Products I Love” and “For the Home,” but you can create your own topics too. Content is not chronological (as on Facebook) and therefore not time dependent. But a number of pin-board sites, wanting to raise awareness of their services and attract users, have adopted Facebook's Timeline API. The interest-based sites and Facebook are complementary, not substitutes for one another, and as these new services grow they pump more content back to Facebook.
3. Ease of creating and finding content that interests a given user. The first is especially important because most people don't like to spend time creating content. They prefer to just consume it, as evidenced by the typical 80/20 distribution (80% of content is produced by 20% of users).
4. Careful avoidance of the [copyright issues of shared photos](#).

Domain Parking Application

The pin-board sites' features make them ripe for adoption of domain name monetization. For example:

1. Curation involves building a mini-site around key words that the site participants have a passionate interest in. The key words are often descriptive, as noted above with Pinterest, and not necessarily single key-word domains.

2. The sites work best for type-in domains. Moreover, interest and passion stimulate repeat visits. These two features reduce marketing cost and generate repeat visits.
3. Because the sites work best with a portfolio of type-in domains, they are best managed by a new breed of monetization companies and not by individual effort. A portfolio can seamlessly connect a large number of topics, which makes it easier for users to navigate across topics. In addition, the sites allow user customization across a large number of key words, thus ensuring homogeneity in design. Managing a portfolio of domain names makes it easy to discover the forces driving Web site success.

There's a first mover advantage in developing domain names along the lines of interest-based social sites: The larger the number of initial participants, the larger the size of the content. This draws in more participants, who bring more content with them. This advantage must be protected by continuous innovation, and it still isn't too late to get on the band wagon, as evidenced by the number of new start-ups such as [Snip.it](#), [canv.us](#), [Fab.com](#) (which is commerce driven), and [flipboard](#).

The success of domain name-based social Web sites depends on:

1. Domainers' willingness to wait before loading the Web sites with ads. Note that impatience is one of the reasons for the [failure of MySpace](#), in contrast to Facebook's initial decision not to embed ads that users might perceive as clutter. Moreover, patience provides the time needed to select the best [monetization options](#).
2. The development of a robust platform that makes managing content very easy but also provides a mechanism that encourages developers to build new applications.
3. The deployment of effective spam filters to maintain the integrity of content.
4. The ability to monitor illegal content.

In conclusion, although domain name monetization has come a long way from pages of pure links, a new generation of the service should be based on the emerging interest-based Web sites. However, monetization companies need to act fast to capture first mover advantages. ■