Rakuten invests 100 million dollars in Pinterest

By Matthieu Guinebault - 23 May 2012

The Japanese online retail giant, backed by a number of investors, has invested 100 million dollars in Pinterest. According to Reuters the investment marks the beginning of a partnership between Rakuten and the young social network, now valued at almost 1.5 billion dollars.

Investors Andreessen Horowitz, Bessemer Venture Partners and Firstmark Capital also participated in the raising of the funds, along with several angel investors. With an estimated 20 million users in April, Pinterest is sparking more interest than ever before. Based on a concept of themed image-sharing, the Californian social network, which launched in 2009, has attracted the attention of a number of brands who see it as another shop-window. DKNY, Ann Taylor, Barneys New York, Land's End, Maybelline and even La Redoute have all got involved.

“While some may see e-commerce as a straightforward vending machine-like experience, we believe it is a living process where both retailers and consumers can communicate, discover, and curate to make the experience more entertaining”, said Hiroshi Mikitani, President of Rakuten. “We see tremendous synergies between Pinterest's vision and Rakuten's model for e-commerce”.

The Japanese group’s ambition is to develop Pinterest on the Japanese market as well as in other countries in which Rakuten operates. Rakuten is today present in 16 countries, mainly thanks to its acquisitions, and operates in France through PriceMinister, bought in 2010, in Brazil for the past year thanks to Ikeda, and in the United Kingdom since last September with website Play.com. Rakuten had a turnover of 4.7 billion dollars in 2011.