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MARKETTOOLS' AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2008 INSIGHT REPORT REVEALS IMPACT OF WEB ACTIVITY ON CONSUMERS' PURCHASING DECISIONS

Survey Finds 68 percent of U.S. Adults Visit Blogs, Communities or Social Network Sites and 33 percent of Visitors Engage in Online Product Research

SAN FRANCISCO—September 2, 2008—MarketTools, the technology and solutions leader for online customer insights, today unveiled the results of its August/September 2008 Insight Report focused on the increasing American trend to stay socially connected on the Web and the impact of this activity on product purchasing decisions. A nationwide survey of 1,000 U.S. adults reveals that 68 percent of Americans visit online blogs, communities or social networks. The frequency of these visits is also on the rise as 42 percent of visitors say they visit these sites more today than they did just six months ago.

Nearly one in five adults (19 percent) are in the habit of visiting blogs, communities or social networks on a daily basis. The results differ significantly, however, based on generation and gender. For example, 33 percent of Generation Y respondents (people mostly in their 20s) visit these sites every day. In contrast, 17 percent of Generation X (mostly in their 30s and early 40s), 11 percent of Baby Boomers (in their mid 40s to early 60s) and only eight percent of Seniors visit daily. In addition, more women (22 percent) than men (16 percent) visit blogs, communities or social networks on a daily basis.

The research goes on to show that there is a clear connection between online activity and purchasing decisions. Many Americans visit blogs, communities and social networks with the specific intent of researching products. In fact, 33 percent of visitors say they visit these sites to engage in product research before making a purchasing decision. In particular, affluent visitors (with annual incomes of \$75,000 plus) are most likely to research products online before buying (43 percent). MarketTools' research also found that the Baby Boomer visitors are significantly more likely than other groups to read or post comments about products and services on these sites (37 percent). In addition, Baby Boomers, along with Generation X, are significantly more likely than other groups to visit the corporate Websites of product or service providers (63 percent and 59 percent, respectively).

The research goes on to indicate that blogs, communities and social networks have a direct impact on people's purchasing decisions. For example, nearly half of all respondents (47 percent) say that these sites have influenced their decision to purchase particular brands or services to at least some extent—from a little to a lot of influence. The powerful impact of what they read on these sites is demonstrated by the fact that 26 percent of all respondents actually changed their minds about buying a product or service because of what they read on a blog, community or social network. Women are significantly more likely (29 percent) than men (22 percent) to change their minds about a purchase because of these sites. In addition, those in middle-income households (\$35,000 to \$75,000), at 30 percent, and those from Generation Y and Generation X, at 35 percent and 30 percent respectively, are the most likely to change their minds because of the information they read on these sites.

“Our research sheds new light on just how engrained blogs, communities and social networking sites have become in our daily lives,” said Beth Rounds, senior vice president of research solutions at MarketTools. “It is critical for marketers to understand how consumers are discussing and representing their brand and products in online forums and the impact of this online social and community-based content on product purchasing decisions. Insight into what drives consumers to buy, how to tailor content to different demographics, and even how to better engage with target consumers in these increasingly influential online forums, will all have a significant impact on organizations’ success and competitive advantage in the marketplace.”

Additional Points of Interest

- 51 percent of visitors say “to have fun” is a reason for their visits to social networking sites, communities and blogs.
- Other popular reasons for visiting these sites include: reading/posting about current events (42 percent), social networking to meet/date (40 percent) and to educate themselves (38 percent).
- The most popular types of “regular” Websites visited include: company Websites (56 percent), news (56 percent), search (50 percent), weather (50 percent), entertainment (45 percent) and health/medical (41 percent).

About MarketTools Insight Reports

MarketTools Insight Reports are regular reports of findings on topical, national issues of interest. Data is based on feedback from 1,000 online respondents drawn from ZoomPanel, MarketTools’ proprietary online sample source of more than 2.5 million individuals who have been validated through MarketTools TrueSample. Insight Report respondents are a nationally representative sampling of the U.S. adult population, age 18 years and over. The overall margin of error is +/- 3%.

Organizations interested in additional findings or a further breakdown of data from this month’s Report can visit <http://www.markettools.com/insights/> or contact Schwartz Communications for MarketTools at: (415) 512-0770 or markettools@schwartz-pr.com.

About MarketTools

MarketTools is the leading technology and solutions provider of Customer Insight Management solutions for the world’s market leaders. Through a unique combination of best-in-class research platforms, quality-assured global panels and research innovation, MarketTools enables companies to better identify new opportunities, fuel greater product success and build customer advocacy. As the first company to make online surveys widely available on the Web, MarketTools continues its market-leading position by providing the broadest range of powerful, accurate and integrated customer insight technologies that empower companies to become the most customer-centric organizations in their industries. MarketTools’ premier portfolio of technology-based insight brands includes Zoomerang™, zTelligence™, CustomerSat™, TrueSample™, Insight Networks™, Idea Networks™ and ZoomPanel™.

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