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Buying Decisions Survey: Young and Highly-Educated are Most Influenced by Online Sources

HOPKINS, MINN. (February 18, 2010) — Young and highly educated consumers say online information sources influence their buying decisions at a markedly higher rate than the rest of the population. A survey conducted by Opinion Research Corporation and sponsored by ARANet asked consumers the relative importance of 14 information sources when deciding which goods and services to buy.

Personal advice from friends or family members was by far the most influential source, followed by TV broadcasts and search engines.

“The eyes of young people 18 to 34 and the most highly educated Americans are looking online – search engines, online articles, online ads, email offers and social media -- to a degree that is head and shoulders above the average citizen,” says Scott Severson, president of survey sponsor ARANet, which provides content to media through its ARAcontent article service and Adfusion ad network. According to Severson, consumers in the 25-to-34 age range expressed strong preference for:

- Search engines, 50 percent vs. 39 percent for all respondents;
- Online articles, 39 percent vs. 28 percent for all respondents;
- Emails from retailers or manufacturers, 32 percent vs. 20 percent for all respondents;
- Online ads, 30 percent vs. 19 percent for all respondents; and
- Social media, 31 percent vs. 18 percent for all respondents.

The following summary of the data shows the percentage of respondents choosing a 4 or 5 out of 5 – where 1 is NOT influential at all, and 5 is VERY influential in buying decisions. It’s followed by the mean summary rating points:

- Personal advice from friends or family members: 59 percent or 3.6 out of 5
- TV news or other broadcasts: 40 percent or 3.1
- Search engines such as Google, Bing, Yahoo, or Ask.com: 39 percent or 3.0
- Ads I see on TV: 36 percent or 3.0
- Articles I see in newspapers or magazines: 33 percent or 3.0
- Ads I see in newspapers or magazines: 31 percent or 2.9
- Articles I see online: 28 percent 2.8
- Radio news or other broadcasts: 25 percent or 2.7
- Direct mail: 24 percent or 2.7
- Ads I hear on the radio: 20 percent or 2.6
- Emails I receive from retailers or manufacturers: 20 percent or 2.5
- Ads I see online: 19 percent or 2.5
- Messages or posts on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or MySpace: 18 percent or 2.3
- Billboards: 15 percent or 2.3

For people making \$75,000 or more, Severson said, search engines are preferred by 49 percent vs. 39 percent for all respondents – a signal that high-income consumers are also following the trend to online sources.

Severson said that the data supports the industry trend of a higher percentage of marketing budgets flowing into online and digital tactics. “Search engine optimization and backlinks from advertising and public relations efforts are providing information in the places where high-value consumers are influenced about buying decisions,” Severson says.

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Editor’s Note: These results are based on 1,029 interviews conducted by Opinion Research Corporation online from January 7-8, 2010 among a demographically representative U.S. sample of adults 18 years of age or older. Respondents for this survey were selected among those who have volunteered to participate in online surveys. The question was: *“How important are the following information sources to you when you’re deciding which goods and services to buy? Please rate the information sources below from 1 to 5 where 1 is NOT influential at all, and 5 is VERY influential in your decisions.”*

About ARAnet

Founded in 1996, ARAnet is a leading media company with two products to help its clients reach and win new customers, Adfusion and ARAccontent. Adfusion is an article-based cost per click advertising platform. It is one of the nation’s most dynamic online advertising networks, currently delivering billions of impressions monthly through a network of premium publishing partners. ARAccontent generates feature article placements online and in print that build awareness of and sales for its clients’ products and services. To learn more, visit www.ARAnetOnline.com or www.Adfusion.com.

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