



In tough economic times, new breed of 'Recession Shopper' flocks online.

New York, January 26, 2009 – While consumers are curbing their overall shopping habits as a result of the current economic climate, a new group being termed "recession shoppers" has said they will turn online to find the very best deals as their financial situation deteriorates. The new demographic segment was discovered in a study just completed by Penn, Schoen & Berland Associates, Inc. (PSB) and commissioned by LinkShare, a leading performance marketing network provider. The companies revealed the findings, which also showed the power of coupons and discounts in influencing buying behavior, at the LinkShare Symposium West event hosted in San Francisco last week, attended by several hundred online publishers, marketers and retailers.

As the nation's economic woes continue, consumers have become increasingly careful about their purchasing decisions, with most now seeing online research as a normal part of their buying behavior, even for small purchases. Retailers that offer discounts, special promotions and product comparisons to engage – and keep – these consumers will have more success than those that continue to try striking emotional chords through traditional channels. These strategies, when combined with an understanding of the various online shopping personalities, can be effective in winning over new consumers and influencing hardcore shoppers.

In its research, PSB found that hardcore online shoppers, termed "weekly shoppers," can be influenced by coupons and discounts, but so, too, can a new consumer segment PSB discovered called "recession shoppers" – those who will shop more online if their personal economic circumstances deteriorate.

Specifically, the study found that:

- 68 percent of "recession shoppers" (and 79 percent of "weekly shoppers") purchased something online they wouldn't have otherwise because of a coupon or discount.
- 64 percent of "recession shoppers" (and 70 percent of "weekly shoppers") said they purchased something from a particular online retailer they wouldn't have otherwise because of a coupon or discount.

"We are aware that the current state of the economy is changing the way consumers are shopping," said Jonathan Levine, co-president of LinkShare. "These results demonstrate that consumers are becoming more aggressive when searching for deals and making smarter buying decisions. The Internet offers these shoppers the opportunity to research products as well as compare similar product pricing with the click of a mouse. Retailers that will thrive in these difficult times are those that have the smartest distribution, and we are pleased to help members of our network significantly extend their reach to all demographic segments."

Study results also reveal that to engage these consumers, retailers must change the way they think about – and connect with – these groups. PSB revealed three things every online retailer must know in order to stay competitive in today's tough economy. They must:

- cater to these consumers' new need for information-based shopping
- know the right channels through which to reach frequent online shoppers
- build "brand champions" through consumer loyalty.

Overall, consumers have become more aggressive when shopping for deals, and more cautious where - and on what - they spend their money. While they are concerned with the current economic crisis, they see online shopping as part of the solution, as it offers the opportunity to research, compare and review products that is often difficult when shopping in-store.

"The results of this study reveal crucial information for retailers," said Yasuhisa "Yaz" Iida, co-president, LinkShare. "In this critical time for business, retailers are looking for ways to keep consumers engaged. This information provides insight into the minds and motivations of online shoppers – where they're shopping, what they're looking for, and how to reach them."

Additional survey results:

- Seventy four percent (74%) of online shoppers receive e-mail alerts from their favorite retailers
- The "recession" shopper is 17 points more likely to research products or services online several times a week than average users
- Consumers under 34 years of age make more online purchases every month than any other age group
- Thirty four percent (34%) of those surveyed plan to make more online purchases in 2009 than they did in 2008

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