

“Just Browsing” Takes On A New Meaning

(NAPSA)—If you are one of the 109 million adults online in the U.S., then it's highly likely that you are a participant in one of the biggest trends in retail: shopping online. According to the Pew Internet & American Life Study, more than four out of five (83 percent) of consumers have turned to the Internet to research a product online. Whether shopping for a digital camera, an engagement ring or designer apparel, today's savvy shopper knows that the best way to find the best product for the best price is online.

Price and product comparisons for products such as MP3 players, baby strollers and even home furnishings is a cinch on the Internet. In addition to product specs, expert reviews and consumer reviews, shoppers are able to easily figure out which retailers are selling the product, at what price, its availability and delivery options and a mass of additional details.

Like most things in life, though, there is a trick to successful online window shopping. If you are not careful, there is so much information to sort through, that the average consumer can easily be overwhelmed. Jumping from Website to Website to compare product information can quickly seem more like a hassle than a convenience and it's easy to lose track of what you have seen and where.

Savvy shoppers know that comparison-shopping online has evolved tremendously over the past couple of years. Some of the



Shortcut to comparison shopping online: start with one of the most comprehensive shopping sites like Yahoo! Shopping.

more advanced Websites use sophisticated comparison-shopping tools that allow consumers to search for information by product, by brand or by price.

Rated the No. 1 portal shopping destination for more than 20 consecutive months by Nielsen//NetRatings, Yahoo! Shopping is a great example of a Website that has created a special shopping destination (<http://shopping.yahoo.com>) designed to help consumers find, research and comparison shop among thousands of retailers and specialty merchants all on one platform.

It's no surprise that shopping online is one of the easiest ways to research and compare products quickly and easily. Remember a solid comparison-shopping site can make a world of difference in your quest to find the best buy for your money.

What to look for in an effective and timesaving comparison-shopping Website:

- 1) Choice: access to a large selection of both major retail Websites as well as thousands of smaller specialty stores—you want to be fishing in as large a pool as possible in order to make a great catch.
- 2) Unbiased expert opinions: the best sites have reviews from unbiased and trusted sources like Consumer Reports that help shed additional light on the product you are interested in purchasing.
- 3) Comprehensive comparison tools: these highlight the merchants who are selling the product and provide a full product description, price and shipping costs all on one page.
- 4) Merchant Rating System: consumer-driven merchant ratings based on their experiences with various large and small e-tailers.
- 5) Buyer Protection Program: these types of programs protect consumers' online purchases, adding another layer of confidence when making a purchasing decision.