



## **Yahoo! and comScore Networks Study Reveals Influential Consumers Can Be Reached Through Search, Social Media and Communication Tools**

### **"Brand Advocates" Are Loyal and Engaged Consumers That Are Word of Mouth Powerhouses - Especially Online**

SUNNYVALE, Calif., Dec 13, 2006 (BUSINESS WIRE) -- The Internet has become an increasingly powerful resource to help companies extend their brand message online through some of the most loyal, engaged and influential consumers, according to new research from Yahoo! and comScore Networks. Released today, "Engaging Advocates through Search and Social Media" reveals how consumers use social media, search and communication tools like email and instant messaging to research and talk about the brands, products or categories about which they are passionate.

The study found the following:

-- The Internet has significantly impacted how consumers talk about and recommend brands.

-- Word of mouth -- a trusted source of information -- is amplified online to reach significantly larger audiences.

-- "Brand Advocates" have emerged online as primary influencers, with at least a two to one rate of converting an actual friend or family member to buy the same product or brand.

-- Brand Advocates are incredibly valuable to marketers because they are better connected consumers with a larger sphere of influence.

"The art, science and humanity required to create great brands has not changed," said Anne Frisbie, vice president of category for Yahoo! Search Marketing. "But search and social media are new tools for brand marketers that allow them to target, listen and authentically engage key opinion leaders to create even deeper and more personal brand relationships."

Brand Advocates: Who are they?

Of the 2,297 respondents surveyed for the study, a particular group stood apart attitudinally and behaviorally, considered to be "Brand Advocates." Brand Advocates are adventurous opinion leaders and social influencers who are slightly younger, more educated and affluent, and spend more time online than non-advocates. They represent approximately 36 percent of the online purchasers surveyed across four categories including consumer electronics, automobiles, vacations and home mortgages. Brand Advocates are more active searchers and conduct 48 searches per month on average compared with 39 searches per month for non-advocates. In addition, half of Brand Advocates use search engines to research prior to purchasing, compared with one-third of non-advocates. By investing in the research process, Brand Advocates feel more satisfied with their decisions post-purchase, and therefore, are more compelled to talk about them.

Advocates Talk about Brands Online

The study revealed that post-purchase, approximately half of all Brand Advocates speak to their friends, family and even strangers about their purchases through a variety of online channels. Sixty percent of Brand Advocates believe that good brands are worth talking about versus 26 percent of non-advocates. Brand Advocates spend their time promoting a brand far more often than negating it, with approximately 90 percent writing something positive about a purchase they made.

Social Media is the Key

Study findings showed that Brand Advocates are taking full advantage of social media tools and actively leveraging them for product purchases. Through instant messaging, chat, community, photo sites and blogging, Brand Advocates are able to influence their vast online social circle. They are 40 percent more likely to use instant messenger when compared with non-advocates and 119 percent more likely to use podcasts. Brand Advocates are also nearly twice as likely to e-mail someone for their opinion and twice as likely to ask or post a question online compared with non-advocates.

Key Implications

Overall, the study found Brand Advocates are avid researchers that consider more brands, making them more open to

dialogue with marketers. Post-purchase, they have higher levels of brand commitment, are more likely to recommend brands, and tend to talk about positive experiences. Additionally, Brand Advocates are opinion leaders that influence other people's purchase decisions, telling at least twice as many people about their purchases than non-advocates, and more than twice as likely to persuade others to buy compared with non-advocates. Marketers should engage and influence Brand Advocates through search, social media and online communication tools if they wish to capture this extremely valuable audience and amplify the influence of those favorable to their brand.

## Methodology

A comprehensive three-phase research methodology approach was used for the study. The goal was to connect with consumers who have purchased the following items within the last three to six months:

- Consumer electronics (\$300 or greater purchase)
- Automobiles
- Vacations (Family vacation including a hotel stay)
- Home mortgages

The qualitative portion of the research was conducted by Create With Context in August 2006, using an ethnographic approach (documentary-style interviewing). Interviews were conducted with 24 respondents in San Francisco, CA, Saint Louis, MO and New York, NY and examined consumers' pre-and post-purchase behaviors for specific purchases in these four product categories.

The quantitative portion of the study was conducted by comScore via an online survey of 2,297 respondents who had recently made purchases in one of the four target categories. Respondents were asked to rate various research sources, both pre-and post-purchase. They were also asked about their behavior post-purchase and how they communicated their preferences and/or recommendations to others.

Finally, using comScore's online panel of 1+ million members, click stream behavior was observed anonymously from January through July 2006 to determine the online behaviors of the 2,297 people who completed the quantitative survey. A wide range of activities were observed throughout the entire Internet, including portal usage, social media, page views, intensity and search referral activity.

## About Yahoo!

Yahoo! Inc. is a leading global Internet brand and one of the most trafficked Internet destinations worldwide. Yahoo! seeks to provide online products and services essential to users' lives, and offers a full range of tools and marketing solutions for businesses to connect with Internet users around the world. Yahoo! is headquartered in Sunnyvale, California.

## About comScore Networks

comScore Networks is a global leader in measuring the digital age. This capability is based on a massive, global cross-section of more than 2 million consumers who have given comScore permission to confidentially capture their browsing and transaction behavior, including online and offline purchasing. comScore panelists also participate in survey research that captures and integrates their attitudes and intentions. Through its proprietary technology, comScore measures what matters across a broad spectrum of behavior and attitudes. comScore consultants apply this deep knowledge of customers and competitors to help clients design powerful marketing strategies and tactics that deliver superior ROI. comScore services are used by global leaders such as AOL, Microsoft, Yahoo!, Verizon, Best Buy, The Newspaper Association of America, Tribune Interactive, ESPN, Fox Sports, Nestle, MBNA, Universal McCann, the United States Postal Service, Merck and Expedia. For more information, please visit [www.comscore.com](http://www.comscore.com).

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