

25 million Germans shop via mouse click

The Internet has by now become one of the retail trade's most important partners. Even though only a small portion of total retail sales - 20 billion euros - is generated on the Internet, the trade could no longer do without it.

The Internet has become one of the most important sources for the product research consumers make before deciding to purchase. The figures document this: 98% of the 40 million private Internet users regularly consult the web for product research. These were the findings of the Allensbacher Computer und Technikanalyse (ACTA) 2008.

Not only is the Internet a blessing for the retail trade, however, but it has decidedly increased the power of the consumer. Some 17 million consumers already factor in the experiences of other Internet users with products and services, in addition to product evaluations on the Internet sites of magazines and newspapers, when making their own purchasing decisions. These forums, in which consumers publish their own comments - and which, according to ACTA, are considered much more reliable than the manufacturers' websites - have already deterred more than half of all those surveyed from making a purchase.

The Internet plays a particularly prominent role in the tourism sector. 22 million Germans now research hotels, flights, or package holidays online, 33% more than in 2004. 12.6 million people use this source to obtain information on clothing, fashion and shoes. Less research is done here in the home, decorating and design sector, demonstrating a clear preference for the print media. Online product research does not necessarily result in an immediate purchase. The greatest sales results are still seen for books (80%), followed by travel offers (72%), clothing and shoes (63%), and CDs (60%). It is much less likely for cosmetics, furnishings or insurance to be purchased via the Internet. Consumers presumably prefer not only to procure information through other media channels in these areas, but to obtain personal advice before deciding on a purchase.

On the other hand, the Internet is an especially important communication and sales channel for pharmaceutical products. During the past year, for example, the clientele of the online pharmacy DocMorris has almost doubled. A total of 4.4 million Germans looked for information about medications on the Internet last year. 2.1 million obtained information about such products on a regular basis.

Internet usage high - Advertising volume not yet comparable

The Internet is so versatile and practical that it would be difficult to imagine our day-to-day life without it any more. Nevertheless, the prominent role it plays has yet to be adequately matched by advertising revenue. Although the annual growth rates in percentage points are imposing, the absolute figures reflect the reality: Total sales in the classic media amounted to over € 10 billion in the first half of 2008. With gross advertising amounting to over € 10 billion in the first half of 2008, the € 665 million generated by online advertising only accounted for a modest portion. Online advertising volume will grow vigorously in the coming years, even if not with the accustomed dynamism. Particularly in periods with a

weak economy, an increase in sales-oriented advertising should be expected, and the Internet, an efficient channel available at short notice, is particularly well suited for this.

However, as the number of online advertising environments is constantly growing, pricing pressure in the field will intensify and reduce margins. For the time being, the classic media will set the tone, both in regard to quality and in their capacity as primary media and effective advertising vehicles.

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December 2008***
