



Nielsen Online

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Media Alert

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BLOGGING, BROWSING, OR BUYING? NIELSEN ONLINE TRACKS CONSUMER ATTITUDES AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE ECONOMY

Consumers Leveraging Social Networks to Share Coping Strategies and Reactions to Tough Economic Times

As gas prices nationwide approach the \$5 per gallon mark and grocery prices strain budgets, U.S. consumers are turning to social media to discuss growing frustrations about the economy, and share tactics for saving money or deferring purchases at all pricing levels. Nielsen Online explored how consumer attitudes and concerns about the economy are expressed online, and shared findings in a client Webinar earlier today. Below are a number of key findings from the research, and the Webinar event is archived [here](#) online.

FUEL PRICES

As gas prices increase, so does online driving discussion. Consumers are leveraging social media to share gas saving tips, analyze the cost benefit of hybrid vehicles, and research alternative modes of transportation such as motorcycles, scooters and public transit.

Top 5 Topics among Online Gas & Driving Conversations

Topic	Percent of Discussion
Need More Alternative Fuel Vehicles	20%
Commute Via Scooter/bike	19%
Condense trips/Drive Less	16%
European Comparisons	14%
Can't Sell Vehicle, Poor Resale & Trade-in Value	14%

Source: Nielsen Online, BuzzMetrics
Gas & Driving Discussion from 4/08 – 5/08. 95% confidence; +/- 10%

Online Consumer Shared Tips for Saving Gas

Ensure proper tire inflation
Set cruise control
Coast when possible
Change filters & spark plugs
Minimize rapid acceleration and braking



Reduce speed
Add acetone to tank

Source: Nielsen Online, BuzzMetrics
 April 1, 2008 – May 31, 2008

“Consumers are changing their driving habits and vehicle purchase consideration sets due to rising gas prices,” said Julie Enzweiler, research director, automotive, Nielsen Online. “We have a perfect storm in the sense that consumers are actively trying to purchase smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicles, but unable to sell or trade-in their current, less fuel-efficient vehicles. Auto manufacturers need to find a way to work with owners to become part of the solution.”

Enzweiler continued, “Hybrids used to be a vehicle you would purchase if you wanted to do your part for the environment or portray a green image. Those days are gone. Hybrids are now viewed as a necessity to save money at the pump, to improve efficiency and to wean ourselves off of foreign oil dependence.”

GROCERY PRICES

Nielsen Online analysis also reveals that concern around grocery costs continues to climb, and although it has not yet reached the volume expressed around fuel costs, online discussion is intensifying. Consumers are describing specific changes to the way they shop, such as couponing and shopping sales. Overall buzz for private labels has not changed dramatically in recent months, however, buzz trends for milk, cheese and eggs reveal consumers are claiming to shift some purchases to store brands.

As consumers venture online to hunt for the best deals, traffic to weekly circulars ads on retail banner Web sites is up 155 percent in May 2008 compared to the previous year.

“Both consumer product manufacturers and retail outlets have an opportunity to create strong consumer loyalty in the midst of a struggling economy. Shoppers are enthusiastically sharing deals online in discussion forums and on blogs, and marketers who reach these customers with relevant savings will likely engender the support of consumers looking to stretch their dollars,” said Jessica Hogue, research director, CPG, Nielsen Online.

Top 5 Topics among Online Grocery Pricing Conversations

Topic	Percent of Discussion
Sales/Promotions	32%
Stockpiling	26%
Healthy Foods/Organics	21%
Scratch Cooking	18%
Couponing	16%

Source: Nielsen Online, BuzzMetrics
 Volume is determined as a percent of a sample of messages about grocery prices from November 25, 2007 to May 18, 2008.

About Nielsen Online:

Nielsen Online, a service of The Nielsen Company, delivers comprehensive, independent measurement and analysis of online audiences, advertising, video, consumer-generated media, word of mouth, commerce and consumer behavior, and includes products previously marketed under the Nielsen//NetRatings and Nielsen BuzzMetrics brands. With high quality, technology-driven products and services, Nielsen Online enables clients to make informed business decisions regarding their Internet, digital and marketing strategies. For more information, please visit www.nielsen-online.com.

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Editor's Note: Please source all data to Nielsen Online.