



## For Immediate Release

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## Making a list and checking it twice: Social networkers seeking more than just friends online

*American Marketing Association Releases New Research as Prelude to Mplanet; Event Will Address New Strategies for Using New Media*

**Chicago, Nov. 24, 2006** – New research conducted by the American Marketing Association (AMA) revealed a narrowing gap between social networking and e-commerce. In preparation for its first-ever Mplanet™ (Nov. 29-Dec. 1), AMA is releasing a series of research reports that measure consumer attitudes toward new online mediums, the best channels by which to reach today's savvy consumer, and how they are finding out about the newest and hottest products this holiday season.

“With Black Friday upon us and the holiday shopping season officially here, marketers need to take notice of some interesting trends related to consumer attitudes,” said Dennis Dunlap, Chief Executive Officer of the American Marketing Association. “With today’s consumers holding the marketing industry to higher standards, it is important that the entire marketing industry understand how to take advantage of the proliferation of media and channels and how to better establish brand relevancy with our consumers.”

AMA is releasing the research as a precursor to its inaugural Mplanet, where the topic of morphing media and channels is one of six content themes at the heart of the program. With more than 30 program sessions and over 60 speakers, Mplanet’s program was strategically designed to enable marketers to explore new solutions and hear about future trends that will impact 2007 and beyond. The content for Mplanet was developed in collaboration with strategic partners McKinsey and Co., The Wharton School and Spencer Stuart.

### **Social Networking and Shopping this Holiday Season**

“While previous holiday seasons have focused on the growing popularity of online shopping, all signs indicate this will be a landmark year in how ecommerce impacts holiday shopping. As our survey shows, marketers have an opportunity to create marketing solutions to better reach customers online,” said Nancy Costopulos, Chief Marketing Officer of the American Marketing Association.

AMA’s survey revealed about half of consumers who would visit social networking sites would go there to search for holiday gift ideas, find out about upcoming holiday sales, or download coupons, if given the option.

- Nearly half (49 percent) of all respondents said they would participate in one or more activities related to shopping and buying on those sites, if those activities were available.
- Nearly as many said they would visit a social networking site to search for gift ideas (47 percent); while one-third (29 percent) said they would buy products on those sites, if such a service were available.

“We're starting to see a merging of ecommerce and social networking, on sites such as Yahoo! Shopping. This 'social commerce' is creating a new way to interact with customers,” said Costopolos. “But we have to be careful. Social networking sites have been successful because they allow for real connections to take place. The research shows an opportunity for marketers to participate, but they must have something real and relevant to say--if they try to go in with stealth tactics or over-hyping the brand, they will face a serious backlash.”

### **Searching for Product Information Online**

The survey also revealed that consumers will immediately turn to online sources, such as search engines and company Web sites, for information about the newest or hottest products this holiday season.

“Is it interesting to note that while social networking is up, people are still sticking with the tried and true sources for reviews and information. The preferred use of search engines indicates the sophistication of search engines may be increasing or that consumers want to still see what the Web offers on a broad scale first,” said Costopolos.

Across multiple product categories, from electronics to real estate, respondents' top resource for finding information about the newest and hottest products this holiday season will be search engines (43 percent).

- Company Web sites (29 percent) are also a popular first choice among respondents, with one-fourth to one-third choosing this source across multiple product categories.
- Search engines are most popular for categories for which the decision-making process may be seen as somewhat less critical, such as entertainment (including music, movies, and books) (49 percent) and toys and games (49 percent).
- Overall, far fewer respondents chose “online consumer reviews” as a first choice for information about the newest and hottest products. However, of those who did, computers and software (15 percent), electronics (17 percent), and automotive (19 percent) garnered the most votes for top picks.

### **Full Survey Results**

For an executive summary of the data, please contact Lauren Dettloff at [lauren.dettloff@fleishman.com](mailto:lauren.dettloff@fleishman.com) or call 312-751-3540.

The remaining research will be released at Mplanet (Nov. 29-Dec. 1, Orlando, Fla.).

### **Survey Methodology**

AMA, the largest marketing association in North America for individuals and organizations involved in the practice, teaching and study of marketing worldwide, partnered with Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) to conduct the research. Between November 9–12, 2006, ORC conducted online interviews with 1,098 Internet-representative consumers 18 years of age or older in the continental United States. The sample was comprised of 527 men and 571 women.

The sampling error associated with a sample size of 1,098 is plus/minus two to three percentage points at a 95 percent confidence level.

**About the American Marketing Association**

The American Marketing Association (AMA) is the largest marketing association in North America. It is a professional association for individuals and organizations involved in the practice, teaching and study of marketing worldwide. It is also the source that marketers turn to every day for information/resources, education/training and professional networking. AMA members are connected to a network of experienced marketers nearly 40,000 strong and include leading marketing academics, researchers and practitioners from every industry.

AMA offers highly acclaimed seminars, workshops and Hot Topic events focused on the immediate needs of marketers, as well as trends shaping the future. AMA's website, [MarketingPower.com](http://MarketingPower.com), is the everyday connection to marketing data, articles, case studies, best practices and a robust job bank. The AMA also is the source for the field's top magazines and journals, including *Marketing News*. AMA local chapters keep members in touch with the best people and the best practices. For more information on the AMA, please visit [www.MarketingPower.com](http://www.MarketingPower.com).