



Nielsen Online

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## News Release

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### **FREQUENT SOCIAL NETWORKERS MOST LIKELY TO CONSULT A WIDE-RANGE OF HEALTHCARE SOURCES, INCLUDING PRINT AND ONLINE, ACCORDING TO NIELSEN ONLINE**

#### **83 Percent of Online Consumers Visit Web Sites for Healthcare Information**

**NEW YORK– August 19, 2008** – According to a recent Nielsen Online survey, 83 percent of respondents said they have visited Web sites for healthcare information. And while family physicians remain the most trusted healthcare resource for consumers, frequent social networkers consult a wider range of information, both on- and offline. The online survey of more than 1,000 respondents was fielded in Q2 2008 and asked consumers about how they make important healthcare-related decisions. Most respondents said they went directly to Web sites with which they were already familiar rather than using search engines or other referral sources, suggesting the importance of strong branding for Web publishers.

Even with the breadth of online healthcare resources, physicians and other healthcare providers still remain the first resort for most patients, regardless of the severity of their medical conditions. When evaluating a variety of information sources, more than 80 percent of respondents put a high level of trust in physicians, considering them to be unbiased, up- to-date and comprehensive. Perhaps because of this widespread confidence in doctors, professionally written Web content is the second most popular healthcare resource among consumers, with more than 60 percent of respondents reporting a high level of trust in this kind of content.

#### **Social Networkers – The Seekers and Speakers**

Nearly one-third of survey respondents identified themselves as frequent social networkers, an important target group for marketers because they tend to gather and disseminate information more broadly than their Web 1.0 counterparts. Indeed, this group was wider ranging in its search for healthcare information than the average consumer, not just online, as one might expect, but also from print sources and friends and family. Frequent social networkers were less likely than average to consult a physician *first*, and were less likely to consider healthcare providers as “up-to-date,” a quality they highly value.

“Although we did ask consumers about social networking participation, we did not intend to focus on social networkers as a segment,” commented Melissa Davies, research director, healthcare, Nielsen



Online. “However, when we took a look at the results, we realized that we had an interesting group here – one that is influential and that can be influenced because of their intense information-gathering tendencies. This is obviously a valuable combination for healthcare marketers.”

**Ad Unaware – The Untapped Consumer**

Nearly one-fourth of eligible survey respondents were identified as “Ad Unaware,” meaning that out of 15 top brands as ranked by ad spend, they could not identify which treated insomnia and which treated high cholesterol. This group is less likely than average to go online for healthcare information (63 percent of respondents in this group compared to 83 percent of respondents overall) and is less likely to trust physicians and professionally written Web content. However, members of this group are notably more likely to consult a Newspaper/Magazine or Social Networking site when making a healthcare-related decision, suggesting untapped opportunities for pharmaceutical companies and other providers of healthcare information to reach this consumer group.

**Webinar, September 3<sup>rd</sup> : The Second Opinion – How the Web Drives Healthcare Decisions**

Please sign up [here](#) to join Melissa Davies in a Webinar discussing Nielsen Online’s latest findings about how consumers are using the Web to make important healthcare decisions. She will discuss the implications for publishers, pharmaceutical companies and advertisers and share best practices for reaching healthcare-minded consumers online.

**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](http://www.nielsen-online.com). Also, visit our blog at [www.nielsen-online.com/blog](http://www.nielsen-online.com/blog).

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