



For Immediate Release:  
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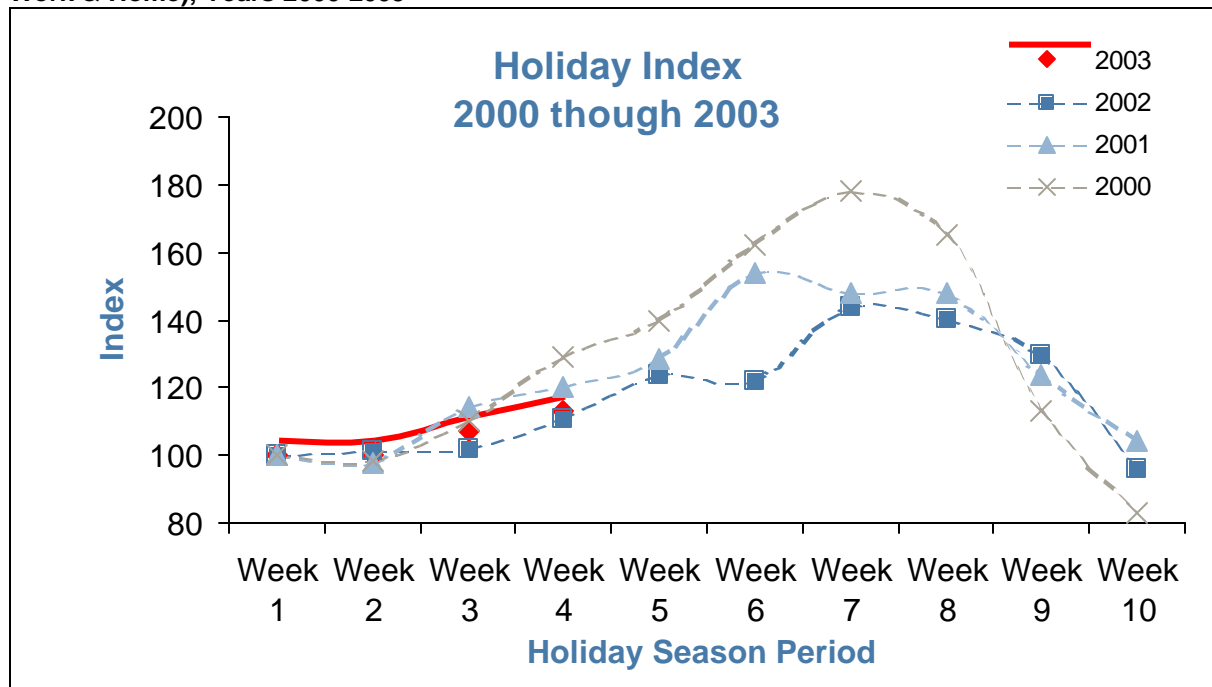
## ONLINE HOLIDAY SHOPPING SEASON 2003 BEGINS, DRIVEN BY TOY SHOPPING, ACCORDING TO THE NIELSEN//NETRATINGS HOLIDAY ECOMMERCE INDEX

*Nielsen//NetRatings Launches Fifth Annual Holiday eCommerce Index*

**NEW YORK, NY – November 25, 2003** – Nielsen//NetRatings, the global standard for Internet audience measurement and analysis, today launched its fifth annual Holiday eCommerce Index. The index revealed the online holiday shopping season has officially started during the past two weeks, driven by a significant uptick in shopping at toys sites.

This year's online holiday shopping season started the second week in November, but kicked off stronger than last year by increasing 13 percent in home and work shopping visits as compared to 11 percent a year ago (see Chart 1). Growth was calculated using the last week full week in October as a shopping baseline. Traffic growth rates during the same weeks in years 2001 and 2000 were 20 percent and 29 percent, respectively.

**Chart 1. Nielsen//NetRatings Holiday eCommerce Index Based on Total Shopping Trips (U.S., Work & Home), Years 2000-2003**



Source: Nielsen//NetRatings, November 2003

Note: The index is comprised of approximately ten representative sites across ten categories, and is meant to act as a barometer to gauge the level of interest at eCommerce sites during the holiday season.

**Hot Categories: Toys, Home & Garden and Consumer Electronics**



The categories of toys and video games, home and garden, and consumer electronics saw consistently large increases in shopping activity since base week ending October 26<sup>th</sup>. Traffic to toys and video game retailers jumped 99 percent during this period, led by ToysRUs (105 percent) and KB Holdings (96 percent).

“Toys and games got the holiday season started this year, with big spikes in many of the firms’ online sessions,” said Robert Leathern, director and senior analyst, Nielsen//NetRatings. “Other categories like consumer electronics, and home and garden have shown strong consistent growth throughout this year, and continue to grow traffic strongly as the holiday season is kicking off.”

Home and garden sites saw consumer shopping sessions increase 27 percent over the past two weeks, with MarthaStewart.com rising 80 percent and Sears seeing 54 percent growth.

Consumer electronics showed strong progress with 25 percent overall category growth. According to Nielsen//NetRatings AdRelevance, CircuitCity.com delivered over 53 million online advertising impressions during the previous week, and saw its online user sessions surge by 68 percent, followed by RitzCamera.com (65 percent) and SonyStyle.com (15 percent).

By comparison, heavy hitters Amazon and eBay increased user sessions 16 percent and two percent, respectively, since base week ending October 26<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Broadband Penetration – Key Driver to Search & Online Shopping**

Nielsen//NetRatings research has found that consumers more intensely research their online and offline purchases on the Web when they have broadband Internet access.

“The persistent, always-on nature of broadband Internet connections means more consumers are conducting searches, doing comparison shopping and discovering more product- and merchant-related information. This also results in a noticeable offline impact— more informed buyers,” said Leathern. “Expect to see search engines and online shopping comparison sites play a major role in this season’s holiday shopping.”

Nielsen//NetRatings also announced today a partnership with Goldman Sachs and Harris Interactive on the launch of the third annual holiday eSpending reports, measuring weekly online spending and consumer shopping behavior. For more information, please click here: [http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/pr/pr\\_031125.pdf](http://www.nielsen-netratings.com/pr/pr_031125.pdf)

#### **About the Nielsen//NetRatings Holiday eCommerce Index**

The weekly Nielsen//NetRatings Holiday eCommerce Index is based on total shopping trips at work and at home, measuring the amount of Web surfing activity at online retail sites during the course of the holiday season. The index is comprised of approximately ten representative sites in each category, and is meant to act as a barometer to gauge the level of interest at eCommerce sites during the holidays. Categories tracked include apparel, books/music/video, computer hardware/software, consumer electronics, flowers and gifts, home and garden, jewelry, retail, shopping comparison/portals, and toys and video games.

#### **About Nielsen//NetRatings**

Nielsen//NetRatings is the global standard for Internet audience measurement and analysis and is the industry’s premier source for online advertising intelligence with its NetView, AdRelevance, @Plan, WebRF, LemonAd, MegaPanel and SiteCensus services. Covering 70 percent of the world’s Internet usage, the Nielsen//NetRatings services offer syndicated Internet and digital media research reports and custom-tailored data to help companies gain valuable insight into their business. For more information, please visit [www.nielsen-netratings.com](http://www.nielsen-netratings.com).

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