

Consumer Corner

Smart Shoppers Compare Prices Online

(NAPSA)—2003 marks the 10th anniversary of the Internet browser, an invention that has changed the way the world works, communicates—and even how it shops. Initially, browsing online meant a random game of chance, as users sorted through a bizarre array of content on new and often poorly developed Web sites. Eventually, retailers started to appear online, and browsing in the virtual world led to shopping there, too.

The success and growth of online shopping in just 10 years proves the importance of information and convenience to consumers, who quickly realized that the Internet shifted the power of information and choice into their hands. Consumers spent nearly \$13.7 billion online during the 2002 holiday shopping season—up 24 percent from the previous year.

Today, with thousands of online stores to choose from, comparing prices, brands, or product features across several retailers can be time-consuming. If you've ever spent an hour making an online buying decision you thought would only take five minutes, it's time to discover the power of today's comparison shopping sites. mySimon (www.mysimon.com) is one of the best, recently selected in *Forbes* magazine's 2003 "Best of the Web" issue as a "Forbes Favorite," and winner of the 2003 *Editor & Publisher* magazine EPpy award as "Best Internet Shopping Service."

To instantly find the products that match a shopper's specific needs, mySimon scans through more than 1400 highly rated merchants in 200 categories, from popular categories like apparel and toys, to hard-to-find specialty categories like movie memorabilia and fly fishing gear. In a hurry to find a \$90-or-less pair of travel binoculars for your safari-going friend, or a



In just 10 short years, Internet shopping has become a global experience.

lower price on the brand of golf shoes you saw in your pro shop? Comparison shopping sites like mySimon make finding just about anything incredibly easy. Shoppers can be reassured that only pre-qualified merchants are listed on mySimon, all rated within a three-star customer service ranking system, which is further enhanced by user feedback.

Some online comparison shopping services are dedicated entirely to specific product categories—like automobiles, technology, and travel—which consumers typically like to research more deeply before making buying decisions. For example, CNET.com offers a broad range of evaluation tools for technology shoppers, like in-depth product reviews and 360-degree photographs, and is a must for anyone buying tech products, from the most basic desktop or portable computer, to the latest in digital music devices, digital cameras, wireless devices and home networking.

With the availability of today's powerful comparison shopping Web sites, perhaps "finding" is a better word than "browsing" to describe the online shopping experience.