



CONSUMER CORNER



Online Shopping Lets Consumers Save Time And Money

(NAPS)—In the evolution of shopping on the Internet, going from purchasing directly from many Internet-based merchants to using one online starting point—or portal—is like making the transition from hunting and purchasing products store-by-store to using a mall or superstore to shop in one place.

“We want to make shopping online an easier, more integrated experience,” said Sasha Peters, product planner for MSN eShop, the MSN starting point for online shopping. Peters said that in developing and refining the portal, Microsoft collected extensive data from consumers about what they want from an online shopping experience.

With that data, Peters said, MSN eShop continues to develop new features that offer shoppers definite advantages over the merchant-by-merchant approach.

- Tools such as Power Search and Quick Search let users search all the merchants on eShop at once by defining the categories, brands, price ranges and other features for the products they are interested in purchasing.

- Side-by-side comparison guides allow for easy analysis of the pros and cons of specific prod-



Online shopping “portals” provide one-stop convenience and other benefits.

ucts. Users can compare particular features, size, prices and expert reviews of products. Consumer reviews from epinions.com also give users the opportunity to read the experiences their fellow shoppers have had with a product.

- The integrated Buyer’s Guide eliminates the need to go to multiple Web sites for different people on a gift list. Using the guide’s product information, product finders and reviews, buyers can quickly and easily decide what to purchase for family members or friends.

- Everyone loves a bargain, and at MSN eShop’s Bargain Cen-

ter, shoppers have one-click access to deals on products that have been discounted by 20 percent or more.

The new enhancements to MSN eShop, according to Peters, dovetail with existing features—including built-in security—to provide an even better online shopping experience.

MSN Yellow Pages, for example, helps consumers find local retailers that sell the items they find on MSN eShop. Seasonal gift guides let shoppers know what’s hot and what’s not as holidays and seasons come and go.

Some of the biggest advantages to shopping on MSN eShop, Peters said, are its interactive features.

E-mail reminders of upcoming holidays, birthdays, anniversaries and other special occasions, along with suggestions for unique gift ideas, are sent to shoppers. My Saved Items—an online registry of sorts—creates a list of items shoppers would like to receive and then e-mails the list to friends and family as a Web page.

“On MSN eShop, shoppers can shop at great stores for the products they want at great prices,” Peters said.

To find out more, visit the Web site at <http://eshop.msn.com>.