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GOING ONLINE TO WHILE AWAY THE TIME: GLOBAL STUDY

New TNS study into global digital life shows we are spending 29 per cent of our leisure time online

TORONTO, December 2, 2008 — A TNS global study that examines online consumers' engagement with the Internet suggests that people across 16 countries surveyed are spending three-tenths of their leisure time online, with Canadians whiling away slightly less time on the Internet than the global average.

Entitled *Digital World, Digital Life*, the study found that consumers allocate similar percentages of their total amount of free time to online activities, regardless of how many hours that they have available each day to spend on leisure pursuits. Respondents with up to two hours of spare time each week day, for example, spend the same proportion of their leisure time online—29 per cent on average—as those who have between seven and eight hours of leisure time each week day.

TNS asked consumers to identify a range of activities that they engaged in online during the month prior to when they took the survey. Topping the list was using a search engine to find information, with eight in 10 (81%) claiming to have done so. The next most popular activity was reading news, performed by three-quarters (76%) of consumers. Rounding out the top five activities were online banking (74%), looking up the weather (65%) and researching a product or service before buying it (63%). These activities are all inherently very practical and far more popular than other online pastimes, including watching a video clip (51%), downloading music (37%), visiting a social networking site (33%), visiting an adult-only Web site (19%) and downloading a podcast (8%).

Canadians' top five list of online leisure activities does not differ greatly from the global list. Looking up the weather (78%), however, was second only to using a search engine (84%). Further, checking the forecast was more prevalent in Canada than in any of the other countries surveyed, reinforcing the stereotype that Canadians are obsessed with the elements. The only other difference of note related to the use of the Internet for bill payments, with seven in 10 Canadians claiming to perform this function online, placing it within their top five activities. This activity fell outside of the top five on an overall level, with only 56 per cent of respondents across all 16 markets mentioning it.

"The Internet has had a profound impact on the lives of Canadians and people around the world. We go online to inform ourselves, connect with friends and family, be entertained, and make more efficient use of our valuable time. With more social and entertainment activities available online, it is also easy to understand why our lives are becoming more digital," said Michael Ennamorato, executive vice president of TNS Canadian Facts and director of the firm's technology and telecommunications research practice.

Who and where are the most avid cybernauts in the world? Young people under 25, as might be expected, are seriously engaged with the Internet, claiming to spend well over one-third (36%) of their leisure time online. Chinese respondents under 25 spend half of their free time online. Canada is more closely aligned with the global average, as Canadians under 25 claim to spend 39 per cent of their spare time online.

If the world is to take its lead from Japan and Korea—countries that are seen as being innovative and pioneering in the digital world—then we can expect to spend even more time online in the future. In those countries, consumers say they currently spend on average around two-fifths of their leisure time online.

The *Digital World, Digital Life* study also underlined that mobile handsets are frequently used to connect to the Internet. Worldwide, one in 10 respondents surveyed say they connect to the Internet once a day via their mobile handsets. But Asia's adoption trends imply significant growth prospects in other markets. Among Japanese and Chinese respondents, for example, more than one-quarter access the Internet over mobile

connections at this once-a-day frequency. Canada, as with countries such as France and Spain, lags far behind these Asian markets, with only three per cent of respondents connecting to the Internet at least once a day through their mobile phones.

“With the introduction of the iPhone and other devices to the Canadian marketplace, the emphasis is now shifting to embrace mobile technology as providing more than just simple call and text functions,” said Ennamorato.

“In addition, with new providers in the wireless market on the horizon, combined with the price-oriented strategy of some existing ones, multi-functional devices that facilitate Internet access are expected to become more affordable and, consequently, more widely accessible,” he noted.

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About *Digital World, Digital Life*

A global study about consumers' online behaviours and attitudes, TNS conducted Internet-based interviews with 27,522 people, aged 18 to 55, in 16 countries: Australia, Canada, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. The research focused on four themes. First, the study looked at how consumers are using the Internet for entertainment, information and commerce. Second, the survey analyzed the extent to which people are using online channels when making major life decisions, in such areas as health, family, education, and investments. Third, the research measured the development of social media. Finally, the study investigated the degree to which consumers place trust in online sources of information, compared to traditional offline media or recommendations from friends.

In Canada, TNS Canadian Facts randomly selected a national sample from its Internet access panel and completed interviews with 1,007 Canadians between February 12 and March 5, 2008. The survey data were weighted to reflect the demographic composition of the general adult population aged between 18 and 55.

TNS Canadian Facts (www.tns-cf.com) is one of Canada's most prestigious full-service marketing, opinion and social research organizations.

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