
Chapter IX

Audience Measurement Applications for Online Advertising and E-Commerce

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Introduction (Internet Measurement Industry)

The idea of panel-based Internet audience measurement was a child of the late 1990s “dot-com” era, where financial analysts hinged predictions of stock price rise or ruin on Website rankings. Bold marketing schemes led to spikes in traffic to Websites, which in turn led to higher rankings and the potential for greater advertising revenues. Monthly rankings became as common a mention in company press releases as any other measure of revenue or profit. Despite the sudden and calamitous collapse of the “new economy” in the second quarter of 2000, Internet audience measurement remains a highly relevant industry.

Figure 1: Top 10 Web Properties (March 2003)

Rank	Web Parent	Top Web Brand	Unique Audience (000)	Q4 2002 Revenue \$ (000,000)
1	AOL Time Warner	AOL	94,545	11,320
2	Microsoft	MSN	92,392	8,541
3	Yahoo!	Yahoo!	80,986	286
4	U.S. Government	U.S. Dept. of Defense	46,782	n/a
5	Google	Google	42,903	n/a
6	eBay	eBay	37,349	414
7	RealNetworks	Real	37,180	46
8	Amazon	Amazon	36,015	1,429
9	About-Primedia	About Network	34,613	n/a
10	Terra Lycos	Lycos Networks	33,596	198*

Source: Nielsen//NetRatings, Hoovers Online, Terra Lycos, 2003

*Terra Lycos revenue figures converted from Euros.

The companies operating the top 10 Web parents produced in excess of \$20 billion in revenue during the fourth quarter of 2002 (see Figure 1). Combined, those top 10 parents reached 122.8 million unique Internet users during March 2003, or 91% of the active Internet universe.

Relevance has not ebbed, and growth of the Internet universe did not fall victim to the dot-com induced economic flameout of 2000, as Nielsen//NetRatings has recorded a steady rise in the number of both at-home and at-work Internet users. July 2000 saw nearly 144 million home users and just over 34 million work users in the United States (see Figure 2). Those numbers have since grown to more than 174 million and nearly 47 million, respectively, in March 2003.

With the arrival of the Internet and World Wide Web as mainstream media and important commercial vehicles, high-quality, timely and comprehensive data based on user activity and advertising have become vital to businesses, government organiza-

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