



***Behaviors of the
Blogosphere:
Understanding the Scale, Composition and
Activities of Weblog Audiences***

August 2005

Research conducted by comScore Media Metrix, a division of comScore Networks Inc.
and sponsored in part by SixApart and Gawker Media

www.comscore.com

Introduction & Methodology

Introduction

The word "blog" dates back to 1999 (coined by blogger and tech entrepreneur Peter Merholz) and the popular blogging software Blogger.com was launched that same year (by Pyra Labs, now owned by Google), but it took the political influence wielded by these mostly amateur online diaries during the 2004 U.S. presidential elections to bring the phenomenon to popular, if not yet mainstream, attention.

A few attempts have been made in the last couple of years to better understand just who is actually reading blogs, but most prior research has taken the approach of consumer surveys. Although surveys are a valuable research methodology, especially for understanding people's attitudes, they are notoriously inexact as a means for measuring people's online behavior. In the case of blogs, for example, it is likely that a certain number of people in a survey regularly visit specific sites without realizing that those sites would be qualified as "blogs," and so they neglect to identify themselves as blog readers.

For this reason, comScore, along with its co-sponsors of this research, Six Apart and Gawker Media, decided that the online behaviors of blog readers deserved a thorough analysis. The result, based on comScore's permission-based research panel that measures the online activity of more than 2 million global participants, is this behavioral examination of consumers who visited the 400 top weblog properties and blog hosting services during the first three months of 2005.

Key findings include the following:

- 50 million U.S. Internet users visited blog sites in the first quarter of 2005. That is roughly 30% of all U.S. Internet users and 1 in 6 of the total U.S. population
- Five hosting services for blogs each had more than 5 million unique visitors in that period, and four individual blogs had more than 1 million visitors each
- Of 400 of the biggest blogs observed, segmented by seven (nonexclusive) categories, political blogs were the most popular, followed by "hipster" lifestyle blogs, tech blogs and blogs authored by women
- Compared to the average Internet user, blog readers are significantly more likely to live in wealthier households, be younger and connect to the Web on high-speed connections
- Blog readers also visit nearly twice as many web pages as the Internet average, and they are much more likely to shop online

Methodology

The following report is based on data produced using comScore's panel of more than 2 million Internet users (this analysis is based on more than 1.5 million U.S. participants within this global sample). These panelists provide comScore with explicit permission to measure their Web browsing and buying behavior.* The comScore panel includes representative samples of home, work and university users and closely reflects the demographic composition of the general U.S. Internet user population. All comScore research is conducted in strict adherence to the standards of **researchware** to ensure the complete protection of panelist privacy.

Working with Rick Bruner, director of research for DoubleClick, comScore developed a list of the top 400 blog domains, based on a composite of "top blog lists" and "blogosphere ecosystems" maintained by services including Daypop, Blogdex, BlogPulse, Technorati, and more than 14,000 sites listed on TruthLaidBear. An analysis of the traffic of thousands of blogs identified some 350 top blog sites and blog networks; that list was supplemented with other popular blogs in smaller segments, such as business blogs. The analysis also included more than two dozen large weblog hosting services, including Blogspot, Xanga, TypePad and others, which collectively represent millions of blog sites. The visitor and visit counts in the report are projected estimates for the entire U.S. Internet population based on the panel samples.

The following report was co-authored by comScore Networks analyst Graham Mudd and DoubleClick's Rick Bruner.

Definitions

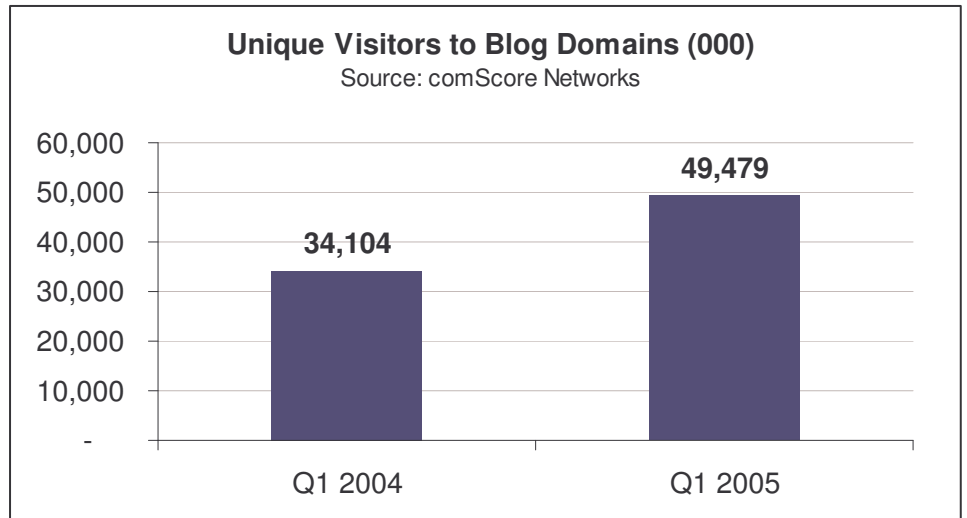
Unique Visitors – The number of individual people visiting a site in a given time period. Note that because data are based on a research panel, traffic figures are not affected by cookie-resetting, dynamic IP addresses or other such issues. The audience data included in this report quantify visitation among U.S. Internet users and does not include traffic from any non-U.S. users.

Visits – The total number of times individual audience members navigate to a site in a given time period. One unique visitor may visit a site several times during a quarter.

Composition Index – The propensity of a specific segment to visit a category or property compared to the average Internet user. An index of 100 represents parity. An index of 162 can also be read as 62 percent more likely than average.”

Blogs Now Reach 50 Million Americans

While few will be shocked to learn that blog readership is quickly growing, it may come as a surprise to some that the 400 blog domains tracked by comScore were visited by 50 million U.S. Internet users in Q1 2005. This represents an increase of 45 percent compared to Q1

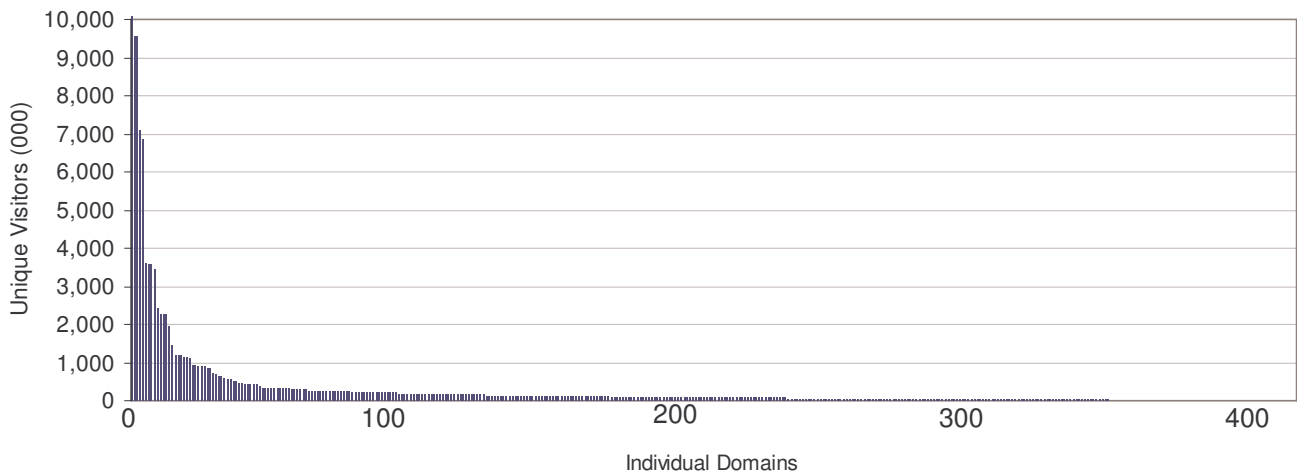


2004. While it's difficult to define where the threshold lies for "mainstream media," one could argue that with approximately 30 percent of the U.S. Internet audience now visiting blogs, this medium is quickly approaching that status.

One of the defining attributes of the "blogosphere" is the sheer number of blogs that users have published. The graph below, which shows unique visitors to the 400 domains analyzed in this study, illustrates just how fragmented the blog audience is. While estimates vary, Technorati estimates that there are now more than 14 million blogs published today.

Unique Visitors to Top Blog Domains - Q1 2005

Source: comScore Networks



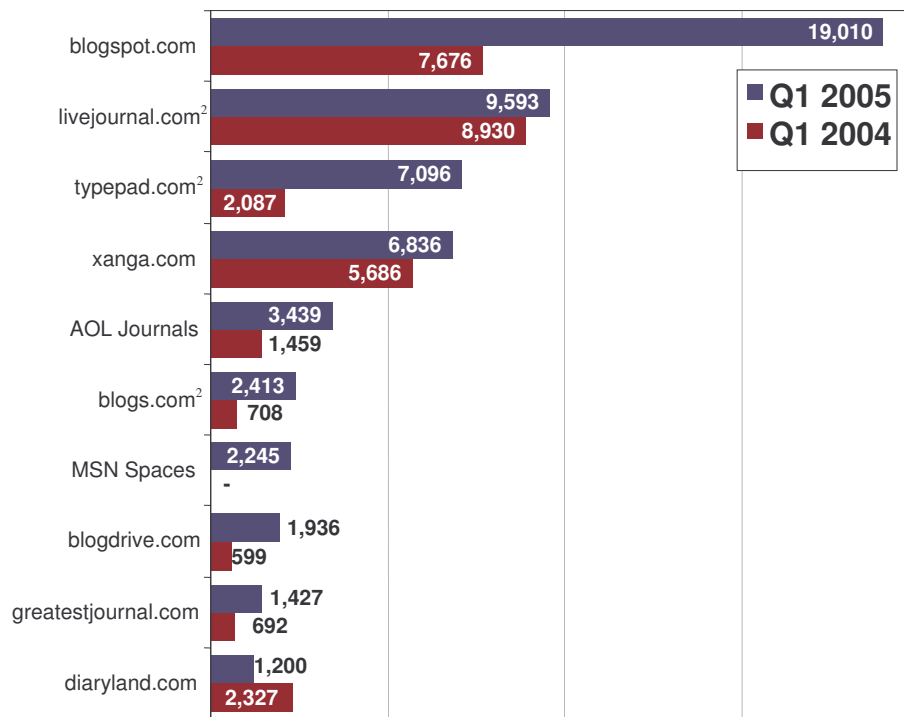
Top Blog Hosts Are Now as Large as Many Mainstream Media Sites

Traffic to the top blog hosting services has grown considerably in the past year. The top four hosts each now reach more than five million visitors per quarter. In fact, Blogspot.com now reaches more visitors than NYTimes.com, USAToday.com and WashingtonPost.com -- clear evidence that consumer-generated media can draw audience on par with traditional online publishers.

Six of the top ten hosts have grown by more than 100 percent compared to last year. Top gainers included Blogs.com (+241 percent), TypePad (+240 percent) and Blogdrive (+223 percent).¹

Unique Visitors to Top Blog Hosts (000)

Source: comScore Media Metrix



Notes:

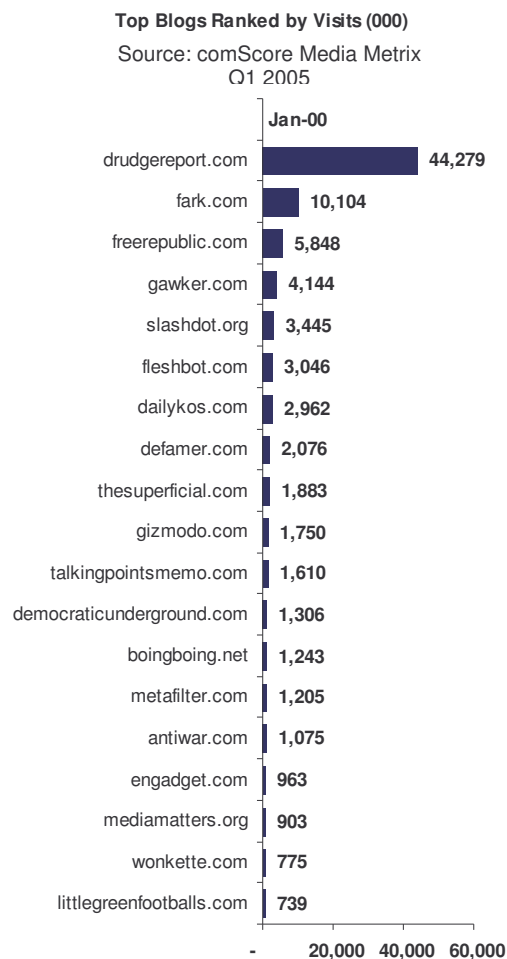
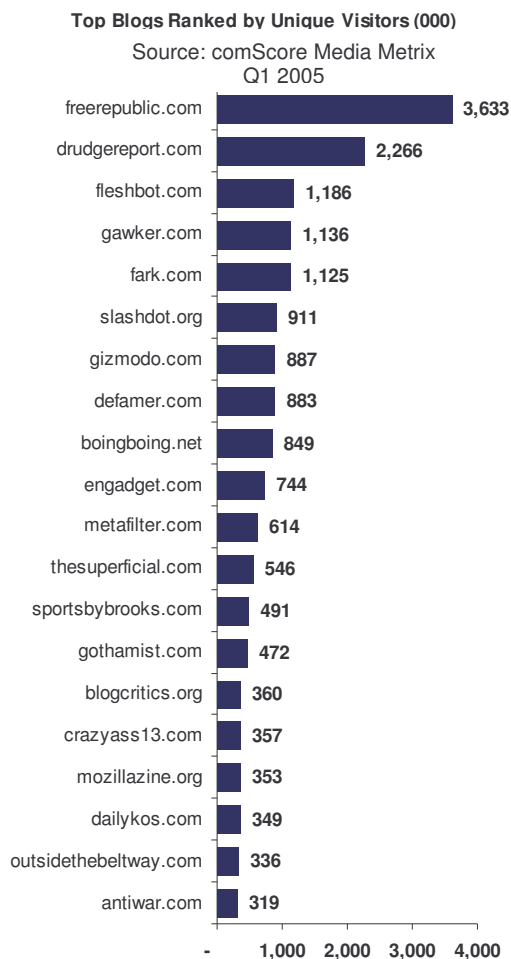
¹ At the time this research was conducted, available measurement systems could not distinguish MySpace.com blogs from MySpace.com social networking content. As a result, blogs hosted by this fast-growing site were not included in this analysis. Subsequent analysis suggests that MySpace Blogs would have been among the top blog host sites in Q1 2005 if comparable data were available.

² LiveJournal, TypePad, and Blogs.com are properties of SixApart. Note that TypePad.com data do not include visitation to blogs that are hosted at exclusive domains not related to TypePad.com, even if they use the TypePad application.

Top 25 Blogs

The top blogs, as ranked by unique visitors in Q1 2005, vary as widely in content as they do in usage intensity. Because blogs often source their visitors from search engines or links from other sites (often other blogs), many draw relatively large audiences that visit infrequently on average. For example, FreeRepublic drew an impressive 3.6 million unique visitors in Q1 2005, but these users visited an average of just 1.6 times during the quarter. Likewise, Fleshbot drew 1.2 million visitors who visited an average of 2.6 times during the quarter.

Other blogs, such as DailyKos and TalkingPointsMemo reach a smaller audience, but these users visit frequently. Some blogs, often those aggregating or commenting on news daily (or even hourly), are both widely and frequently visited. Examples include DrudgeReport, which drew 2.3 million visitors who visited an average of 19.5 times, and Fark, which drew 1.1 million users an average of 9.0 times in Q1 2005.

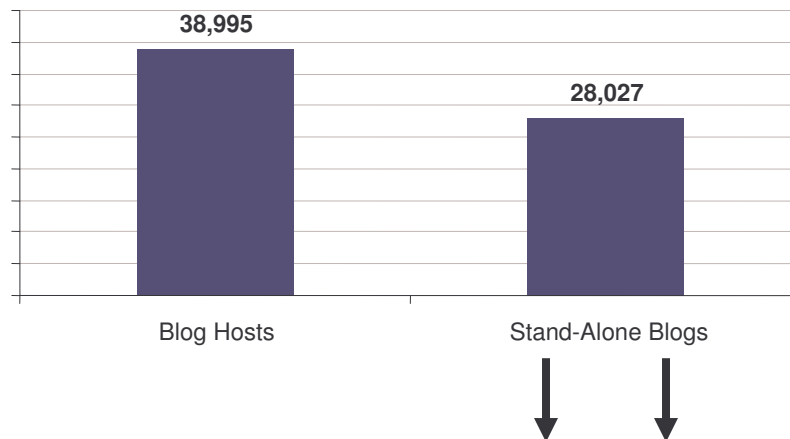


Political/News Category Captures Largest Share of Visitors

By classifying the 400 domains tracked in this research into seven categories, the study was able to provide insight into the relative popularity of different types of blogs. Nearly 40 of the 50 million blog visitors in Q1 2005 visited at least one blog residing on one of the major blog hosts. Approximately 30 million users visited at least one stand-alone or non-hosted blog. News/Politics blogs, such as FreeRepublic, DailyKos and Wonkette, drew 43 percent of the non-hosted audience, by far the largest share of the seven categories.

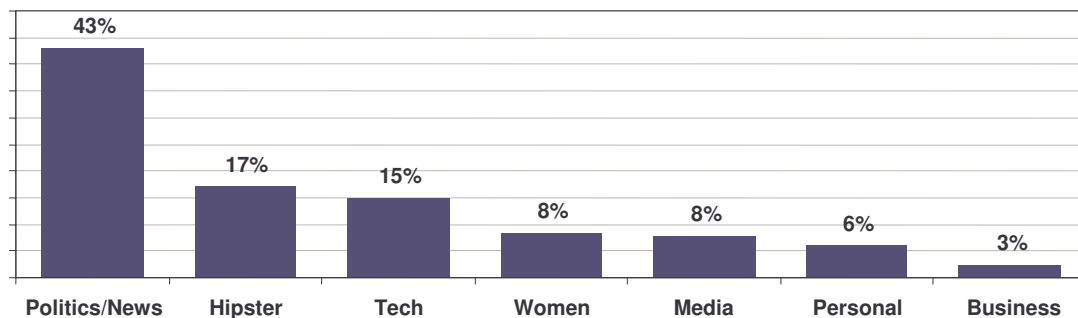
Unique Visitors to Blog Hosts vs. Stand-Alone Blogs (000)

Source: comScore Media Metrix
Q1 2005



Stand-Alone Blog Visitor Share by Category

Source: comScore Media Metrix
Q1 2005



Blog Category Examples	
Politics/News	FreeRepublic, DailyKos, Wonkette, TalkingPointsMemo, etc.
Hipster	Fark, Gawker, BoingBoing, ApartmentTherapy, etc.
Tech	Slashdot, Gizmodo, Engadget, Mozillazine, ScienceBlog, etc.
Women (Authored)	Gothamist, Wonkette, MichelleMalkin, ArianaOnline, etc.
Media	MediaMatters, Poynter, MediaBistro, AdRants, etc.
Personal	Kottke.org, Malevole.com, Kalsey.com, etc.
Business	AdRants, LinuxJournal, MarketingVox, GMBlogs, etc.

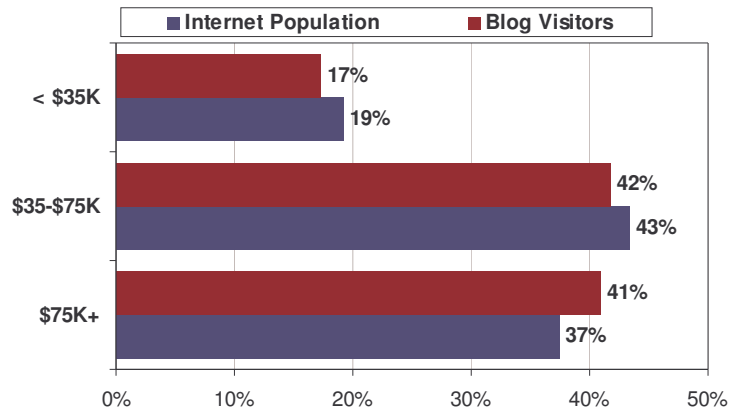
Blog Visitors Are a Demographically Attractive Audience for Advertisers

comScore found that blog visitors represent a demographically attractive advertising audience. Blog visitors are disproportionately likely to be affluent, young and broadband-enabled.

Blog visitors are 11 percent more likely than the average Internet user to have incomes of \$75,000 or more.

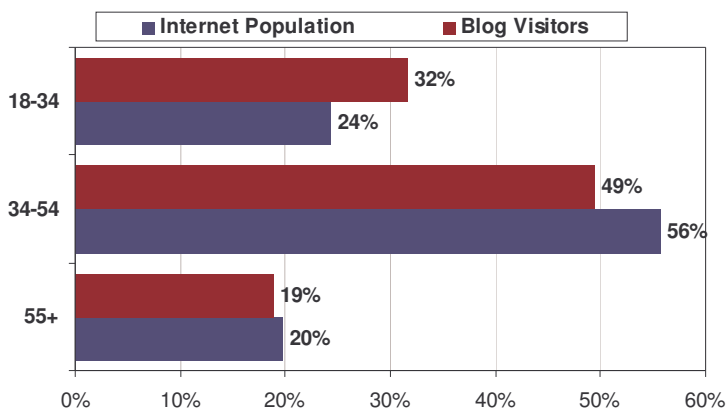
Household Income

Source: comScore Media Metrix
Q1 2005



Head of Household Age

Source: comScore Media Metrix
Q1 2005

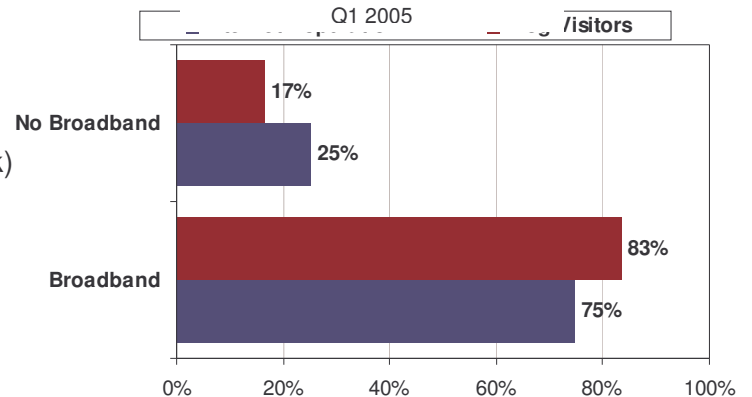


Blog visitors are 30 percent more likely than the average Internet user to live in households where the household head is 18 to 34 years old.

Blog visitors are 11 percent more likely to access the Internet (from either home or work) using a broadband connection.

Broadband Access (Home or Work)

Source: comScore Networks
Source: comScore Media Metrix
Q1 2005

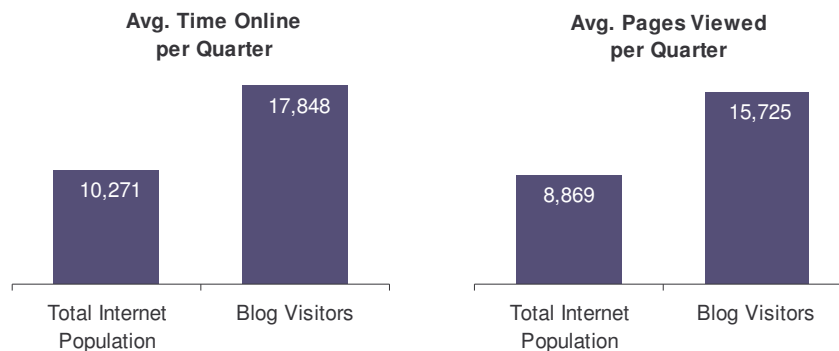


Blog Visitors Spend More Time and Money Online

In addition to being an attractive advertising audience demographically, comScore found that Blog visitors are significantly heavier Internet users than the average consumer. The average Blog visitor viewed nearly 16,000 pages over the course of the Q1 2005 – 77 percent more than the 9,000 pages viewed the average Web user. Blog users also spend substantially more time online. The average Blog visitor spent nearly 18,000 minutes or about 23 hours per week online, while the average Internet user spent just over 10,000 minutes or 13 hours per week online.

Internet Usage Intensity

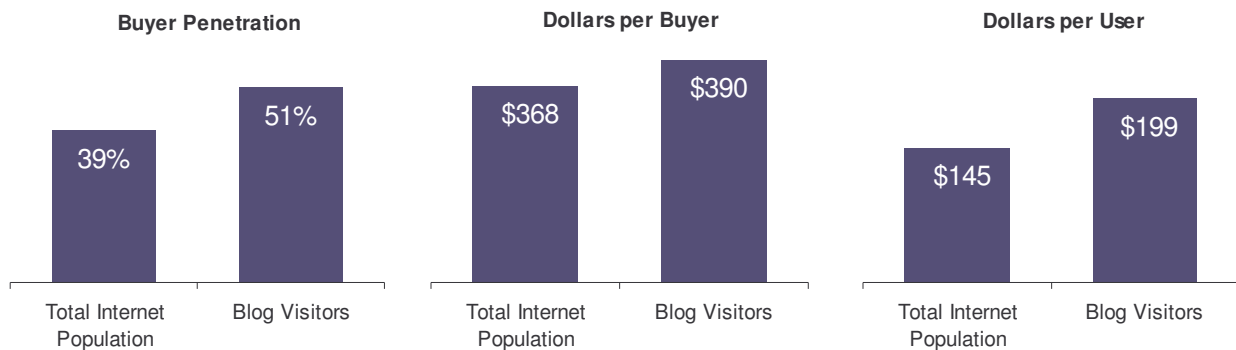
Source: comScore Media Metrix
Q1 2005



The study also found that blog visitors are 30 percent more likely to buy products or services online. While less than 40 percent of the total Internet population made an online purchase in Q1 2005, 51 percent of blog visitors did. The average blog visitor who bought online spent approximately six percent more than the average online buyer.

Online Buying

Source: comScore Networks
Q1 2005



About comScore Networks

comScore Networks provides unparalleled insight into consumer behavior and attitudes. This capability is based on a massive, global cross-section of more than 2 million consumers who have given comScore explicit permission to confidentially capture their browsing and transaction behavior, including online and offline purchasing. comScore panelists also participate in survey research that captures and integrates their attitudes and intentions. Through its patent-pending technology, comScore measures what matters across a broad spectrum of behavior and attitudes. comScore consultants apply this deep knowledge of customers and competitors to help clients design powerful marketing strategies and tactics that deliver superior ROI. comScore services are used by global leaders such as AOL, Yahoo!, Verizon, Best Buy, The Newspaper Association of America, Tribune Interactive, ESPN, Nestlé, Bank of America, Universal McCann, the United States Postal Service, GlaxoSmithKline and Orbitz.

For more information, please visit www.comscore.com.