

For Immediate Release

Rosie O'Donnell's Candor on Sexual Orientation Resonates Well With Americans

Witeck-Combs/Harris InteractiveSM tests whether Rosie's own sexual orientation affects her popularity

Rochester, NY, March 20, 2002 – Three-quarters (75%) of all Americans – heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered – who are also aware of Rosie O'Donnell's disclosure that she is a lesbian, agree that it has no effect on their feelings towards her, according to a new national *Witeck-Combs/Harris InteractiveSM* study.

Respondents were also asked whether O'Donnell's disclosure had an effect on their likelihood to purchase brands that she endorses. Eight out of ten (80%) of all Americans said it made no difference, with 2% reporting they were more likely and 18% saying they were less likely to purchase endorsed products. Almost 9 out of 10 gays and lesbians (88%) said it made no difference, while 9% said it would make them more likely to purchase.

Among Rosie's most popular audience, namely American women between the ages of 35 and 44, when asked specifically if the disclosure about O'Donnell's sexual orientation would have a better, worse or would not change their opinion at all about her, 73% of women between ages 35 and 44 said it made no difference. Ten percent (10%) said it improved their opinions, while 18% said their opinions of Rosie O'Donnell had worsened.

When 35 to 44 year old American women were asked whether the disclosure changes their feelings about O'Donnell's product endorsements, a full 85% said it made no difference, while 12% said they would be less likely to change their opinions; and 3% said they would be more likely to purchase products endorsed by Rosie.

These are the highlights of a nationwide *Witeck-Combs Communications/Harris Interactive* study of 2,017 adults surveyed online between March 12 and 14, 2002, of whom seven percent (7%) self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT). The survey was conducted online by Harris Interactive, a worldwide market research and consulting firm, and Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc., a marketing and communications firm with special expertise in the GLBT market.

Rosie O'Donnell made national news last week in her exclusive ABC News interview with Diane Sawyer, by speaking up for adoption by gay parents and revealing that she, herself, is a lesbian parent. O'Donnell is a celebrated television figure, actress and publisher of her own trademark magazine targeted to American women. In addition, she is well known for her commercial endorsements and commitment to social and philanthropic causes.

Wesley Combs, president of Witeck-Combs Communications, said, "Rosie O'Donnell may be one of America's most beloved figures who provides an excellent snapshot that aids in understanding the perceptions and the risks of the marketplace for openly gay celebrities. In general, we find that younger adults and women state a higher degree of acceptance and generally favorable impressions – all critical to Rosie O'Donnell's continued strength in the market." Combs concluded, "What is most compelling are the overwhelming numbers who say Rosie's public disclosure of her sexual orientation has not really affected their opinion, or their consideration to purchase the products she endorses."

"Not surprisingly, nearly four out of ten (37%) self-identified gays and lesbians say the disclosure has improved their opinion of the popular television talk show host," stated David Krane, senior vice president, Harris Interactive. "In addition, 5% of all heterosexual Americans concur that they have more favorable views, while 19% of heterosexuals said the disclosure has worsened their opinion of Rosie."

Seventy-six percent (76%) of women ages 35 to 44 indicate they hold a favorable impression of her, while only 24% said they had an unfavorable opinion. A substantial majority (84%) also said they had seen, heard or read about Rosie O'Donnell's disclosure, while 15% said they had not.

Notes on reading tables

GLBT refers to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender respondents. The percentage of respondents has been included for each item. An asterisk (*) signifies a value of less than one-half percent. A dash represents a value of zero. Percentages may not always add up to 100% because of computer rounding or the acceptance of multiple answers from respondents answering that question.

TABLE 1
OPINION OF ROSIE O'DONNELL AFTER DISCLOSURE
 "Is your opinion of her better or worse than before she made this disclosure?"

Base: Seen, Read, Or Heard of Rosie O'Donnell's Recent Disclosure

	TOTAL %	SEXUAL ORIENTATION		FEMALE/AGE			
		GLBT %	HETEROSEXUA L %	18-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55+ %
Better (Net)	7	37	5	14	10	3	2
A Lot Better	4	20	2	7	5	2	*
Somewhat Better	4	17	3	7	4	2	2
No Different	75	59	76	71	73	85	69
Worse (Net)	18	4	19	16	18	12	29
Somewhat Worse	11	4	11	14	12	4	15
A Lot Worse	7	*	8	2	5	8	14

TABLE 2
LIKELIHOOD OF PURCHASING A PRODUCT OR BRAND ENDORSED BY ROSIE O'DONNELL
 "What effect does Rosie O'Donnell's disclosure have on your likelihood to purchase the products or brands that Rosie O'Donnell endorses?"

Base: Seen, Read, Or Heard of Rosie O'Donnell's Recent Disclosure

	TOTAL %	SEXUAL ORIENTATION		FEMALE/AGE			
		GLBT %	HETEROSEXUA L %	18-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55+ %
More Likely (Net)	2	9	1	3	3	*	-
Much More Likely to Purchase	1	3	1	1	3	*	-
More Likely to Purchase	1	6	1	3	-	*	-
Makes No Difference	80	88	79	90	85	89	71
Less Likely (Net)	18	3	19	7	12	11	29
Less Likely to Purchase	8	-	9	2	5	2	13
Much Less Likely to Purchase	10	3	10	4	7	9	16

TABLE 3
OPINION TOWARDS ROSIE O'DONNELL
 "Do you have a favorable or unfavorable opinion of Rosie O'Donnell?"

Base: All Respondents

	TOTAL %	SEXUAL ORIENTATION		FEMALE/AGE			
		GLBT %	HETEROSEXUA L %	18-34 %	35-44 %	45-54 %	55+ %
Favorable (Net)	57	80	56	79	76	72	59
Very Favorable	20	48	18	34	34	29	20
Somewhat Favorable	37	32	37	44	42	43	39
Unfavorable (Net)	43	20	44	21	24	28	41
Somewhat Unfavorable	24	13	25	15	15	17	19
Very Unfavorable	19	7	20	7	9	11	22
I don't know who Rosie O'Donnell is.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Methodology

This Harris Interactive QuickQuerySM survey was conducted online within the United States between March 12-14, 2002, among a nationwide cross section of 2,017 adults. Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and income were weighted where necessary to bring them into line with their actual proportions in the population. "Propensity score" weighting was also used to adjust for respondents' propensity to be online.

In theory, with a probability sample of this size, one can say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 3 percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. However, this is not a probability sample.

These statements conform to the principles of disclosure of the National Council on Public Polls.

###

About Harris Interactive

Harris Interactive (Nasdaq: HPOL) is a worldwide market research and consulting firm, best known for *The Harris Poll*[®] and its pioneering use of the Internet to conduct scientifically accurate market research. Strengthened by its recent merger with Total Research Corporation, the Company now combines the power of technology with international expertise in predictive, custom, strategic research. Headquartered in the United States, with offices in the United Kingdom, Japan and a global network of local market and opinion research firms, the Company conducts international research with fluency in multiple languages. For more information about Harris Interactive, visit www.harrisinteractive.com. EOE M/F/D/V
To become a member of the Harris Poll Online, and be invited to participate in future online surveys, register at www.harrispollonline.com.

About Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc.

Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. (www.witeckcombs.com) is the nation's premier strategic marketing communications firm, specializing in reach the gay and lesbian consumer market. With over nine years experience in this unique market, Witeck-Combs Communications has developed respected relationships throughout the community and serves as a bridge between corporate America and gay and lesbian consumers. The Gay Financial Network (gfn.com) has twice identified Bob Witeck and Wesley Combs as two of the nation's twenty-five most influential openly gay business executives.

For more information contact:

Nancy Wong
Harris Interactive
585-214-7316 or (cell) 585-415-8931
nwong@harrisinteractive.com

Wesley Combs
Witeck-Combs Communications
202-887-0500 ext. 14 or (cell) 202-439-1827
wcombs@witeckcombs.com