



Gay Consumers' Brand Loyalty Linked to Corporate Philanthropy and Advertising

New National Survey by Witeck-Combs Communications/Harris Interactive also contrasts gay and non-gay consumers on product upgrades, laser eye surgery, laser hair removal, and gay cable television

Rochester, NY—July 22, 2002 – In the most recent consumer research study by Witeck-Combs Communications and Harris Interactive®, a national cross-section of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender respondents (GLBT) signaled they tend to prefer popular product brands, indulge themselves, and seek product upgrades in higher proportion than their non-gay counterparts. In addition, their intention to seek laser eye surgery and laser hair removal tested at least twice as high as non-GLBT consumers.

Significantly, nearly 4 out of 10 gay consumers (39%) also stated that – quality and value of products being equal – they prefer to purchase products from companies that advertise in gay and lesbian media. However, an even higher percentage (46%) also stated they prefer to purchase products from companies that provide financial and/or in-kind support to nonprofit organizations serving the gay and lesbian community over competing products from companies that do not.

With much research echoing the brand loyalty of GLBT consumers, this survey specifically tested GLBT consumer preferences in choosing alcoholic beverages, a category with many competing brands marketing directly to this segment. When the national sample was asked whether they order alcoholic beverages by brand name, half (49%) of all GLBT individuals stated that they do, while this is only true of 41% of heterosexual respondents.

“In a marketplace so competitive and information-driven, we see fresh evidence that gays and lesbians are brand-loyal and discriminating about the companies that speak to them,” said Wesley Combs, President of Witeck-Combs Communications. “Companies are smart to create deeper connections and build loyalty with customers. Lesbians and gays appear to learn quickly how their choice of brands stacks up by judging the companies that advertise those brands.”

These are several highlights of a nationwide *Witeck-Combs Communications/Harris Interactive* study of 2,050 adults, of whom six percent (6%) self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT). The survey was conducted online between June 20 and 26, 2002 by Harris Interactive, a worldwide market research and consulting firm, in conjunction with Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc., a strategic public relations and marketing communications firm with special expertise in the GLBT market.

When individuals were asked if they upgrade to the latest model or version of a product, three-quarters (74%) of the GLBT sample stated they *sometimes to always do*, and 68% of their non-gay counterparts

responded similarly. When asked how often they indulge themselves by purchasing luxury goods, 53% of the GLBT sample responded *sometimes to always*, as did 50% of the heterosexual panel.

Gays and lesbians also reported that they are more apt to seek laser eye surgery as well as laser hair removal on parts of their bodies. Eight percent (8%) of the GLBT sample stated they plan to seek laser eye surgery this next year and seven percent (7%) also plan to have laser hair removal performed. In contrast, the non-GLBT sample reported that 4% plan to seek laser eye surgery to correct vision deficiencies, and only 1% plan to seek laser hair removal services.

With the anticipated emergence of one or more major cable networks aimed at gay and lesbian audiences, this latest national survey also confirmed that seven out of ten GLBT individuals (70%) say they are likely to subscribe to a paid cable television channel that offers programming primarily intended for gay and lesbian audiences. Four percent (4%) of the non-gay respondents also say they are likely to subscribe to a gay cable network.

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

SELL CONSUMER PRODUCTS TO GAY OR LESBIAN CONSUMER

“If a company wishes to sell a consumer product to a gay or lesbian consumer, and there is little difference on price and quality between its products and other similar products, how strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements?”

Base: All GLBT Respondents

	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree (Net) %	Neither Agree Nor Disagree %	Strongly Agree/ Agree/ Somewhat Agree (Net) %
I prefer to purchase a product from a company that advertises in the gay and lesbian media over competing products that do not.	17	44	39
I prefer to purchase a product from a company that is known for providing financial and/or in-kind support to non-profit organizations in the gay and lesbian community over competing products that do not.	16	39	46

TABLE 2

PURCHASING GOODS AND SERVICES

“How often do you do the following?”

Base: All Adults

	Rarely/ Never (Net) %	Always/ Sometimes (Net) %
Indulge myself by purchasing luxury goods		
GLBT	47	53
Heterosexual	49	50
Upgrade to the latest model or version of a product		
GLBT	26	74
Heterosexual	32	68
Order alcoholic beverages by brand name (for example, asking for “Absolut and soda”)		
GLBT	43	49
Heterosexual	50	41

TABLE 3

LASER SURGERY AND LASER HAIR REMOVAL

“In the next twelve months, do you plan to do either of the following?”

Base: All Adults

	Yes %	No %
Have laser eye surgery to correct vision deficiencies		
GLBT	8	92
Heterosexual	4	96
Have laser hair removal performed on some part of my body		
GLBT	7	93
Heterosexual	1	99

TABLE 4

LIKELIHOOD OF SUBSCRIBING TO A PAID CABLE TELEVISION CHANNEL FOR GAYS AND LESBIANS

“How likely would you be to subscribe to a paid cable television channel that offered programming primarily intended for gay and lesbian audiences that featured such programming as situation comedies, dramas, documentaries, feature films and news?”

Base: All Adults

	Very unlikely/ Unlikely/ Somewhat unlikely (Net) %	Neither likely nor unlikely %	Very likely/Likely/ Somewhat likely (Net) %
GLBT	16	14	70
Heterosexual	89	7	4

Methodology

This study was conducted online within the United States between June 20 and 26, 2002, among a nationwide cross section of 2,050 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.

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About Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc.

Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. (www.witeckcombs.com) is the nation's premier strategic marketing communications firm, specializing in reaching 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.

About Harris Interactive®

Harris Interactive (www.harrisinteractive.com) 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. We combine the power of unique methodologies and technology with international expertise in predictive, custom and strategic research. Headquartered in Rochester, NY, with offices across the United States, in the United Kingdom, in Japan and a global network of local market and opinion research firms, the Company conducts international research with fluency in multiple languages. EOE M/F/D/V

To become a member of the Harris Poll OnlineSM and be invited to participate in future online surveys, visit www.harrispollonline.com.

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