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Gays Lead Non-Gays In Internet Use for Access to Political News

National survey findings also show gays may more often feel influenced by online advertising than heterosexuals, and they are more likely to use gay-specific websites for travel reservations

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – May 11, 2004 – According to a new national online survey of adults, results show that gays, lesbians and bisexuals (GLB) use the Internet more for access to political news and updates than heterosexuals (16% to 6%).

Both GLBs and heterosexuals ranked “staying connected with friends and family” (53% to 52%) and seeking “general news and information” (41% to 38%) as their top two activities on the Internet.

GLB adults prefer different methods for making hotel reservations for personal travel. Although gays and heterosexuals each ranked “a mainstream travel-related website” as their top booking method (33% and 25%, respectively), “a gay and lesbian website where you can make travel plans” was ranked second among GLB respondents (15%), and a “hotel’s toll-free telephone number” was the second-favored choice by non-gays (21%).

These are a few highlights of a nationwide survey of 3,698 adults who of whom just over six percent self-identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual. The survey was conducted online between March 18 and 29, 2004 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 gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender market.

According to the survey, GLB adults demonstrated other differences in their online behavior. GLBs use the Internet slightly more than heterosexuals (22% to 17%) for purchasing consumer products online, but heterosexuals are more likely to use the Internet for hobbies, games and entertainment (35%-21%).

"It's easy to see the importance that the Internet plays in the lives of both heterosexuals and gays in their day-to-day activities, but the particular travel website preferences of gays and lesbians, for making travel plans are particularly interesting to hoteliers who are looking to understand what their customers are really like and want from their travel experiences," said Andrew Freeman, Vice President of Public Relations and Strategic Partnerships, Kimpton Hotels.

In another interesting finding, four out of ten (42%) gays agreed that advertisements they read online have influenced their purchasing decisions for one product or service over another, while 35% of heterosexual respondents agreed that online advertising had similar influence.

“These findings on the online behavior of gays, lesbians and bisexuals give a new perspective to previous Harris Interactive/Witeck-Combs Communications surveys, which have taught us that GLB people are brand loyal and heavy online users, and that they trust gay-specific tailored outreach when making their purchasing decisions,” said Jake Stafford, Senior Communications and Marketing Strategist for Witeck-Combs Communications.

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
TOP ACTIVITIES ON INTERNET**

“The Internet is used by many people for different needs and personal interests. Please tell us the top two activities for which you most use the Internet.”

Base: All Adults

	Total	GLB	Heterosexual
	%	%	%
Staying connected with friends and family	52	53	52
General news and information	37	41	38
Hobbies, games and entertainment	35	21	35
Buying consumer products and services	17	22	17
Learning about consumer products and services	14	9	15
Taking polls	14	11	14
Political news and updates	7	16	6
Meeting others for dating	2	6	2
Local community events and activities	2	5	2
Other	15	14	15
None	2	-	1

TABLE 2
ADVERTISING INFLUENCING PURCHASE DECISIONS

“To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: Advertisements that I read online influence my purchasing decisions for one product or service over another?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	GLB	Heterosexual
	%	%	%
Agree (Net)	36	42	35
Strongly agree	4	2	4
Somewhat agree	32	40	31
Disagree (Net)	64	58	65
Somewhat disagree	29	25	30
Strongly disagree	35	33	35

TABLE 3
METHOD FOR BOOKING HOTEL RESERVATION

“When making your hotel reservations for personal travel, what method to book your accommodations do you most often use?”

Base: All Adults

	Total	GLB	Heterosexual
	%	%	%
A mainstream travel-related websites (i.e. Orbitz, Expedia, Travelocity)	25	33	25
Hotel's toll-free telephone number	20	12	21
The hotel's official website	16	14	17
Travel agent	7	2	7
Do it myself/Call myself	2	1	2
Travel coordinator at my place of work	1	1	1
Yellow pages/find one when I get there	1	*	1
A gay and lesbian website where I can make travel plans (i.e. Gay.com, Planetout.com, gaytravel.com)	1	15	-
Friends/relatives/personal experience	1	-	1
AAA/travel club	*	*	*
I do my research/Internet/travel mags, etc.	*	*	*
Through timeshare	*	-	*
Depends	*	-	*
Through airline	*	-	*
Don't travel/don't stay in hotels	*	-	*
Other	1	1	1
None	25	21	24
NA	*	-	*

* Less than 0.5%

Methodology

The survey was conducted online within the United States between March 18 and 29, 2004 among a nationwide cross section of 3,698 adults (18+) of whom 231 self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (GLBT). Figures for age, sex, race, education, region and household 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 probability samples of this size, one could say with 95 percent certainty that the results have a statistical precision of plus or minus 2 percentage points of what they would be if the entire adult population had been polled with complete accuracy. Statistical precision of the GLBT sample is plus or minus seven percentage points. Unfortunately, there are several other possible sources of error in all polls or surveys that are probably more serious than theoretical calculations of sampling error. They include refusals to be interviewed (non-response), question wording and question order, and weighting. It is impossible to quantify the errors that may result from these factors. This online sample 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 corporate clients including American Airlines, IBM, Sears, Ford Motor Company and its brands Jaguar, Volvo and Land Rover. With a decade's experience in this unique market, Witeck-Combs Communications has earned respected relationships throughout the community and serves as a bridge between corporate America and gay and lesbian consumers. In April 2003, *American Demographics* magazine identified Bob Witeck and Wes Combs as two of 25 experts over the last 25 years who have made significant contributions to the fields of demographics, market research, media and trendspotting for their pathbreaking work on the gay and lesbian market.

About Harris Interactive®

Harris Interactive (www.harrisinteractive.com) is a worldwide market research and consulting firm best known for *The Harris Poll*®, and for pioneering the Internet method to conduct scientifically accurate market research. Headquartered in Rochester, New York, Harris Interactive combines proprietary methodologies and technology with expertise in predictive, custom and strategic research. The Company conducts international research from its U.S. offices and through wholly owned subsidiaries—London-based **HI Europe** (www.hieurope.com), Paris-based **Novatris** and Tokyo-based **Harris Interactive Japan**—as well as through the Harris Interactive Global Network of independent market- and opinion-research firms. EOE M/F/D/V

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

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