

## **National Survey Shows Gay-Specific Marketing Practices May Influence Brand Loyalty and Purchase Decisions of Gays, Lesbians and Bisexuals**

**ROCHESTER, N.Y. – February 4, 2005 –** According to a recent nationwide online survey, one in four (24%) gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) adults report that they always or often “like to keep up with the latest styles and trends,” compared with 17 percent of heterosexual adults. Seventeen percent of GLB adults also state that they always or often “tend to upgrade to the latest model or version of a product,” while 15 percent of their heterosexual counterparts do the same. When ordering mixed drinks, 36 percent of GLB respondents aged 21 and over say they always or often specify the alcoholic brand name, contrasted with 28 percent of non-gay respondents aged 21 and over.

These are a few highlights of a nationwide survey of 2,092 U.S. adults, of whom 107 have self-identified as gay, lesbian or bisexual. The survey was conducted online between December 8 and 15, 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.

The online survey also presented factors that would most influence GLB’s loyalty to consumer brands. Specifically, when making purchasing decisions, they were asked how likely they were to consider a company’s nondiscrimination and benefit policies, its advertising strategy, and other forms of corporate outreach.

Seven in ten (70%) GLB respondents say they are extremely or very likely to consider a brand that is known to provide equal workplace benefits for all of their employees, including gays and lesbians. Half (51%) of GLB respondents also report they are extremely or very likely to consider brands that support nonprofits and/or causes that are important to them as GLB people.

These latest findings corroborate what earlier studies by Witeck-Combs Communications and Harris Interactive revealed -- particularly research conducted in May 2001 which concluded that 48 percent of GLB respondents “trust brands more if they are manufactured by companies that have progressive policies towards gay and lesbian employees.” One-third (33%) of gay adults also agreed with the statement that they trust brands more if they incorporate gay or lesbian images into their advertising.<sup>1</sup>

The findings from this most recent Witeck Combs/Harris Interactive survey also suggest that gay-specific marketing practices can influence how GLB people connect with brands and form purchasing decisions:

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<sup>1</sup> Harris Interactive® conducted this online survey in the U.S. between May 3 and 16, 2001 among 2,692 adults aged 18 and over, of whom 128 self-identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender. Sampling error is plus or minus 2 percentage points.

- Almost two-thirds (64%) of GLB respondents say they are at least likely to consider purchasing everyday household products and services from companies that market directly to gays and lesbians over competing brands that do not.
- More than two-thirds (69%) say they are at least likely to consider purchasing services, such as legal advice or banking services, from companies that market directly to gays and lesbians over competing brands that do not.
- Half (51%) of the GLB people polled find advertising that is informative, funny or witty and includes images of gay and lesbian people either the most important or a very important factor that influences their likelihood to consider a company's products or services.
- Nearly half (48%) of all GLB respondents say they find it most important or very important – when considering products or services – to see advertising that is clearly tailored to a gay audience with gay imagery, people or copy that speaks to them as a gay person and that appears in both mainstream publications and gay publications.
- The most common ways GLB adults become aware of a company's reputation for gay-friendliness is by word of mouth (45%), gay websites (29%) or gay magazines or newspapers (29%).

“For several years, in-depth research has allowed us to measure consumer decision-making and to test what factors may truly influence gay consumers,” said Jake Stafford, senior marketing strategist at Witeck-Combs Communications. “These new data confirm that a company's internal and external behaviors matter very much to gay households. Understandably, gays like to spend their money with companies that treat their gay employees equitably, value them as customers and represent them openly and accurately in marketing initiatives.”

**TABLE 1  
KEEPING UP WITH STYLES AND TRENDS**

“Now, we’d like to you to tell us how often you do the following. I like to keep up with the latest styles and trends.”  
Base: All Adults

	<b>GLB</b>	<b>Heterosexuals</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Always/often (NET)</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>17</b>
Always	3	3
Often	21	14
Sometimes	42	48
<b>Rarely/never (NET)</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>35</b>
Rarely	24	29
Never	10	6

**TABLE 2  
KEEPING UP WITH LATEST PRODUCTS**

“Now, we’d like to you to tell us how often you do the following. I tend to upgrade to the latest model or version of a product.”

Base: All Adults

	<b>GLB</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Always/often (NET)</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>
Always	7	2
Often	10	13
Sometimes	57	59
<b>Rarely/never (NET)</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>26</b>
Rarely	25	23
Never	2	3

**TABLE 3  
ORDERING ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES BY BRAND NAME**

“When you order mixed drinks away from home, do you purchase or order a specific brand of alcohol, or do you just mix or order the drink you want without regard to the brand?”

Base: Adults aged 21 and over

	<b>GLB</b>	<b>Heterosexual</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Often/Always order alcoholic beverage by brand name (NET)</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>28</b>
With mixed drinks, I always order an alcoholic beverage by brand name.	28	18
With mixed drinks, I often order an alcoholic beverage by brand name.	9	10
<b>Sometimes/Never order alcoholic beverage by brand name (NET)</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>41</b>
With mixed drinks, I sometimes order an alcoholic beverage by brand name.	17	20
With mixed drinks, I never order an alcoholic beverage by brand name.	26	21
I do not consume alcoholic beverages.	21	31

**TABLE 3  
INFLUENCE ON DECISION MAKING**

“Assume you have an interest in a specific product or service. Please rank in order of importance the factor that most influences your likelihood to consider that company’s products or services, when you see an advertisement. Please rank the statements from 1 to 5 where 1 is most important and 5 is least important.”

*Percentages represent combined “1” and “2” responses*

Base: GLB Respondents

	%
The advertisement is informative, funny or witty and includes images of gay and lesbian people.	51
The very same advertisement, which is clearly tailored to a gay audience with gay imagery, people or copy that speaks to me as a gay person, appears in both mainstream publications and in gay publications.	48
The very same advertisement, which is not tailored to a gay audience, appears in both mainstream publications and in gay publications.	44
The advertisement is informative, funny or witty but does not speak to me specifically as a gay person.	38
The advertisement is informative, funny or witty, but only uses advertising copy to speak specifically to me as a gay person.	18

**TABLE 4  
LIKELIHOOD OF CONSIDERING BRANDS OR PRODUCTS**

“How likely are you to...?”

Base: GLB Respondents

		<b>Extremely Likely</b>	<b>Very Likely</b>	<b>Likely</b>	<b>Somewhat Likely</b>	<b>Not At All Likely</b>
Consider brands that support nonprofits and/or causes that are important to you as a gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender person	%	28	22	14	28	7
Consider a brand that is known to provide equal workplace benefits for all of their employees, including gay and lesbian employees	%	41	29	16	12	2
Consider purchasing everyday household products and services from companies that market directly to gays and lesbians over competing brands that do not	%	15	22	28	24	11
Consider purchasing services such as legal advice or banking services from companies that market directly to gays and lesbians over competing brands that do not	%	23	20	25	20	11

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

**TABLE 5  
AWARENESS OF GAY-FRIENDLINESS**

“If you wish to be aware about a company’s reputation for gay-friendliness, where do you look?”

Base: GLB Respondents

	%
Word of mouth	45
Gay websites	29
Gay magazines or newspapers	29
Close friends	27
Gay and lesbian nonprofit organizations	20
Mainstream news sources	11
Advertisements by the company	7
Other general interest websites	7
Personal customer experience	5
Gay and lesbian chambers of commerce	5
Family members	5
Other	5

Note: Multiple-response question.

**Methodology**

Harris Interactive® conducted the study online within the United States between December 8 and 15, 2004, among a nationwide cross section of 2,092 adults, of whom 107 self-identified as gay, lesbian, or bisexual (GLB). 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 for the overall sample have a sampling error of plus or minus 3 percentage points. Sampling errors for GLB adults aged 18 and over (107) is plus or minus 10 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.***

**Additional Note:** Previous research conducted by Harris Interactive in conjunction with Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. queried gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (GLBT) self-identified respondents. Although we remain interested in the consumer attitudes and characteristics of transgendered individuals, for accuracy and consistency we distinguish sexual orientation from gender identity. In addition, given the low incidence of response from transgendered individuals, it is extremely difficult to draw conclusions from the data captured.

**About Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc.**

Witeck-Combs Communications, Inc. ([www.witeckcombs.com](http://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. 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 Inc. ([www.harrisinteractive.com](http://www.harrisinteractive.com)), the 15<sup>th</sup> largest and fastest-growing market research firm in the world, is a Rochester, N.Y.-based global research company that blends premier strategic consulting with innovative and efficient methods of investigation, analysis and application. Known for *The Harris Poll*® and for pioneering Internet-based research methods, Harris Interactive conducts proprietary and public research to help its clients achieve clear, material and enduring results.

Harris Interactive combines its intellectual capital, databases and technology to advance market leadership through U.S. offices and wholly owned subsidiaries: London-based HI Europe ([www.hieurope.com](http://www.hieurope.com)), Paris-based Novatris ([www.novatris.com](http://www.novatris.com)), Tokyo-based Harris Interactive Japan, through newly acquired WirthlinWorldwide ([www.wirthlinworldwide.com](http://www.wirthlinworldwide.com)), a Reston, Virginia-based research and consultancy firm ranked 25<sup>th</sup> largest in the world, and through an independent global network of affiliate market research companies. EOE M/F/D/V

To become a member of the Harris Poll Online<sup>SM</sup> and be invited to participate in future online surveys, visit [www.harrispollonline.com](http://www.harrispollonline.com).

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