

One in Four Gays More Likely than Last Year to Consider Shopping at Stores with Reputations as Good Corporate Citizens

Pre-holiday Harris Interactive/Witeck-Combs Communications study highlights attitudes and preferences related to holiday shopping

ROCHESTER, N.Y. – February 6, 2006 – Gay and lesbian adults were more likely than heterosexual adults to say that more than last year, they would consider shopping for holiday gifts based on a store's reputation as a good corporate citizen, according to a nationwide online survey of U.S. adults conducted prior to the holidays in December 2005.

Nearly one in four gay and lesbian adults (24%) said that, while shopping for holiday gifts, they would consider, more than during the 2004 holiday season, to shop at stores with reputations as good corporate citizens, compared to only 16 percent of heterosexual adults responding to the same question.

A majority of gays and lesbians (69%) indicated their shopping decisions – other things being equal such as price, value or quality – would likely or very likely be influenced by a “buyers guide” of companies whose workplace policies objectively support equal and fair treatment of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people.

These are several highlights of a nationwide online survey of 2,245 adults (ages 18 and over) conducted online between Dec. 8 and 14, 2005, 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.

“Gay men and lesbians are savvy consumers and spend their money with companies that are known for socially responsible business practices,” said Wesley Combs, President of Witeck Combs Communications. “Brand loyalty has long been a characteristic of this \$610 billion consumer segment,” added Combs.

The study found similarities and differences in holiday shopping behaviors among heterosexuals and gays and lesbians. For instance, a large majority of both gay and lesbian adults (85%) and heterosexual adults (86%) consider a store's “price and value” when choosing the stores they prefer for holiday gift buying.

However, gays and lesbians are less likely to consider a store’s “advertising/sales promotions and coupons” (9%) as a reason in choosing a store they prefer for holiday gift buying, compared to 16 percent of heterosexuals. Another slight difference is revealed as gays and lesbians (8%) consider a store’s attention to the latest styles and trends, compared to 3 percent of heterosexuals.

The study showed differences in the product category of holiday gifts or gift certificates the two groups give. More than half of heterosexual adults (52%) said they would purchase fashion items (such as clothing, shoes and accessories) as holiday gifts, compared to 35 percent of gay and lesbian adults. Heterosexual adults were also somewhat more likely to say they would give cash as a holiday gift (31% vs. 23% of gays and lesbians).

TABLE 1
AMOUNT OF SHOPPING AT A STORE DUE TO ITS REPUTATION AS A GOOD CORPORATE CITIZEN

“This year, if making holiday gift purchases, will you consider shopping in a specific store based on that store's reputation as a good corporate citizen?”

Base: All respondents

	Total (n=2,245) %	Gay/Lesbian* (n=354) %	Heterosexual (n=1,781) %
Less than last year	11	12	11
The same as last year	46	43	47
More than last year	16	24	16
Not sure	20	12	20
I don't make holiday purchases	7	10	7

Note: Total includes all heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender respondents and does not include gay/lesbian “over-sample”.

* Gay/lesbian sample of 354 includes an over-sample of 200 gays/lesbians.

TABLE 2
LIKELIHOOD THAT A BUYERS GUIDE WILL INFLUENCE SHOPPING DECISIONS

“The Human Rights Campaign recently issued a Buyers Guide, which encourages gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) Americans, their friends and families to spend their money with companies whose workplace policies objectively support equal and fair treatment of GLBT people. If you had such a guide, how likely would a recommendation from the guide influence your shopping decisions, other things being equal such as price, value, or quality?”

Base: Gay/Lesbian adults

	Gay/Lesbian* (n=354) %
Very Likely/Likely (Net)	69
Very likely	55
Likely	15
Somewhat likely	19
Somewhat/Very Unlikely (Net)	9
Somewhat unlikely	3
Very unlikely	5
Makes no difference	3

* Gay/lesbian sample of 354 includes an over-sample of 200 gays/lesbians.

TABLE 3
REASONS FOR PREFERRED PLACES TO SHOP

“You may have many reasons for choosing the stores you prefer for holiday gift buying, but we’d like to ask you for the top three reasons you consider in choosing these places to shop.”

Base: All Adults

	Total (n=2,245) %	Gay/Lesbian* (n=354) %	Heterosexual (n=1,781) %
Price and value	86	85	86
Selection	56	49	56
Convenient location	45	48	45
Quality of products	43	48	43
Advertising and sales promotions, special coupons	15	9	16
Customer service	12	15	12
Store reputation for welcoming customers like me	5	8	5
More attention to latest styles and trends	3	8	3
Recommendation by friends or family members	2	1	1
News articles about the specific place to shop	1	-	1
Other	9	11	8

Note: Total includes all heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender respondents and does not include gay/lesbian “over-sample”.

* Gay/lesbian sample of 354 includes an over-sample of 200 gays/lesbians.

TABLE 4
TYPES OF HOLIDAY GIFTS CONSIDERED

” When purchasing holiday gifts or gift certificates, which product categories will you include this year?”

Base: All Adults

	Total (n=2,245)	Gay/Lesbian (n=354)	Heterosexual (n=1,781)
	%	%	%
Fashion such as clothing, shoes and accessories	52	35	52
Books	45	43	44
Movies/DVDs	41	39	41
Music/CDs	33	35	33
Cash	31	23	31
Personal care products and fragrances	28	21	28
Electronic equipment such as cell phone, PDA, computer, MP3 player	28	34	28
Food and beverages	25	33	24
Jewelry	22	14	22
Housewares or furniture	18	10	18
Homemade gifts such as a knitted scarf or blanket	12	8	12
Camera or photography equipment	9	7	9
Magazine subscriptions	8	11	8
Event tickets, such as concerts, films	7	9	8
Flowers	5	5	5
Travel packages or cruises	2	1	3
Gym or spa membership	2	2	1
Automobiles or motorcycles	1	1	1
None of these	10	16	9

Note: Total includes all heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender respondents and does not include gay/lesbian “over-sample”.

* Gay/lesbian sample of 354 includes an over-sample of 200 gays/lesbians.

Methodology

Harris Interactive® conducted the study online within the United States between December 8 and 14, 2005, among 2,245 adults (ages 18 and over), of whom 1,781 indicated they are heterosexual; 354 self-identified as gay or lesbian (354 total includes a 200 gay/lesbian over-sample). 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. In addition, the results for the gay and lesbian sample were weighted separately based on profiles of the gay and lesbian population that Harris Interactive has compiled through many different online surveys. 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 2 percentage points. Sampling error for the results from samples: heterosexuals (1,781) is plus or minus 3 percentage points and gay and lesbians (354) is plus or minus 5 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, 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 transgender (GLBT) self-identified respondents. Although we remain interested in the consumer attitudes and characteristics of all of these individuals, this survey is focused specifically on gay/lesbian responses.

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. 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), based in Rochester, New York, is the 13th largest and the fastest-growing market research firm in the world, most widely known for *The Harris Poll*® and for its pioneering leadership in the online market research industry. Long recognized by its clients for delivering insights that enable confident business decisions, the Company blends the science of innovative research with the art of strategic consulting to deliver knowledge that leads to measurable and enduring value.

Harris Interactive serves clients worldwide through its United States, Europe (www.harrisinteractive.com/europe) and Asia offices, its wholly-owned subsidiary Novatris in Paris, France (www.novatris.com), and through an independent global network of affiliate market research companies. EOE M/F/D/V

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

Press Contacts:

Jennifer Cummings
Harris Interactive
585-214-7720

Bob Witeck
Witeck-Combs Communications
202-887-0500 ext. 19 or (cell) 202-997-4055
bwiteck@witeckcombs.com

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