



For Immediate Release

**Gay and Lesbian Consumers Trust Brands Most
From Companies with Progressive Policies**

*Harris Interactive/Witeck-Combs Communications Survey Spotlights Lesbian and Gay
Attitudes to Brand Advertising*

Rochester, NY and Washington, D.C., June 11, 2001 – A survey conducted in May by Harris Interactive and Witeck–Combs Communications, Inc. reveals that consumers who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) have deeper trust for products and brands that not only target gay consumers, but even more so for products offered by companies that have progressive policies toward gay and lesbian employees. Fifty-six percent of all gays sampled agreed that they trust brands more from progressive companies -- with 41% reporting they “strongly agree.”

In addition, seven out of ten gay consumers sampled (72%) agreed it was important for companies advertising products to LGBT consumers to “demonstrate effective corporate citizenship” by supporting lesbian and gay causes. Seven out of ten sampled (71%) also stated it was important for companies advertising their products to “establish and publicize progressive policies towards gays and lesbians.”

“In a market so information-driven, it’s not surprising that gays and lesbians ask why companies reach out to them,” said Bob Witeck, CEO of Witeck-Combs Communications. “Reputation clearly matters, and companies that develop smart practices internally find they establish deeper connections and loyalty with customers. Lesbians and gays appear to learn quickly how their choice of brands stack up by judging the company that advertises those brands.”

The results also show that half the respondents also say it is important for companies to use gay images in advertising, and seventy-two percent of LGBT respondents say it is important for companies to advertise in gay media.

This data provides further evidence for companies like Verizon (*sponsor of New York Gay and Lesbian Pride*) and United Airlines (*sponsor of San Francisco’s and Los Angeles’ Gay and Lesbian Pride celebrations*) that actively pursuing the market makes good business sense. Wesley Combs, President of Witeck-Combs Communications, noted “both companies are known by lesbians and gays as leaders within the community because both offer domestic partner benefits to their same-sex employees and welcome diversity on many levels. Being a good corporate citizen not only makes these companies a good place to work but also positively impacts the bottom line.”

These unique findings were part of a significantly larger Harris Interactive online study about consumer behaviors of gays and lesbians, as well as other adults. The latest Harris Interactive/Witeck-Combs Communications research was conducted online among 2,692 adults from the Harris Interactive online panel of respondents, between May 3 and May 16, 2001, in which 128 individuals or 4.8% identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

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Editor's Note: The following lesbian and gay pride celebrations are being sponsored by these companies known for their progressive policies towards lesbian and gay employees: San Francisco - Showtime, United Airlines; Washington, DC - United Airlines, Verizon; New York - Verizon; Los Angeles - Showtime; Atlanta - Coors Light, Showtime; Philadelphia - US Airways, IBM, First Union; Denver - Wells Fargo, Subaru, Coors Light; Houston - Wells Fargo, JP MorganChase, Continental Airlines; Cleveland - American Express, Subaru, Absolut.

Note: LGBT refers to individuals who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Percentages may not always add up to 100% due to computer rounding.

Methodology

This Harris Interactive survey was conducted via the Harris Poll Online within the United States between May 3 and May 16, 2001. The survey was conducted via the Internet among 2,692 respondents, 18+ years of age. Figures for age, sex, race, education and number of adults in the household 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.

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

TABLE 1
TRUST IN COMPANIES WITH PROGRESSIVE POLICIES

Base: LGBT Respondents

"How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statement...I trust brands more if they are manufactured by companies that have progressive policies toward gay and lesbian employees."

| | LGBT Respondents |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | % |
| Strongly Agree | 41 |
| Agree | 8 |
| Somewhat Agree | 7 |
| Neither Agree Nor Disagree | 33 |
| Somewhat Disagree | 1 |
| Disagree | 3 |
| Strongly Disagree | 8 |

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TABLE 2
ACTIONS COMPANIES SHOULD TAKE TO REACH OUT TO
GAY AND LESBIAN CONSUMERS

Base: LGBT Respondents

“If a company wishes to sell an every-day consumer product to a lesbian or gay consumer, and there is little difference on price and quality between the product and other similar products, how important would it be for the company to do each of the following?”

% Important

| | LGBT Respondents |
|--|-------------------------|
| | % |
| Advertise in gay media (such as The Advocate) | 72 |
| Demonstrate effective corporate citizenship (that is, support lesbian and gay causes) | 72 |
| Establish and publicize progressive policies toward gay and lesbian employees | 71 |
| Show gay images in its advertising | 50 |
| Show gay images on its packaging | 34 |

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 seven years experience in this unique niche 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 Wes Combs as two of the nation’s twenty-five most influential openly gay business executives.

About Harris Interactive

Harris Interactive (Nasdaq: HPOL), is a worldwide market research, polling and consulting firm. It is best known for *The Harris Poll* and its pioneering use of the Internet to conduct scientifically accurate market research. The Harris Interactive Internet-based forecasts for the 2000 election were the most accurate in the history of the polling industry. With expertise in pharmaceutical, health care, automotive, finance, ecommerce, technology, consumer packaged goods and other markets, the firm has spent 45 years providing its clients with custom, multi-client and service bureau research. In February 2001, the Company acquired the custom research group of Yankelovich Partners, a leading consultative marketing and opinion research firm. Through its U.S. and Global Network offices, Harris Interactive conducts international research in multiple, localized languages. Harris Interactive currently maintains a database of more than 7 million online panelists – the largest of its kind. For more information about Harris Interactive, please visit the Company’s website at www.harrisinteractive.com. EOE M/F/D/V

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