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Study: Gay, Lesbian Consumers Favor 'Friendly' Brands



Levi's 501 TV ad

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Bravo, Apple, Showtime, HBO, Absolut and Levi were cited as the gay-friendliest brands, in a study released this week by Clark, Martire & Bartolomeo. On the other hand, Wal-Mart,

Dunkin Donuts, Cracker Barrel, Exxon Mobil and Samsung received the lowest marks.

The Prime Access/PlanetOut Gay and Lesbian Consumer Study, which claims to be one of the largest studies of gay and lesbian consumer habits and brand perceptions, surveyed 2,259 adults of which 757 identified themselves as homosexuals. It was conducted by Clark, Martire & Bartolomeo, an Englewood Cliffs, N.J.-based opinion research firm. More than two-thirds of gay and lesbian consumers said they were more likely to buy from a company they consider gay-friendly and 71% said they favored brands that include gay imagery in their advertising, as Levi Strauss did last year with a TV ad for Levi's 501 jeans.

"The study reveals that gays and lesbians are fiercely loyal customers to brands they perceive as reaching out to them," said Howard Buford, president and CEO of Prime Access, New York, a multicultural ad agency that commissioned the survey. "A marketing communications program directed at the gay and lesbian audience can be a significant opportunity for brands to build business."

Gay and lesbian participants were twice as likely (60%) as straight counterparts (34%) to say that people seek their advice, which makes them valuable as word-of-mouth ambassadors. Almost half (47%) of gays and lesbians surveyed said sexual orientation was the community that most defined them, followed by gender (45%) and religion (28%). Thirty-six percent of straight respondents said they most identified with gender, followed by nationality (32%) and religion (30%).

The report also polled 3,156 readers of PlanetOut brands like Gay.com and *The Advocate*. Eighty-five percent of PlanetOut respondents said they were more likely to purchase products from gay-friendly companies and 36% considered themselves to be in the know.

The Prime Access/PlanetOut study comes less than a year after Community Marketing, a gay and lesbian marketing consultancy in San Francisco, released the Gay Consumer Index last August. That report, which was sponsored by Absolut Vodka, drew from more than 26,000 responses concerning behaviors like Internet usage, dining frequency, and plasma and HDTV purchases.