

Multiculturally Speaking

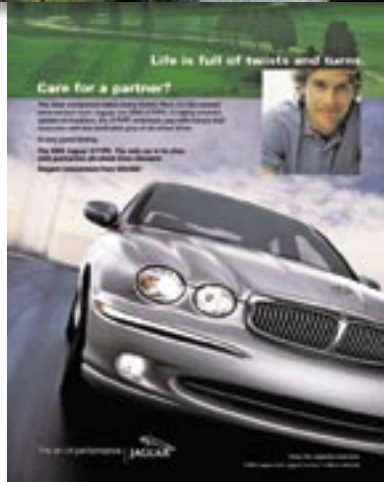


Well-known brands such as Coors, Jaguar, and Stolichnaya Vodka, are aiming to reach a broader demographic.

1 Assess your situation. “The first thing we recommend is that advertisers do an assessment — an internal and external audit,” says Bob Witeck, CEO and cofounder of Witeck-Combs Communications. Such an audit should, for example, take into account an advertiser’s policies and practices, both positive and negative, as well as the company’s treatment of other minority groups.

2 Avoid the stereotypes. Michael Wilke, executive director of the Commercial Closet Association, recently released a best practices document to help build awareness of the GLBT market. The three most common advertising offenses, he says, are homophobia, the classic sissy, and lipstick lesbians.

The typical homophobic ad includes a person responding negatively to another because that person has misinterpreted a particular situation. The classic sissy ad features a gay or effeminate person surrounded by characters who respond negatively to him. The lipstick lesbian is a stereotype that’s less evident but still harmful. “Conventional wisdom says that straight men really like lipstick lesbians and that they will always make an ad sexier,” Wilke says. “This is not necessarily a portrayal that will cause offense, but it’s a very limited representation of the lesbian community.”



Reach Out

GLBT consumers want to embrace your brand. Return the favor by following these six tips
By John Patrick Pullen

AT LEAST 15 MILLION PEOPLE in the U.S., with a combined buying power of more than \$640 million, identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (GLBT), according to a study by Witeck-Combs Communications, a Washington, D.C.–based marketing and public relations firm. But more important than their dollars is this group’s clear preferences on how products and services are marketed to them. If you want their patronage — and their long-term loyalty — keep these six tips in mind before embarking on a GLBT-focused campaign.

3 Market to your strengths. When Ford Motor Co. set out to target the GLBT marketplace, it looked at its individual brands to see what equity they had with the audience, says Shameka Lloyd, a senior marketing and communications strategist for Witeck-Combs, who worked on the campaign. What Ford found was that three of its product lines — Jaguar, Land Rover, and Volvo — stood out in gay buyers’ minds. But of those three, Volvo was thought of as stodgy and in need of a refreshed image. The image of the soccer mom safely transporting the kids to practice in a Volvo didn’t carry over to

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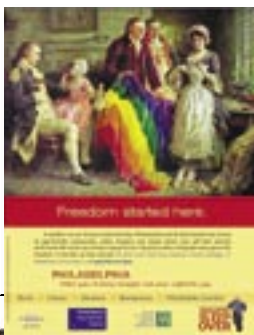
the GLBT market. Through clever PR, Lloyd's group got the word out that Volvo represents all families. Following this was an Ogilvy Award-finalist Starting a Family campaign that included imagery of same-sex couples and recognized that they had families too.

4 Invest more than money. Nearly 50 percent of U.S. consumers within the GLBT community make more than \$50,000 per year, according to a Harris Interactive Panel. But what they want is something money can't buy: genuine, lasting support. And they found that in Stolichnaya Vodka's Be Real campaign, winner of a 2006 ANA Multicultural Excellence Award. The campaign helped Stoli increase its business in GLBT bars and neighborhoods by approximately 30 percent last year. Moreover, an attitude and usage study found that GLBT consumers aged 25–35 are twice as willing to drink Stoli as they are other vodka brands. "Any brand can come in and spend a lot of money on (corporate sponsorships)," says Adam Rosen, senior brand manager for Stoli, a division of international spirits purveyor Pernod Ricard. "We wanted to find a way to become more valuable and more culturally relevant."

They found their way by creating Be Real, a documentary that explores gay life in the U.S. through the perspective of six different people. This spring, Stoli aired five episodes of a made-for-television version of Be Real on MTV's Logo network, which targets GLBT viewers. "It's not just an empty statement with an open check-book," Rosen says. "It is a long-term commitment that the brand is making to help support the community."

5 Walk the talk. Forty-six percent of GLBT consumers prefer products from companies that support gay nonprofit organizations, and 55 percent prefer to patronize businesses that have professed a commitment to equality in the workplace, a Witeck-Combs study found. "Today, a majority of the Fortune 500 companies have domestic partner benefits

The city of Philadelphia and companies like Volvo are specifically aiming their campaigns at the GLBT audience.



"Today, a majority of the Fortune 500 companies have domestic partner benefits as a part of their employee benefits program."

— BOB WITECK,
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as a part of their employee benefits program," Witeck notes. "If they don't have that, then it's probably going to become a problem for a company wanting to do an authentic job of marketing, because they're not holistically treating their employees in the same fashion."

In addition, marketers cannot get away with slapping a "gay-friendly" tag on an offer and expect results, experts say. Local hotels in Philadelphia, for example, offer gay and lesbian packages that undergo sensitivity training to make sure guests feel right at home. "If you're two women checking into a hotel, you don't want any creep factor and you certainly don't want any sense that there's gossip or conversation going on," says Jeff Guaracino, vice president of communications for Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing.

Important, too, is that GLBT ads are authentic. Dawn Meifert, president and CEO of Dallas-based Merge Media Group, says her firm took some heat in 2004 for using both straight and gay models in two separate GLBT-focused ads for Coors Light. "We learned a lesson there," Meifert adds.

6 Segment the community. Marketing to lesbian women is slightly different from marketing to gay men, says Guaracino. The city's initial campaign, Get Your History Straight and Your Nightlife Gay, featured Betsy Ross stitching a rainbow flag and Benjamin Franklin flying a rainbow kite. "The lesbian consumers said to us, 'Hey, that's great, it speaks to me as a gay person, but it doesn't speak to me as a lesbian woman,'" he says.

The challenge applies not only to the messaging but also to the imagery and the media outlets where the ads run. "We've been able to slightly tweak the messaging as we've gone along," Guaracino says of the Philadelphia ads. "We learned that our content could speak more directly to lesbians by highlighting the lesbian things to do at night or by featuring lesbians in our ads."

As more marketing research is compiled, the GLBT community is becoming better defined. As a result, marketers should be targeting more than gays, Witeck says. "We're looking at a lot more different ways to segment in the future — men and women, parents," he adds. "We're also looking at the older gay market for retirement needs. There's a lot more sophistication over a period of time, and that only comes about when you can segment." ■

Next Steps

To learn more, visit the Marketing Insights Center at ana.net/mic. Keyword Search: "GLBT." Entries for the 2007 ANA Multicultural Excellence Awards are now being accepted. Visit ana.net/awards for more information.