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A Content Analysis of Same-Company Advertisements in Gay and Lesbian  
Publications Compared with Mainstream Publications

by  
Sharon Ann Follmer Miken

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the  
Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Division  
of Rowan University  
1998

Approved by

Professor

Date Approved 5/13/98

## **ABSTRACT**

**Sharon A.F. Miken**

**A Content Analysis of Same-Company Advertisements in Gay and Lesbian  
Publications Compared with Mainstream Publications  
1998**

**Mr. Larry Litwin**

**Public Relations/Communications**

In a content analysis, this study reviewed and analyzed advertising placed by national corporations in lesbian and gay magazines. The presumption was that the homosexual population is a viable niche that is being targeted by corporations with a segmented marketing approach. The purpose was to determine if these companies changed the content of these ads in any way to address the needs of the gay consumer.

The two most prominent national magazines that serve the lesbian and gay population in the United States are *The Advocate* and *Out*. From these two magazines was drawn a universe of national corporations that have advertised in these publications as well as *Time*, *Glamour*, *Newsweek* and *Vanity Fair*.

The ads published in the lesbian-gay periodicals were examined for specific reference to any sexual orientation. These were coded as either "straight" or "gay." If a sexuality was implied but not clear, the ad was coded "ambiguous." If the placement was simply informational the code was "generic."

A chart was compiled detailing the name of the advertiser, name of gay and mainstream magazines in which advertisements appeared, the page and date, and the code assigned.

It was concluded that those advertisers who did tailor their advertising when it appeared in gay periodicals were forthright and clever in their creative efforts. Some of the most frequent advertisers who placed messages in both straight and gay audiences did not alter the content or images of the ads to reflect the niche to which the ad was targeted.

## **MINI ABSTRACT**

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Publications Compared with Mainstream Publications  
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It was concluded that some of the most frequent mainstream and gay advertisers did not alter the content or images of the ads to reflect the niche to which the ads were targeted.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate these months of work and the result to my grandfather Nicholas M.Follmer, who died Dec. 27, 1997. Thank you, Pop, for teaching me how to hammer a nail, how to paint a room, and how to love unconditionally. To my grandmother, Helen Follmer, thank you for all your tea, patience, and love.

Thank you, Jane, for enduring this process with me and for sustaining me with your love. To Lois, who is “the only one I know who knows this system,” thank you for being there, most especially, when we weren’t always certain where “there” was.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Problem Statement and Importance**

While the numbers vary with some sources indicating that gays and lesbians are four percent of the U.S. population and other sources saying it is 10 percent, there is little doubt that a large gay segment exists in the United States with as much as \$514 billion to spend.<sup>1</sup> It is little wonder that corporate America would be inclined to court this market, to tap into this growing economic segment.

More and more national companies that are considered “mainstream,” i.e. primarily heterosexually-owned and advertising in heterosexual media, are placing ads in gay media in order to reach this niche. Corporations trying to reach this segment use two major vehicles: sponsorship of gay-oriented events and/or advertising directly in gay media.

This raises the question, then, regarding whether ads are altered specifically to attract the gay consumer. It is hoped that this thesis will be among the first to take an academic look at how mainstream corporate America includes this sizable niche in its marketing strategies as well as adding to the general research regarding marketing to gays and other minorities.

#### **Purpose**

This purpose of this study was to determine if and how mainstream corporations tailor their advertising through copy or image when they advertise in gay media in order to reach this market more effectively. In this study, advertising placed by the same companies in

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Wilke, “Reliable research data difficult to gather, analyze,” Advertising Age (August 4, 1997), 11

gay-oriented print media was compared to ads placed in mainstream print media to determine what if any changes were made to accommodate this gay market niche.

A study of the gay and lesbian market conducted by Simmons Market Research and Mulryan/Nash Advertising attested to the affluence of the market. The "Gay & Lesbian Market Study," considered to be the largest of its kind, found that the average individual income for gays and lesbians to be \$36,800 compared to census statistics of \$32,114 for heterosexuals.<sup>2</sup> The study reported that 28.5 percent of the 3,896 respondents had annual household incomes in excess of \$50,000. Of those total responses, 21 percent reported incomes in excess of \$100,000.<sup>3</sup> This study was based on the readership of the eight leading gay newspapers in the country and the results are controversial.<sup>4</sup>

Another survey, the Yankelovich Monitor Study put the income for gay men at \$37,400 compared to \$39,300 for heterosexual men; and \$34,800 for lesbians compared to \$34,400 for heterosexual women. While the income figures may vary, it remains that marketers perceive gays and lesbians as a viable, reachable niche market.

If a corporation advertises to a gay market, must the image be a gay one to be effective? That is, must there be an indication that the people pictured in the ads are involved in a same-sex relationship? Or, likewise, does the copy reflect a same-sex orientation? According to some sources, "psychographic marketing" (reaching consumers on an emotional level that appeals to their perceived lifestyle) is a new trend in the refinement of niche marketing.<sup>5</sup>

Discussing the expansion of wine retailers into the gay market, an article in *Wine Business Monthly* noted that: "It used to be that advertising touted a product based on its specifications: the horse power of an automobile, the designer label of a suit, or the appellation of a wine.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel L. Wardlow, Phd., Gays, Lesbians and Consumer Behavior (1996), 25

<sup>3</sup> Michael Wilke, "Data show affluence of gay market," *Advertising Age* (February 3, 1997), 58

<sup>4</sup> Wardlow, 25

<sup>5</sup> Steve Heimoff, "Psychographic Marketing Latest Trend," (*Decanter*, November 20, 1997), found on America Online

“Those still count, advertisers say, but when you’re trying to get consumers to try a product they may know little about, such as wine, you’ve got to reach them on an emotional level, one that appeals to their perceived lifestyle.”<sup>6</sup> Even though the gay market (targeting selling to homosexuals and lesbians) is diverse (both genders, several age groups, different ethnicities, etc.) it is considered a niche market.

A niche market is a narrowly focused market that is defined by some special interest. This is in contrast to a mass market which is a broad, undifferentiated market. When a corporation decides to target a narrow, or niche market, it is considered to be using *differentiation planning*.

Differentiation strategies are used when products or services are sought or bought by a narrow group. Considerations are given to individual needs. When there is little to distinguish products such as cars, marketers may use differentiation strategies to produce a certain image to create a selling appeal.<sup>7</sup>

Documentation pinpoints the start of identifiable niche marketing beginning in the mid-1960s. The shift to niche marketing has been attributed to several factors including increasing levels of competition for the mass market, shifts in demographic growth rates and geographic patterns for the U.S. population, and the increasing availability of specialized media products.<sup>8</sup>

Among groups to be targeted as niche groups are various racial and ethnic audiences. Gays and lesbians have joined the category of “niche market” having met the criteria of being identifiable, accessible, and sufficient in number.

Although people vary in degree to which they identify with a group, by and large, gays and lesbians have shared commonalities which form the basis of an identifiable group. The social and political movement of gays dating from the start of the modern “gay rights” watershed known as Stonewall in 1969, has helped gays and lesbians develop a

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> William Wells, John Burnett, Sandra Moriarty, Advertising Principles and Practice (1992) , 211

<sup>8</sup> Wardlow, 15

consciousness of themselves as a people.<sup>9</sup>

### **A historical perspective**

Corporate America moved into the gay market around the 1970s. The marketing move had a set back when the AIDS epidemic struck predominantly in the male homosexual population.<sup>10</sup>

The economic recession in the United States during the 1980s brought these companies back to “court” the gay market. This was necessary because a market had to be found that was expanding while others were cutting back and the gay market fit the bill. Despite the controversy that can sometimes be associated with this niche market, the demographics make it attractive enough for some corporations to take the risk. The lesbian-gay market is perceived as lucrative and gays and lesbians are likely to be among early adopters when it comes to trying new products.<sup>11</sup>

Companies that were wary of entering this niche because of possible backlash from mainstream customers gained confidence as time went by and they realized their products were selling and their services were successful in this niche. Mainstream companies can move into the gay niche without advertising directly in the gay media, or if they do, can use generic advertising once they have made the buy.

They do this by using their public relations departments to publicize their non-discrimination and domestic partners policies. The strategy is that the company is perceived as “gay friendly.” The image is cultivated through news media, brochures, or other media campaigns. Once a corporation has been viewed by the gay niche as accepting and non-prejudicial, their products and services become sought after by the gay consumer.<sup>12</sup>

Another way a corporation can accomplish gay visibility is through sponsorship of gay-targeted or gay-oriented events. The company logo is seen on literature, promotions, or ads

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<sup>9</sup> Wardlow, 22

<sup>10</sup> Interview, Stuart Elliot, advertising columnist for the *New York Times*, 10/31/97

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

associated with the events. The company is then seen as a gay ally without having to spend money on advertising in gay media.<sup>13</sup>

Sometimes major corporations will not advertise directly in gay media, but will allow subsidiaries to do so. This is the case with the Seagram's Distilling Company. Recently ads for its subsidiary Tropicana Orange Juice were placed in a gay magazine while the larger company has not placed ads targeted to that niche.

### **Delimitations**

What this study did not set out to do was join the "gay debate." There was no attempt to put any perspective on some of the divisive questions which arise in the studies of gay issues. There is not, for instance, a discussion of whether homosexuality is something one is born to or a choice. There was no attempt to study why other companies decided not to advertise to the gay market.

There is a definite bias in this study that is pro-gay in terms that: gays exist in this country as a minority population just as there is a Hispanic minority, a black minority, or a Jewish minority. They therefore form a segmented, niche market recognizable and desirable to some mainstream American corporations.

### **Procedure**

About a year in advance of writing this thesis, tearsheets were collected from gay magazines to compile a list of advertisers who were considered to be "mainstream." These were corporations that market primarily to heterosexual audiences through heterosexual-oriented media who had placed advertising in homosexual-oriented media.

The implication was that these were corporations that were, at least for the purposes of business, "gay-friendly." That meant that these were companies that had come to the decision to market to the gay and lesbian audience through their publications. Publications

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

from which this collection was made were *The Advocate* and *Out* (gay- and lesbian-oriented magazines with national distributions). Seminars and workshops were attend during 1997's PrideFest, Philadelphia's annual celebration of gay diversity. This was done to make further contacts for this study.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Gay:** For the purposes of this study this is used generically to mean men and women who prefer relationships with and/ or are attracted to people of the same sex. The term applies to both male and female homosexuals unless it is applied as an adjective to delineate "gay man" or "gay woman." Where the wording is "gay and lesbian," gay means male homosexual. Lesbian is used interchangeably to mean gay woman as well. There is no attempt here to delineate between transgendered transsexual, or bisexual individuals. Rather, these groups and, any tangential to them, are viewed to be a part of what is considered the "gay" community.

**Out:** homosexual men and women who readily acknowledge their sexual orientation either in gay or gay-friendly circumstances or to the world at large. This status is achieved either by self-proclamation or due to sources having disclosed the information about the individual.

**Openly gay:** this refers to homosexual men and women who acknowledge their sexuality to the world at large.

**Non-gay:** Used interchangeably with heterosexual or "straight," indicates circumstances where individuals, a society or a community deems themselves or itself to be opposite-sex oriented.

**Heterosexual:** individuals of opposite sex orientation; also "straight."

**Mainstream:** that which is associated with the non-gay world at large.

Niche: a segment or constituency.

Niche marketing: sales, promotions, advertising aimed at a specific.  
population segment or audience.

Queer: controversially used in some gay circles to denote homosexual or gay in a positive interpretation; also interpreted to be an anti-homosexual slur. Note: In some gay media it has become acceptable to use the term “queer” instead of gay. “Queer” has traditionally been seen as insulting to gays and, despite its growing popularity among some gays, it is viewed here in its traditional, negative view. Therefore “queer” will not be used synonymously with “gay” or any other form to mean homosexual unless used contextually.

## CHAPTER 2

### RESEARCH OF THE LITERATURE

One of the newest niches to open up in recent years is the marketing to and courting of lesbian and gay consumers. Since niche marketing to gays is relatively new, periodicals were the primary source for this topic. One book that addressed the subject, *Gays, Lesbians, and Consumer Behavior*, was located through a web site on the Internet called Amazon.com.

The majority of the articles used for this research were found through Proquest and Newsbank and came from *Advertising Age*. Several more sources were found through *The Advocate*, *The New York Times*, *Media Week*, *Editor and Publisher*, *Billboard* magazine, and the *Philadelphia Gay News*.

It follows that since marketing to gays and lesbians as a niche is somewhat new, research in the area is rather recent. Therefore, most of the information compiled for this thesis was through periodicals rather than texts or scholarly papers. For instance, writing about the subject of gay media visibility, Wayne Hoffman in the Oct. 3, 1997, edition of the *Philadelphia Gay News* said that "gay and lesbian visibility in the mainstream media has reached unprecedented levels in the 1990s."<sup>1</sup> In his commentary, "Gays gain media visibility: Will image diversity follow?" Hoffman quoted lesbian activist and writer Urshi Vaid who said there seemed to be an "explosion of gays and lesbians as a marketing niche."

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne Hoffman, "Gays gain media visibility; will image diversity follow?" *Philadelphia Gay News* (Oct. 3-9, 1997), 30

This attention from corporate America has heightened awareness of the gay community among the rest of the country. This, in turn, has been integral to the recent proliferation of gay images in the press. Liquor companies, movie distributors, pharmaceutical businesses, and others sponsor gay events, buy ads in gay magazines, and make increased gay coverage financially feasible in the mainstream media.<sup>2</sup>

While both Vaid and William Bray, program director for the Institute for Alternative Journalism, have some reservations about this newly-developed mainstream pitch to the gay-lesbian niche, they are in agreement about its recent popularity. Bray feels that, "Gay and lesbian people have arrived at the right to be marketed to by corporations through the media and that is a sign of progress."

One of the more recent and comprehensive articles to appear in a mainstream publication regarding the move of "big advertisers" into the gay market was printed in the Aug. 4, 1997, issue of *Advertising Age*. The article noted that visibility of gays and lesbians has reached a critical mass in corporate America and mainstream media over the last several years. This has resulted in such mainstream marketers as IBM overcoming its reluctance to enter a demographic previously perceived as risky.<sup>3</sup>

IBM Corporation has become the largest U.S. employer to extend health care benefits to long-term partners of gay and lesbian employees. Following that move, in order to stay competitive, the company advertised in gay media for the first time in its history.<sup>4</sup>

The list of major national advertisers who have "jumped on board" to reach out to gay audiences includes America Online, Aetna Life & Casualty, Chase Manhattan Corp., Johnson & Johnson, Lotus Development Corp., Merrill Lynch & Co., Samsung Electronics America, Subaru of America, United Airlines and US West.

These corporations joined others that had a longtime presence in the gay media market, but those early advertisers were primarily "spirits" products such as Seagram America's Absolut Vodka. The prediction is that other more diverse product and service corporations are likely to join this growing list. This is a niche viewed as an expanding one with more ads being placed

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Wilke, "Big advertisers join move to embrace gay market," *Advertising Age* (August 4, 1997), 1

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

in such product areas as soft drinks, beauty care, juice, and pet foods.<sup>5</sup>

Making the move to advertise in gay media was no easy decision for these major corporations, according to Michael Wilke of *Advertising Age*. "The trend is a major leap of faith for companies that have little research to support their decision..."<sup>6</sup>

Another industry observer sees the move as less than momentous. "The sensationalism has worn off--it's not as rare and newsworthy for a company to enter the gay market," said Howard Buford, president of Prime Access, New York, which specializes in reaching minority markets.<sup>7</sup>

Moreover, the potential for backlash is always present. In 1994, AT&T withdrew a gay-oriented direct mail piece prepared by Prime Access when it got protests from "conservatives."<sup>8</sup> Corporations that do enter this market must do so with sensitivity to the niche. "People who've been historically excluded are very skeptical," said Buford. "If you suddenly offer somebody acknowledgement, it's a very suspicious relationship."

Once corporations decide to enter the gay market they must decide whether the ads run in gay-oriented magazines will be "gay specific," or whether a more ambiguous route will be taken. Increasingly, marketers do go the "gay specific" route. Last year, some alcoholic beverage marketers, which have had a long history of gay marketing, became even more "gay daring." For example, a lesbian kiss was scheduled to be featured in a commercial aired in Canada by BBDO Canada for Molson Dry (beer). In July 1997 Miller Brewing, which began marketing to gays as early as 1987, okayed a gay-only campaign featuring male paper dolls.<sup>9</sup>

According to Julian Acosta, marketing manager--emerging markets, American Express Financial Services, corporations that decide to take the gay plunge must do so with total commitment. "We can't be half committed. We have to use the 'g-word,'" he feels.<sup>10</sup> He was particularly critical of ads that are open to interpretation and appear to be one thing to a gay clientele and another to a straight audience. "We heard in focus groups it makes people angry to see

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

(ambiguous) ads. Some people think you can hit two markets with the same message. But people are too sophisticated. You can't do that anymore."

Ambiguity is increasing in ads "that put representation in the eye of the beholder."<sup>11</sup> One major advertiser, Benetton (clothes) for instance, ran an ad in 1994 that had two men pictured as "brotherly love" on outdoor billboards that were designed to reach mainstream audiences. When the same ad ran in a gay magazine, the implication was far more gay themed.<sup>12</sup>

Some advertisers seemingly want to have their gay cake and eat it, too. In the fall of 1996 Abercrombie & Fitch denied that an ad was gay oriented despite a provocative male pairing in a photo ad that appeared only in gay media.<sup>13</sup> Another example of ambiguity is "gay-vague" Parliament cigarette ads from Philip Morris USA that pictured two men and a woman. This ad appeared repeatedly in gay magazines. In July 1997 in an ad for Parliament Menthol Lights, Philip Morris changed the ad to show two men with a dog. This ad, however, was found only in gay periodicals and not in mainstream publications.

According to at least one poll, if advertisers are going to reach a gay audience, they will have to forego any trepidation about being gay-specific. A survey taken by *The Advocate* (a gay and lesbian magazine) showed 54 percent of those responding favoring advertising that addressed gay issues. According to *The Advocate*, some national advertisers such as Virgin Atlantic Airways, Miller Lite and Hiram Walker and Sons' Tuaca Liqueur have used gay-specific themes in their advertising.

Considered "premiere" among break-through gay-themed advertising is an ad for the Swedish-owned Ikea furniture company. In the mid 1990s the furniture company produced a commercial that featured a homosexual couple shopping for furniture for their home. The ad, according to Bob Garfield reviewer for *Advertising Age*, was received by mainstream America "with very little fanfare."<sup>14</sup>

Among the first major airlines to actively court the gay consumer was United. The airline

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Wilke, "Are they?...Or aren't they?" *Advertising Age* (August 4, 1997), 11

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Bob Garfield, "Ikea again furnishes stylish whimsy in ads," *Advertising Age* (August 25, 1997), 29

scheduled an ad to run in the June 30, 1997, edition of *The Advocate* for a campaign expected to run through the fall. The ad was of the same generic variety that appeared in United's mainstream placements.

Such smaller airlines as Kiwi International and Virgin Atlantic Airways were years ahead of United in gay-oriented campaigns.<sup>15</sup> British Airways took its first foray into the gay market not through advertising, but by sponsorship. The British air carrier became a major sponsor of the Rainbow Credit Card in the fall of 1997.<sup>16</sup> The Rainbow Card is a gay- and lesbian-oriented credit card company with some of the proceeds going to lesbian and gay charities and causes.<sup>17</sup> Another major airline carrier to sponsor gay events but not directly advertise to the gay market is American Airlines. American has sponsored events associated with the gay community since 1994 but has not done any gay-specific ads nor any gay periodical placements despite having appointed a gay-market sales liaison in 1994.<sup>18</sup>

"We have a strong foothold in the market," said Rick Cirillo, American's global sales and marketing manager to the gay and lesbian community. The company, according to Cirillo, sees no need to place ads since "the perception is that we've already advertised."<sup>19</sup>

Subaru of America is recognized as a leader among automobile manufacturers in targeting the gay market. Subaru is unique because it specifically targets lesbians in its advertising (as well as having gay male-oriented ad counterparts). Research by the company showed gay females were four times as likely to own a Subaru as the general market.<sup>20</sup> The move by the company makes it the first Japanese carmaker to use gay media. In addition, Subaru is a Rainbow Card sponsor.<sup>21</sup>

Subaru's move into the gay market was a continuing effort, according to the company, to carve out niche marketing. "Three years ago we were trying to be a competitor in the mainstream and that...wasn't working," said a spokesperson. It was then that the carmaker switched its focus to all-wheel drive and wagons, shifting to a market with a smaller but more loyal consumer groups,

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<sup>15</sup> Wilke, 10

<sup>16</sup> The New York Times, (October, 15, 1997), C8

<sup>17</sup> Harriet L. Schwartz, The Philadelphia Gay News, (October 25-31, 1997), 3

<sup>18</sup> Michael Wilke, "United is 1st major airline to target gays," *Advertising Age*, (June 2, 1997), 6

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Wilke, "Subaru adds lesbians to niche marketing drive," *Advertising Age* (March 4, 1996), 8

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

among them lesbians and gays.<sup>22</sup>

Advertisers who have moved into this niche have favored the male clientele. Because gay - specific creative is still uncommon for mainstream marketers, even fewer have specifically included lesbians (the exception being Subaru which recently placed an ad with direct appeal to gay females). On the whole, little research exists regarding this niche and lesbians have been largely ignored, while gay men have fared slightly better.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER 3

### STUDY DESIGN

#### **Data needed**

For this study a collection of straight-oriented and gay-oriented magazines was compiled in order to draw conclusions about whether or not companies that were advertising in mainstream magazines were changing their images or copy in any way when these companies ran advertising in gay-oriented magazines. This comparison was done on a same-company based approach using companies traditionally viewed as heterosexually-oriented. For instance, if Budweiser placed an advertisement in *The Advocate*, a gay-oriented magazine with a national distribution, what were the similarities and contrasts to ads placed in *Newsweek* ? Once out of the mainstream media, did a corporation such as Anheuser-Busch (parent company of Budweiser) use a “generic” ad to get its message across or was a more gay-themed message used? By “gay-themed” it is meant that images and/or copy implicitly or explicitly depicted same-sex orientation.

The goal was to analyze ad data to determine if the presentation of the message made an “opposite-sex” pitch or if the pitch was gay-themed. If there was no straight or gay orientation in the ad, analysis was based on whether the message was ambiguous and could be interpreted by the gay niche without any kind of overt or covert message that the orientation being depicted was only opposite-sex. Lastly, an ad could simply be a generic, product-oriented message with no specific lifestyle or sexual orientation indicated.

#### **Research method**

For the purposes of this study, only print media were considered. Two major gay-oriented

national magazines were studied. These magazines were *The Advocate*, and *Out*. Ads in these magazines were compared to same-company ads placed in mainstream magazines such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Glamour*, and *Vanity Fair*. These mainstream magazines were selected because of the commonality of product and or service selection. That is, these magazines were likely to contain the same kind of advertising for products and services--credit cards, airlines, wine, liquor, fashion, etc.--that are popular among both gay and heterosexual consumers.

Gay-themed magazine selection for the purposes of this study was extremely limited given that there are just two publications that are distributed nationally with a significant national advertising base to make this a viable study. Since the gay selections were a "given," the next task was to choose comparable "mainstream" publications with which to make comparisons. The four mainstream magazines *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Glamour* were selected for the reasons previously mentioned. The sampling of all six magazines used in this study ("gay" and "straight") were drawn from a 31-month period (October 1996 through April 1998).

The first analysis was done with the gay-oriented magazines: *The Advocate* and *Out*. These publications were scrutinized to determine which companies with national images were advertising in them. This would include such national corporations as IBM, the Aetna insurance company, airlines such as United Airlines, liquor, beer, and wine companies such as Budweiser and Absolut vodka, and auto manufacturers such as Subaru. The universe was drawn from advertisements in either or both gay publications of any product or service construed as having national recognition. No regional, classified, or in-house advertisements were considered for this study. Once the ad was found in a gay magazine and was determined to be a nationally-known product/service, a code drawn from four categories was applied to it .

Categories for the national advertisements found in *Out* and *The Advocate* were established according to a specific methodology. First, the company or brand name was noted. Next, the illustration was scrutinized to determine if there was any overt depiction of a sexual orientation either towards a same-sex or opposite-sex lifestyle. For example, if there were two people featured

in the ad, were they holding hands, embracing or otherwise showing a romantic or committed attachment? Any covert indications of sexual orientation were also noted. This included, for example, a female in the foreground as a “spokesperson” for the product with a male in the background with children, a “family-type” car and/or a house. Any such depictions where same sex couples were used were noted as well.

Next, copy was examined to see if there were written references to any specific lifestyle. Words such as “marriage,” husband,” “wife,” “fiancee,” were taken to indicate a straight lifestyle slant. Some buzzwords for same-sex relationships were “union,” “commitment,” “domestic partner,” “closet.”

Also considered was the kind of copy that accompanied the images. For example, if the word commitment was used but the image showed an opposite sex couple, this obviously fit the “straight” category. Likewise, “couple,” usually meant to construe a heterosexual relationship, took on a different meaning if it was used in conjunction with two same-sex people.

Finally, any particular symbols, labels or other “small print” statements were noted. For example, a statement saying that the product or service was endorsed by the Christian Coalition would have indicated a heterosexual orientation. A symbol showing support from a gay-oriented group such as the Human Rights Campaign would have been construed as homosexual orientation.

## **Criteria**

The criteria used to determine if an advertisement was specifically designed to be gay-themed was the following: 1--a same sex couple(s) was depicted in a romantic or domestic situation; 2--the copy for the ad specifically referred to same-sex orientation; 3--the image contained a “gay related” symbol such as the diversity rainbow flag or the inverted pink triangle, both universally acknowledged to be connected to “gay pride;” or some other gay organization endorsement. Ads meeting this criteria were given a GY which stood for “gay.”

Analysis for straight-oriented ads used the same criteria as for same-sex orientation. An

advertisement was considered to be straight-oriented if it featured an opposite sex-couple(s) with a clear-cut domestic or romantic attachment. For instance, were the two kissing, holding hands, dancing, or engaged in any other activity that could be logically construed as a heterosexual relationship? Did the printed copy indicate that this was a straight couple? For example, was there a mention of husband or wife in the copy? Did the ad show a picture of a female and make reference to a boyfriend, thereby establishing heterosexuality? If either of these two criteria were present and/or the ad contained an endorsement or otherwise supportive statement from an exclusively heterosexual organization, it was given the code ST for “straight.”

If there was no clear-cut indication that an advertisement leaned toward any orientation and its image and copy were open to interpretation, it was coded AM for “ambiguous.” Ads were given this code if they, for instance, featured three people of different genders and the relationship among them was not clear. If the ad was vague and did not use specific female-boyfriend or male-girlfriend references in its wording or illustration, it was deemed ambiguous.

Lastly, a GN (for “generic”) code was applied if an advertisement 1--simply pictured the product, 2--the copy was product-specific with no lifestyle or sexual orientation references or images, 3--nothing else in the message (labels, symbols, endorsements) could be construed to lean toward any sexual orientation.

There were no codes applied to advertisements found in the heterosexually-oriented, mainstream magazines. The assumption going into this study was that no gay-themed ads would be found in mainstream magazines. Ads appearing in *Vanity Fair*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Glamour* would likely fall into one of three categories: straight; generic; ambiguous. This assumption was borne out through the research. (See table at end of chapter.)

## **Research steps**

The research began with the gay-oriented magazines. A total of 12 issues of *Out* magazine were examined from the period of October 1996 through April 1998. (Note: *Out* is a monthly publication.) Sixteen issues of *The Advocate* were examined from the period of January 1997

through March 1998. (Note: *The Advocate* publishes twice a month.)

They were studied page-by-page and a list was compiled noting the name of any nationally - recognized product/company that advertised in any way (either through an ad placement or a sponsorship endorsement). The name of the company or product was noted along with the name of the publication the ad/endorsement appeared in, the date, page number, and the code.

Next, these same companies that had placed advertisements in straight-oriented magazines were noted. A total of 16 issues of *Vanity Fair*, which publishes monthly, was studied from October 1996 through April 1998. Eighteen issues of *Newsweek*, a weekly publication, were analyzed covering the period of September 1997 through April 1998. A total of 21 issues of *Time* was included in the study. The period examined was July 1997 through March 1998. A total of 15 issues of the monthly *Glamour* were examined covering November 1996 through March 1998.

Once the list was compiled, the next step was to analyze those same-company/product ads that appeared in both gay and straight magazines. A total of 36 companies were found that placed advertisements in both gay-oriented and straight-oriented magazines.

Those companies and/or products were: Aetna Insurance Company, Absolut vodka, Altoids, American Airlines, American Express, Bacardi Rum, Baileys, Bass Ale, Benson & Hedges, British Airways, Budweiser/Bud Light, Calvin Klein, Dewar's, Freixenet, Glenlivet, Grand Marnier, Gucci, Hennessy, IBM, Joe Boxer, Lauder, Merit, Nautica, Nike, Parliament Lights, Perry Ellis, Remy Martin, Smirnoff, Subaru, Tanqueray, Tommy Hilfiger, Tropicana, United Airlines, Versace, (Vizio) Movado, and Waterford Crystal.

These 36 companies with a total of 207 advertisements formed the universe of study. The next step was to compare the ads to see if and in what ways the ads were altered to reach a gay audience. This could have been by changing image, re-doing copy, putting a "gay-friendly" symbol or endorsement on the ad, or all three alterations.

In addition to this visual comparison, three executives of mainstream companies which have out-reached to the gay market niche were contacted. Questions were posed regarding strategies

tactics, constraints and other considerations that were applied to the objective of tapping into this particular niche. The head of a gay-niche boutique was also interviewed regarding this particular segment and the “cross over” by mainstream corporations and services. Their responses and comments are discussed in chapter five.

### **Data Table and Pie Chart**

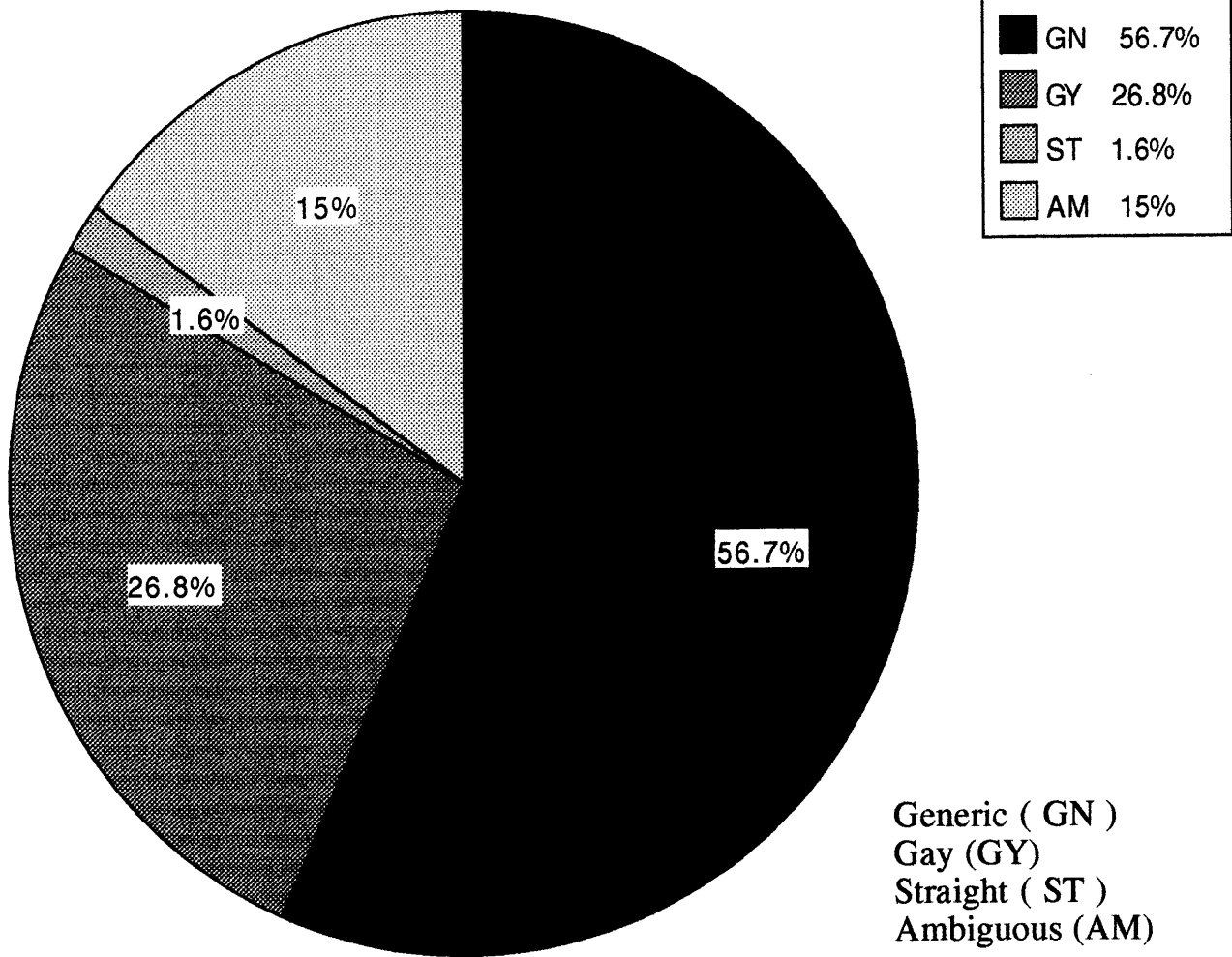
|    | A                    | B            | C                 | D     | E    | F                   | G                    | H     |
|----|----------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------|------|---------------------|----------------------|-------|
| 1  | Product              | Gay Magazine | Date              | Page  | Code | Mainstream Magazine | Date                 | Page  |
| 2  | Aetna                | Out          | Feb. 1997         | 14    | GN   | Newsweek            | Dec.29,'97/Jan.5,'98 | 9     |
| 3  | Absolut              | Out          | Nov. 1997         | bc    | GN   | Newsweek            | Nov. 10, 1997        | bc    |
| 4  |                      | Out          | Feb. 1997         | 51    | GN   | Newsweek            | Dec. 15,1997         | ifc   |
| 5  |                      | Out          | June 1997         | bc    | GN   | Time                | July 14,1997         | 11    |
| 6  |                      | Out          | April 1997        | 57    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 7  |                      | The Advocate | Mar. 3, 1998      | bc    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 8  | Altoids              | The Advocate | Mar. 3, 1998      | 2     | GN   | Time                | Jan. 26, 1998        | 74    |
| 9  |                      | The Advocate | Feb. 3, 1998      | 2     | GN   | Glamour             | Mar. 1998            | 177   |
| 10 | American Airlines    | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 57    | GY   | Time                | Nov. 24, 1997        | 19    |
| 11 |                      |              |                   |       |      | Newsweek            | Oct. 20, 1997        | 31    |
| 12 | American Express     | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 27    | GN   | Newsweek            | Sept. 22, 1997       | 11    |
| 13 |                      | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 41    | GN   | Time                | Feb. 9, 1998         | 110   |
| 14 |                      | Out          | June 1997         | 17    | GN   | Time                | July 14,1997         | 59    |
| 15 |                      | Out          | June 1997         | 41    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 16 |                      | Out          | Oct. 1997         | 41    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 17 |                      | Out          | April 1997        | 27    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 18 |                      | Out          | April 1997        | 87    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 19 |                      | Out          | July 1997         | 37    | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 20 |                      | Out          | Dec.'97/Jan.'98   | 35    | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 21 |                      | The Advocate | Oct. 14, 1997     | 50    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 22 |                      | The Advocate | Oct. 28, 1997     | 7     | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 23 |                      | The Advocate | Nov. 25, 1997     | 7     | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 24 |                      | The Advocate | Jan. 20, 1998     | 10    | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 25 |                      | The Advocate | Feb. 17, 1998     | 7     | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 26 | Bacardi              | Out          | April 1997        | 35    | GN   | Glamour             | Mar. 1997            | bc    |
| 27 |                      | Out          | June 1997         | 19    | GN   | Glamour             | April 1997           | 246   |
| 28 |                      | Out          | Dec. '97/Jan. '98 | 33    | GN   | Vanity Fair         | Dec. 1996            | 173   |
| 29 |                      | The Advocate | Oct. 14, 1997     | 34    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 30 | Baileys              | Out          | Feb. 1997         | bc    | GN   | Glamour             | Nov. 1997            | bc    |
| 31 |                      | Out          | Mar. 1997         | 53    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 32 |                      | Out          | April 1997        | 76    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 33 |                      | Out          | June 1997         | 11    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 34 |                      | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 35    | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 35 |                      | Out          | Dec.'97/Jan.'98   | 102   | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 36 |                      | The Advocate | Nov. 11, 1997     | 10    | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 37 |                      | The Advocate | Nov. 25, 1997     | 11    | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 38 |                      | The Advocate | Dec. 23, 1997     | 14    | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 39 | Bass Ale             | Out          | Oct. 1997         | 13    | GN   | Vanity Fair         | Dec. 1997            | 229   |
| 40 |                      | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 77    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 41 |                      | Out          | Dec.'97/Jan.'98   | 113   | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 42 | Benson and Hedges    | Out          | June 1997         | 52    | GN   | Vanity Fair         | Jan. 1998            | 68-69 |
| 43 |                      | Out          | Oct. 1997         | 55    | AM   | Vanity Fair         | June 1997            | 105   |
| 44 |                      | Out          | Dec. '97/Jan. '98 | 67    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 45 |                      | The Advocate | Feb. 3, 1998      | 65    | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 46 |                      | The Advocate | Mar. 3, 1998      | ibc   | GN   |                     |                      |       |
| 47 | British Airways      | The Advocate | Feb. 17, 1998     | ibc   | GY   | Newsweek            | Oct. 20, 1997        | 70    |
| 48 |                      | The Advocate | Mar. 17, 1998     | 36-37 | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 49 | Budweiser/ Bud Light | Out          | April 1997        | 57    | GY   | Newsweek            | Dec. 8, 1997         | 64    |
| 50 |                      | Out          | June 1997         | 65    | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 51 |                      | Out          | Oct. 1997         | 25    | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 52 |                      | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 63    | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 53 |                      | Out          | Dec.'97/Jan.'98   | 73    | GY   |                     |                      |       |
| 54 |                      | The Advocate | Jan. 21, 1997     | 23    | GY   |                     |                      |       |

|      | A              | B            | C                 | D     | E  | F           | G                    | H         |
|------|----------------|--------------|-------------------|-------|----|-------------|----------------------|-----------|
| 5 5  |                | The Advocate | Oct. 14, 1997     | 106   | GY |             |                      |           |
| 5 6  |                | The Advocate | Oct. 28, 1997     | 23    | GY |             |                      |           |
| 5 7  |                | The Advocate | Nov. 11, 1997     | 66    | GY |             |                      |           |
| 5 8  |                | The Advocate | Nov. 25, 1997     | 22    | GY |             |                      |           |
| 5 9  |                | The Advocate | Dec. 23, 1997     | 25    | GY |             |                      |           |
| 6 0  | Calvin Klein   | Out          | Feb. 1997         | ifc/1 | AM | Glamour     | June 1997            | 43-44     |
| 6 1  |                | Out          | April 1997        | ifc/1 | AM | Glamour     | Nov. 1996            | 52-53     |
| 6 2  |                | Out          | June 1997         | ifc/1 | AM | Glamour     | Feb. 1997            | 52-53     |
| 6 3  |                | Out          | Oct. 1997         | 15    | AM |             |                      |           |
| 6 4  | Dewar's        | Out          | Mar. 1997         | 17    | GN | Time        | Nov. 17, 1997        | ibc       |
| 6 5  |                | Out          | April 1997        | bc    | GN | Time        | Dec. 15, 1997        | 8         |
| 6 6  |                | The Advocate | Jan. 21, 1997     | ifc   | GN | Vanity Fair | Feb. 1997            | 54        |
| 6 7  |                |              |                   |       |    | Vanity Fair | May 1997             | 109       |
| 6 8  |                |              |                   |       |    | Vanity Fair | Nov. 1997            | 211       |
| 6 9  | Finlandia      | Out          | Dec.'97/Jan.'98   | 6-7   | GN |             |                      |           |
| 7 0  |                | The Advocate | Jan. 20, 1998     | ifc/1 | GN |             |                      |           |
| 7 1  | Freixenet      | The Advocate | Jan. 20, 1998     | 15    | GN | Time        | Dec.29 '97/Jan.5 '98 | 166       |
| 7 2  |                | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 67    | GN | Time        | Dec. 22, 1997        | 92        |
| 7 3  |                |              |                   |       |    | Glamour     | Dec. 1997            | 202       |
| 7 4  |                |              |                   |       |    | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1996            | ibc       |
| 7 5  |                |              |                   |       |    | Vanity Fair | Nov. 1996            | 21        |
| 7 6  | Glenlivet      | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 99    | GN | Newsweek    | Dec. 8, 1997         | 41        |
| 7 7  |                | The Advocate | Nov. 27, 1997     | 19    | GN |             |                      |           |
| 7 8  | Grand Marnier  | Out          | Oct. 1997         | bc    | AM | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1997            | 93        |
| 7 9  |                | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 25    | AM | Vanity Fair | Nov. 1996            | 226       |
| 8 0  |                | Out          | Dec.'97/Jan.'98   | 44    | AM | Vanity Fair | Nov. 1997            | 86        |
| 8 1  |                |              |                   |       |    | Vanity Fair | July 1997            | bc        |
| 8 2  | Gucci          | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 11    | GN | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1997            | 107       |
| 8 3  |                | Out          | Mar. 1997         | 23    | AM |             |                      |           |
| 8 4  |                | Out          | Oct. 1997         | 23    | AM |             |                      |           |
| 8 5  |                | The Advocate | Aug. 19, 1997     | 2     | AM |             |                      |           |
| 8 6  | The Hartford   | The Advocate | Mar. 17, 1998     | 2     | GY |             |                      |           |
| 8 7  | Hennessy       | Out          | Feb. 1997         | 29    | GN | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1997            | 83        |
| 8 8  |                | Out          | Mar. 1997         | 27    | GY | Vanity Fair | Jan. 1998            | 23        |
| 8 9  |                | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 17    | GN |             |                      |           |
| 9 0  |                | Out          | Dec. '97/Jan. '98 | 14-15 | GY |             |                      |           |
| 9 1  |                | The Advocate | Dec. 23, 1997     | 3     | GY |             |                      |           |
| 9 2  |                | The Advocate | Jan. 20, 1998     | 8     | GN |             |                      |           |
| 9 3  |                | The Advocate | Feb. 3, 1998      | 5     | GN |             |                      |           |
| 9 4  |                | The Advocate | Feb. 17, 1998     | 2     | GN |             |                      |           |
| 9 5  |                | The Advocate | Mar. 3, 1998      | 4     | GN |             |                      |           |
| 9 6  | IBM            | Out          | Oct. 1997         | 11-12 | GN | Newsweek    | Dec. 8, 1997         | 7         |
| 9 7  |                | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 39    | GN | Time        | Nov. 24, 1997        | ic, 68-69 |
| 9 8  |                | Out          | Dec.'97/Jan.'98   | 43    | GN |             |                      |           |
| 9 9  |                | The Advocate | Oct. 14, 1997     | 3-4   | GN |             |                      |           |
| 10 0 |                | The Advocate | Jan. 20, 1998     | 2     | GN |             |                      |           |
| 10 1 |                | The Advocate | Mar. 3, 1998      | 19    | GN |             |                      |           |
| 10 2 | Joe Boxer      | Out          | Mar. 1997         | 30    | GN | Vanity Fair | Mar. 1998            | 145       |
| 10 3 |                | Out          | April. 1997       | 119   | GN |             |                      |           |
| 10 4 | Johnnie Walker | Out          | Feb. 1997         | 2-3   | AM |             |                      |           |
| 10 5 |                | Out          | Oct. 1997         | 19    | GY |             |                      |           |
| 10 6 |                | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 8-9   | GN |             |                      |           |
| 10 7 |                | The Advocate | Sept. 16, 1997    | 14    | GY |             |                      |           |
| 10 8 |                | The Advocate | Oct. 14, 1997     | 19    | GY |             |                      |           |

|       | A                 | B            | C                 | D     | E  | F           | G             | H       |
|-------|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------|----|-------------|---------------|---------|
| 1 0 9 |                   | The Advocate | Oct. 28, 1997     | ifc   | GY |             |               |         |
| 1 1 0 |                   | The Advocate | Nov. 11, 1997     | 17    | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 1 1 |                   | The Advocate | Nov. 25, 1997     | ifc   | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 1 2 | Kamel Cigarettes  | Out          | Feb. 1997         | 43    | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 1 3 |                   | Out          | June 1997         | 9     | ST |             |               |         |
| 1 1 4 |                   | The Advocate | Dec. 23, 1997     | 7     | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 1 5 |                   | The Advocate | Jan. 20, 1998     | 12    | ST |             |               |         |
| 1 1 6 |                   | The Advocate | Feb. 3, 1998      | 10    | ST |             |               |         |
| 1 1 7 |                   | The Advocate | Feb. 17, 1998     | 5     | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 1 8 | Kool              | Out          | May 1997          | ibc   | AM |             |               |         |
| 1 1 9 |                   | The Advocate | Oct. 14, 1997     | 20-21 | ST |             |               |         |
| 1 2 0 |                   | Out          | July 1997         | bc    | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 2 1 | Lucky Strike      | Out          | Feb. 1997         | 16-17 | AM |             |               |         |
| 1 2 2 |                   | Out          | Mar. 1997         | bc    | AM |             |               |         |
| 1 2 3 |                   | Out          | April 1997        | 20-21 | AM |             |               |         |
| 1 2 4 |                   | Out          | June 1997         | ibc   | AM |             |               |         |
| 1 2 5 |                   | Out          | Oct. 1997         | ibc   | ST |             |               |         |
| 1 2 6 |                   | Out          | Dec.'97/Jan.'98   | ibc   | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 2 7 | Lauder            | Out          | Nov. 1997         | 2-3   | AM | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1997     | 5       |
| 1 2 8 |                   |              |                   |       |    | Vanity Fair | Sept. 1997    | 6-7     |
| 1 2 9 | Merit Cigarettes  | Out          | Mar. 1997         | 29    | GN | Glamour     | Mar. 1997     | 152     |
| 1 3 0 |                   | Out          | Dec. '97/Jan. '98 | 107   | GN | Time        | Jan. 15, 1997 | bc      |
| 1 3 1 |                   | The Advocate | Aug. 19, 1997     | ifc   | GN | Newsweek    | Dec. 29, 1997 | bc      |
| 1 3 2 | Miller Lite/      | Out          | June 1997         | 25    | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 3 3 | Miller Brewing    | Out          | June 1997         | 128   | GY |             |               |         |
| 1 3 4 |                   | The Advocate | Aug. 19, 1997     | 14    | GY |             |               |         |
| 1 3 5 |                   | The Advocate | Dec. 23, 1997     | ibc   | GY |             |               |         |
| 1 3 6 | Nautica           | Out          | April 1997        | 2-3   | GN | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1997     | 41-53   |
| 1 3 7 |                   | Out          | Oct. 1997         | 9-10  | GN | Glamour     | Feb. 1997     | 54-55,  |
| 1 3 8 |                   | Out          | Dec. '97/Jan. '98 | 12-13 | GN |             |               | 111     |
| 1 3 9 | Naya              | Out          | Feb. 1997         | 38    | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 4 0 |                   | Out          | June 1997         | 83    | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 4 1 |                   | The Advocate | Oct. 14, 1997     | 11    | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 4 2 |                   | The Advocate | Jan. 20, 1998     | 6     | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 4 3 |                   | The Advocate | Aug. 19, 1997     | 20    | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 4 4 |                   | The Advocate | Jan. 21, 1997     | 15    | AM |             |               |         |
| 1 4 5 | Nike              | Out          | Feb. 1997         | 9-10  | GN | Glamour     | Feb. 1997     | 34      |
| 1 4 6 |                   | Out          | Mar. 1997         | 12-13 | AM | Glamour     | Mar. 1997     | 62-63   |
| 1 4 7 |                   | Out          | June 1997         | 2-3   | AM | Glamour     | July 1997     | 86-87   |
| 1 4 8 | Parliament Lights | Out          | Mar. 1997         | 57    | AM | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1997     | 231-232 |
| 1 4 9 |                   | Out          | July 1997         | 95    | GY | Glamour     | Mar. 1997     | 283-284 |
| 1 5 0 |                   | Out          | Dec./Jan. '98     | 135   | AM | Glamour     | Dec. 1997     | 261-262 |
| 1 5 1 | Perry Ellis       | Out          | Mar. 1997         | 40    | AM | Vanity Fair | May 1997      | 78-79   |
| 1 5 2 |                   | Out          | April 1997        | 43    | AM | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1997     | 127     |
| 1 5 3 | Remy Martin       | The Advocate | Nov. 11, 1997     | 23    | AM | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1996     | 169     |
| 1 5 4 |                   | The Advocate | Jan. 20, 1998     | 18    | AM | Vanity Fair | Nov. 1996     | 99      |
| 1 5 5 | Smirnoff          | Out          | Dec./Jan. '98     | 39    | GN | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1997     | 209     |
| 1 5 6 |                   |              |                   |       |    | Glamour     | Jan. 1998     | 121     |
| 1 5 7 | Southern Comfort  | Out          | Dec./Jan. '98     | 127   | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 5 8 |                   | Out          | June 1997         | 35    | GY |             |               |         |
| 1 5 9 | Stolichnaya       | Out          | Nov. 1997         | ifc/1 | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 6 0 |                   | Out          | July 1997         | 6     | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 6 1 |                   | Out          | Feb. 1997         | 13    | GN |             |               |         |
| 1 6 2 |                   | Out          | April 1997        | 15    | GN |             |               |         |

|       | A                 | B                   | C                      | D           | E                     | F           | G             | H     |
|-------|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|-------|
| 1 6 3 |                   | Out                 | Dec./Jan '98           | 2 7         | GN                    |             |               |       |
| 1 6 4 | Subaru            | Out                 | June 1997              | 1 3         | GY                    | Time        | Nov. 17, 1997 | 94-95 |
| 1 6 5 |                   | The Advocate        | Mar. 17, 1998          | 1 1         | GY                    |             |               |       |
| 1 6 6 |                   | The Advocate        | Oct. 14, 1997          | 9           | GY                    |             |               |       |
| 1 6 7 |                   | The Advocate        | Mar. 3, 1998           | 7           | GY                    |             |               |       |
| 1 6 8 |                   | The Advocate        | Feb. 17, 1998          | ibc         | GY                    |             |               |       |
| 1 6 9 | Swatch            | The Advocate        | Jan. 20, 1998          | ibc         | GY                    |             |               |       |
| 1 7 0 |                   | Out                 | June 1997              | 5 8         | GY                    |             |               |       |
| 1 7 1 |                   | Out                 | Oct. 1997              | ifc/1       | GY                    |             |               |       |
| 1 7 2 |                   | Out                 | April 1997             | 5 1         | GN                    |             |               |       |
| 1 7 3 | Tanquerly         | Out                 | Dec. '97/Jan.'98       | 4 7         | AM                    | Vanity Fair | Nov. 1997     | 3 6   |
| 1 7 4 |                   | The Advocate        | Sept. 16, 1997         | 5 3         | GN                    | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1997     | ibc   |
| 1 7 5 | Tommy Hilfiger    | Out                 | Nov. 1997              | 2 3         | AM                    | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1997     | ifc   |
| 1 7 6 |                   | Out                 | Dec. '97/Jan. '98      | 4-6         | GN                    | Vanity Fair | Nov. 1996     | 28-29 |
| 1 7 7 |                   |                     |                        |             |                       | Glamour     | April 1997    | ifc/1 |
| 1 7 8 | Tropicana         | Out                 | Dec.'97/Jan.'98        | 6 0         | GN                    | Vanity Fair | July 1997     | 2 3   |
| 1 7 9 | United Airlines   | The Advocate        | Mar.3, 1998            | 2           | GN                    | Newsweek    | Feb. 23, 1997 | 4 8   |
| 1 8 0 |                   | The Advocate        | Oct. 28, 1997          | 2           | GN                    | Newsweek    | Nov. 24, 1997 | 16-17 |
| 1 8 1 |                   | The Advocate        | Oct. 14, 1997          | ifc         | GN                    |             |               |       |
| 1 8 2 |                   | The Advocate        | Mar. 3, 1998           | 5           | GN                    |             |               |       |
| 1 8 3 | Versace           | Out                 | Feb. 1997              | 5           | AM                    | Vanity Fair | Nov. 1996     | bc    |
| 1 8 4 |                   |                     |                        |             |                       | Vanity Fair | Nov. 1997     | bc    |
| 1 8 5 | Vizio/Movado      | Out                 | Nov. 1997              | 8           | GN                    | Newsweek    | Dec. 8, 1997  | 6 1   |
| 1 8 6 |                   | Out                 | Feb. 1997              | ibc         | GN                    | Vanity Fair | Dec. 1997     | 1 3   |
| 1 8 7 |                   | Out                 | June 1997              | 5           | GN                    | Vanity Fair | Nov. 1996     | 2 7   |
| 1 8 8 | Waterford Crystal | Out                 | Dec. '97/Jan. '98      | 2-3         | GY                    | Vanity Fair | April 1998    | 1 4 1 |
| 1 8 9 |                   |                     |                        |             |                       |             |               |       |
| 1 9 0 |                   |                     |                        |             |                       |             |               |       |
| 1 9 1 |                   |                     |                        |             |                       |             |               |       |
| 1 9 2 |                   |                     |                        |             |                       |             |               |       |
| 1 9 3 |                   |                     |                        |             |                       |             |               |       |
| 1 9 4 |                   |                     |                        |             |                       |             |               |       |
| 1 9 5 |                   | Code: bc=back cover | ifc=inside front cover |             | ibc=inside back cover |             |               |       |
| 1 9 6 |                   | GN=generic          | GY=gay                 | ST=straight | AM=ambiguous          |             |               |       |

## Coded Advertisements



## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

The focus of this chapter is the findings of content analysis of advertising done by mainstream companies in gay-oriented magazines compared to those same company ads in straight-oriented magazines. A sample of six magazines (two gay-oriented and four straight-oriented) was analyzed in a time frame spanning from October 1996 to April 1998. A total of 36 separate companies and or products totaling 207 advertisements were found that appeared in both a mainstream magazine (*Newsweek*, *Glamour*, *Time*, *Vanity Fair*) and one or both of the two most prominent national magazines targeted to the homosexual male and female audience, *The Advocate* and *Out*.

The ads were coded in one of four ways in order to determine a “sexual orientation appeal”: GY if the copy and/or illustration was considered to be of a direct appeal to the “gay” (homosexual and/or lesbian) consumer; ST if the ad focus was a “straight” (heterosexual) image; AM if the product or service message was “ambiguous” and therefore could be interpreted two or more ways in terms of sexual orientation appeal; and GN “generic,” if the ad was simply informational with no sexual orientation implied either overtly or covertly. For purposes of reporting, the findings will be done in alphabetical order.

#### **Absolut**

The first product considered is Absolut vodka. In the study group, this ad first appeared in the February 1997 issue of *Out*. An ad for Absolut appeared in every gay magazine analyzed usually on the back cover. In every instance the image was a generic one. The Absolut advertisements are minimal copy. In every instance found in the study, there were simply two words with the first

being the product's name. For instance "Absolut welcome" (bottle shape appears in a house decorated for the Christmas holidays), " Absolut squeeze" (ad shape configured in citrus juicer) "Absolut restraint" (outline of bottle on the back of a tattooed body). The Absolut message was a generic one and did not vary when it appeared in such mainstream magazines as *Time* (July 14, 1997) or *Newsweek* (Nov. 10, 1997 and Dec. 15, 1997).

### Aetna

Aetna Insurance Annuity Co. advertisements for its retirement services appeared in *Out* twice (February 1997 and June 1997) and in *Newsweek* (Jan. 5, 1998). The same picture and copy were used in both the *Out* February issue and the *Newsweek* issue. It depicted a man in a parka on a snowy landscape chasing penguins with the headline copy reading "Retirement is dead. It's been replaced by a novel concept called living." Since the copy was informational and the illustration neutral, it was given a generic rating. The June *Out* advertisement pictured a man and a woman leaping in the air (perhaps on a trampoline), the headline copy reading, "Forget retirement-- We're talking about a second childhood. (This time make sure you get a big allowance. " While nothing in the copy denoted a sexual orientation, an opposite-sex couple was pictured. This ad was coded straight .

### Altoids

Altoids mints appeared in the Feb. 3, 1998, and the March 3, 1998, issues of *The Advocate* . The March 3 ad was considered generic. It showed a young boy (with a 1950s look) wearing a cumbersome mouth apparatus holding the product. The headline copy read, "Brace yourself," with a tag line, "The curiously strong mints," beneath it. Similar ads appeared in *Time* Jan. 26, 1998, and *Glamour* March, 1998. The Feb.3 *Advocate* ad, however, pictured a male body builder with the headline reading, "'Nice Altoids'" (the same tag line appeared below it). This was a play on the word "deltoids." Since this ad appeared in a gay-oriented magazine it was deemed ambiguous.

This same ad was not found in any mainstream magazines, but the study sample for this product was extremely limited.

### **American Express**

A total of 13 advertisements for American Express were examined in the two gay magazines during the period studied. Of those 13, five had a gay message and the remainder determined to be generic. The ads were for the American Express Card, American Express Travelers Cheques and American Express Financial Advisors. One gay-themed ad featured a lesbian couple and appeared in three issues of *The Advocate* during the time period studied and once in *Out*. The ad pictured a woman resting her arms and head on her female partner's shoulder. The background was a landscape with soft golden hues and a touch of shoreline to the left of the picture. The headline copy read, "How do you plan your future together?" The body of the copy used the words "gay" and "lesbian." "When you're ready to plan a future together, who can you trust to understand the financial challenges that gay men and lesbians face?" The copy discussed the specific financial situations faced by homosexual couples and talked about "Domestic Partner Planning" and "the restrictions placed on unmarried couples." In addition, a "small print" notice on the picture explained that, "American Express Financial Advisors offers domestic partner benefits to our lesbian and gay employees worldwide."

An American Express ad appearing in the Oct. 28, 1997, issue of *The Advocate* also appealed to same-sex consumers. The headline for this ad for American Express Financial Advisors said: "Finally, financial advice that acknowledges your unique needs." There were no illustrations for this ad. The copy discussed "unmarried couples" and said, "At American Express Financial Advisors, we want to make our commitment to gay men and lesbians clear. Just as we have extended domestic partner benefits to our lesbian and gay employees worldwide, we are committed to providing sound financial advice that specifically address the unique issues affecting our gay and

lesbian clients.” This same ad also appeared in the July 1997 issue of *Out*. American Express ads appearing in the April 1997 and June 1997 issues of *Out* were judged to be generic. The illustrations and the copy discussed the need to use Travelers Cheques when vacationing and the necessity for financial planning. Still another ad for the American Express Card (*The Advocate*, Oct. 14, 1997) featured a full page ad of television personality Daisy Fuentes afloat in a pool surrounded by sundry goods from exercise equipment to a mounted sword fish. To the right was a list of American Express Card merchants.

The same generic ad for the American Express Card appeared in an issue of *Out* (October 1997) as well as *Newsweek* (Sept. 22, 1997). The copy said: “Wherever you go, chances are we’re already there...” The words were superimposed on a sepia-toned “European look” village.

A *Time* ad for American Express Financial Advisors (July 14, 1997) featured a profile of one of the company’s financial consultants. The headline copy said, “How long have I been advising people about money? Long enough to know you can’t plan someone’s future in five minutes.”

### **Bacardi and Baileys**

Bacardi Limited (Bacardi-Martini USA , Inc.) placed several product ads in *Out* and *The Advocate* as well as *Glamour* and *Vanity Fair*. In all instances the ads were the same--a generic message that featured the product.

Of nine advertisements for Baileys (Original Irish Cream liqueur) five placements had gay themes. The ads pictured two china cups. In three instances the cups both wore bow ties indicating a male couple. The other two featured cups with bright red lips and bow to the side indicating a female couple. The copy for the ads was the same: “Our limited-edition coffee cups are available nationwide, though only recognized as a set in Hawaii.” The determination that made this gay was the reference to Hawaii. In that state, a long gay-marriage legal battle continues to be fought and there are indications that Hawaii may become the first state in the United States to legalize marriage between same-sex couples. The remainder of the ad featured the bottle of

Baileys (about a fifth of the size of the cups) on its side with the words “& coffee” under it. The copy also contained details on purchasing the cups.

The four other Baileys placements in gay periodicals were of the generic variety. One in *Out* (February 1997) showed an icy glaze with a “melted out” portion showing a woman biting her finger. The copy said “Yum.” The Baileys bottle appeared in the bottom right portion of the page. Another “Yum” version was placed in the March 1997 issue of *Out* showing just the male china cup and a third “Yum” version was placed in the June 1997 issue of *Out*. All the “yum” series studied were generic.

A Baileys ad in the November 1997 issue of *Glamour* on the back cover showed two china cups, male and a female with “yum” written on inside of female cup. Additional copy read: “Just another innocent get-together?”

## **Bass Ale**

Bass Ale (Guinness Import Co.) placements in gay magazines were of the generic nature. An identical ad appeared in the December 1997 issue of *Vanity Fair* and two issues of *Out* (October 1997 and December 1997-January 1998). A two-page spread, this ad showed an eclectic-looking group of men and women smoking cigars on the one page. The facing page displayed an old-fashioned fan blowing away the smoke. The copy read: “In a world of fleeting diversions, there’s always Bass Ale.” A picture of a glass of the beer was at the bottom right corner of the page. A second Bass Ale ad in the November 1997 issue of *Out* featured a tattooed man in his briefs. The copy said: “In a world of avoidable mistakes, there’s always Bass Ale.” The product was pictured lower right with the name “Bass” being etched on the glass. Nothing in the picture or copy could be construed as leaning in any one orientation. This, too, was given a generic rating.

## **Benson & Hedges**

The Benson & Hedges ads examined from *Out* and *The Advocate* and the two analyzed from the straight *Vanity Fair* all were deemed generic. The exception to this was one appearing in the

October 1997 issue of *Out*. In all instances, the cigarette manufacturer placed ads that personified the cigarettes. One, for example, in the year-end (1997) issue of *Out* showed two cigarettes “sitting” on a park bench. The copy read: “Peace & quiet; Benson & Hedges”. Another showed a cigarette “sitting” in an arm chair “feet” resting on an ottoman. The copy for this said: “Warm & cozy”.

These were typical of Benson & Hedges ads found in both gay and mainstream magazines. One in the October 1997 issue of *Out*, however, showed two cigarettes in an embrace-like pose outside at night. Copy for this read: “Moonlight & romance; Benson & Hedges”. Since there was no way to distinguish the cigarettes in terms of gender (unlike the Baileys series), this ad was given an ambiguous code.

### **Other Cigarette manufacturers**

Cigarette advertising was frequently found in the gay magazines. Twenty six were found in the gay magazines in the period studied versus eight in straight magazines. Besides Benson & Hedges, these brands included Kamel Red Cigarettes, Lucky Strike, Merit, and Parliament. The two brands found in both gay and straight publications in addition to Benson & Hedges were Merit and Parliament. No matter where these ads were found, though, the presentation was usually generic with some occasional ambiguity found in Parliament Light ads. Kamel will be discussed further in chapter five. The ambiguity of the Parliament ads is of interest in terms of findings. Ads for the cigarettes found in *Glamour* (December 1996) showed a man and a woman and its straight connotation was evident. When Parliament advertised in the gay periodicals, however, there was likely to be three people pictured (usually two men and a woman) giving the scenario a sense of ambiguity. In the July 1997 issue of *Out*, the cigarette manufacturer placed an ad showing two men and a dog that could be construed as gay.

## **British Airways**

British Airways moved from sponsorship status to full advertiser in two examples used in the study. In the Feb. 17, 1997, issue of *The Advocate*, the airline company was listed as a sponsor of the Rainbow Card, a credit card company which donates part of its earnings to gay-interest causes. As such, its logo appeared along with the words, "Proud sponsor of the Rainbow Endowment" (foundation supporting the card). In the March 17, 1998, issue of *The Advocate* British Airways had a gay-coded ad placement that covered the bottom half of two pages. The headline said: "If you think *South Beach* is the only place for tea, think again." What gave this copy its gay flavor were the references to "South Beach" (a favorite Miami hangout for gay males) and "tea." In "gayese" tea means an afternoon dance and club gathering, an extremely popular and entrenched part of the gay and lesbian culture, especially on vacations. There is nothing gay-specific in the rest of the copy, an invitation to "take a quick break across the Pond to London." However, there was some wording that could be viewed ambiguously. One sentence said: "Whatever your interest, London is waiting to welcome you." At the bottom right of the page is a sub headline which read: "London--You don't know the half of it." This contrasts with a more neutral approach taken by the airway in the Oct. 20, 1997, issue of *Newsweek*. There the ad's dominant copy read: "Free ticket to anywhere in the world."

## **Budweiser**

Every advertisement examined in the gay magazines of this study for Bud Light (Anheuser-Busch, Inc.) was gay-specific. The ads took on three forms. One ad listed a series of labels such as "yes-man," "battle-ax," "dumb jock," "nice guy," "Pollyanna." The labels, seven in all, dominated the page. They were white on red blocks (they simulated dispenser-type labels) placed against a black background. In contrast to this all caps, sans serif type, a script in much smaller

print centered at the bottom of the page said: “Labels belong on beer, not people.” The Bud Light logo was positioned next to the script. This creative was given a gay code for its obvious reference to the stereotyping (labeling) that is often accorded homosexual people.

A second Bud Light ad showed a case of the product seemingly emerging from a closet. Again the copy was brief. Above the case of beer was small all cap, sans serif letters that said: “Closet case.” In the bottom right corner was small sans serif type arranged in a curved pattern that said: “Be yourself and make it a Bud Light.” What made this copy gay is that a term used for homosexuals who no longer hide their sexual orientation is, “Coming out of the closet.”

Along a similar vein is an advertisement where a six-pack of Bud Light is pictured. One of the bottles is being lifted out. The copy was done the same way as the previously discussed ad and read: “Another one coming out.” Again the “curve effect” admonishment to “be yourself” was positioned in the lower right corner. The “gay” translation of this copy was that any lesbian or gay who publicly acknowledges his/her sexual orientation is known as an “out” gay. The process of this acknowledgement is known as “coming out.”

There was a far less political approach to a Budweiser ad placed in a mainstream magazine analyzed in this study. In that ad, the bottle is shown next to a glass of beer and the copy reads: “Good friends. Good times. Good cheer.” At the bottom of the page preceding the Budweiser logo was a sentence that said: “Thanks for drinking responsibly.”

### **Calvin Klein**

Every Calvin Klein ad encountered in this study was ambiguous in nature no matter where it appeared. Typical of this advertiser whose marketing approach has earned the company a “cutting edge” reputation, was an ad featured in the November 1996 issue of *Glamour*. A two-page spread exhorted the viewer to “be a secret. be a rumor.” Pictured was a woman with the disheveled, waif-like appearance for which these ads are famous. An ad in *Out* (April 1997) on the inside cover took the same approach. An androgynous woman peered out to the audience, hands in the back of her dark jeans while the copy simply stated: “be shy. be bold. just be.”

The ambiguity, of course, broadens the possibilities and allows the advertiser to use the same creative in gay and mainstream publications without committing to any one sexual orientation. For example, an ad for Calvin Klein fragrance in the October 1997 issue of *Out* used a black and white photo of a muscular man bare from the waist up. As is usual in Calvin Klein ads, the copy used the minimalist approach. The print simply named the product--Escape for men-- with the Calvin Klein identification running along the bottom of the page. This ambiguous, minimalist approach allows the vendor to "sell" to both gay and straight clientele.

Another example is taken from the April 1997 *Out*. In a two-page, color spread that uses the inside cover and the first page, a full page picture of a denim-clad woman looks to the right. On the right-hand side are two androgynous women (one sporting cropped hair and tattoos) embracing. The only copy is stark white typeface that says "Calvin Klein jeans" superimposed on the "CK" logo. Because the presentation is in a homosexually-oriented publication, it would be easy to view the women as lesbians and, hence, draw the conclusion that this is a specific gay appeal. But the ambiguity of the images are such that the same depiction would "play" in a straight magazine equally as well as be simply viewed as avant garde.

### **Other fashion marketers**

Fashion and accessory companies (in addition to Calvin Klein) that advertised in *Out* and *The Advocate* as well as a straight publication (*Vanity Fair*) were Gucci, Joe Boxer, Movado, Nautica, Nike, Perry Ellis, Tommy Hilfiger, and Versace. As with the liquor ads, fashion advertisements tended to be either ambiguous or generic whether placed in gay or straight magazines [see "Calvin Klein].

In the case of Gucci, ads found in both *Out* (November 1997) and *Vanity Fair* (December 1997) were minimalistically generic. Pictured was an extreme close up of a stylish black boot against a silver-blue metallic background. In white serif typeface below going across the bottom of the page was the Gucci name. Two Gucci ads in other gay publications merit further scrutiny. One

*Out* (March 1997) was a black and white photo of a John Kennedy, Jr., look-alike. Again, the minimalist approach was used with the same Gucci logo appearing in smaller typeface in the lower right corner. Considering that this image appeared in a magazine that appeals mostly (but not exclusively) to gay males this image was at least ambiguous. Likewise, another Gucci ad in *The Advocate* (August 19, 1997) showed a color photo of two men in a semi-embrace. The photo had a white cast to it and a white line crossed their faces. They were dressed in contrasting metallic-hued shirts and ties. The Gucci logo was positioned across the middle of the page. This image was given a gay code.

Nike ads (sportswear) were for the most part of the generic whether they were found in straight or gay publications. The images and copy were product-explanatory. One appearing in *Out*, though, is open to an ambiguous interpretation. Like all the Nike ads examined, this was done in a two-page spread. The left side of the spread featured a red background with black stark, sans serif type in varying sizes centered on the page. The facing page featured an athlete in action with the Nike logo to the right bottom of the picture. Nothing in the image lends itself to anything other than a neutral interpretation, but the copy raised sexuality questions. It read: "Blue lips suggest stupidity not studliness." Certainly a variant of the word "stud" in a magazine read by gay males would at least have to be rated as ambiguous.

In the case of Perry Ellis, two examples drawn from *Vanity Fair* (May 1997 and December 1997) were clearly straight images. In one black and white photo a woman in a tank top lies on the chest of a reclining man in a white tee shirt. The Perry Ellis logo is printed in sans serif type across the bottom. In *Out* (April 1997 and March 1997) single photos of two different males were used in closeups taken from the waist up. In one instance the model was bare-chested and wet having perhaps just come from a swim. In the other, a male in a white shirt peered straight out at the camera. The head of the model was cut off at the forehead. The Perry Ellis logo appeared at the bottom and there was no other copy. Again, the code was an ambiguous one since interpretation was open to the viewer.

Clothing manufacturer Tommy Hilfiger placed ads in both the gay magazines as well as straight (*Glamour* and *Vanity Fair*). Hilfiger images consisted of groups of young people sitting around in casual denim and cotton clothes. The images were similar whether they were for the clothes themselves or for the Hilfiger fragrance “Tommy.” Since the marketer’s images showed both genders together, the look was that of “a group of friends” with no indication of coupling. But in at least one instance (*Out* November 1997) a female had her arm around a male and was whispering in his ear. On first glance, this would be considered a straight presentation. However, an interpretation could also be made that the woman was perhaps whispering to him regarding the male to his right indicating a possible link. Then again, perhaps nothing sexual was being indicated despite an obvious intimacy between the male and female giving the presentation an overall effect of ambiguity.

### **Dewar’s, etc.**

Chief among advertisers in the two gay-oriented periodicals were liquor and wine products. Among those advertisers whose advertising was found in both mainstream and gay magazines were: Dewar’s (scotch whiskey), Freixenet (wine), Glenlivet (scotch), Grand Marnier (liqueur), Hennessy (cognac); Remy Martin (champagne cognac), Smirnoff (vodka), Stolichnaya (vodka), and Tanqueray (gin). Several more companies were found exclusively in the gay periodicals and they will be discussed in chapter five. With few notable exceptions, discussed here, ads appearing in both straight and gay magazines were the same “generic” type with a pitch made for the product and nothing related to any sexual orientation was mentioned.

For instance, the Dewar’s ads found in the gay magazines were duplicated in the straight magazines. One such ad was a two-page spread with 20-year-old high school pictures on the right hand side. On the left, the copy read: “If you don’t think your tastes change, let’s think back to that haircut senior year.” The product was placed in the lower right corner and the dominant colors

of the piece were red, yellow, and black (*The Advocate* Jan. 21, 1997). The same color scheme and type face were found in an ad which appeared in *Vanity Fair* (February 1997) and *Out* (April 1997). In that ad, two men (one older) were having a drink. The copy read: "Now you've got more in common with your dad than just his nose."

Another Dewar's spot found in *Time* Dec. 15, 1997, appeared to appeal to a straight audience showing a man and a woman home from shopping with the copy saying: "A full day of shopping? Now that calls for a drink."

Four ads for Remy Martin were studied that appeared in *Vanity Fair* as well as *The Advocate*. All were found to be generic except for one in the Nov. 11, 1997, issue of *The Advocate*. In that spot, two filled glasses sat next to the bottle of champagne on a pedestal surrounded by clouds. The copy said: "Want to come up for a drink sometime?" This ad was coded ambiguous.

### **Grand Marnier**

In each instance that Grand Marnier ran an ad the ambiguous approach was taken. Two different ads appeared in the issues studied, but the images were the same. In one (*Vanity Fair* December, 1997) a woman in "long johns" with a cast on her leg is seated and sipping from a cup. She is surrounded by three men. There are two to the left and top right of the picture and a third, somewhat obscured, at the bottom right. He, too, is sipping from a cup and the woman is looking at him. Given that there are four people in this picture, it was open to interpretation as to their relationship with one another. The reader was left to draw his/her own conclusions.

The copy accompanying the picture is product-oriented, but provocative. It reads: "Adding Grand Marnier to one's coffee can also create a stir." The word "stir", in this case used as a noun, can mean "a mental impulse, sensation, or feeling." This, then, added to the ambiguity of the meaning of the message. This same ad appeared in issues of *Out* in December 1997-January 1998. A similar ad (*Out* November 1997) pictured a man and two women seated having cocktails. The man had his arm draped around the woman to his right and was looking at the second woman to

his left. The woman to the man's right was looking seductively at the other woman across the table. The positioning of the subjects gave rise to several interpretations of this ad in terms of sexuality.

If the man and woman were together, were they looking to engage the second woman in conversation, or is something more there? And what was to be made of the woman looking across the table at the single woman? Surely the intention here is deliberately ambiguous. Likewise, the copy gave little hint of the relationship among the people pictured. It said: "adding Grand Marnier to a margarita is also quite enticing." Like "stir" in the previous ad, "enticing" was a loaded word here. Just who was "enticing" whom was left solely to the imagination of the viewer.

## **Hennessy**

Hennessy (cognac) presented several different images in the magazines analyzed. In the 1997 series of advertisements examined, the marketer went with muted images in sepia tones. One ad, considered generic, appeared both in *Out* (February 1997) and *Vanity Fair* (December 1997). In that presentation, a trumpeter was shown with copy that said: "If you've ever been lost in a blue note you already know the feeling of cognac Hennessy"

Another Hennessy ad in *Out* (November 1997) featured a woman in a sheer fabric with copy that read: "If you've ever been wrapped in silk you already know the feeling of cognac Hennessy." Another *Out* ad for Hennessy (running three different times) featured two men embracing. The copy was similar: "If you've ever come in from the cold you already know the feeling of cognac Hennessy." Nothing in the copy of any of these ads alluded to any sexuality. The one depicting the men, however, could be interpreted as gay-oriented. The ad with the woman was ambiguous since she was pictured alone.

A subsequent Hennessy ad (placed in both gay and straight publications) delivered a generic message in the copy despite a straight image. It featured a drawing of a man on a motorcycle and a woman in a sidecar. The "pitch" was for a sidecar cocktail made with Hennessy.

## **IBM and United Airlines**

IBM (International Business Machines) had many placements in *The Advocate* and *Out*. All were similar or the same to those found in *Time* and *Newsweek*. One (*Time* Dec. 8, 1997) depicted three white teenagers and said: “At least now they have a reason to think they know everything.”

In a two-page spread in *The Advocate* (October 14, 1997), the left page displayed a number of faces all wearing the same ski hat. The faces were of various ages, both genders, and represented different ethnicities. The copy stated: “the ‘how do we sell more stuff to more people in more places?’ solution.” All IBM ads studied were coded generic.

Likewise, United Airlines advertised in both gay and straight publications but the same generic images and copy were used in all instances. One ad featured a 50s-look mother and daughter. The headline copy read: “Remember how your mother told you not to cut in line? She didn’t live in airports.” The second showed candy-coated cereal floating in milk. The copy discussed the airline’s policy of giving thorough and prompt explanations when flight delays occur.

## **Subaru**

Subaru of America was one of the first sponsors of the Rainbow Card, an affinity card targeted to the gay community. Its logo appeared in Rainbow Card ads in *The Advocate* designating the company’s sponsorship. Subsequently, Subaru has advertised in *The Advocate* and *Out* with both generic and gay pitches. In one, a muscular young man was pictured with the copy: “Makes your heart throb, your pulse race and even takes you out for breakfast.” Another, in a similar vein, showed a young woman atop copy that stated: “Great looking. Stylish. And really, really, nice to your friends.” In both instances the copy and images could have been seen as generic or ambiguous except that both contained gay-related endorsements that clearly show these ads are targeted for the people who read the publication: lesbians and gays. Both ads indicated that Subaru is a Rainbow Card sponsor and one congratulate *The Advocate* on its 30th anniversary.

Another Subaru ad appearing twice in *The Advocate* (March 3, and March 17, 1998) used gay-explicit copy. The Subaru Forester was pictured at the top center of the ad against sunset-gold hues. The headline of white sans serif type said: "Entirely comfortable with its orientation." The explanatory copy talked about the vehicle's attributes of comfort and handling and added: "the... Forester is very secure with its identity."

A Subaru advertisement in *Time* (Nov. 17, 1997) showed a woman putting a kayak on the roof of a Forester. The copy said the vehicle was especially "user friendly."

### **Category breakdowns**

This study found that the overwhelming majority of ads placed in gay periodicals were generic. It was found that 56.7 percent of the ads analyzed for this study were neutral or product/message oriented (see chart chapter three). Almost 27 percent (26.8) of the ads studied were coded gay. Fifteen percent of the ads were coded ambiguous and 1.6 percent were found to be gay oriented.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND INTERPRETATION

Advertisers may choose where to spend their money, but once the decision is made to benefit from the market and target lesbians and gays, responsibility dictates that they be willing to stand by such a choice.

Some marketers have initiated efforts but fail to acknowledge their ongoing intent, while others have quickly pulled back. But the word is out: Since gay consumers consider themselves historically ignored, corporate wishy-washiness causes resentment and defeats the purpose of appealing to this often affluent and influential segment of the public.--Viewpoint, *Advertising Age* (Aug. 11,1997)

The gay market is a viable, and by research accounts, formidable niche that deserves more than “token” courting by advertisers. If a corporation is going to target that niche, then there is an obligation to reflect that niche.

The corporations that do advertise in gay publications are urged to follow the admirable lead of such companies as American Express, Baileys, British Airways, Budweiser, and Subaru. These companies are often gay/lesbian-specific in their advertising. As discussed in chapter four, these companies used images and/or copy that directly addressed the niche it was targeting. The words “lesbian” and “gay” were used. Gay “buzzwords” were evident such as “closet” (Budweiser), “domestic partners” (American Express), “South Beach” and “tea” (British Airways ). Once a gay - friendly image is established through creative, there must be more frequency to demonstrate fidelity to a niche that has already proven its loyalty.

To be successful in this niche, the advertiser must present an image that says, “We know who

you are and what your needs and concerns are.” Secondly, the advertiser must be a regular, consistent presence in the gay media following the lead of American Express or Bud Light. To simply use a “gay daring” creative on a “one shot” placement tells the niche consumers an advertiser is not committed to them and can only offer a token exploration into their realm to enable the corporation to say, “We did it.” Such tactics are reminiscent of the pre-women’s liberation days when companies were wont to say, “We hired a woman once, but she just wasn’t up to the job.”

To establish a foothold in this market, there can be no more fence-straddling or equivocation. Companies are either gay-supportive and willing to demonstrate as much in their advertising in gay publications, or they are not.

### **Black magazine, black images**

An informal study of *Ebony* magazine over a period covering 22 months revealed that advertisements in that magazine reflect the black culture to which the publication is targeted. This is accomplished either through images, copy, or both. For example, an ad for Head and Shoulders features the Zion Baptist Gospel Choir. A Coca-Cola ad made very creative use of a black-associated phrase. That ad showed an older and a younger man, presumably father and son. They have just finished a basketball game and the father (standing) sips a Coke. The son sits to his right looking dejected. The father has the ball on the boy’s head. The copy: “I brought you in this world and I just took you out.”

Two McDonald’s ads also makes the company’s support of the Afro-American niche clear. One list the names of “Afro-American McDonald’s franchise owners who are involved in their communities.” Another salutes “1996 Black History makers of tomorrow.” In virtually every ad examined (hundreds) every photo or image represented Afro-Americans. There was little that was generic or ambiguous. Clearly, these corporations understand the importance of identifying with a targeted niche market. *Ebony* is a black-oriented magazine and the perception gotten from leafing

through its pages is that the advertisers understand and cater to that niche. The ads reflect the audience the advertisers are trying to reach.

Interestingly, two corporations advertising in the gay publications studied also were found in *Ebony*. In both cases, Hennessy and American Express, black images were presented. Also worth noting, a Wheaties ad (General Mills) pictured a Wheaties box commemorating the 75th anniversary of the Negro (baseball) Leagues. The copy read: "Seeking triumph, they knew talent would decide the winner, not the rules that said wait until the game is over for your turn. And America saw that heroes are not myths, but players who dare to break the barriers."

### **Getting off the fence**

As *Advertising Age* pointed out in the Viewpoint excerpt quoted in the opening of this chapter, advertisers cannot be half-hearted or timid in their approach to the gay market. They either want the gay dollar or they don't and, if they do, they must get off the fence and be gay-specific.

There are several companies that deserve to be singled out and recognized for their forthrightness in gay targeting. These are companies which have demonstrated that they know how to reach and how to speak to the lesbian-gay consumer.

Anheuser-Busch with its Bud Light advertisements readily springs to mind. While it is not the place in this paper to examine the preponderance of cigarette, beer, wine, and liquor advertising in the gay publications (much has been made regarding specific "black" targeting in those media as well), the point remains that when companies such as Budweiser advertise in gay magazines, they use gay messages. They speak to the niche. Every Bud Light ad found in a gay periodical was gay-themed. When a Bud Light advertisement talked about "labels" a lesbian or gay consumer could readily identify with what it is like to be stereotyped. Bud Light knows this, or so say its ads, and relates directly to the target audience in ways that general, generic advertising does not. Companies like Anheuser-Busch (despite some corporate leaning toward conservative issues in the

past) at least show how advertising to a niche should be done. It must be a consistent presence in the media the niche audience uses and believes. It must speak the language of that audience and depict images to which the audience can relate. Images that mention “the closet” and “coming out,” as the Bud Light ones do, are ways of relating to the gay audience whose loyalty and business it seeks.

American Express readily fits this role as well. In this study, American Express advertisements whether for the travelers checks, credit card, or financial services, were a consistent presence in both *Out* and *The Advocate*. While some American Express presentations in these gay publications were generic, there were those that spoke directly to the homosexual consumer using the words “gay” and “lesbian” and addressed the unique concerns gay couples have in financial planning and assets protection.

When Subaru of America and British Airways expanded their role in gay consumerism and moved from sponsorship (the Rainbow Card) to advertisements, they used gay-specific presentations. British Airways spoke in a language to which only a gay consumer could relate (tea at South Beach) and Subaru alluded to being “comfortable with orientation”. Granted, these are relatively new entrants to the gay advertising market, but it indicates a determination to enter on a level that shows a commitment and understanding of its target audience.

Baileys found a way to incorporate gay-specificity in its creative in a very clever “pitch” that showed the company is not only actively courting the lesbian-gay consumer, but is up-to-date on the issues confronting the community. A Baileys creative showed two same-sex cups and told the audience they could purchase these same-sex cup pairs although they are only recognized “as a set” in Hawaii. This approach says that Baileys understands that a crucial issue before the gay community is the battle to legalize same-sex marriage. Hawaii has become the battleground for this major legal issue where court rulings have upheld the right of lesbians and gays to marry. (The rulings still face legal challenges.) This is how a marketer can talk to a niche in a language that speaks volumes to who they are. Baileys says to gays, “We understand you, we support you.” This recognition is crucial if any marketer hopes to get and keep a foothold in a niche market.

What singles out the gay niche from other niches, for instance, the Hispanic, Asian, or Afro-American, is that the gay niche is controversial. Therefore there is a potential for backlash from other consumers that does not exist with other niches. Nonetheless the obligation to commit firmly and honestly to this niche is vital.

The Viewpoint in *Advertising Age* addressed this issue clearly and head on. It urged corporations to “Be out front on gay ads.” It said:

“Mainstream advertisers are approaching gay consumers in record number, yet many remain closeted on the subject. More than two-thirds of gay-market advertisers contacted chose not to comment for our article...on marketing to gays.

Such public squeamishness may be the result of fear of reprisals from conservative groups--like the American Family Association--that oppose homosexuality, or it may stem from a lack of full commitment to such marketing initiative.

Advertisers may choose where to spend their money, but once the decision is made to benefit from the market and target lesbians and gays, responsibility dictates that they be willing to stand by such a choice.

Some marketers have initiated efforts but fail to acknowledge their ongoing intent, while others have quickly pulled back. But the word is out: Since gay consumers consider themselves historically ignored, corporate wishy-washiness causes resentment and defeats the purpose of appealing to this often affluent and influential segment of the public.”

In taking such “closeted” advertisers to task, *Advertising Age* referred to the media hype surrounding the “coming out” episode of the situation comedy “Ellen.” The show, aired in the spring of 1997, was surrounded by guessing and controversy. First the star, Ellen DeGeneres, made talk show rounds months before the show hinting at her own orientation and being noncommittal about whether the episode would truly be the “coming out” of its lead character “Ellen Morgan.” Once it was announced that the character would indeed reveal herself as gay, there was the decision on the part of corporations as to whether to support the show with its

sponsorship. The *Advertising Age* commentary took indecisive advertisers to task:

“Many advertisers that fled the ‘Ellen’ coming-out episode on ABC didn’t take responsibility with their rationale. Chrysler Corp. made much ado about its withdrawal from the controversial program, but unceremoniously reappeared in the next episode and remained.

The price of attracting the gay market is fairness--and honesty.”

### **Generic ads**

While it is true that when a company is simply putting out product information the ad need not go beyond that. The objective is to inform an audience that a product or service exists and to relate the benefits or features of the product or service. Niche marketing, especially to one as new as the lesbian/gay segment, is different. Marketers cannot expect to establish a foothold with noncommittal advertising. If this were the case, then why are black images and references depicted in advertising appearing in *Ebony* magazine? As mentioned before, too many advertisers in *The Advocate* and *Out* want to have their gay cake and to eat it, too. That just is not practical or, in the words of *Advertising Age*, “honest.”

Products and services that advertise to gays and take the generic route are perpetuating the idea that one size fits all and this clearly is not the case. It is not done with the Afro-American niche and should not be done with gays. Companies who try to reach the gay consumer through generic advertising send a clear message: “We want your money, but we won’t commit to you.” Liquor advertisers such as Absolut vodka, a mainstay advertiser in gay publications, easily should be able to use its cutting edge, avant-garde creative to speak directly to the gay market it so ardently courts. Absolut has done gay-event sponsorships and, on at least one occasion, has done a rainbow flag theme in its advertising. The fact remains that these companies can and should do more.

Absolut, of course, is by no means alone. Like Absolut, Hennessy cognac is a frequent gay advertiser. Yet only one ad campaign found in the study indicated it wanted to speak to the audience it seeks [two men embracing, see chapter four]. As with too many other distilled spirits

advertisers, there was a sense that the company was playing it safe. It is fair to ask Bacardi, Dewar's, Remy Martin, Finlandia, Freixnet, Glenlivet, Stolichnaya, Smirnoff, Bass Ale, and Tanqueray why their ads appear so frequently in gay magazines but contain no gay themes. Cigarette companies that chose to go the generic route in gay magazines include Benson & Hedges, Merit, Lucky Strike, and, until recently, Parliament Lights.

Parliament Lights finally took the "gay plunge" in July 1997 with a gay-specific placement in *Out* but two questions arise: What took Philip Morris so long? and, Where are other gay/lesbian-specific Parliament Lights ads? Likewise, advertisements for Kool cigarettes were found in *The Advocate* and *Out* that could have been placed in just about any mainstream magazine.

Why is it that companies that advertise regularly in *The Advocate* and *Out* are willing to have a presence there but not an image that says, "We understand the needs, the desires and concerns of the audience we are courting." Surely these corporations understand the basic psychological human need for understanding and acceptance. Why, then, do they overlook them in the gay-targeted advertisements?

Of course this "gay oversight" is by no means limited to cigarette and spirits marketers. Despite numerous placements in gay magazines, nothing in IBM ads showed they were speaking to a gay niche. The same can be said for Naya and United Airlines (the exception being limited sponsorship of gay-related issues). Again, the perception is perpetuated, "We want you to use our products, but we are not willing to address you on your level."

### **Ambiguous ads**

Just as open to criticism are those companies that place advertisements that are ambiguous. The ambiguous route says to the reader, "You figure out what we're trying to say, we don't have the guts to be up front about it." With ambiguous ads, there is the perception that by staying on the noncommittal fence, the marketer is trying to get "more bang for the buck." This creative

can be used in any magazine. It tells a niche consumer that he/she is not worth the money and effort it takes to design messages that speak directly to his/her life. Chief among those advertisers falling into this “ambiguous” guessing game are fashion and accessory marketers. Calvin Klein, Gucci, Joe Boxer, Movado, Nautica, Nike, Perry Ellis, Tommy Hilfiger, Nike, and Versace all indicate a desire to win gay consumers but none, judging from their advertising messages, is willing to acknowledge that they exist as a discrete segmented market. Images and copy placed by these brands are open to broad interpretation. If they are courting a gay market and want to continue the “ambiguous” route in the selling approach, the least they can do is show sponsorship of a gay-related interests. A rainbow logo (ala Miller Brewing), an explanation of their domestic partner benefits (like American Express), and/or sponsorship of an affinity service (the Rainbow Card and Subaru), offer a number of ways to demonstrate to the members of the gay market that they are valued and supported.

### **Straight ads in gay magazines**

More perplexing than companies that remain uncommitted in their advertising in gay media are those that place straight presentations in gay magazines. For example, the Aetna ad [see chapter four] presents a straight image and yet the ad is in a gay-audience vehicle.

Kool cigarettes had a two-page spread in the October 14, 1997, issue of *The Advocate* that pictured a woman riding on the back of a motorcycle with a man driving. The question arises: Would Kool use white faces if the company were advertising in *Ebony*? Why use a straight presentation to sell to a gay audience?

R.J. Reynolds ad copy for its brand of Kamel Red cigarettes depicted an image from the 50s with a stiletto-heeled, blonde woman in a body-fitting dress pictured in the promotion. Another Kamel Red ad reminiscent of film noir showed a torch singer in a clinging gown on stage while men in the audience fistfight. Copy at the top of the illustration said: “It was the kind of joint a woman didn’t go to alone. Unless, of course, she was the kind of woman who smoked Kamels.”

This kind of advertising was typical 20 to 40 years ago for products such as cigarettes, cars, and tools that used sex (and sexist images) in their sales pitches. Such images are not only outmoded but inappropriate. It would be easy to imagine a lesbian or gay reader asking, "To whom does this ad speak?" While the ads are clever and gays can be expected to appreciate period pieces as much as the (straight) next guy, it still remains that this niche is a new venture for most companies. Such approaches cannot help but instill doubts in the minds of homosexual consumers. It seems prudent to give niche consumers images to which they can readily relate.

### **Gay images for gay media**

Besides those mainstream companies already mentioned that "crossed over" to advertise in gay publications and used gay copy and images when they did so, a number of ads were found only in the gay publications during the period studied that were gay-themed.

Most innovative was one for The Hartford (insurance company). A Hartford ad in the March 17, 1998, issue of *The Advocate* showed two light blue cars facing one another. Underneath, the copy said: "The Hartford offers auto insurance discounts to gay couples." Following that were two pink cars facing one another and the copy said: "We also offer discounts to lesbian couples." The last image was of a blue and pink car facing one another with the copy declaring: "Heck, we even offer discounts to heterosexual couples. (Not that there's anything wrong with that.)" The copy at the bottom of the page told the reader that The Hartford is "dropping premiums up to 25% for committed couples of all kinds." Headline copy at the bottom right proclaimed: "Commitment. Bring It On." Below that was the company's logo with the hart ( male deer).

Here, then, is an advertisement that spoke directly to gays and lesbians and even tweaked the "majority" culture the homosexual population so often finds itself up against.

Also worthy of mention are Johnnie Walker Red Label (Schieffelin & Somerset Co.) advertisements. While ads for Johnnie Walker were sometimes ambiguous and generic, at least one ad spoke to the male gay culture. The ad pictured three men. The copy at the top stated: "For the

last time, it's not a lifestyle. It's a life." The type appeared in red sans serif type against a black background. It is an allusion to the opinion oft-voiced by the straight community that gays live a "style" of a life and where there is "style" there is choice. The ad and copy challenged that notion head on.

Swatch (a Swiss watch company) was "gay-daring" in an ad placed in the June, 1997, issue of *Out*. Pictured were the watch and a man doing pull ups. The copy above his image said: "Someday I'll have a body like Arnold." Superimposed on the picture covering both the man and the watch in reverse type was: "Right now he's leaving with Hans."

This is an ad that, without the "Hans" reference, could be generic enough to be placed anywhere. Swatch is to be commended for its willingness to take the extra step to show that it can relate to the audience it is targeting. Two other Swatch ads are gay-ambiguous--one shows a muscular man with a teaser copy that reads: "Am I naked or am I not?" Another shows a male water polo team claiming, "Someday our team will wear gold...right now we want our bathing suits back."

Similarly, Waterford Crystal had a two-page spread in the December 1997-January 1998 issue of *Out*. The image was decidedly "ambiguous." It was a black and white photo of a woman flanked by two men, all three holding champagne glasses. The copy, however, is what made this a "gay" presentation. Across the picture in reverse sans serif type was the statement: "It's time your crystal came out of the closet as well."

Southern Comfort has also weighed in on the gay-imagery side. An ad in the June 1997 issue of *Out* showed two men sitting together in a restaurant/bar booth. One has his arm around the other, a drink sits on the table. The copy admonished: "Go slow. It's easy to blow right past this. Take it easy." This creative was in contrast to one appearing in the December 1997-January 1998 *Out* that makes an oblique reference to a diamond ring and a Mustang automobile.

### **Some corporate preparations**

One of the early sponsors of the gay-targeted Rainbow Card was Subaru of America. The company views itself as “hip” with an “irreverent attitude.” The company believes gay consumers can identify with this image.<sup>1</sup>

With all its niche efforts, the company’s approach is one of “giving back.” The idea is to create a benefit for the niche consumer. For instance, when Subaru sponsored the National Ski Patrol, the company made donations to promote safe skiing education.

Do Tell, Inc., marketer behind the Rainbow Card, provided Subaru with demographics that attested to the viability of the lesbian-gay market niche. In addition, the Rainbow Endowment was set up to help funnel some proceeds from the card to lesbian and gay-related causes. This provided Subaru with a way to “give back” to the gay customer. Subaru offers Rainbow Card holders a free maintenance policy when they purchase Subaru vehicles. In addition Subaru makes donations to gay-related causes supported by the Rainbow Foundation.<sup>2</sup>

The company has been satisfied with its move into the gay niche and has become a gay-specific advertiser in lesbian and gay media. This is an important step because the company, which has a long association with a variety of marketing niches, feels it is crucial to be an integral part of the market that is being targeted, not merely “posers.”<sup>3</sup>

The bank behind the Rainbow Card is Travelers based in Wilmington, Delaware. Anticipating some backlash moving into this market Travelers, together with Do Tell, put a public relations plan in place in advance of the marketing campaign that anticipated inquiries and practiced responses. The plan worked and dispelled any qualms the company had about going into this venture.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Interview, Tim Bennett, Subaru of America, 10/20/97

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Interview, Gene Oaksmith, vice president, partnership marketing, the Travelers Insurance Group

## **Conclusions**

As mentioned in this chapter, messages delivered in *Ebony*, a black magazine, are oriented and tailored for that audience. The conclusion from this research is that marketers targeting the gay niche should do no less. Opinions voiced, from the gay community and others as well, attest that marketers who reflect the image of the lesbian and gay market segment in their messages not only stand a better chance of winning that audience's business and loyalty, but have a *responsibility* to be gay-specific.

Gay images in media will continue to expand. Those images are reflective of a formidable and influential group of Americans. As stated in *Advertising Age*, it is time for all businesses seeking the gay dollar to be open and up front about it.

An *Ebony* ad for Wheaties cereal honoring the Negro Leagues talked about "breaking barriers" and not waiting "for your turn." The same applies to lesbians and gays in this country. Barriers have already been broken. Gays have much more visibility, in part, because corporate America has been willing to support gay causes and issues. Gains are being steadily made in attaining full and equal rights. This will make it easier for corporate America to openly embrace the lesbian and gay niche. On the other hand, corporations who are forthright about their support of gays vis-a-vis internal policies and external advertising, will help to foster gay rights in this country. Corporate America and lesbians and gays in this country have a symbiotic relationship. It is a relationship that should be cultivated and nurtured. There are few, if any, national corporations that have courted the gay market that have reported serious negative repercussions. The groundwork has been laid.

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