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Evolution, Not Revolution

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Abstract

"Advertising clearly isn't treating the gay movement as a viable market, deserving of special campaigns and special treatment, as it is now beginning to do with blacks and women and has done for years with teenagers." So declared *Advertising Age* in 1972, under the headline: "No Gay Market Yet, Admen, Gays Agree:" Yet within three decades, the gay market and, gay and lesbian media were sufficiently established for Viacom subsidiaries MTV and Showtime to explore the development of a gay cable channel, Outlet. MTV executive Matt Farber described this progression as "an evolution, not a revolution," contrasting the image of a revolution - a politically motivated, violent upheaval with a Darwinian ideal, where natural selection by an intrinsically fair, equilibrium-seeking free market facilitates an inexorable march toward increasingly progressive images of GLBT people, "Evolution, not revolution" is the cousin of "business, not politics": it suggests that gay marketing, and the media it supports, simply evolved through rational development within the entrepreneurial sphere, and disavows the efforts of marketers, media publishers, journalists, market researchers, and consumers themselves toward actively producing this market. Yet despite marketers' claims that they are interested in gay and lesbian consumers for dispassionate reasons of "business, not politics," the history of the gay market shows that this consumer niche was forged out of an intimate meeting of the entrepreneurial search for ever-expanding sources of revenue and the political quest for sexual equality.

CHAPTER 2

EVOLUTION, NOT REVOLUTION

Advertising clearly isn't treating the gay movement as a viable market, deserving of special campaigns and special treatment, as it is now beginning to do with blacks and women and has done for years with teenagers.¹

So declared *Advertising Age* in 1972, under the headline: "No Gay Market Yet, Admen, Gays Agree."² Yet within three decades, the gay market and gay and lesbian media were sufficiently established for Viacom subsidiaries MTV and Showtime to explore the development of a gay cable channel, *Outlet*.³ MTV executive Matt Farber described this progression as "an evolution, not a revolution," contrasting the image of a revolution—a politically motivated, violent upheaval—with a Darwinian ideal, where natural selection by an intrinsically fair, equilibrium-seeking free market facilitates an inexorable march toward increasingly progressive images of GLBT people. "Evolution, not revolution" is the cousin of "business, not politics": it suggests that gay marketing, and the media it supports, simply evolved through rational development within the entrepreneurial sphere, and disavows the efforts of marketers, media publishers, journalists, market researchers, and consumers themselves toward actively producing this market. Yet despite marketers' claims that they are interested in gay and lesbian consumers for dispassionate reasons of "business, not politics," the history of the gay market shows that this consumer niche was forged out of an intimate meeting of the entrepreneurial search for ever-expanding sources of revenue and the political quest for sexual equality.

As Richard Ohmann observes, "markets are shaped, not discovered."⁴ Marketers do not simply begin to offer images of and sell products to preex-

isting niches, but shape the contours of those groups in order to present a credible, desirable, and viable target market. The development of the gay market is only one such process of niche-formation that dominated marketing in the twentieth century: before gays garnered marketers' attention, youth, women, African Americans, and other groups had already been courted as coherent target markets.⁵ To question the evolutionary model of market development requires a consideration of the processes through which markets are produced from existing cultural stereotypes and social movements. How was the gay market shaped, propelling gay and lesbian consumers from the obscurity of market invisibility in the late 1960s to the glare of attention from global corporations such as Saab, Pepsi, and Viacom in the early 2000s?

The history of the gay market reflects complex relations among GLBT media and advertisers, niche and mainstream media, unflattering images of GLBT people and their new incarnation as desirable consumers. These relations structure the growth of the gay market from the 1960s, a period when gays and lesbians were largely ignored or reviled by mainstream media and marketing, to the present day, when gays and lesbians are increasingly courted in niche media, and occasionally appear in general market print and television ads. The history of the gay market reveals a number of struggles over the meaning and definition of gayness in the public sphere, where political imperatives clash with business demands, where the desire for civil rights coverage and sexual content in gay media conflict with the need to produce a palatable vehicle for national advertisers, and where advertisers, market researchers, and publishers wrestle over who, exactly, constitutes the "gay market."

Before Stonewall: The 1960s

Before the Stonewall riots of June 1969, gays and lesbians were largely invisible in mainstream media, openly gay-owned businesses serving gay and lesbian clientele were few, and the idea of a "gay market" was embryonic at most. Yet since the late nineteenth century, gay men had congregated in urban centers such as New York and San Francisco, freed by industrialization from their obligations to rural families and farms. As historian John D'Emilio asserts, capitalism facilitated the development of gay *identity*, distinct from same-sex sexual *activity*, by relieving men of their duty to marry upon which agrarian life had hitherto depended.⁶ This process was accelerated for both gay men and lesbians by the geographical and social upheaval of World War II. According to historians George Chauncey, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, and Madeline Davis, growing communities of gay men and lesbians in the mid-twentieth century began to consume in distinctly homosexual ways, signaling their sex-

ual identities to each other through such accoutrements as red ties for men and men's suits for butch women.⁷ Urban businesses serving a gay clientele (whether intentionally or inadvertently) included brothels, bathhouses, bars, restaurants, and residential hotels such as the YMCA.⁸ Although queer theorist Jeffrey Escoffier estimates that after the Second World War 25 to 30 percent of gay bars in San Francisco were owned by gay men and lesbians, even into the 1960s gay and lesbian entrepreneurs tended not to be open about their sexuality. The Mafia—being somewhat more protected from legal and social sanctions than were aboveboard, but openly gay, businesspeople—commonly owned bars and nightclubs that were patronized by gays and lesbians.⁹ As activist Karla Jay remarks, in the late 1960s Craig Rodwell's Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop was one of the earliest publicly gay commercial spaces owned by a gay person.¹⁰

The postwar period was also notable for the rapid growth of the gay and lesbian press. In 1958 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that gay publications were not necessarily "obscene, lewd, lascivious and filthy," as Wisconsin's Postmaster General had claimed; the decision facilitated the circulation of publications such as *ONE* and the *Ladder*.¹¹ Early gay and lesbian politically inflected publications tended to be noncommercial, were funded by sponsoring groups such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, and had few, if any, ads. Men's "physique" publications tended to achieve larger circulations, and a few of these contained at least somewhat openly gay, erotic advertising.¹²

Inaugurated in 1967, the *Los Angeles Advocate* was "the country's first, true, gay newspaper";¹³ it contained nonfiction material in tabloid format, had a full-time paid staff, and was the first openly gay newspaper to actively court national advertisers. Between 1967 and 1974 the paper carried out its mission, as publisher Dick Michaels stated in the first issue, "to publish news that is important to the homosexual—legal steps, social news, developments in the various organizations—anything that the homosexual needs to know or wants to know."¹⁴ What the homosexual readership was assumed to need and want to know in this and other early issues had primarily to do with legal cases and political developments pertaining to civil rights for gays: who had successfully overturned cases of "obscenity"; which states upheld antisodomy laws; and how politicians viewed homosexual issues.

Advertising in the first issue of the *Advocate* was sparse. There were ads for a men's clothing store, a homosexual night at a local bar, and *Barfly*, a printed guide to euphemistically labeled "interesting, friendly places." Joe Landry, the magazine's current publisher, related that of the \$24 of advertising space sold, only \$7 was ever collected.¹⁵ Within a year, advertising revenues would grow to more than \$200 per issue.¹⁶ The first issue of the *Advocate* also included a

classifieds column ("Trader Dick's") with eight ads—for gay books, cards, a dating service, and items for sale. By December 1968, "Trader Dick's" had grown to a full page, much of which contained personal ads from men looking for other men for sexual encounters.

In addition to personal ads, retail ads for sexual goods and entertainment quickly became a significant category. These included ads for mail-order pornography, and bookstores, some of which exhorted potential patrons not to be "chicken" (either fearful or underage) and encouraged "browsers." An ad from Anvil offered "a shattering new concept in male physique [photography]" (fig. 2.1).¹⁷ The early publishers of the *Advocate* were not squeamish about including sexually explicit ads alongside their editorial content, which contributed to its eventual profitability. In contrast to journals that were funded by homophile organizations, such as the *Ladder*, which was produced by the Daughters of Bilitis, the *Advocate* was the first openly gay news publication in the United States to be supported entirely by advertising and the cover price. In the newspaper's first year, publisher Dick Michaels recognized that in order to be taken seriously by national advertisers, the *Advocate* would

LOS ANGELES ADVOCATE JANUARY 1969 Page 23

TRY THESE ON FOR SIZE!

SUBMIT \$10⁰⁰ each FOR DUNGEON VOL. I VOL. II

TWELVE ACTUAL PHOTOGRAPHS BOUND IN MAGAZINE FORM

ORDEAL

BUNKHOUSE

A SHATTERING NEW CONCEPT IN MALE PHYSIQUE FROM

ANVIL, P.O. Box 38326
Los Angeles, California 90038 **BROCHURE-\$1⁰⁰**

FIGURE 2.1 PORNOGRAPHY ADVERTISEMENTS APPEARED REGULARLY IN THE *ADVOCATE* FROM ITS EARLY ISSUES (*LOS ANGELES ADVOCATE*, JUNE 1969).

need to offer the same circulation and readership data that other magazines could. He commissioned the Walker Struman research firm to conduct the first market research of gay readers, and soon after hired an independent auditing firm to verify circulation figures.¹⁸ Yet despite Michaels's hopes of creating a national gay newspaper with corporate advertising, it would be many years before the *Advocate* would achieve this aim.¹⁹

Through the 1950s and 1960s no ads that openly showed gay men or lesbians appeared in the mainstream media. There are a couple of "gay window" or "gay vague" examples, however, where advertisers subtly coded ads with gay subcultural cues that were probably opaque to heterosexual readers.²⁰ A 1958 Smirnoff ad appearing in *Esquire* magazine showed two men in close proximity, and declared "mixed or straight, it leaves you breathless."²¹ Whether this ad read as gay to gay or heterosexual audiences in the 1950s, history does not relate.

Despite the dearth of open appeals to gay consumers through the 1960s, a range of cultural and advertising trends that marked the latter half of this decade as one of nonconformity, defiance, and self-chosen identity set the stage for the earliest attempts to imagine a gay market. Increasing sexual freedoms afforded some tolerance for alternative sexual and relationship choices and made youth culture and sexuality attractive to mainstream America, including advertisers. Young adults, at least in the middle classes, "embodied the unspoken fantasies of a consumer society extended to the sphere of sex."²² This relative sexual liberalism echoed the social nonconformity of the black civil rights, antiwar, women's liberation, and gay liberation movements.²³ In 1969 the Stonewall riots, conventionally held as inaugurating the contemporary gay rights movement, precipitated a period in which gay people were perceived as a community with similar aims and a shared purpose. The post-Stonewall gay liberation movement brought GLBT people, and especially gay men, into public view and focused much more on visibility than on accommodation as a goal.²⁴

These political movements, in turn, made identity groups more visible to mainstream marketers. The development of African American, youth, and other consumer niches shows that in the 1960s marketers were already familiar with attributing distinguishing characteristics to a group for the purposes of segmentation. Rejecting an earlier emphasis on conformism, safety, and popularity, advertising messages began to encourage rebellion, individualism, and authenticity.²⁵ The increased visibility of a nonconformist gay liberation movement and marketers' developing skill at harnessing identity movements to products prepared the way for the formation of the gay market.

The Gay Playboy: The 1970s

The energy that inspired the Stonewall riots and subsequent gay rights activism achieved a number of civil rights gains in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The most significant of these was the removal of homosexuality from DSM-II, the American Psychiatric Association's manual of mental disorders, in 1973.²⁶ These gains, in turn, were reflected in the greater visibility of gays and lesbians in both news and entertainment programming. Advertising trade press articles about the potential for a gay market began to appear in 1972, even though national marketers remained apprehensive about associating their products with gay consumers who, for their part, seemed less than interested in petitioning for marketers' attention. As one journalist surmised,

Unlike those larger segments of the population that can cite discriminatory practices [in advertising] because of race, color, gender or creed, the gay movement's leaders appear to be less concerned with advertising and more concerned with winning legal sanctions for their activities and raising the consciousness of the media. Perhaps at some later date they will turn their attention to advertising; perhaps advertising will turn its attention to them first.²⁷

When advertisers did turn their attention to gay consumers in the mid-1970s, the gay market was imagined almost universally as made up of fashionable, "young, educated, and affluent" men. Yet some gay commentators expressed fear that "we would see a lot of 'silly queens' dancing around in ads directed to a homosexual consumer."²⁸ Despite the scarcity of market research data at this time, the tension between the stereotypes of the trendsetting, free-spending gay man and the immature, flaming homosexual became quickly entrenched in marketing discourses.²⁹ Lesbians were not mentioned in the trade press, and lesbian publications carried little advertising beyond small-business ads for lesbian-specific products and services.

If advertisers wanted to approach gay consumers they needed to look to the gay press to do so, because mainstream venues for advertising to gay consumers were limited; in the early 1970s the *New York Times*, the *New York Daily News*, and *Esquire* magazine, among others, refused ads that mentioned the words *gay* or *homosexual*.³⁰ Some magazines, such as the arts and entertainment magazine *After Dark*, were seen as "subtextually gay" by many readers, and included ads for records, theater, films, and books that covertly appealed to gay men.³¹ There were few, if any, openly gay appeals in ads on television, although there is an early example of the "Gasp! It's a man!" genre of cross-dressing ads

in a 1974 pantyhose commercial that slowly pans along a fabulous pair of legs, ultimately revealing that they belong to athlete Joe Namath. His voice-over reassures us, "Now, I don't wear pantyhose, but if Beautymist can make *my* legs look good, imagine what they'll do for yours." The emphatic kiss between Namath and a woman at the end of the commercial restores viewers' confidence in his heterosexuality.

The *Los Angeles Advocate* remained a news-focused, tabloid-format paper supported by increasing numbers of display and classified ads through the early 1970s. Retail advertising expanded from less than one page in 1967 to more than twenty pages in 1972, and the classifieds grew from less than half a page to more than five pages in the same period. Within two years, the circulation increased from its original press run of 500 to 23,000 copies, which were distributed every two weeks in urban centers nationwide. This was in marked contrast to the fate of many other gay publications in the early 1970s: the *Gay Liberator*, the *Gay Times*, and even the venerable *Ladder* folded. The explicit critique of capitalism and consumption in radical gay and lesbian feminist magazines was one reason these magazines halted production after relatively short lives, because such a critique precluded the development of sufficiently strong relationships with the more lucrative advertisers. In contrast, the *Advocate* continued to grow, although advertising revenue still came predominantly from baths, bars, pornographers, and bookstores.

In 1974, Dick Michaels sold the *Advocate* for a staggering \$1 million to David Goodstein, the son of a wealthy Denver family and a financial entrepreneur who had been fired when his employers discovered that he was gay.³² Goodstein was pivotal in the circulation of a desirable image of the gay male consumer, an image that came to personify the "gay market." He quickly transformed the *Advocate* from a politically oriented newspaper into a lifestyle magazine, reducing its sexual content and distancing editorials from the more militant factions of the gay civil rights movement. He also dropped "Los Angeles" from the name to stress the *Advocate's* national appeal. In the first issue under new ownership Goodstein flattered his audience with an idealized image of the *Advocate's* reader: male, employed, "responsible," with a "meaningful lifestyle . . . an attractive body, nice clothes and an inviting home."³³ He emphasized the most positive stereotypes of gay men—that they were stylish, trendsetting, and affluent—to displace the less palatable caricatures, including that of the "immature" homosexual that the American Psychiatric Association had only recently dropped from DSM-II. This was not the first time that publishers had struggled to produce a desirable image of the male consumer: as scholar Kenon Breazeale outlines, the founders of *Esquire* in the 1930s worked

to position a sufficiently masculine, virile, male consumer against the feminizing associations of a consumer magazine, countering the common assumption that "men produce and women shop."³⁴ The *Esquire* editors achieved this by insisting that consumption was something men do *better* than women, particularly in the pursuit of high-culture tastes, and by compulsively reaffirming heterosexual masculinity. *Esquire* thus laid the groundwork for *Playboy* in the 1950s. As Hugh Hefner gloated, "We enjoy mixing up cocktails and an *hors d'oeuvre* or two, putting a little mood music on the phonograph and inviting in a female acquaintance for a quiet discussion on Picasso, Nietzsche, jazz, sex."³⁵ Cultural scholar Barbara Ehrenreich notes that the unmarried heterosexual man of the 1950s risked being seen as frivolous and immature because he was unfettered by the responsibility for a wife or children. The urbane playboy lifestyle that emphasized a sophisticated model of male consumption and plentiful (straight) sex helped offset the taint of immaturity.

Goodstein took Hefner's model of male consumption and reworked a specifically homosexual version of it. Like unmarried men in the 1950s, gay men were seen as immature in the popular imagination of the 1970s. Establishment psychiatrists had long framed male homosexuality as a stunted version of a "normal" desire for women: gay men remained too attached to their mothers and unable to mature into heterosexual relations. In the pages of the *Advocate*, the gay playboy was encouraged to emulate the successful route out of immaturity established by his heterosexual counterpart of an earlier era by constructing a tasteful, luxurious, and sexually satisfying lifestyle. Goodstein thus established the gay playboy as central to the identity of the magazine and, beyond its pages, as a viable market for forward-looking advertisers. The familiar stereotype of the psychologically unhealthy, immature homosexual persisted, however, in both the trade press and in the pages of the *Advocate* itself. Editorials distanced the magazine from associations with drag queens, transvestites, and transsexuals by casting them as pathetic misfits: "The most flamboyant, nelliest 'queen,' if one takes the time to try to know him, is revealed as a very unhappy individual."³⁶ The *Advocate* distanced the image of the gay playboy from the effeminate connotations of consumption by emphasizing his masculinity.

The shift in the *Advocate's* content from political news to address the reader as a consumer, first and foremost, also necessitated a shift in the placement of sexual commodities in the paper. By the second issue under new management, the classified section and most other sex-related advertising had been removed from the magazine proper into a newly designed pull-out section which was easier to both find and identify (the photo on the front made the

section more attractive—it looked like another, ‘free’ magazine—and alluded to its sexual content).³⁷ Readers who were most interested in this content had quick and easy access to it, while those who might be offended could more easily discard it. Most importantly, however, Goodstein excluded sexually explicit material from the main body of the magazine so that mainstream advertisers might find the *Advocate* a more hospitable context for national ads: in an interview with the *New York Times*, he said “we’ve come a long, long way. . . . We are being deslezified.”³⁸ Ironically, the exclusion of sexually explicit ads from the main pages of the magazine precipitated an expansion of explicit pornographic advertisements for goods and services in the classifieds supplement.

In 1976 the *Advocate* was one of the country’s fastest-growing magazines, with a biweekly distribution of 60,000, yet advertising revenues did not grow correspondingly, and ads remained limited to bars, hotels and travel services, discos, and theater shows. However, the late 1970s saw increasing gay visibility in mainstream media and a rapid expansion of marketing to gay people in the gay press. Images of gays on television, including coverage of Anita Bryant’s 1977 Dade County antigay campaign and the 1979 gay and lesbian rally in Washington, D.C., alerted marketers to a sizable cluster of potential consumers. As journalist Karen Stabiner notes, Bryant’s campaign “was what drove many homosexuals out into the open, into the business community’s line of sight.”³⁹ National advertising in the local gay press was also made much easier by the formation of Rivendell Marketing in 1979, a media sales company that places ads in gay publications across the country. Rivendell’s sales staff courted advertisers for the local publications they represented, and schooled agencies and their clients in how to appeal to the gay market. Gay marketers’ and activists’ growing visibility was reflected in mainstream advertisers’ increasing interest in gay consumers. The huge crossover success of disco led many record companies to gay publications, making these the first ads from national corporations, soon to be followed by ads for beer and liquor, entertainment, hi-fi equipment, financial services, personal care items, clothing, and rental cars.

The Gay Market “Deep Freeze”: The 1980s

The 1980s opened with promise for the gay market. Mainstream corporations showed continued interest in reaching readers of gay media; Boodles Gin, for example, produced the first openly gay ads by a national company that appeared in gay publications, featuring Walt Whitman and other famous (and famously gay) men (fig. 2.2). Although not openly gay, other ads appearing in the *Advocate* seemed tailored toward an ironic gay sensibility; a Gitanes ciga-

rette ad “quoted” the Marquis de Sade: “it hurts me to say it, but I love them.” Liquor companies bought ad space for Tuaca liqueur, Smirnoff, and most famously, Absolut vodka (fig. 2.3). As an editor of *Genre* magazine commented, “When Absolut took the risk of placing ads in gay magazines, no gay man would serve anything but Absolut. Those ads took Absolut from fifth place to the number-one selling premium vodka in the country.”⁴⁰ The story of Absolut’s success may be largely responsible for gay people’s legendary loyalty to those brands advertised openly and directly to GLBT people.

The trade press continued to characterize gay male consumers as white, highly educated, gainfully employed, trendsetting, and free of the financial burden of wives, children, and mortgages.⁴¹ One gay commentator assured advertisers that gays were very concerned with conspicuous consumption in

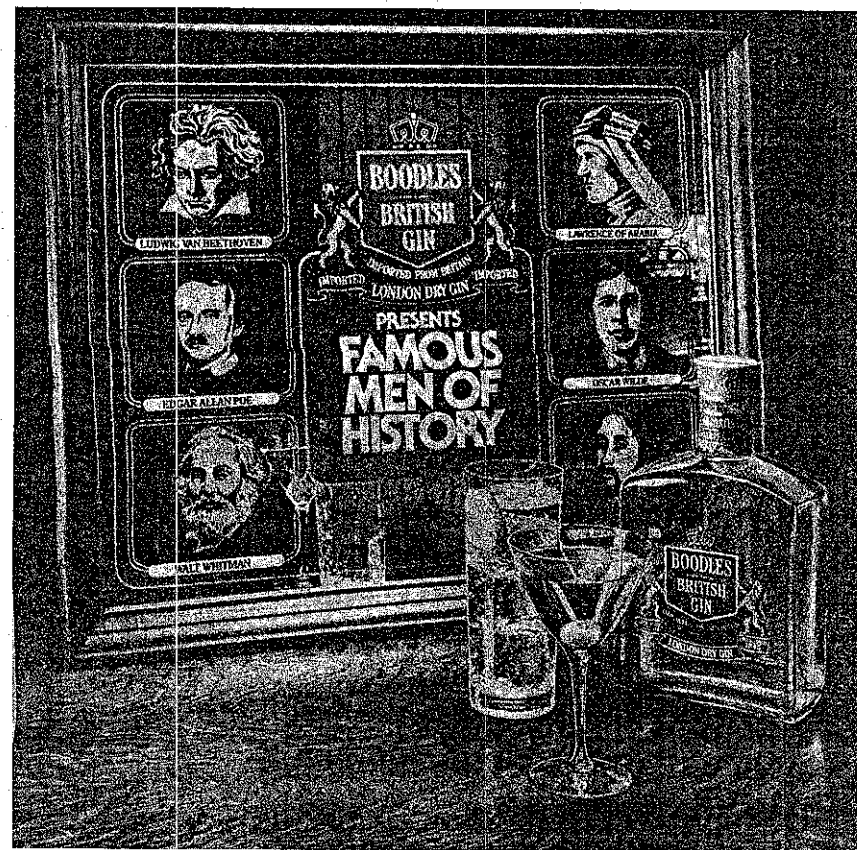


FIGURE 2.2 BOODLES GIN COURTS GAY DRINKERS BY INVOKING “FAMOUS [GAY AND BISEXUAL] MEN OF HISTORY” (*ADVOCATE*, APRIL 16, 1981).

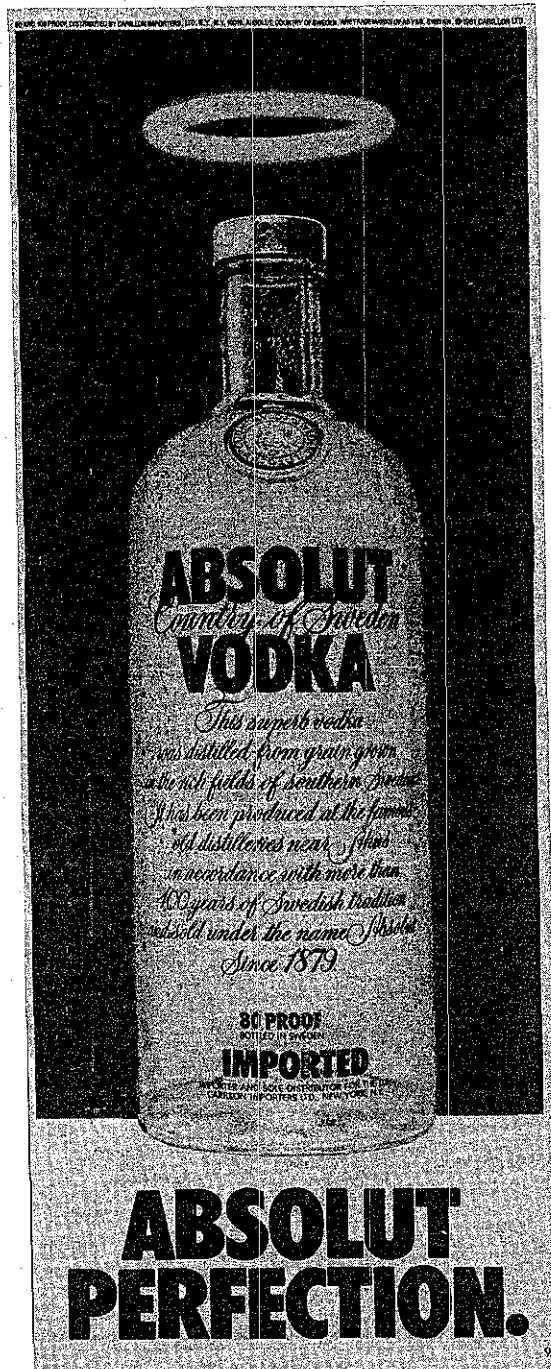


FIGURE 2.3 ABSOLUT VODKA APPEALED TO GAY READERS' SEARCH FOR "ABSOLUT PERFECTION" (*ADVOCATE*, JANUARY 21, 1982).

order to signal that they were "finally . . . in the 'in' group [and] no longer the outsiders [they] were in high school."⁴² Peter Frisch, then publisher of the *Advocate*, listed a gay man's "must-haves: 'A convertible. A sports car, a foreign sports car. Believe me, that imported sports car shows up in our demographics. It's incredible. Some fabulous wardrobe. You take umpteen vacations and weekend trips a year. You have a second home.'"⁴³ The image of the affluent homosexual did not circulate without some concern by gay commentators, however; in the same article, sociologist and activist Laud Humphries expressed concern that this affluent image would work against employment rights activism. He commented, "I can imagine a lot of people reading about the gay market and saying 'we should give them their rights? We're starving. They're buying a Mercedes.'"⁴⁴

In contrast to the dominant image of the desirable gay consumer as white and male, people of color and lesbians remained almost completely invisible. As Stabiner commented, lesbians "are discounted so completely, when it comes to consumer power, that most people who talk about the 'gay market' make the implicit assumption that it is a male market."⁴⁵ She argued that significantly lower income levels contributed to marketers seeing lesbians as a less attractive consumer segment: In 1982 women earned only 59 cents for each dollar earned by men, a wage differential that was compounded in households of two women. Gays and lesbians of color were so disregarded that not even the trade or popular press commented on their invisibility in the market.

Representing only a limited view of the gay market demographic—affluent white men—did not completely reassure marketers about the wisdom of approaching the niche, however. National corporate advertisers remained nervous about making openly gay appeals in mainstream media through the early 1980s. First, they were concerned that their merchandise might be branded a "gay product," thereby alienating their heterosexual customers. Second, advertisers were worried that approaching gay consumers might provoke retribution from what was then a relatively new phenomenon: Moral Majority boycotts. Third, corporate advertisers expressed anxiety over explicitly sexual advertising in gay publications: "A vice-president of Transamerica Corp.'s Budget Rent a Car [*sic*] subsidiary notes that his company had some reservations about advertising in the *Advocate* because of the personal ads in the magazine's midsection."⁴⁶ But, the article continues, the company managed to overcome its squeamishness because "for very little money we reach a potentially large audience that travels a lot, has high disposable income, and feels more loyalty to the advertiser." National advertisers interested in openly courting the gay market at the beginning of the decade frequently constructed a rhetorical quandary over the sexual content of the gay press before they

could posit the profit rationale as the reason for taking the “risk” of advertising there. Indeed, most articles in the trade and mainstream press from the mid-1970s onward posed the dilemma confronting advertisers interested in the gay market as a struggle between the desirability of an affluent, loyal market niche, and the distastefulness of gay magazines’ sexual editorial content and advertising.⁴⁷ Publishers responded by removing most or all sexual content: Goodstein pulled all the remaining sex ads from the *Advocate*, printing them only in the pull-out section. He was not alone in seeing gay sexual content as antithetical to national advertising: the short-lived, covertly gay magazine *Bi-coastal* launched with “no nudity, no sexually explicit personal ads, nothing to upset a mainstream advertiser.”⁴⁸ Editor Charles Codol explained that, “You can appeal to advertisers with discriminating tastes . . . if you don’t visualize, pictorially, any activity that goes against the grain of American society.”⁴⁹

Finally, sex was not the only topic editors of gay publications avoided in order to court national advertisers: political coverage, especially when sympathetic to gay activists, was also seen as creating a hostile environment for corporate advertisements. According to *Advertising Age*, increased political visibility led some marketers to feel that “more advertisers would be trying to reach the emerging gay minority market if it would quiet down some of its enthusiasts.”⁵⁰

With these accommodations, national corporate advertisers increasingly looked toward gay consumers as a new, desirable target market, and toward the gay press as a means to reach them. The more open cultivation of the gay market would prove short-lived, however: the AIDS epidemic put gay-themed appeals back into the “deep freeze.”⁵¹ The years 1984 to 1989 were marked by the rapid withdrawal of many advertisers from gay media as they realized the extent of the health crisis; only Absolut vodka remained a consistent advertiser in the gay press through the 1980s, consolidating gay consumers’ loyalty to the product. Publishers at the *Advocate* responded by filling the gap left by national advertisers with profitable classified and phone sex advertising, bringing back into the magazine those “questionable” ads that had only recently been moved to the pull-out section. The withdrawal of national advertising was reflected in press coverage: in the mid- to late-1980s the advertising and marketing trade press stopped covering the gay market altogether.

Although marketers responded to the AIDS epidemic with a near-total moratorium on open appeals to gay consumers, advertisers nevertheless still made implicit “gay window” appeals to the gay market in mainstream media.⁵² More explicitly gay images in ads dropped out of sight in the mid- and late-1980s, in dramatic contrast to the massive increase in gay visibility in the news and elsewhere in mainstream media. This new visibility was dominated by the

twinned images of the sexually promiscuous, diseased gay man and the angry, anarchic ACT UP activist—images from which most advertisers fled. In 1987 a new category of ads appeared in the gay press, those marketing AIDS-related services and products. An ad from the San Francisco AIDS Foundation, for example, showed a mustachioed, muscular man wrestling with the question “Should you take the AIDS antibody test?” (fig. 2.4). Although early AIDS-related ads were funded by charities and public health services, they prefigured a plethora of advertising that appeared in the late 1980s and 1990s to market drugs, health supplements, counseling, and financial programs to people with HIV and AIDS. The meaning of the “gay market” was to take a tragic—but nevertheless still profitable—turn.

Although the gay press in the early 1980s made occasional references to lesbians and GLBT people of color, the dominance of AIDS issues from mid-decade on narrowed the editorial focus largely back to white, gay male concerns. A new publication for gay African Americans, *BLK*, offered an alternative to the overwhelming whiteness of the gay press, but remained underfunded into the 2000s. The focus on AIDS issues also legitimated the ongoing marginalization of women within gay media, because lesbians were not considered a desirable audience for AIDS-related advertising dollars. This coverage failed to address risks of HIV infection for lesbians, risks that the lesbian pornography magazine *On Our Backs* took care to educate its readers about;

SHOULD YOU TAKE THE AIDS ANTIBODY TEST?

Possible Benefits

- People who get test results usually reduce high risk behavior.
- By taking the test, you find out whether or not you can infect others.
- Regardless of the result, testing often increases a person's commitment to overall good health habits.
- People who test negative feel less anxious after testing.

Possible Disadvantages

- Some people wrongly believe that a negative test result means they are immune to AIDS.
- People who test positive show increases in anxiety and depression.
- When testing is not strictly confidential or anonymous, some people may risk job and insurance discrimination.

The San Francisco Department of Public Health offers AIDS Antibody Testing which is **voluntary, free and anonymous.** Counseling and referrals are also available. To make an appointment for testing, call 621-4858.

For more information about AIDS Antibody Testing, call the San Francisco AIDS Foundation Hotline at **863-AIDS.**
Toll free in Northern CA: (800) FOR AIDS
TDD: (415) 884 8806

YES **NO**

Funding for this message provided by the S.F. Department of Public Health.

GET THE FACTS. CONSIDER YOUR FEELINGS. THEN DECIDE.

FIGURE 2.4 STRUGGLING WITH THE DILEMMA OF HIV TESTING IN AN AD FOR THE SAN FRANCISCO AIDS FOUNDATION (*ADVOCATE*, JULY 7, 1987).

as one feature headline urged: "Let's Go Safe Sex Shopping!"⁵³ Many gay publications also ignored both the very large numbers of lesbians involved in AIDS awareness and political action, as well as the extent to which mobilization of lesbian and gay men's communities in response to the epidemic went a long way in healing some of the traditional antipathy between them.

The Market of the Decade: The 1990s

The 1990s were distinguished by renewed interest in the gay market from both the trade press and from advertisers themselves. Greater numbers of national advertisers bought space in existing national and local gay publications than ever before: advertising in gay media rose throughout the 1990s to a record \$120.4 million in 1999, a 20.2 percent rise from the previous year.⁵⁴ The growth in revenues for gay and lesbian media led to an expansion of gay publishing, especially of glossy magazines: the early 1990s saw the debut of *Out* and *Deneuve*, the first glossy magazines to seriously challenge the *Advocate's* dominance; the mid-decade saw the addition of magazines such as *Girlfriends*, a sexy lesbian lifestyle magazine, *Hero*, a desexed magazine for gay men, *Victory!*, a publication for gay entrepreneurs, *Alternative Family*, for lesbian and gay parents and their children, and *AIDS Digest*, *POZ*, and later *POZ en Español*, for HIV-positive people and people with AIDS. The *Advocate's* owner, Liberation Publications, Inc. (LPI), also diversified, publishing a number of new pornography titles, including the *Advocate Classifieds*, *Big Daddies*, *Big Men on Campus*, *Street Trash*, *XX Men*, as well as their existing *Advocate Freshmen*.⁵⁵

In addition to a rapid expansion of print media, advertisers also looked toward direct mail, sponsorship, and the Internet to gain access to gay consumers. Direct-mail efforts were informed by the strategies developed by Sean Strub and other fund-raisers during the 1980s in response to the AIDS crisis. Trade press articles heralded the arrival of catalogs sent to gay and lesbian direct-mail lists, such as Shocking Gray, Tzabaco, and International Male, and then quickly announced their demise.⁵⁶ Gay consumer expositions also proliferated since 1993, with expos for HIV-positive people following in 1996.⁵⁷ But the Internet proved to be the most significant development in gay marketing through the 1990s; affinity sites such as PlanetOut and gay.com rapidly reached more consumers than all gay and lesbian magazines combined; some data suggested that GLBT people, many of whom may not be reachable through other gay and lesbian media, were more likely than heterosexuals to subscribe to online services.⁵⁸

Both trade articles and my interviewees offered similar explanations for the renewed interest in marketing to gays in the early 1990s. Commentators argued

that the AIDS crisis led to the mobilization of the gay community, more people coming out to family and colleagues, and increasing professional visibility for openly gay marketers. Stuart Elliott, advertising columnist at the *New York Times*, commented that with "the response to the AIDS epidemic, . . . you tended to get a solidarity among gay men and lesbians which made them somewhat easier for marketers to find as a target market."⁵⁹ Increased visibility from AIDS activism made marketers more aware of gays as a potential target reachable through the gay press, as the mobilization of gays against Anita Bryant's Dade County antigay initiatives had in the 1970s.

Journalists suggested that the recession at the beginning of the 1990s sent marketers in search of new groups of consumers, a move that affirmed the rationale that marketing to gays was a question of "business, not politics." Stuart Elliott quoted Doug Allgood, vice president of special markets at BBD&O New York: "For a lot of people, the main concern right now is surviving in a tough economic climate. . . . When that happens people get liberal in a hurry." So if marketers can "find a market that's educated, affluent and can be reached through targeted media . . . there's no reason to be concerned about politics."⁶⁰

Marketers also attributed shifts in marketers' attention back toward gays to improved research and statistics on gay consumption. From the late 1980s and into the early 1990s, Overlooked Opinions, Simmons, and other market research companies circulated data about "the gay market" based on readership surveys from the *Advocate*, other gay publications, and charity mailing lists:

Research reveals the USA's estimated 20 million to 25 million gay men and women to be demographically desirable—affluent and well-educated. A survey by Simmons Market Research Bureau shows gays with an average household income of \$55,430, vs. a national average of \$32,144; 59% are college graduates vs. 20.3% of all Americans.⁶¹

By the mid-1990s these market research reports were increasingly criticized, primarily for their unrepresentative sampling methods, with critics observing that readership surveys that relied on respondents' willingness to self-disclose their sexual identity were bound to be skewed toward those more financially and professionally secure. Data from a more representative sample in a 1994 Yankelovich study suggested that although spending patterns for gays and heterosexuals were a little different, income and other demographic factors were more similar between these groups than research had found previously.⁶² Other attempts to gain representative data included Greenfield Online's Internet study with the Spare Parts marketing group, and surveys by large cor-

porations such as IBM, American Express, and Subaru that hoped to get reliable information before launching expensive campaigns.

Another factor in the growth of the gay market was that gay visibility in news and entertainment media was higher than ever. The battles over same-sex marriage in Hawaii and gays in the U.S. military were regularly featured in the news in the early 1990s. The 1993 gay and lesbian March on Washington brought gay people into public view: not coincidentally, the trade and popular press produced a flurry of articles on the gay market in the months leading up to the march.⁶³ Some writers made explicit links between a political presence and a target market. One journalist observed, "Two months from now, when nearly 1 million gays, lesbians and their supporters are expected to come to Washington in a massive march of unity, many participants might be surprised by who else will be joining them in force. Marketers."⁶⁴ Many articles continued to endorse the perspective that gay marketing was a matter of business, not politics, but a few did express a progressive impulse in their appeals to the gay market. A spokesperson from Carillon Importers, marketers of Absolut, commented: "We're not encouraging or discouraging [homosexuality], we are just making a statement. It's very important in [the] nation and civilization we are living in to be accepting of people."⁶⁵ Yet some marketers were nervous about their products becoming associated with political activism. A spokeswoman from Naya water, which did not advertise but did distribute water at the march, said: "I don't need to have my banner up next to people who may be throwing eggs at Vice President Gore. . . . It's not our image. And it's not controllable."⁶⁶ The relationship between the march and marketing complicates the discourse of "business, not politics," because political visibility makes the market more available to advertisers, both conceptually (amassing an organized, apparently cohesive community) and practically (giving sponsors access to many people congregated in one place).

President Clinton's willingness to acknowledge gay people from the beginning of his first term was also seen as a watershed in public acceptance of homosexuality. Celebrities too embraced gay causes or came out, further increasing marketers' awareness of GLBT people. Many of the marketers I spoke with mentioned the positive impact of greater numbers of gay and lesbian television characters (not least Ellen DeGeneres's character, Ellen Morgan), and tended to see the increase in such characters as creating the circumstances for, rather than as responding to, increased gay marketing. Stuart Elliott suggested that shows with gay characters were vehicles for corporations to reach a large gay viewership, implying that television producers may have such advertising aims in mind during program development.⁶⁷

The 1990s also saw more openly gay people in the workplace. Gay advertising professionals established gay-specialized agencies such as Mulryan/Nash (which folded in 1999) and Prime Access (which also specializes in the African American and Latino markets), as well as gay-focused public relations and marketing firms such as Spare Parts and Witeck-Combs Communications. A parallel move occurred with gay and lesbian professionals in general-market agencies; the New York Advertising and Communications Network formed alongside other gay and lesbian professional groups, including the Bankers' Group, the Publishing Triangle, and the Wall Street Lunch Club.⁶⁸ Employees also formed groups within large corporations such as Apple, Digital Equipment, AT&T, and Coors. The organization of gay professionals emphasized the presence of gays and lesbians not only within the workforce but also as customers, and afforded gay and lesbian personnel more security in suggesting gay marketing strategies. An increased enthusiasm for gay marketing was not matched by improved conditions for gay professionals in ad agencies, however. A survey of fifty top agencies' policies on gay staff garnered responses from only seven, showing a disappointing view of agency life for gays in terms of antidiscrimination protection, partner benefits, diversity training, and the presence of openly gay management. According to *Advertising Age* journalist Michael Wilke, the Hill, Holiday, Connors, Cosmopolis agency in Boston had the best record, probably because Jack Sansolo, an openly gay man, had been president of the company at one time.⁶⁹

The threat of boycotts by right-wing and religious antigay activists also became somewhat less pressing in the mid-1990s. Although AT&T's 1994 "Let Your True Voice Be Heard" direct-mail campaign to gay and lesbian consumers was suppressed by a religious right boycott, other antigay efforts to pressure companies proved far less successful (fig. 2.5).⁷⁰ Some companies remained more vulnerable to right-wing boycotts, but religious fundamentalists tend not to be frequent (or, at least, open) consumers of many products that are advertised to gay people: alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, designer clothes, and other "image" products.

With a rapid increase in coverage from 1993 onward, trade and popular press journalists encouraged the sense that advertising to gays was respectable and profitable. Their opinion and guidance was supplemented by *Quotient*, a monthly newsletter developed by gay marketing specialists Dan Baker, Harold Levine, and Sean Strub. Although only six monthly issues were published (December 1994 to May 1995), the publication both helped marketers think through diverse ways of approaching gay consumers (such as sponsorship, catalogs, and direct mail, in addition to advertising) and aimed to rectify some of

Let Your True Voice Be Heard.

When David's away he wishes we were so close. I love to know what he's doing and what's on his mind.

Even though Paul lives a thousand miles away, I've always been able to reach him. The fact that I always look forward to his calls.

Saving money on long distance is important to me. John's grandmother talks to my grandmother longer, he or Claire.



AT&T True USA Savings

You could save more with AT&T True USA Savings than with MCI's Family-wide Basic or True Time service. It's true. With True USA Savings, you could save \$1,000¹ per year calling around the country here in the U.S. just calling long distance. No long distance calls. There's no monthly fee. No setup charge. You pay as you go. And every month you make between \$10 and \$24.99 on long distance calls, you'll automatically save 10%. Simply call us at 1-822-9995 to become part of AT&T True USA Savings. Free.

AT&T True Rewards

Earn points good for free miles on Delta Airlines, United Airlines or USAir, while paying these to the people you love. Sign up to AT&T and we'll enroll you in AT&T True Rewards. You get points good for free AT&T minutes or frequent flyer miles on Delta, United, or USAir. Every \$4 in AT&T long distance calls, we give you one point. Earn 125 points in qualifying long distance calls per month. Enroll now in AT&T True Rewards at free. Even better, you can combine the True Rewards program with AT&T True USA Savings for the best rates and savings you'll find. And when you're full month of enrollment, you'll receive triple mileage points. As a special welcome from us,

AT&T TrueVoice

New AT&T TrueVoice will sound even better than AT&T TrueVoice. It's a revolutionary improvement in long distance calling. It's clear, so natural sounding that you'll want to use it. And it's free. Just call us and say you want your true voice heard. We'll switch you back to AT&T at no cost to you.

FIGURE 2.5 COMMUNICATING DIVERSITY IN AT&T'S "LET YOUR TRUE VOICE BE HEARD" DIRECT MAIL CAMPAIGN (PRIME ACCESS, 1994).

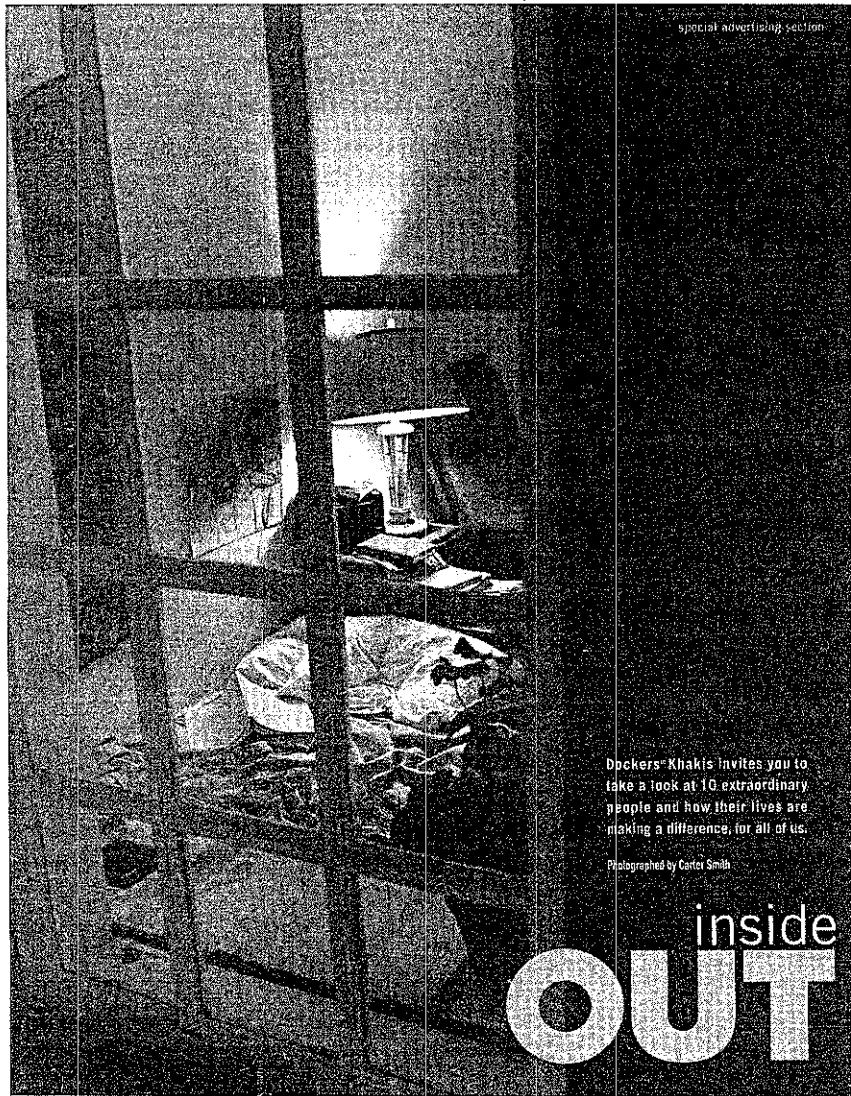
the grossest distortions of the gay consumer market. *Quotient's* writers advocated a more sober approach to marketing than did some other gay marketing professionals, by circulating more representative demographic data and reminding readers that an estimated total annual gay income of \$202 billion per year "isn't all spent on Don't Panic T-shirts, rainbow keychains and fabulous vacations in Palm Springs."⁷¹

All these influences combined to boost the visibility of gay and lesbian consumers and the apparent profitability of marketing to them. Throughout the 1990s, gay market formation was characterized most strongly by processes of diversification: in media, marketing strategies, products, and in target audiences. As more magazines entered the field, each needed to differentiate its content and readers from its competitors. Interviewees from *Out* and the *Advocate* were most careful to distinguish the other publication from their own: *Out's* president, Henry Scott, commented, "I say to people who [ask], 'don't you compete with the *Advocate*?' . . . 'does *Vanity Fair* compete with *U.S. News*?' They do different things, they are different magazines."⁷² Within two years of this interview, however, LPI owned both titles. Another interviewee said that publishers of local papers felt ambivalence about the proliferation of gay glossies such as *Out*, *Girlfriends*, and *Genre*: they loved the magazines for making the market as a whole more attractive to advertisers, but were also worried that the glossies would take business away from local and regional gay publications.⁷³

As marketing efforts toward gays and lesbians intensified in the 1990s, advertisers and sponsors needed to work harder to distinguish themselves in an increasingly crowded market. Some used more explicitly gay images in their ads in order to stand out from advertisers of similar products, and in response to research that gay consumers want to see ads that "address gay and lesbian themes."⁷⁴ Others looked to event and community sponsorship to place their logo in contexts beyond magazines or papers. As *Advocate* publisher Joe Landry said, "Through sponsorship of gay fund-raisers or political organizations or sporting events and other events, sponsors reap the rewards of the emotional connection that the community has with these events."⁷⁵ Indeed, the late-1990s produced intensified efforts to create such an emotional connection with gay consumers as a way of capitalizing on gay consumer loyalty. Articles emphasized the need for advertisers to demonstrate that they are able to form a deeper relationship with their gay consumers than with others. For example, a Miller Brewing Company spokeswoman said that gay people "really want to see that we understand them."⁷⁶ Other advertisers went beyond advertising or sponsorship to create marketing approaches designed to "get under the skin" of the consumer.⁷⁷ *Out* magazine collaborated with a long-standing advertiser, Seagram's, on a cocktail and entertainment guide, "Out to Party," inserted in the July 1998 issue. Seagram's spokesman described this shift in advertiser-editorial relations: "[Magazines] are not in the business of selling ad space, but of building relationships with advertisers."⁷⁸ In their November 1998 issue, the *Out* staff also produced a 12-page advertorial with Levi's for its Dockers line, "Inside Out," which blended advertising with editorial copy that advocated for gay youth and education organizations (figs. 2.6 and 2.7). This stylish fashion-spread combined consumption and politics to intensify the ways in which marketers make "authentic," "emotional" appeals to gay consumers.

The diversification of advertising venues and approaches mirrored a huge proliferation of products and services advertised to gay people. Notable new ads included television commercials for Ikea furniture and Mystic beverages, and print ads for increasing numbers of travel companies, HIV and other pharmaceuticals, viatical (or "life settlement") companies, automobiles, apparel, home furnishings, airlines, online services, car and health insurance, and a few packaged goods such as vegetarian burgers, toothpaste, and pet food. Advertisers left open, and even encouraged, debates about possible gay appeals in ambiguous ads appearing in mainstream media such as Volkswagen's "da-da-da" commercial ("Sunday Afternoon") and Abercrombie & Fitch's ads by photographer Bruce Weber.

Not all products and services found a welcome corner in the newly blossoming gay media, however. Continuing the trend from the 1970s, sex ads

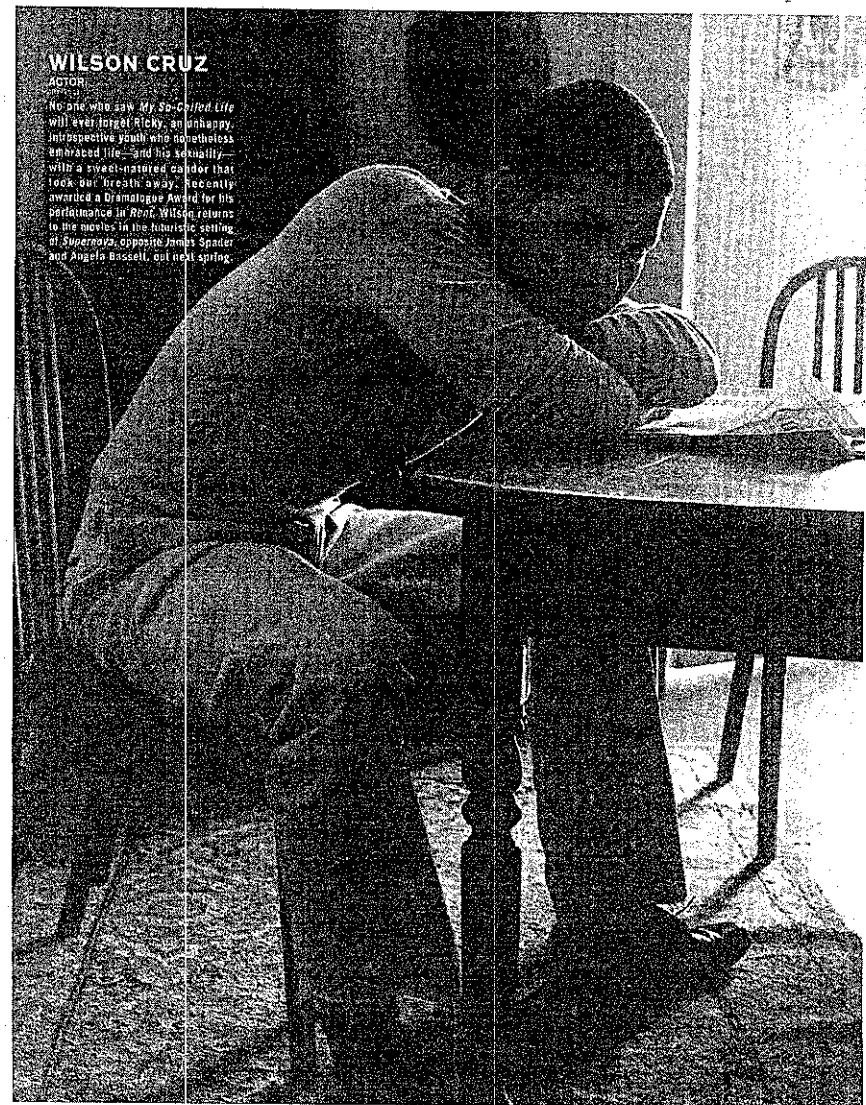


special advertising section

Dockers® Khakis invites you to take a look at 10 extraordinary people and how their lives are making a difference, for all of us.

Photographed by Carter Smith

inside
OUT



WILSON CRUZ

ACTOR

No one who saw *My So-Called Life* will ever forget Ricky, an unhappy, introspective youth who nonetheless embraced life—and his sexuality—with a sweet-natured candor that took our breath away. Recently awarded a Dramatogue Award for his performance in *Rent*, Wilson returns to the movies in the historic casting of *Supercop*, opposite Jackie Chan and Angela Bassett, out next spring.

FIGURES 2.6 AND 2.7 EXTRAORDINARY PEOPLE IN AN EXTRAORDINARY PROJECT: LEVI STRAUSS'S ADVERTORIAL COLLABORATION WITH *OUT* (NOVEMBER 1998).

were all but eliminated from national gay lifestyle publications in the mid- to late-1990s. In 1992 the *Advocate* moved the classified section of the magazine out of its newsstand version altogether as part of what publisher Niles Merton called a two-year "mainstreaming plan."⁷⁹ Interested readers had to purchase the *Advocate Classifieds* independently: it had a cover price of \$1.95, but subscribers to the main magazine could receive it free of charge. Editor Jeff Yarbrough reflected on the removal of sex ads from the newsstand *Advocate*: "We needed to clean up our act and get a little more happy and shiny to attract advertisers."⁸⁰ It was not only national advertisers who were attracted: as large corporations became increasingly willing to advertise in the pages of the *Advocate*, sexual advertising in the *Classifieds* mushroomed, expanding from a 12-page pullout in 1990 to a 66-page separate publication in 1992.

Although local publications in general could not afford to remove sex ads altogether, most shunted them to the back pages in order to encourage national advertisers in the front pages. The *Washington Blade* reportedly made it "difficult" for sex-oriented businesses to advertise, in order to attract "Mom and Pop businesses in Du Pont Circle" that might be squeamish about appearing next to sex ads.⁸¹ Internet sites such as PlanetOut and gay.com similarly distanced themselves from sexual advertising: a gay.com spokesperson said, "That's not the business we're going to be in. We're in the business of community, news' and other services."⁸² Such comments reinforce assumptions that gay sexual content is inherently incompatible with a marketing-friendly sense of gay community.

In the 1990s the gay market diversified not only in terms of media and products but also beyond the stereotype of the young, affluent, white gay man. Although some journalists continued to circulate inflated household income statistics and hyperbole about gays as "advertising's most elusive, yet lucrative, target," the "market of the decade," and a "goldmine," others began to recognize that "the gay market" as previously imagined was only a slice of an otherwise economically disparate population.⁸³ As an editor at *Genre* magazine explained, "Targeting the gay male population rather than a segment of the market is as ill-conceived as targeting all straight men."⁸⁴ Michael Wilke suggested that, because the market is not as affluent as once thought, packaged goods, over-the-counter drugs, and other more general products could join luxury products such as Gucci and Waterford Crystal in *Out* and other magazines.⁸⁵ However, *Out's* president, Henry Scott, responded to Wilke that there is a misconception that Gucci and other upscale companies are targeting "the 'gay market' any more than they're pursuing the heterosexual market. The truth is those brands are in logical pursuit of only the most affluent segment of the gay market"—an affluent segment that *Out* could deliver.⁸⁶

Income was not the only criterion marking an increasingly diversified conception of the gay market. A spokesman for the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force cautioned "marketers who think there is only one way to reach gays: . . . It's very different trying to reach gay men in West Hollywood than, say, lesbians in Columbus, Ohio."⁸⁷ Journalists and marketers made more concerted efforts to address lesbian readers' issues: the *Advocate* included "lesbian" in its header, and *Deneuve* and *On Our Backs* put a sexy, worldly, fun image of lesbians into the publishing and marketing sphere. Specific references to lesbians in the trade press also began to appear more often, such as the article "Economics Holds Back the Lesbian Ad Market," in a 1993 *Advertising Age* special feature on marketing to gays and lesbians.⁸⁸ These articles attempted to account for the time lag in marketing to lesbians, suggesting that marketers' beliefs about anticonsumerist politics, lower average annual incomes, and lower visibility compared with gay men made lesbians, in *Deneuve* publisher Frances Stevens's words, "the invisible of the invisible."⁸⁹ The rise in attention to "lipstick lesbians" and more openly lesbian celebrities heightened marketing attention somewhat, but lesbians remained "on the fringe of the gay marketing movement."⁹⁰

During the 1990s, ads began to appear in both mainstream and gay and lesbian media that showed images of people with AIDS.⁹¹ Benetton notoriously pushed the boundaries of public taste in 1992 with its "David Kirby 'a pietà'" print ad showing the dying AIDS activist with his family (fig. 2.8). As protease inhibitors and combination therapies came on the market, images of people with AIDS shifted from the emaciated AIDS "victim" that dominated the news to representations of increasingly robust-looking people living, exercising, and loving with AIDS (fig. 2.9). The transformation of the public image of people with AIDS led to the first national commercial showing an HIV-positive person advertising a product that was not AIDS related: Ric Muñoz, an openly gay, HIV-positive athlete, appeared in a Nike ad in 1995. This transformation of images of people with AIDS has been received ambivalently, however. For example, Sean Strub, an HIV-positive man and the publisher of *POZ* magazine, traced the trajectory of images in HIV-related ads through the 1990s:

The first ones invariably would have somebody alone, very thoughtful with a long face and looking at the moon and walking alone along the beach and clearly contemplating life and death issues. . . . So then, the next wave were ads where they were saying [cheerful tone]: "Joe, who has HIV . . ." You know, a white man and he would be looking, if not cheerful, somewhat more alive than the guy walking along the beach. And



UNITED COLOR OF BENNETT

FIGURES 2.8 AND 2.9 DEATH AND REDEMPTION IN IMAGES OF HIV: BENETTON'S "DAVID KIRBY 'A PIETA'" (WWW.BENETTON.COM, RETRIEVED MAY 14, 2004) AND MERCK'S CRIXIVAN AD (POZ, OCTOBER 1998).

If you're HIV+, CRIXIVAN may help you a longer, healthier life

Being HIV+ isn't easy. It's a long-term condition that can take 15 years or longer to be diagnosed. In between, you'll have to deal with the stress of living with HIV and how you can best manage it. For many people, that means taking a long-term medication to help keep the virus under control. But there's also the possibility of side effects from your medication. CRIXIVAN is a powerful medicine that helps you manage your HIV+ condition. It's a long-term medication that helps you manage your HIV+ condition. It's a long-term medication that helps you manage your HIV+ condition.

Now HIV research showed people taking CRIXIVAN in triple therapy lived longer and experienced fewer opportunistic infections. These findings were based on research by the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In a study of 1,000 people, those taking CRIXIVAN in triple therapy lived longer and experienced fewer opportunistic infections than those taking other HIV medications. This research was published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

CRIXIVAN in triple therapy continues to hold serum viral load levels below the limit of detection at the end of year 1. In a separate study, CRIXIVAN in triple therapy was compared to other HIV medications. The results showed that CRIXIVAN in triple therapy was more effective at reducing viral load than other HIV medications. This research was published in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases*.

CRIXIVAN is generally well tolerated. CRIXIVAN is a powerful medicine that helps you manage your HIV+ condition. It's a long-term medication that helps you manage your HIV+ condition. It's a long-term medication that helps you manage your HIV+ condition.

CRIXIVAN is the number one choice of doctors. CRIXIVAN is a powerful medicine that helps you manage your HIV+ condition. It's a long-term medication that helps you manage your HIV+ condition. It's a long-term medication that helps you manage your HIV+ condition.

Even on the rise of your HIV+ condition, HIV therapy, like with your doctor, can help you manage your HIV+ condition. CRIXIVAN is a powerful medicine that helps you manage your HIV+ condition. It's a long-term medication that helps you manage your HIV+ condition. It's a long-term medication that helps you manage your HIV+ condition.

Remember ask your doctor about C



Going th

then the wave after that was bringing some diversity into those ads, showing situations where there's a relationship, either a couple or a family situation or whatever, and there's gender or racial diversity and so on. . . . But then it went from there to body builders and people climbing mountains and ridiculous extreme stuff like advertising does.⁹²

Strub's comment raises thorny issues concerning the representation of people with AIDS, which are reminiscent of debates over the benefits and limits of positive images of gays, lesbians, and other groups that have been dogged by negative stereotypes. People with AIDS might feel great relief both that their image is not solely associated with sickness and sadness, and that there is less stigma for HIV-positive people appearing in ads. However, Strub and others are concerned that the most recent incarnation of people with AIDS in medication advertising encourages unrealistic expectations of life on HIV drugs and minimizes their less attractive side effects.⁹³

The 1990s nevertheless stand as a watershed for marketing to gays, lesbians, and people with HIV. Increased media visibility and the GLBT community's response to the AIDS epidemic brought advertisers in droves to gay and lesbian consumers and provided an infrastructure to appeal to them. As advertisers explored this potential and as the national media landscape became somewhat more tolerant of openly gay and lesbian images, advertisers used these images to appeal to queers and straights alike. Yet despite more representative data showing the diversity of gay people among the U.S. population, and excepting some HIV-related ads, images targeted at gay consumers largely continued to recirculate long-held notions of gays as white, male, affluent, body-conscious, and trendsetting (figs. 2.10 and 2.11).

Putting Power into Fewer Hands: The 2000s

The early 2000s built upon the increasing presence of gay and lesbian people in mainstream advertising and other media, and on the growing interest in gay and lesbian consumers from national corporations. This interest provided

the family car

205

SECA

SYDNEY CITY TOYOTA
 Cheryl Naylor
 188 William St. Sydney
 (02) 357 7766

TOYOTA
 For further information
 or to arrange a test drive in Seica
 Ultima or any other Toyota model,
 please contact these dealers.

NEW 1
 Robert Warner
 824 & 859 Elizabeth St. Maitland, N.S.W.
 (03) 329 7777

SECA ULTIMA

FIGURE 2.10 LOVE—AND TOYOTA—MAKE A FAMILY (ADVOCATE, OCTOBER 6, 1992).

FOR INFO CALL 1-888-3-VERSACE

VERSACE

FIGURE 2.11 CAMPING IT UP WITH VERSACE (OUT, JANUARY 1999).

more revenue for gay media, facilitating a growth in the number of gay publications and Web sites which, in turn, led to increased competition for readers and advertisers. As gay and lesbian publishing became more profitable, media companies began to merge into larger conglomerations that were then faced with the challenge of prospering in a faltering economy.

In 2000, gay media continued to be dominated by ads for apparel, alcohol, cigarettes, entertainment and music, financial services, and HIV-related pharmaceuticals. With the debut of the travel magazine *Passport* in 2001, and a gay and lesbian microsite on Orbitz's Internet travel site in 2002, gays and lesbians were courted as tourists with unprecedented openness (fig. 2.12). Orbitz estimated that U.S. gays and lesbians spent \$1.2 billion on travel in 2001 (although where this figure comes from, journalist Jim Kirk does not relate).⁹⁴ The early years of the twenty-first century also saw some expansion into the gay market of more traditionally conservative advertisers: Crest "Whitestrips" (Procter & Gamble's teeth-whitening product) appeared in *Out* magazine in the summer of 2001 (fig. 2.13). *Out* and *Advocate* publisher Joe Landry saw this as a breakthrough in the hitherto reluctant packaged goods market: to get an ad from Procter & Gamble "opens the door to more packaged goods."⁹⁵ Also new on the market were a number of automobile manufacturers: in 2001, Jaguar, Volkswagen, and Volvo joined Saab, Saturn, and Subaru, which had been advertising in gay publications since the 1990s. Subaru had distinguished itself by aligning its product with the "civic-mindedness of the gay and lesbian community," creating gay-punning print ads such as: "It's not a choice. It's the way we're built."⁹⁶

Recognition of gays and lesbians as consumers and as part of the television audience also led to a few ads in mainstream media. Subaru expanded its pro-gay campaign from gay and lesbian print publications to television. In Subaru's "What do we know?" commercial, Martina Navratilova, dumped by mainstream advertisers when she came out as a lesbian, joined two other female athletes to demonstrate the virtues of the Subaru Forester. The ad explained "what they know" about the vehicle's control, handling, and performance, and Navratilova delivered the punch line: "What do we know? We're just girls." A more explicit lesbian reference came in a commercial from John Hancock, the insurance company, which featured a lesbian couple adopting a baby. The company had to change the spot after its initial airing to downplay that it showed a lesbian couple, and to announce the arrival of the flight—and thus the baby—from Cambodia, not China, since China had banned adoption by openly gay couples in 1998. This ad debuted during the 2000 Summer Olympics, demonstrating a shift toward using affirming gay and lesbian images to appeal to mainstream audiences. However, a spokesperson distanced the

SEE LONDON INSIDE & OUT

LONDON'S THE PLACE TO DROP A FEW POUNDS.

From antiques to boutiques, from the traditional Silver Vaults to fashionable New Bond Street—London's the place to exercise your shopping arm and tone your sense of style.

Create Your Own Vacation
 Create your own shopping trip, flying with British Airways and choosing from hundreds of special accommodations, sightseeing and car rental options. For example, stay in an elegant Town House Hotel from \$115 including continental breakfast. Shop for treasures with a taxi of Sunday Morning Street Markets and Greenwich for \$67. Explore in your own rental car for just \$19 per day.
 See your travel agent or call
 British Airways Holidays at **BRITISH AIRWAYS**
1-877-4-A-VACATION

BRITAIN INSIDE & OUT
 For your free brochure, call 1-800-224-6248 or visit our website at www.gaybritain.org

LONDON
 IGLTA

Terms and conditions: On-arrival tax and hotel prices are per person and based on double occupancy. Car rental does not include insurance and petrol. See the British Airways website, brochure, Create Your Own Vacation Ad # 11919, March 31, 2000, for full terms and conditions.

FIGURE 2.12 DROPPING THE POUNDS COURTESY OF THE LONDON TOURIST BOARD (*OUT*, JANUARY 1999).

NOW AVAILABLE IN TEETH.

NEW Crest Whitestrips
DENTAL WHITENING SYSTEM

Antique White
Off White
White

© 2001 P&G

NOT YET AVAILABLE IN STORES
ORDER ONLINE NOW AT
www.whitestrips.com
(OR CALL 1-888-CREST-WS)

ORDER NOW AND
SAVE \$5.00

By mail-ordering the box of Crest Whitestrips, you'll save the customer. One good for brushed teeth. Visit your dentist every 6 months.



Easy.
Crest Whitestrips are soft, flexible strips that noticeably whiten your smile in just 2 weeks. Simply apply them twice a day for thirty minutes at a time.



Effective.
They use the same enamel-safe ingredient trusted by dentists to whiten teeth ten times better than the leading whitening toothpaste. And Crest Whitestrips give you a whiter smile for at least 6 months.



REVEAL YOUR WHITER SMILE

ALSO AVAILABLE THROUGH DENTISTS.

FIGURE 2.13 PROCTER & GAMBLE NIBBLES ON THE GAY MARKET WITH CREST WHITESTRIPS (OUT, APRIL 2001).

company from its lesbian and gay customers by claiming that it was “not so much targeting a specific audience” as making a more general appeal to “diversity” by showing a gay couple.⁹⁷

An increasingly common theme in television commercials involved heterosexual women cruising men who turn out to be gay: Miller Lite’s “Switcheroo” showed two women sending a beer to a handsome man at the other end of the bar, only to watch as his boyfriend shows up. The ad concludes, “Well, at least he’s not married.” With this ad Miller could get the best of all worlds: in testing, gay men appreciated the ad because it represents them; heterosexual women enjoyed it because it shows them as sexually assertive; and heterosexual men found it amusing and unthreatening because it suggests that when women *are* sexually assertive—that is, when they usurp straight men’s conventional role—they mess up. Further, the product avoided the risk of becoming known as “the gay beer” because it’s the women who order Miller Lite, not the gay men. Nevertheless, Stuart Elliott saw this commercial as

really a watershed because in this country it’s been that beer companies were perfectly willing to do stuff targeted to the [gay] market as long as it never got out, never sees the light of day in the general market. So that was a real change. And it’s driven by the fact that they think their target market for [beer] thinks it’s perfectly okay. Or it’s cool, or whatever.⁹⁸

Although mainstream audiences may be beginning to think that gay male couples are “okay” or “cool,” the same cannot be said for transgender images. Those rare appearances of transgender people in general market ads continued to exploit the “mistaken identity” joke; a print ad for TheStreet.com warned: “Mail-order bride, transsexual, Internet stock. It never hurts to do a little research before bringing one home.” This ad repeated the assumption that deception (and a later, nasty revelation) is at the center of transgender identity, and that readers would necessarily rather avoid the shock of finding out that their one-night stand (like their bride or their stock) is other than advertised.

Still, gender-normative gays and lesbians were of growing interest to national advertisers, an interest that continued to support efforts for increasingly accurate data on them as a market. Two market research projects dominated the first years of the decade: one from OpusComm with Syracuse University and Gsociety, Inc; the other from Witeck-Combs Communications with Harris Interactive. Although both used online surveys, which offer relative anonymity but not representative samples, each took a distinct strategy for recruiting respondents and analyzing data. Calling its project the “Gay/Lesbian

Consumer Online Census,” OpusComm advertised for subjects on the Internet, with such slogans as “Stand up and be counted! Take pride in knowing that you are affecting [sic] a change in the world for yourself and the future of the GLBT community.”⁹⁹ Over a six-week period they collected data from more than 6,000 respondents: 55 percent were male, 92 percent were living in the United States, and the sample had an average household income of \$65,000. At a recent panel, one of the researchers admitted that the sample was not representative, and the data were therefore “not projectable” to the GLBT population as a whole.¹⁰⁰

In contrast, Witeck–Combs Communications’ collaboration with Harris Interactive is based on a 20,000 member, GLBT-identified subset of a sample of three million consumers who regularly give information on their behaviors and attitudes. None of the GLBT participants is recruited from gay-specific sites or venues. Although this sample is necessarily self-selected and has access to the Internet, skewing the overall data toward people with both time and money, Witeck–Combs and Harris attempt to get a diverse sample by recruiting not only online but by mail and telephone as well. They also weight their data according to U.S. Census information and by using a statistical technique known as “propensity weighting” to reduce the effects of selection bias in their results. Witeck–Combs found that 39 percent of GLBT consumers preferred to purchase products from companies that advertise in gay media, and that 46 percent would patronize companies that support GLBT nonprofit organizations. Because of the statistical techniques employed by Witeck–Combs Communications and Harris, this market research offers perhaps the most representative and projectable GLBT market research to date.¹⁰¹

Better market research helped gay and lesbian media win lucrative national advertising, and these media’s increased profitability led to further expansion and consolidation in the early 2000s. In particular, the Internet emerged as the premiere route to access gay consumers: in 2002 PlanetOut and gay.com, both owned by PlanetOut Partners, Inc., together boasted 5.2 million members, reaching more GLBT people than the gay print media combined. After six consecutive quarters of increasing income, the company announced its first profitable quarter in October 2002, with a 15 percent rise in ad revenue.¹⁰² The early part of the decade also saw a diversification of print media directed toward gay and lesbian people of color: *Noodle*, for Asian American gay men; *Tentaciones*, a bilingual publication for GLBT Latino/as; *2lips*, for Latina lesbians; and *Trikone*, a quarterly magazine for GLBT South Asians.¹⁰³ Although most of these are produced using personal financial investments and rely on voluntary labor, it nevertheless suggests that GLBT people of color are responding to a need for media that address not only their sexual but their racial

and ethnic identities too. Yet the challenge for GLBT print media in an increasingly competitive environment is reflected in the fate of many lesbian publications; Todd Evans, whose company, Rivendell, sells advertising space for GLBT publications, reported that the number of lesbian publications they represent declined from eleven in 1994 to only three in 2002.¹⁰⁴

The profitability and consequent diversification of gay (if not lesbian) media suggests a mature phase in gay marketing. This phase has two manifestations: the consolidation of existing media, and expansion into new—and more expensive—media forms. As more media vehicles enter the market, each is subject to increased competition; one consequence of this is a move toward conglomeration of the more successful titles. In the early 2000s the *Advocate’s* parent company, LPI, bought *Out* magazine; Windows Media, which already owned the *Southern Voice*, bought the *Washington Blade* and the *New York Blade News*; America Online bought a 12 percent share of the gay Web-site portal, PlanetOut; PlanetOut negotiated a merger with LPI (a deal that was dropped as a result of the dotcom crash of 2001); and PlanetOut and gay.com merged.¹⁰⁵ Such activity did not come without concern, however. One headline asks: “Will Mergers Quiet the Voice of the Gay Press? Many Fear Takeovers Will Put Power into Fewer Hands and Put Diversity at Risk.” Henry Scott, who left as president of *Out* magazine shortly after it was acquired by LPI, expressed concern that the PlanetOut–gay.com merger “threatens to further diminish the opportunity for vigorous debate over issues of politics and culture and style that is our community’s greatest strength.”¹⁰⁶

Dedicated GLBT Internet and print media have also been supplemented by cable television. In January 2002, MTV and Showtime announced a new joint project: Outlet, a cable channel devoted to GLBT content and audiences.¹⁰⁷ Following the success of television shows on network and cable television such as *Will & Grace* and *Queer as Folk*, these Viacom subsidiaries joined forces on the project of bringing “all gays, all the time” to cable subscribers in the United States. According to a leaked memo, Outlet was scheduled for launch in the spring of 2003 and was subsequently shelved. In May 2004, MTV announced it would go ahead and launch the channel, now called Ego, in 2005. Logo’s developers face the challenges of persuading enough cable distributors to carry the channel, of providing sufficiently diverse content to attract large enough audiences, and of funding the development of original programming, a very expensive proposition. Canada’s 24-hour GLBT channel PrideVision announced in 2002 that it was scaling back on original programming after subscriptions had not grown as fast as expected. It may be that Bravo becomes the de facto “gay cable channel,” with its hit makeover show *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* and its queered version of the dating show, *Boy*

Meets Boy. It remains to be seen how the dynamics of gay marketing will intersect with cable channel marketing and programming: the attention given to youngish white men in U.S. GLBT print and Internet media may dominate television too, as both Bravo's and PrideVision's programming suggests.

The challenge to become and remain profitable in an increasingly competitive media environment was exacerbated by the overall decline in advertising budgets in the tight economic climate of the early 2000s. The Gay Press Report, published by Prime Access, Inc., and Rivendell Marketing, related that after a period of rapid growth in the late 1990s, 2001 saw a decline in advertising in gay media of 1.9 percent, with the local gay press taking the biggest hit. Circulation figures for all print media were down, perhaps because of growing GLBT Internet use. On a more positive note, the report found that there was an expansion of gay-themed (rather than generic) ads in gay and lesbian media. Although it is hard to predict the effects of the recession on gay marketing, the marketers I interviewed were optimistic about an ongoing diversification of products advertised to gay consumers, particularly in the packaged goods and automobile categories.¹⁰⁸ The *New York Times*'s Stuart Elliott mentioned that the slump might have a positive impact on gay marketing, because it was a similar economic climate in the early 1990s that sent mainstream marketers in search of gay consumers: "People said, 'Oh God, nobody's spending money—oh wait! Those people [gays] are spending money, maybe we should advertise to them!'"¹⁰⁹ In the hard times brought on by economic instability, the doctrine of "business, not politics" may be particularly persuasive as demands for new consumers overshadow trickier questions of if and how to market to gays and lesbians.

Race, Sexuality, and Market Segmentation

Tempting as it might be to see the development of the gay market as a process of natural evolution, the formation of the gay market reflects a growing tendency throughout the twentieth century to segment potential consumers into ever more narrowly defined niche markets. As Richard Tedlow and Joseph Turow describe, market segmentation was made possible by increasingly sophisticated manufacturing, media, research, and distribution technologies that both led to a proliferation of goods and allowed for more precise means of dividing, measuring, and appealing to consumers.¹¹⁰ And although niche marketing is most associated with identity-based movements since the 1960s, the linkage of target marketing with identity began early in the twentieth century, when marketers appealed to women, Jewish immigrants, and people of color, even if market segments were only roughly drawn and lacked the statistical so-

phistication of contemporary demographics. When marketers became interested in gay consumers they were therefore already familiar with the processes required to cultivate niche markets, and many large companies already had personnel in their marketing departments skilled in appealing to identity groups.

Looking at the development of the African American market since the 1930s suggests some interesting parallels with the development of the gay market decades later, especially in terms of the strategies marketers deployed to produce a desirable market from a stigmatized social group. At the turn of the twentieth century, white business-owners largely ignored African Americans, considering this often poor and largely rural population insignificant and undesirable as consumers. Black people were mainly served by black business-owners, who began to form associations such as the National Negro Business League in 1900. Massive migration to northern cities by rural black Southerners during the First World War increased the incomes of many and led to a pouring of African American dollars into black-owned businesses, including those producing "race" records and films, and cosmetics.¹¹¹ As African American consumers became more affluent and more visible to both black- and white-owned businesses, the National Negro Business League and other groups began to carry out small-scale market research.

By the beginning of the Second World War, black consumers were increasingly likely to be recognized and appealed to by both black- and white-owned businesses as a result of increased incomes, market research, trade press coverage, and a recognition of black spending. The Second World War also saw another large migration of black workers from the South to northern cities, raising many black families' standard of living, and 1946 marked the first attempt at a representative survey of African American consumers, paid for by interested corporations and Interstate United Newspapers, Inc., a consortium of black-owned papers. Trade press coverage reflected increased market research efforts. David Sullivan, an African American market researcher and expert on black consumption, published articles with such titles as "Don't Do This—If You Want to Sell Your Products to Negroes!" that offered advice to white business-owners: "Don't exaggerate Negro characters, with flat noses, thick lips, kinky hair, and owl eyes."¹¹²

As African American consumers began to be considered a desirable market, so too were black publications recognized as a route to reaching them. From 1940, companies could buy ad space through the Interstate United Newspapers that placed ads in a large number of geographically disparate regional papers. The 1940s saw the beginning of ad-sponsored glossy magazines for African American readers, such as *Ebony*, which debuted in 1945. By the

1950s, Hoover, Schlitz beer, and Pillsbury Mills began advertising in the magazine, despite Pillsbury's fears that its product would become known as "the nigger flour."¹¹³

The 1950s also saw the recruitment of African American marketing specialists by white-owned agencies such as BBD&O. Often isolated from white colleagues in these companies, these executives formed professional associations such as the National Association of Market Developers to provide information, professional training, and social contact with other African American marketers. Black-owned advertising agencies began to flourish, such as the UniWorld Group, founded in 1969. Yet as general-market agencies employed more black personnel, agencies specializing in African American marketing struggled for business and many collapsed. Since the early 1980s the number of black employees in senior positions at advertising agencies has significantly declined, despite ongoing claims that racially diverse agency teams add expertise to broadly targeted campaigns.¹¹⁴ Some general-market agencies accommodated the shift in expertise away from black agency professionals by minimizing the differences between black and white consumers, calling (affluent) black consumers "dark-skinned white people."¹¹⁵ Historian Robert Weems holds a bleak view of African American market development and the incorporation of black consumerism into mainstream American culture, arguing that although this process affords some visibility and leverage for black people, the cost to autonomous black businesses has been too high.

The development of the African American market offers a useful comparison for the later development of gay marketing, revealing commonalities in ideologies and technologies of segmentation. Both groups have suffered invisibility and stereotyping in mainstream media. Yet in compensating for these earlier images, marketers helped to consolidate new stereotypes, often under the guise of "positive images": black men appear as athletes and musicians; gays as affluent, desexualized white men. Market research and trade press coverage were instrumental in the dissemination of (sometimes questionable) information about each market to national advertisers and "legitimized" each segment. Minority media expanded and diversified as advertising dollars bolstered circulation revenues and as publishers further segmented each group (black and gay entrepreneurs, for example, with *Black Enterprise* and *Victory!*, respectively). African American and gay professionals were instrumental in forming, organizing, and providing "insider" expertise about each community, seeing the development of a niche market as offering gains in visibility and reflecting a general sense of progress. Advertising appeals to African American and gay consumers have been interpreted by some commentators as a sign of acceptance and validation on a broader cultural level, and by others as merely

a co-optation of an authentic subculture by corporations in search of further profits.

Consciously or otherwise, marketers redeployed those tactics that had enabled them to imagine and produce the African American market in the formation of the gay market. The similarities in the development of each market were not lost on gay marketers, who made frequent comparisons between the groups when discussing the gay market. An early article in *Business Week* reported that at least one apparel company "monitors the gay community for clues to fashion trends the way it monitors young urban Blacks—to spot fashion trends that may move into the majority community."¹¹⁶ This links gays with blacks not just through how minority markets are formed, but in terms of assumptions about each group as trendsetters. Journalists also compared the value of gay marketing for GLBT and African American communities by locating marketing centrally in the advancement of civil rights. Stuart Elliott described what he saw as the significance of the appearance of a person of color in an ad: "In a lot of ways there was as much progress in the civil rights era when the civil rights bills were signed as when the first ad ran showing a black man in a suit and a tie standing in a phone booth making a phone call, or a national commercial [aired] with a black woman telling her child to take Anacin."¹¹⁷ Elliott went on to suggest that for people of color and GLBT people, civil rights changes come from recognition within the consumer sphere: "That's the kind of culture we live in. So we define ourselves a lot by that, so the fact that advertisers are trying to chase after you to take your money from you is perceived as a sign of progress." Marketers thus not only applied similar strategies to the formation of each group but assumed similar gains from consumer visibility.

The easy comparisons marketers made between African American and gay markets are only possible, however, while these consumer categories are seen as mutually exclusive: that "all the blacks are straight and all the gays are white." Howard Buford, the openly gay, African American president of Prime Access advertising agency, articulated a notable exception to this. He considered it his social responsibility to challenge this artificial split: "we [at Prime Access] very much think of people of color being very much part of the gay market, very much think of Spanish-speaking people being part of the gay market, and I don't think that's true anywhere else."¹¹⁸ Such a view is unusual, however, because the logic of niche marketing mitigates against such complex perceptions of consumer identities. The lack of recognition of GLBT people of color as consumers in *both* markets reveals that markets are normally constructed within unitary notions of identity. Marketers, like media producers, can think only in terms of what cultural scholar Lisa Henderson terms "one-

dimensional diversity”:¹¹⁹ “minority” markets may be black or gay, but for the most part cannot encompass a version of identity produced from more than one of these positions, not to mention myriad others.

The simplistic comparison between markets also obscures the specific ways in which marketers have had to transform negative stereotypes into positive attributes: just because both African Americans and GLBT people have been demonized in mainstream media does not mean they have been demonized in the same way. Each identity group struggles with a different history of both offensive and ostensibly “positive” stereotypes, requiring marketers to compensate for particularly negative associations with more flattering characteristics associated with each group. To displace the homophobic stereotype of the flaming sissy, marketers constructed an image of the ideal gay consumer as gender-normative and displaying a decidedly masculine standard of good taste. Similarly, marketers interested in African American consumers were advised to replace images of pickaninnies, minstrels, cannibals, and people eating watermelon with more “respectable” characters: entertainers, athletes, and musicians.¹²⁰ Racism and homophobia play out in specific ways in the mainstream imagination, and other social factors such as gender and class further complicate the process of transforming negative stereotypes into more “positive” images of each group. All are stereotypes, however, but some are more welcome than others.

Overemphasizing the similarities between the *process* of African American and gay market formation obscures the specific *conditions* of representation, the different struggles in which marketers had to engage, and the specific representational strategies they deployed to resolve some of the most problematic associations with each market. The similar methods marketers deployed to produce the African American market and, decades later, the gay market suggest the extent to which markets, no matter what their target niche, do not simply “evolve” but are produced from specific technological, economic, demographic, and cultural contexts, contexts that markets and marketers then influence. Yet their differences remind us that these conditions are distinct for each market. The conditions in which the gay market was shaped, and the challenges of producing an image of an ideal gay consumer within a homophobic culture, meant that specific pressures were brought to bear on this image. Marketers maximized gay consumers’ ideal characteristics—their tastefulness, trendiness, and affluence—and played down their political commitments and sexual desires. Despite the costs this limited view exacted from the GLBT community, this history shows that we cannot claim that the gay market—like the African American market—was simply imposed on the community from “above” by cynical heterosexuals in mainstream corporations.

It was instead produced largely by members of the GLBT community itself: gay-, lesbian- and bisexual-identified marketers, publishers, and entrepreneurs who saw something to gain—financially, certainly, but also in terms of gay visibility, recognition, and cultural leverage. These professionals, with their business and political investments, populate the following chapter.