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THE FOUNDATIONS OF LGBT TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter covers the following foundations of LGBT tourism and hospitality: your “elevator pitch”: the importance of developing a specific program for LGBT tourism; sizing the LGBT segment: buying power; the importance of the LGBT segment in the travel industry; tips before launching your LGBT marketing campaign; success in the LGBT travel market: and top ten tips from Jeff and Ed.

KEY TERMS

power of the invitation
homophobia
anti-gay laws
LGBT marketing
Corporate Equality Index
SCRUFF
Grindr
LGBT travel spending
LGBT destinations
Community Marketing & Insights (CMI)
International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA)
Gay Pride

1A | YOUR “ELEVATOR PITCH”: THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING A SEGMENT-SPECIFIC PROGRAM FOR LGBT TOURISM

Your colleagues, boss, board, your straight or LGBT family or friends—whether inside or outside the travel industry—may ask: “Why do we need to specifically target LGBT travelers? Have we not moved beyond the ‘gay ghetto’?” Our experience and our interviews with international tourism professionals indicate that a specific, sustained, and smart LGBT tourism program is needed more than ever. Here is your “elevator pitch” for an LGBT tourism campaign.

1. There is nothing more powerful than an invitation. Not every community, country, or business welcomes LGBT travelers. Among the hundreds of global destinations that are looking for new visitors, relatively few actively reach out to LGBT travelers. LGBT consumers don’t necessarily assume that they are welcome at a particular destination, or they might not know which destinations would interest them. A specific campaign reassures the traveler, and it gives you a competitive edge. It also sends a signal to the friends, families, and allies of the LGBT segment that you are gay welcoming, and it has increasingly become a marker and motivator for straight millennial travelers that you’re a hip and forward-looking destination, hotel, or cruise line.

2. Homophobia still exists today—the tourism and hospitality industries can combat it. In LGBT-progressive cities, countries, and companies, marketers can easily fall into the trap of believing that homophobia has disappeared. Like ageism, racism, and sexism, however, homophobia seems to be baked into humans culturally. In fact, in many countries, LGBT persons can be persecuted and killed with impunity. In recent years, ISIS has hurled gay men off roofs and stoned them to death.¹ Troubling reports of homophobic harassment, threats, and violence persist even in gay-popular destinations like Amsterdam, London, New York City, and San Francisco. Even in the world’s most tolerant places, including the Scandinavian countries that passed laws protecting gay men and lesbians decades ago, homophobia and transphobia can still lurk beneath the surface. In August 2015 *Time* magazine ran the headline “Why Transgender People Are Being Murdered at a Historic Rate” with an accompanying story about transgender crimes in the United States.²

Consider these other disturbing examples from the international press:

- In November 2011 the United Nations reported that at least seventy-six countries retain laws that criminalize people on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity or expression, including laws criminalizing consensual same-sex relationships among adults.³

TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS

EXTENDING THE INVITATION IN PHILADELPHIA AND FORT LAUDERDALE

Meryl Levitz, president and CEO of Visit Philadelphia, explains the power of the invitation perfectly: “Marketers must not forget that people want to be invited. People need to be invited and you do that by choosing imagery that they know is for them, placing it in media that is for them and making a promise of what people can expect all the way through the travel experience. For gay and lesbian travelers who aren’t sure if they are going to be welcomed for who they are, an invitation is definitely needed.”*

Visit Philadelphia devotes significant resources to create a genuine invitation to LGBT travelers to visit the city. It integrates inclusive imagery throughout its website, incorporating LGBT people within “mainstream” images. In addition, its robust and regularly updated LGBT microsite includes stories, pictures, and videos that speak directly to potential gay and lesbian visitors, which translate into a global twenty-four-hour “you are welcome” sign pointing toward the City of Brotherly Love.

Nikki Grossman, president of the Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Bureau, says that without a specific campaign, “the expression of welcome for gay travelers wouldn’t be known. If you want someone to know something about your destination, you have to really put it out there, you have to let them know who you are, what you are thinking and what you have to offer, how they will be treated as a visitor, and so you need that campaign. Even though Fort Lauderdale was early, we needed that first campaign to just say ‘Hi’ and ‘Here we are.’ Now our campaign is ‘Hi, here we are and this is why you should choose us over a number of competitors.’ You’ve got to have a gay campaign; otherwise, gay travelers will be lured to another destination.”† (See Figure 3.)

Because of its open invitation, Fort Lauderdale is a top destination for LGBT travelers and home to the greatest number of same-sex couples in the country. The Greater Fort Lauderdale Convention and Visitors Authority calls the city the “Gay Capital of the United States” and proudly promotes its rank as the country’s seventh-most popular LGBT travel destination. The city welcomed a record-breaking 1.3 million LGBT visitors in 2013. These visitors represented 10 percent of all visitors to the city and spent \$1.48 billion, or 14 percent of the city’s overall revenue of \$10.6 billion.‡

* Jeff Guaracino, *Gay and Lesbian Tourism: The Essential Guide for Marketing* (Boston: Elsevier, 2007), 5–6.

† Interview with Nikki Grossman, August 11, 2015.

‡ Greater Fort Lauderdale Hello Sunny, “Greater Fort Lauderdale Gives 10.6 Billion ‘Thank You’s’ on National Tourism Appreciation Day,” May 8, 2014, www.sunny.org/press-releases/post/greater-fort-lauderdale-gives-106-billion-thank-yous-on-national-tourism-appreciation-day/.

- Russia is reversing its liberal approach to the LGBT community and sending more Russians back into the closet. Consider this account by the conservative news network Al-Jazeera from September 2015:

Activists say it has fuelled anti-gay abuse, discrimination, and violence, spawned a “chilling effect,” and victimized young lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and deterred them from coming out and seeking support.

The Russian legislation banned the spreading of “propaganda for non-traditional sexual relations” to minors and introduced fines for individuals and organizations that breach the law, which critics describe as arbitrary and hard to implement.

The law is seen by many as one in a series of moves by President Vladimir Putin to crack down on dissent, smother civil society, and draw closer to the Russian Orthodox Church, which has spoken out against homosexuality and is one of the most influential institutions in the country.⁴

- The same day as the New York Pride Parade on Sunday, June 28, 2015, Reuters reported, “Turkish police fired water cannon and rubber pellets to disperse a Gay Pride parade in central Istanbul on Sunday, after organisers said they had been refused permission to march this year because of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.”⁵
- The *Las Vegas Sun* reported on April 27, 2011, that the swanky Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas resort encountered a transgender issue with a guest. The report said that a “guest . . . identified as a ‘pre-op trans’ named Stephanie, said upon leaving the women’s room she was taken out of the resort by security guards, told she was trespassing on Cosmopolitan property and she would be arrested if she didn’t leave. She said she was photographed and told she was banned from returning to the hotel.”⁶ In response to the incident, the hotel issued the following statement:

The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas is committed to maintaining a community that recognizes and values the inherent dignity of every person, by fostering sensitivity, understanding and mutual respect of our guests and employees. We sincerely regret any misunderstanding or inappropriate actions that any member of our staff may have taken. And to ensure increased sensitivity within this area, the organization will focus on continued training and ongoing awareness initiatives. In addition, we apologize to the individual guest and welcome her back to the resort anytime. Again, we would like to apologize to the LGBT community and anyone concerned and hope to demonstrate our firm dedication to fair and unbiased treatment of all.

The statement takes responsibility for its role in the incident, but a much better option is to be more proactive about training staff in proper conduct and providing LGBT-friendly facilities.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

IRELAND: A BRIGHT SPOT FOR SAME-SEX COUPLES

Ireland became the first country to approve marriage equality by popular vote in May 2015. This vote has been recognized as a ringing victory for LGBT rights. The vote (62 percent in favor of legalizing same-sex marriage and 38 percent opposed) has been interpreted as a mark of social change and a protest against the Roman Catholic Church. LGBT people around the world saw it as a giant “you are welcome in Ireland” sign.*

Ireland is quickly seeing the positive effects of becoming a country in which same-sex couples have the freedom to marry. Just a few months after the historic referendum, it was estimated that 13 percent or more of the hospitality economy is composed of gay and lesbian travelers. LGBT Capital reports that the LGBT market has contributed \$943 million to the Irish economy.†

Ireland is not the only bright spot for same-sex couples. According to the Pew Research Center, “A growing number of governments around the world are considering whether to grant legal recognition to same-sex marriages. Nearly two dozen countries currently have national laws allowing gays and lesbians to marry, mostly in Europe and the Americas. In Mexico, some jurisdictions allow same-sex couples to wed, while others do not.”‡

* Danny Hakim and Douglas Dalby, “Ireland Votes to Approve Gay Marriage, Putting Country in Vanguard,” *New York Times*, May 23, 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/05/24/world/europe/ireland-gay-marriage-referendum.

† Joseph Pedro, “Gay Travel Makes Up 13% of Ireland’s Tourism and Hospitality Economy,” *Passport*, September 2015.

‡ David Masci et al., “Gay Marriage around the World,” June 26, 2015, Pew Research Center, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/06/26/gay-marriage-around-the-world-2013/>.

- Barbados Minister of Tourism Richard Sealy rejects lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender tourism. Sealy, who is also chairman of the Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), admitted that while some destinations had taken a different approach in trying to tap into the lucrative LGBT market, he did not expect a similar approach in Barbados. Barbados’s evangelical churches, Anglican clergy, and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the West Indies (PAWI) oppose LGBT tourism.⁸

Homophobia doesn’t need to be horrific and obvious to be harmful. Sometimes all it takes is an arched eyebrow from the diners at another table for a traveler to release his partner’s hand. In addition, lack of appropriate staff training or lack of attention to LGBT travelers’ needs—for example, gender-neutral bathrooms—can make guests and staff uncomfortable or stir controversy.

In short, Safety and homophobia are legitimate concerns for all LGBT travelers. The U.S. Department of State recommends that LGBT citizens “avoid excessive physical displays of affection in public, particularly in more conservative countries or regions.” Marketers need to be well aware of the laws and cultures of any particular destination.

LGBT travelers may find homophobia (expressed or latent) by travel suppliers or in their personal interactions with staff, locals, or other travelers throughout their trip. How should businesses respond to local homophobia? The answer is simple. Travel is about inviting people to visit your culture, your lives, and your place. LGBT travel is about safety, acceptance, and being who you are. Your goal is to welcome people who might not be out, accepted, or tolerated back home. Fostering an open dialogue on LGBT travel and the LGBT community will help you improve the visitor experience, as will providing reassurance that LGBT travelers are not only welcome but also safe.

TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS

CREATING A SAFE SPACE FOR IDENTITY AND SELF-EXPRESSION

Charlie Rounds is a pioneering LGBT travel professional and human rights activist. He has dedicated his entire career to ensuring equal rights for all people and to advancing LGBT equality through travel. Rounds believes that LGBT travel can be transformative to the global human experience and that more than ever LGBT people around the world are looking for an LGBT travel experience. In short, the future of LGBT travel is big, bright, and necessary. According to Rounds, developed countries like the United States, Great Britain, and Canada are now beacons to the LGBT community worldwide, communicating that equality, acceptance, and inclusion are possible.*

Rounds believes that LGBT travel is about safety and identity expression. Even in the United States, Rounds says, 99 percent of people are uncomfortable with a public display of same-sex affection. For these reasons, effective LGBT tourism ads often promote the intimacy, safety, and freedom of the experience. For example, gay cruise charters such as Atlantis Events, RSVP Vacations, Olivia, Source Events, and Brand G Vacations create a safe, open environment that appeals to LGBT travelers from all over the world. Many of these LGBT travelers are persecuted culturally, religiously, or legally in their home countries. As examples, he cites wealthy Middle Eastern LGBT persons, newly liberated LGBT refugees pouring out of Europe, and LGBT persons in Ukraine or Moldova.

* Interview with Charlie Rounds, October 28, 2015.

3. LGBT marketing is about knowing your customer and yourself. The LGBT market is no less segmented than any other market. Despite the common use of LGBT as an umbrella term, wide variations exist within each part of the LGBT community. For example, LGBT travelers may be in or out of the closet, and their travel experience can be shaped by their culture, gender, age, religion, whether they have children, the laws relating to homosexuality at home, and many other factors.

LGBT marketing is also about knowing your company, your destination, and your travel product's relationship to the LGBT community. Chapter 2 dives deeply into knowing your customer, so here let's focus on knowing yourself and your company.

Surveys show that LGBT consumers prefer to buy from gay-friendly companies. Thus, telling your story gives you a competitive advantage with these consumers. So align your business with what is important to the LGBT community, and shout it from the rooftops!

Many LGBT people evaluate tourism and hospitality businesses on the basis not just of their treatment of LGBT travelers, but also of their treatment of LGBT employees. Orbitz Worldwide, Marriott, American Airlines, Delta Airlines, IBM, AT&T, Comcast NBC Universal, and Coca-Cola are widely recognized as embracing diversity in their corporate policies. Proud of their commitment to diversity, these companies often broadcast their support of their LGBT employees in marketing programs and employee resource groups.

One measure of how well LGBT employees are treated in the corporate world is the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Corporate Equality Index (CEI), a benchmarking tool focused on U.S. corporate policies and practices pertinent to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees. In the 2015 CEI report, 366 major businesses—comprising nearly every industry and location in the United States—earned a top score of 100 percent and the distinction of “Best Places to Work for LGBT Equality.”

Some corporations, however, still have a long way to go. As the *New York Times* reported on July 1, 2015: “In the Human Rights Campaign's most recent Corporate Equality Index . . . Exxon again ranked last, with a score of minus 25—the only company ever to have received a negative score. After Exxon acquired Mobil in 1999, Exxon rescinded Mobil's policies prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and ended its policy of providing benefits to same-sex partners. Many gay and lesbian drivers have boycotted Exxon service stations ever since.”⁹

In more countries, data support the idea that a “tipping point” has been passed and businesses now have more to gain than lose by being seen as consistent supporters of their LGBT customers and employees.¹⁰ Now is the right time to begin or expand your LGBT marketing effort.

4. Relationship marketing and customer retention are the marketer's ultimate goals. Many companies see relationship marketing as their ultimate goal. Relationship marketing focuses on customer satisfaction and retention rather than simple sales transactions. The underlying belief, supported by the data, is that retaining current customers is much more cost-effective than finding new ones. Relationship market-

ing focuses not on wide-blast e-mails and sales campaigns (though such techniques are still used) but, rather, on a personal relationship between the company and its customers. Jon Allen, proprietor of one of the world's most famous—perhaps the most famous—gay men's guesthouses in Key West, Florida, may have said it best: "Effective marketing is just telling the truth in a way that gets people's attention."

How do you increase your commitment to relationship marketing? Start by telling your company's story. Then personalize the message to the individual customer to craft an authentic invitation.

Remember that LGBT travelers seek specific travel experiences or products with an understanding of their culture, history, community, world perspective, and desires. Relationship marketing starts with knowing your customer. The next step is customizing your company's messages and images to make them resonate with the LGBT community, and then to disseminate this customized content through social media, advertising, and other marketing channels.

During a Source Events cruise visiting Italy, Croatia, and Montenegro, we conducted a focus group with over a dozen experienced world travelers. We asked them: "What makes you buy a gay travel product?" On this cruise, a cabin ranged from \$5,000 to \$14,000. We met quite a few well-to-do gay men from around the world who chose to purchase a gay vacation. Why would a group of gay men choose to sail on the *Royal Clipper* (part of the Star Clipper Cruise Line) and pay more per cabin than

BEST PRACTICES

KNOWING YOUR CUSTOMERS AND CUSTOMIZING YOUR PRODUCTS

LGBT travelers are just like other travelers: they want to be respected and they want a meaningful travel experience. Respect can be as simple as recognizing that two men checking into a hotel room may want to share one bed.

In other cases, travelers may respond well to a program tailored specifically for them. For example, R Family Vacations pairs family-friendly travel experiences with ancillary programming of interest to multigenerational LGBT families.

The *New York Times* travel writer Steven McElroy profiled Atlantis Events, the world's most successful tour operator for the gay and lesbian travel segment. Brian J. Nash, an Atlantis entertainer, described the uniqueness of gay travel on a fully chartered cruise ship as follows: "I think no matter how socially acceptable being gay becomes, and thank God it's continually getting better, there's something about being on this magical island where everyone is like you and you can be entirely yourself and be as ridiculous as you want to be or as romantic and loving in public as you want to be. There's a comfort level, there's no looking over one's shoulder."

they would any other week of the year? Most of them talked about the sense of community they found on board. One respondent, a successful entrepreneur, said that he and his husband are so busy in their day-to-day lives that they have no time to make friends. On Source Events cruises, they have made friends for life, friends whom they see on subsequent Source Events cruises. On this trip, these gay men said, they felt safe and free to be themselves while exploring remote corners of the world (the Balkans, Tahiti, South Africa) and not visiting the same gay resort areas over and over again.

1B | SIZING THE LGBT SEGMENT: BUYING POWER

Estimates of the size of the LGBT segment of the travel market vary from study to study, and many researchers question the accuracy of these numbers because of the research methodology (self-selected versus randomized polling) and other flaws. Overall, though, many studies estimate similar levels of spending and buying power within the segment, and these levels have remained mostly consistent over time.

OVERALL LGBT MARKET SIZE AND CONSUMER SPENDING POWER IN THE UNITED STATES

It is very difficult to estimate the number of LGBT travelers in any given year. To date, there has been no comprehensive way of counting every LGBT traveler. Industry professionals cannot identify LGBT travelers simply by using their eyes, as they can with, say, male, female, black, Latino, Asian, or Caucasian travelers. In other words, unless a company specifically tracks LGBT customers (perhaps through a loyalty program or e-mail profiles), LGBT travelers can be “invisible.” That said, the industry is starting to get a better sense of the numbers through technology, research, and government agencies. For example:

- Facebook allows users to self-identify as LGBT.
- SCRUFF and Grindr include millions of self-identified gay male app users.
- More research studies ask questions about sexual orientation and identity.
- The U.S. Census tracks same-sex households.

As technology and research improve our ability to track same-sex households, sexual orientation, and gender identity in surveys, we can expect to see better data over time. In the meantime, one respected financial firm, LGBT Capital, estimated in 2015 that the global spending power of the LGBT consumer segment is \$3.7 trillion per year; the LGBT population was estimated at about 450 million.¹¹

Another estimate of market size comes from Gary J. Gates, the Williams Distinguished Scholar at the Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law and a coauthor of *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas* (Urban Institute Press, 2004). Gates wrote in the *Washington Post* in April 2011: "I recently reviewed findings from 11 large surveys conducted since 2004, seven in the United States and four internationally. Averaging across the U.S.-based surveys, I found that nearly 9 million Americans (3.8 percent of adults) self-identify as LGBT. That's equivalent to the population of New Jersey. An estimated 19 million Americans (8.2 percent) report having engaged in some same-sex sexual behavior, and nearly 26 million (11 percent) report some same-sex sexual attraction. The latter figure is equivalent to the population of Texas."¹²

GLOBAL ESTIMATES OF LGBT TRAVEL SPENDING

Out Now Consulting, based in the Netherlands, predicted that the global potential value of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender leisure travel market in 2015 would reach a record \$200 billion. Out Now based its estimate on the innovative and groundbreaking LGBT 2030 research program, which measures LGBT consumer spending, purchasing habits, and brand preferences in twenty-four countries.

LGBT 2030 indicates that in the United States gay travelers spend \$52.3 billion per year. The next-largest country in gay travel spending is Brazil, at \$22.9 billion. European countries combined account for \$58.3 billion. In Canada, Travel Gay Canada estimates LGBT Canadian travel spending at \$7 billion annually.

Gay and lesbian visitors contribute about \$6.8 billion to the Spanish economy, edging out France as Europe's top LGBT destination, according to a report by LGBT Capital. According to Spanish government estimates, gay people spend about 30 percent more on average than mainstream tourists in Spain, boosting an economy where tourism accounts for 12 percent of jobs.¹³

Asian LGBT travel is fast developing; LGBT travel spending in Asia is estimated at over \$1 trillion, and China alone is estimated to have an LGBT population of more than 80 million.

In Chapters 2 and 3 of this handbook, we summarize the economic size of micro-markets in travel, including the lesbian market (section 2B), family market (section 2E), trans market (section 2D), and sporting events market (section 3C).

1C | THE IMPORTANCE OF THE LGBT SEGMENT IN THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY

LGBT travel is increasingly understood as a segment in which more and "new" money can be made. LGBT travel started as small-group travel and leisure travel. Today the segment has grown more mature, and it now has a firm footing in the SMERF (social,

military, education, religious, and fraternal) market, along with many new opportunities, such as weddings and honeymoons (see Figure 4). The meeting and group market continues to expand as smaller meetings (such as the Out & Equal Conference) grow larger and more lucrative, and as sporting events (such as the World Out Games) gain in popularity.

Community Marketing & Insights, an authoritative research and marketing firm based in San Francisco, believes that the LGBT market receives a great deal of attention among businesspeople for a number of reasons:

- Many LGBT couples are DINKs—"Dual Income, No Kids." That situation could be slowly changing, however, as millennials age into their child-rearing years.
- Many LGBT people like to travel as part of their cultural identity.
- There is the perception (not necessarily accurate) of greater income and wealth among LGBT people.
- LGBT people can be reached with targeted outreach opportunities.
- Many LGBT people are exceptionally loyal to specific brands and destinations.
- Although LGBT people make up only about 3–6 percent of the adult population, surveys show that they travel nearly twice as much as the average American.

1C

1D

1D | TIPS BEFORE LAUNCHING YOUR LGBT MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Maybe you have not yet started your LGBT marketing campaign. You're not alone. Every one of the eighty-five leaders in the global LGBT travel and hospitality industries that we interviewed for this book started in the same place: the beginning.

Martine Ainsworth-Wells is the director of marketing communications and commerce for the European Tourism Association (ETOA) and former director of marketing and communications for Visit London, the official promotional organization for London. As an out, proud heterosexual travel executive who launched London's LGBT tourism marketing campaign and attracted global events, including World Pride 2012, Ainsworth-Wells offers these six tips for launching your LGBT marketing campaign:

1. Make the decision: Are you an LGBT destination? If you can't stand up enthusiastically and be counted, don't go there yet. Wait until you are ready, or wait until you can easily demonstrate your enthusiasm. You can't fake it. You will be competing against destinations like London, Berlin, New York, San Francisco, and Bangkok, which have very strong credentials in this area.

2. Jump in. Don't dip your toes in the water; rather, jump in. This is what Martine did: "I'm a straight woman and never worked in LGBT marketing before. I was challenged by the mayor of London, Ken Livingston, and the Visit London leadership team to engage everyone. So I just jumped in."

3. Employ experts. You will make mistakes. You don't want to but you will. Accept these mistakes and learn from them. As Martine says, "I joined the mayor's office's working group on diversity. I never felt excluded. Experts allowed me to learn, grow, and develop."

4. Don't make it niche. (This is an unusual statement.) No LGBT campaign can be successful when straight people market to LGBT people. Bring people and teams together and create cooperation among them.

5. Engage in the community. Ask yourself: "Where do I need to be? Whom do I need to speak to? Where do I need to position myself?" Martine describes her experience: "I joined the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA). I attended Community Marketing & Insights' annual conference on international tourism. I attended Pride parades. I wanted to really understand the community. I walked the walk. I saw, experienced, and did more than most straight women would have, but I wanted to immerse myself."

6. Don't forget the L, B, and T. When you are presenting content for the LGBT market, be careful not to focus exclusively on the gay male market. There are many opportunities out there, among them marriages, meetings and conventions, and LGBT sporting competitions.

TIPS FROM THE EXPERTS

KEEPING THE L, B, AND T IN LGBT

Tom Roth, founder and president of Community Marketing & Insights, cautions marketers: "There is no singular 'gay market' or even an 'LGBT market.' The LGBT community represents a 'slice' of the entire world population covering every interest, every culture, every profession, and more." Billy Kolber, cofounder of *ManAboutWorld* magazine, notes similarly, "There is a G, L, B, and T market, each of which has different behaviors, needs, motivations, and spending prowess." For more information:

- The lesbian market: section 2B
- The bisexual market: section 2C
- The trans market: section 2D

1E | SUCCESS IN THE LGBT TRAVEL MARKET: TOP TEN TIPS FROM JEFF AND ED

On the basis of our research and our experiences in the field, we offer ten key tips for success as you brainstorm, implement, and assess the effectiveness of LGBT business, marketing, or outreach.

1. Engage experts. The market, the culture, and the technology are moving quickly. Not only do you need to familiarize yourself with the LGBT market; you also need market knowledge quickly. Hire an expert. If you want to penetrate the Chinese market, for example, you'd hire someone from China who speaks Chinese fluently. The same is true in the LGBT space. There are smart, lean agencies and highly regarded industry experts who are passionate and deeply knowledgeable about the segment (see section 6A). Avoid imposters. Just being an LGBT person doesn't make that person an expert on the market. Avoid "me-search"—the opinions of one of your LGBT staff. That person can offer his or her own opinions but cannot speak for the entire LGBT community. Check out our website at www.LGBTexpert.com for a list of recommended agencies, consultants, and experts.

2. Compete for gay dollars. You need to be really smart with your marketing because others are eyeing your success and revenue. LGBT travelers have more travel choices, and with those options comes the need to reinvest in your LGBT customers to foster deep-rooted loyalty, garner repeat business, and keep top-of-mind awareness strong. Staying competitive with the LGBT segment requires fine-tuned research, a multiyear strategy, and dedicated budgets.

3. Approach LGBT marketing as hybrid international and multicultural marketing. LGBT marketing is increasingly a hybrid of multicultural and international marketing, moving away from a monolithic "diversity" market. In some ways the LGBT market is just as fragmented as many other markets. It mixes men and women, same- and opposite-sex attraction (in the case of bisexual travelers), gender identity, different consumer behaviors, different cultural identities and political perspectives, different history, different religious beliefs, and at times a different vernacular. Compare this situation to any foreign market. You market to cultural differences with an eye on the political, historical, and linguistic differences. You try to be sensitive and respectful, speak to experts (see tip 1 above), do your research, and execute a focused campaign. You should follow the same strategy with the LGBT market.

4. Expand your LGBT business by reaching out to multicultural and multigenerational markets. The most affluent gay men are over-targeted: everyone is going after this obvious market (composed of proudly out gay men with a lot of disposable

income—the ones you see pictured in so much advertising). Smart marketers look at multicultural LGBT segments that are typically under-marketed to, including African Americans, Latinos, lesbians, and bisexuals. These travelers appreciate and respond to an authentic invitation, and they have money to spend.

5. Follow the gay market. Gay men are the original disrupters (a socially connected community forcing change at the grassroots level), early adopters of technology, and trendsetters. Grindr and SCRUFF arose before Tinder and undoubtedly inspired many copycats. As technology evolves and tracking becomes more precise, the gay male market can help marketers understand the future directions of other market segments.

6. Tailor your campaigns. Just throwing images of gay couples into mainstream media and creative (*creative* refers to any creative advertising or marketing communications) is not enough to build your brand or image with LGBT travelers. Rather, you need to focus on a specific, well-defined segment. By all means, maintain one overall campaign strategy, but also plan to execute a plan aimed at specific segments, like the LGBT segment and others. Technology can help you improve your efficiency, reach, and sales to your targeted customers.

7. Understand media consumption and buying. LGBT media consumption and media buying will continue to shift to the Internet and Internet-enabled mobile devices, but the power of local LGBT print media will continue to be a driving force for local market penetration. Sponsored news feeds and branded content online with a higher ability for sharing will continue to reach more people. LGBT editors and publishers of all kinds—both in print and online—will have an even stronger share of the voice. As local LGBT newspaper editorials, columns, and online news sites like Towleroad, *ManAboutWorld*, and platforms like Multimedia Platforms Inc. (a publicly traded LGBT media company) continue to grow, what the media say about you will matter even more.

8. Leverage technology. As technology continues to improve, marketers are increasingly able to measure the performance of their campaigns in all segments, including LGBT travelers. As consumers move to mobile and cross-platform media, the ability to market to and track consumers' behaviors and buying habits will improve even more. (See section 4 J for a case study explaining how Madonna helped sell her 2015–2016 “Rebel Heart” concert tour through Grindr, which was the best-selling platform for ticket sales for that concert.)¹⁴

9. Controversy pays! Certainly twenty years ago—and even five years ago—marketers may have feared launching an LGBT campaign or did so and dreaded backlash. Companies inside and outside the travel industry seem to benefit from anti-LGBT controversy from groups that have demonstrated no real power (for example, One Million

Moms' attack on Campbell's Soup). We don't recommend being controversial just for the sake of controversy, but if your message and your creative are authentic and you stand by that message, you will certainly weather and most likely benefit from controversy. For more information on navigating controversy, see section 3N.

10. Travel teaches other markets. The travel segment will be the model that other industries and governments follow to engage LGBT persons.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do organizations need to specifically understand and reach out to LGBT travelers?
2. How have the changing attitudes toward and growing support for same-sex marriage (as well as laws that have legalized same-sex marriage) altered the efforts of travel marketers?
3. In what ways are marketers able to better track the estimated \$3.7 trillion global spending power of the LGBT consumer segment?
4. Which factors affect the accuracy or dependability of the estimated spending power of the LGBT travel segment?
5. Thinking about your own job, company, business, or industry, which factors are the most important for you to consider before beginning an LGBT marketing campaign? Explain.