

Engaging the KwaZulu-Natal Gay and Lesbian Tourism Market : Tourism KwaZulu-Natal's Initial Gay and Lesbian Tourism Strategy

1. Introduction

The management of Tourism KwaZulu-Natal is of the view that it is essential for the province of KwaZulu-Natal to understand the important Gay and Lesbian Tourism Niche Market and to develop an initial strategy to begin engaging this market.

The purpose of this report is to provide a brief overview of this market and to propose an initial strategy for this province to begin dealing with it.

Gay and Lesbian tourists can be defined as same sex (male or female) couples or individuals who are sexually attracted to other individuals of the same sex and who have adopted an openly gay lifestyle.

2. The Nature and Extent of the Global Tourism Gay Tourism Market

According to Tourism Intelligence International in 2000, some 10% of international tourists were gay or lesbians, accounting for more than 70 million arrivals worldwide. This market is thus an important market segment and is expected to continue to grow as a result of a change in attitudes to homosexuality.

Gays are regarded as being 'early innovators' and 'trendsetters'. They usually have a high disposable income and no kids - the so called DINKS of the 21 Century. American gay and lesbian tourists for example are estimated to generate \$54.1 bn a year - about 10% of the total US travel industry. As a result of the fact that this segment tends to have few family responsibilities they have a large pool of discretionary cash for travelling.

The US market is regarded as being the most important source of gay and lesbian tourists, with the highest levels of disposable of income. It is reported that this market has many specialist segments, which are interested in high value holidays, such as cruising, eco and adventure tourism.

The European market is the next most important market. This market is dominated by city breaks and 'sun, sand and sex' holidays. Some of the key destinations of these tourists are Gran Canari and Mykonos.

Some of the core characteristics of this market are the following:

Demographics: DINKS (Double Income no Kids)

Preferences: Sun, Sea, Sand and Sex, City Trips, Culture, Soft Adventure, Events and Theme Travel

Consumer Type: Trend Setters and Early Innovators

Booking Preferences: Online and Travel Agents

Requirements: Quality and value for money

Education: US Gays and Lesbians tend to be highly educated 46% being University graduates and 43% having a post graduate degree. Some 48% of Australian Gay readers of gay magazines are university graduates 10% the national average.

Income: High - +/-25% of US gay and lesbians earn \$100 000+ a year

(Source: *Tourism Intelligence International, Vol.9, No.1 2002 and Somersville, 2001*)

Somersville reported in a paper that he presented for Pride 2001, that a series of surveys in the 1990's that had been undertaken amongst readers of leading gay and lesbian periodicals in the USA, UK, Australia and South Africa revealed that in terms of leisure travel: 68% of RSA respondents travel abroad on holiday each year; 54% of the USA respondents took foreign trips in the last 3 years, 90% took domestic tourist vacations in the last year; 63% of Australian respondents had taken a foreign trip in the last 3 years, 80% taking a domestic vacation in the last year; 80% of UK respondents indicated that they took 2 or more holidays a year.

It is important to note that all of these figures were higher than the national average.

3. The South African Gay and Lesbian Tourism Market

South Africa appears to becoming a popular gay and lesbian tourist destination as a result of its new constitution. Inbound operators tour operators are reporting that South Africa has a high ranking on the gay community's travel agenda as a result of the fact that this country's constitution, in stark contrast to other African countries, has come to play a key role in the protection of gay and lesbian rights, setting the context for a gay tourism market (Visser, 2003: 175). This statement has been supported in the international press. For example in the British Guardian, it was recently reported that South Africa is the most fashionable 'gay tourist destination'.

Somersville has estimated that South Africa's gay and lesbian community is in the order of 3 million people. Homosexuality occurs across all race groups in this country. Some 50% of this market are economically active and live in urban areas. They also tend to have higher levels of education and employment and higher than average levels of disposal income. They have also been found to be brand loyal and have a trend setting, early adoption reputation.

However, Somerville states that, 'gays and lesbians are discerning consumers that need to be approached with sensitivity. They are vocal in their support of supporters'.(2001:14)

Cape Town has been particularly successful in accessing the foreign gay and lesbian tourism market. The British Guardian for example reported that, 'Cape Town has a thriving gay community and good exchange rates, which bring Europeans here in droves'. Cape Town's reputation as being liberal in terms of its socio-political views, has resulted it in being placed fifth with respect to its 'gay friendliness', ranking only just behind the other core gay centres of San Francisco, London, Sydney and Amsterdam.

Cape Town has specialised organisations that have developed to market Cape Town as 'gay friendly'. Good examples of this are organisations such as the Gay and Lesbian Association of Cape Town Tourism, Industry and Commerce (GALACTTIC) and websites such as www.GayNetcapetown.co.za and www.OutinAfrica.co.za, which provide much support and information for gay tourists. These organisations have also been particularly successful in building Cape Town's reputation as Africa's leading gay friendly destination by engaging the gay press.

It is estimated that in the order of 70 000 gay and lesbian foreign tourists visited Cape Town in 2001. It is reported that Cape Town is regarded as a 'white gay' destination.

Visser stresses a key point, that the existence of a core gay friendly population is often the primary catalyst for the development of a gay-friendly tourist destination.

Ozinsky, the manager of Cape Town Tourism, is also quoted as stating that the popularity of cities such as Amsterdam and Sydney are partially as a result of their substantial gay infrastructure. 'Even if a gay traveller was not attracted to the gay scene per se, gay services and facilities are still an attractive offering and an important signal of gay friendliness'.

Cape Town has a well established gay infrastructure comprising bars, accommodation, tour operators and literature.

The gay tourism infrastructure of Cape Town is reported to be as follows:

Bars 7

Night Clubs 3

Saunas (gay men only) 2

Massage studios (gay men only) 3

Gay Cinemas (gay men only) 8

Guest houses (gay men only) 3

Guest houses (advertised as gay friendly) 82

Restaurants (advertised as gay friendly) 12

Source: Visser,2003: 181

4. KwaZulu-Natal Gay Infrastructure and Tourism Market

Unfortunately, there is not much information available on gay and lesbian facilities in KwaZulu-Natal. The following is a list derived from two South African gay and lesbian periodicals, 'The Gay Pages' and 'Womyn'.

Clubs and Restaurants:

Axis: c/o Rutherford and Gillespie Street Durban.

Telephone (031) 3322603/4 Email axis@saol.com *Bean Bag Bohemia*: 18 Windemere Road, Durban, Telephone (031) 3096019

Club 330: 330 Point Road, Durban. Telephone (031) 3377122

Roman Lounge: 202 Florida Road, Morningside, Durban. (031) 3039022

Shaftbury Avenue Coffee Bar: 69 Overport Drive. Telephone (031) 2079478

Accommodation

Palm Ridge B&B: Bera, Durban. Telephone (031) 2082071

Groups and Organisations

Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Centre: 301 Protea House, Mark Lane, Durban, 4001.

Telephone (031) 3012145.

Fax (031) 3012147 .

Email gaycentre@mweb.co.za

www.gaycentre.org.za

It is possible based on the assumption that at least 10% of human population is gay or lesbian to assume that KwaZulu-Natal tourism facilities are used by as many as 800 000 domestic and 100 000 foreign gay or lesbian tourists on an annual basis. Not much is known about the nature of this market though.

5. An Initial Strategy to begin engaging this market

It is proposed that Tourism KwaZulu-Natal needs to engage the gay and lesbian community in KZN to test their views about establishing an association dedicated to the promotion of gay tourism to the Zulu Kingdom and how TKZN could support such a marketing drive. TKZN could convene a workshop together with the Durban Lesbian and Gay Community and Health Centre to test the views of the gay and lesbian community regarding this matter.

Tourism KwaZulu-Natal should also encourage tourism establishments in the province who are 'gay friendly' to advertise this fact.

The Tourism Information Services Division needs to ensure that it has information on gay and lesbian establishments and gay and lesbian friendly establishments to ensure that they are able to effectively deal with enquiries from this market. Tourism KwaZulu-Natal should publish this information in its travel guides and on its network of websites. Furthermore Tourism KwaZulu-Natal could consider publishing or sponsoring a publication for gay and lesbian tourists who visit this province.

More research needs to be done in order to determine the nature of this KwaZulu-Natal market and how this province could be more successful in accessing it.

The Corporate Communications Division of TKZN should engage journalists from key gay and lesbian publications to inform them of the activities and facilities of the KwaZulu-Natal gay and lesbian community.

Members of the Gay and Lesbian community in KwaZulu-Natal have indicated that there may be important niches in the market which KwaZulu-Natal could target:

- Lesbians – less competition – different segment to the niche which Cape Town is targeting.
- The Black Gay and Lesbian market

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