

50 Shades of Pink: Destination Advertising for Gay Men

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Abstract

One of the purposes of this master thesis is to investigate how destinations advertise for the gay market, specifically at gay men. The other purpose is to see how are the destination ads perceived by gay men. In order to find these out, two original researches were conducted: a content analyses of 241 destination (print) advertisements targeted at gay men, and in-depth interviews using the snowball sampling technique with 20 self-identified gay men.

Research literature about gay travel, gay space at destinations, motivation and segmentation of the target group is investigated. Background about the value of the gay market and the history of gay advertisement are supported both from academic and current business resources.

Two different types of advertisement are investigated: gay-window ads and out of the closet ads. Thorough and detailed content analysis led to the categorization of the destination advertisements and to the finding of the different cues and codes that are used to target gay men, including but not limited to rainbows, pink triangle, red convertible cars, tank tops, close distance and intimacy between men and textual cues, such as gay-friendly, out, proud and fabulous. Examples of the different advertisements are pointed out.

Conclusions are drawn about destination advertisements targeted at gay men and an emphasis is developed about segmentation and targeting to all *50 shades of pink*.

The research is rather exploratory and qualifies as an incremental step towards the analyses of the LGBT market. Managerial implications are suggested, which can be valuable for destinations that decide to tap into new gay markets and want to do it right. The master thesis provides valuable insight about destination advertisements targeted at gay man for marketing and advertising professionals, destination management companies and researchers in the fields of tourism and hospitality, marketing and media and gender and sociology.

Keywords: LGBT, gay travel, gay marketing, gay advertisement