

Risks in LGBTQ+ Tourism



Cover photo: Pride week 2021, Amsterdam. Source: Jill Boelt Andersen (Author)

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Jill Boelt Andersen

Student number: 20202257

Supervisor: Laura James

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Abstract

In this research the quickly evolving LGBTQ+ tourism is explored. During the last two decades the niche segment within the tourism industry has grown from being a segment exclusively thought of as consisting of gay men and lesbian women to a segment filled with different sexualities, genders, diversity and acceptance. One big factor, however, challenging the progress of LGBTQ+ tourism is safety and risks in travelling.

During the last few years, the tourism industry has been seriously tested and the question of safety and risks has become serious among all tourists, but for the LGBTQ+ tourists the safety and risk aspects have always played a role in destination choice and travel motivation in a largely heteronormative world. The risks of travelling are, furthermore, perceived differently by members of the LGBTQ+ community.

This research based on extensive exploration of the LGBTQ+ community, and LGBTQ+ tourism looks for the answer to the following question:

Why are risks encountered differently by members within the LGBTQ+ community when travelling, and how are LGBTQ+ agencies addressing these risks in their promotion towards LGBTQ+ tourists?

While extensive amounts of academic articles have been written on the tourism industry not a lot has been written and research about LGBTQ+ tourism and the LGBTQ+ community in general. This research therefore seeks to a certain extent fill some of this gap.

By a constructivist approach and qualitative research methods, data has been collected. By an in-depth expert interview with the Foundation Coordinator of the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) and a comparative analysis, questions of safety, the Covid 19 pandemic and the future of LGBTQ+ tourism is explored.

The analysis of gathered data show a generally large focus on gay men in previous academic articles, and a certain amount of neglect towards other members of the LGBTQ+ community, this is also the opinion of the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA.

The analysis furthermore show a difference in LGBTQ+ member's way of perceiving risk in tourism largely based on both sexuality and gender but also family status. The amount of risk when travelling is perceived differently by the LGBTQ+ members is also based on the laws and the local judgement of destinations across the world. A country in which same-sex marriage is legalised, might have different laws on being transgender.

Researched LGBTQ+ travel agencies are found to have distinctive keywords throughout their webpages. Words such as 'safety' and 'like-minded' are important on these pages to highlight the added focus of LGBTQ+ tourism on travelling to safe destination with like-minded people who are either a part of the LGBTQ+ community or allies.

Keywords:

LGBTQ+ tourism, Tourism safety, Heteronormativity, Travel motivation

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Introduction

Tourism is ever evolving and has gone from being a rare luxury to nearly being a human necessity. The need to explore and understand is both an important part of tourism but also a big part of understanding oneself. In LGBTQ+ tourism the need to explore and understand oneself meets.

The LGBTQ+ community is a diverse and continuously evolving movement with people from all types of sexualities and genders. The community ranges from gay, lesbian, queer, and bisexual people to transgender and binary people. LGBTQ+ tourism is a specific type of tourism that incorporates some parts of the LGBTQ+ culture and events catering to the community, this includes everything from LGBTQ+ weddings, honeymoons, but also services available for all tourists, but with extra assurance that LGBTQ+ people feel welcome, respected, and safe. This tourism also includes travel agencies catering directly to the LGBTQ+ community, with an enhanced focus on all tourists being like-minded in order to ensure an added amount of safety in the groups.

The phenomenon of LGBTQ+ tourism is fairly new and has evolved as the LGBTQ+ community has received recognition and acknowledgement during recent decades. The LGBTQ+ tourists are typically open about their sexual orientation or allow privately closeted people to explore their true selves. One of the biggest events followed by LGBTQ+ tourists is the different Pride parades around the world. The first pride started as a protest for gay liberation in Chicago on 27th of June 1970. Since the event in Chicago, several other pride parades have followed and now more than 200 prides are celebrated around the world, and still more pride destinations erupt each year¹.

During the last few years, however, the LGBTQ+ community, and tourism, likewise, has been challenged in its progress. In 2020 the world was hit with the biggest pandemic, not seen since the 1920's Spanish flu, which ravaged throughout the world and killed millions of people.

For the most part of 2020-2021 the so-called Covid-19 virus halted some of the world's biggest economic sectors, tourism included. For several months during what should have been the high season of tourism in 2020 the world was completely shut down, international flights were cancelled, borders were closed, and museums and attractions were closed or only open for limited amounts

¹ Gaypridecalendar (2022) Available at <https://www.gaypridecalendar.com/>

of national tourists. For the LGBTQ+ community specifically, Covid-19 caused cancellations for several pride parades across the world, and it became necessary to find alternatives to prevent stalling the progress of the LGBTQ+ agenda.

As the world was starting to slowly reopen again; health safety became a number one priority in tourism. This intertwined well with the LGBTQ+ communities' need to focus on travel safety. In 70+ countries homosexuality is criminalised and an extra focus on vigilance is therefore needed when travelling as an LGBTQ+ person, so safety as a big focus in tourism is nothing new to most LGBTQ+ members. LGBTQ+ people mostly travel with intent and joy while maintaining their own and other's safety, which with Covid-19 now is important for every tourist in the world.²

A very large organisation working on creating more safety for LGBTQ+ people when travelling is the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA). According to the organisation the safety issue is a big motivator behind LGBTQ+ people's desire to travel.³

There is extensive research done on risk and safety issues when travelling, but the research is very scarce when it comes specifically to the LGBTQ+ community, which lead to the problem formulation:

Problem formulation

Why are risks encountered differently by members within the LGBTQ+ community when travelling, and how are LGBTQ+ travel agencies addressing these risks in their promotion towards LGBTQ+ tourists?

² Davies, Lizzie (2021) The Guardian. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jun/29/you-cant-cancel-pride-the-fight-for-lgbtq-rights-amid-the-pandemic>

³ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

Literature review

Why LGBTQ+?

The LGBTQ+ movement is known under many names - LGBT, LGBTA, LGBTQ, LGBTQA, LGBTQIA. During this research the movement will be referred to as LGBTQ+, signifying the Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans and Queer community, and the + signifying people who fall under other spectrums. The spectrums and the LGBTQ+ movement's name has been transformed many times during the years, starting from terms referring to singular groups to now referring to the whole community.⁴

In the sixties the word Homosexual started feeling clinical and Gay became the way to refer to same-sex couples. Through the seventies as gay liberation movements gained popularity the term 'gay and lesbian' became the popular term, referring to the similar issues faced by female same-sex couples. Today Gay is also used as an umbrella term referring to someone not heterosexual, thereby sometimes used to describe the whole LGBTQ+ community.⁵

Bisexuality has long been wrongly seen as a stage between heterosexuality and homosexuality, and bisexual people are often faced with stereotypical views. Recently the term Bisexual has been accused of not being inclusive enough. The term should imply that a person is attracted to all genders but as the prefix "bi" means "two" it is generally understood that someone bisexual is exclusively attracted to someone male or female, and not all genders.⁶

People attracted to all genders are therefore described as being pansexual. The prefix "pan" means all and includes the genders considered missing in the word Bisexuality. Once the term Pansexual was a niche term only used by academics, but the sexuality has now become mainstream and known worldwide. According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary the search for the word pansexual rose by 11,000 percent in 2015, when several celebrities publicly identified as pansexual.⁷

⁴ Gold, Michael (2018) NY Times. Available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/21/style/lgbtq-gender-language.html>

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ Merriam-Webster (2022) Available at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/pansexual>

The term transgender describes a wide range of people whose gender expression or identity differs from the sex that was assigned at birth.⁸

In the term L (lesbian) G (Gay) B (Bisexual) T (Transgender) other letters are often added to include as many people as possible when referring to people who are a member of the community. Some use LGBT, while some choose to include a + which includes the terms not referred to, often to use the overarching sexualities and still acknowledge other sexualities and gender identities. Some might add the letter A, to symbolise allies, people who support the LGBTQ+ movement, and others use it to refer to people who are Asexual. This term refers to people who has little or no sexual attraction to others. The letter I might be added to symbolise people who are Intersex, born with biological sex characteristics not traditionally associated with female or male bodies.⁹

For a long time only the acronym LGBT was used to refer to the community by large LGBTQ+ actors throughout the world but in 2019 the organisation formerly known as the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association chose to add the letter Q and the + and was hereafter known as the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA), formally introducing the even longer name for the community.¹⁰

The Q which stands for the umbrella term Queer, both refers to people who are genderqueer (not cisgender) and sexually queer (not heterosexual). The original meaning for the word is “strange” or “peculiar” and therefore, the term Queer was originally used as an insult towards same-sex couples in the late 19th century. Like the word Gay, Queer is also at times used to describe any member of the LGBTQ+ community, mostly for ease given the lengthy pronunciation of the collective name LGBTQ+.^{11 12}

⁸ Op.Cit. Gold

⁹ Op.Cit. Gold

¹⁰ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² European Travel Commission (2018) “Handbook on the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) Travel Segment”. Available on <https://genctraveller.files.wordpress.com/2018/07/etc-handbook-on-lgbtq-travel-segment-in-europe.pdf>

A short look at the recent history of tourism

Travelling between and across countries has been done for decades. From the early religious pilgrimages to what we know as tourism today is a very long history. The first signs of tourism as we know it today were first seen in the 17th century and had by the start of the 21st century turned into one of the world's most important economic sectors. Today tourism is an umbrella term for all kinds of different types of travelling such as leisure, business, education, pilgrimages etc.¹³

For the past many years, the tourism sector has seen a big halt in action around once every decade. In 2001 because of the terror attacks in New York, in 2008-2009 because of the large financial crisis and in 2020-2021 because of the Covid-19 Pandemic. When looking at the numbers for each year the Covid-19 Pandemic has been the worst cause of halt in tourism by far.¹⁴

Since the start of the 2010's tourism has been on an upward spiral and in 2019 it was predicted that 2020 and the years following would be a continuous string of record setting years for tourism.¹⁵

The reality, however, turned out very different when in 2020 the Covid-19 Pandemic started raging throughout the world. The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) deemed 2020 the worst year ever in tourism history with a reported 74% drop in international arrivals. When compared to the same number of the 2009 financial crisis where a four percent decline was reported, it is very visible how damaging the Covid-19 Pandemic has been to the tourism industry. With countries closing borders and introducing strict restrictions as the pandemic evolved, it became a necessity to find a quick and safe way to again welcome tourists to destination around the world as put by UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili:

“While much has been made in making safe international travel a possibility, we are aware that the crisis is far from over. The harmonization, coordination and digitalization of Covid-19 travel-related risk reduction measures, including testing, tracing and vaccination

¹³ Britannica (2022) Available on <https://www.britannica.com/topic/tourism>

¹⁴ US Travel Association (2020) Available at <https://www.ustravel.org/press/latest-analysis-coronavirus-impact-travel-9x-worse-911>

¹⁵ UNWTO (2019) “International Tourism Highlights”. Available at <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284421152>

certificates, are essential foundations to promote safe travel and prepare for the recovery of tourism once conditions allow.”

Zurab Pololikashvili¹⁶

LGBTQ+ history

To fully understand the LGBTQ+ community and the need for safety in LGBTQ+ tourism it is relevant to look at the LGBTQ+ history. The history of homosexuality is long and wide, but the LGBTQ+ movement is relatively new history.

The first possible case of a homosexual couple could be found all the way back in Egypt's fifth dynasty circa 2400 BC.¹⁷ The American education organisation GLSEN however lists one of the first known cases of homosexuality that of Roman Emperor Hadrian.¹⁸

Of historical importance nothing like the relationship between Hadrian and his lover Antonius was seen until 1623, when Sir Francis Bacon coined the term “Masculine love” in his first published writing “The advancement of Learning – an argument for empirical research and against superstition”.¹⁹ The year after in 1624 Richard Cornish was tried and hanged for sodomy.²⁰ Sodomy was at the time known as “Buggery” and had been ruled a crime in England since 1533 when Henry VIII signed The Buggery Act, the first law against homosexuality in England. Within this law homosexuality was penalised on par with bestiality.

Lesbianism is known to go far back to the ancient Egyptians, but the history is far scarcer. In North America the first known lesbian couple was Sarah White Norman and Mary Vincent Hammon who in 1649 became the first known couple convicted of lesbian activity and since stories like theirs has been seen throughout the world.²¹

¹⁶ UNWTO (2021) Available at <https://www.unwto.org/news/2020-worst-year-in-tourism-history-with-1-billion-fewer-international-arrivals>

¹⁷ Reeder, Greg (2000) Same-sex desire, conjugal constructs, and the tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep. *World Archaeology*, 32 (2). Pp 193-208

¹⁸ GLSEN (2017) “LGBTQ History Timeline Reference”. Available at <https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/LGBTQ-History-Timeline-References.pdf>

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Spencer, Arlene (2020) Available at <https://globalmaritimehistory.com/richard-cornish-was-put-to-death-wrongfully/>

²¹ Op.Cit. GLSEN

In 1749 Thomas Cannon wrote what is thought to be the first published English defence of Homosexuality in “Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify’d.”²² He wrote, among other things, as follows:

“That celebrated passion, sealed by sensualists, espoused by philosophers, enshrined by kings, is now exploded with one accord and disowned by the meanest beggar. Wherefore since fashion discountenances, law punishes, God forbids, the detested Love, we may sure discuss it with freedom and the most philosophical exactness. Every dabbler knows by his classics that it was pursued and praised with the height of liberty, boy love ever was the top refinement of most enlightened ages. Unnatural Desire is a Contradiction in Terms; downright Nonsense. Desire is an amatory Impulse of the inmost human Parts: Are not they, however constructed, and consequently impelling, Nature? Nature sometimes assumes an unusual appearance, but the extraordinary pederast seeing fruition is as naturally acted as the ordinary woman’s man in that pursuit.”

Thomas Cannon²³

Almost one and a half century later the first ever public gay journal was published in Berlin, Germany under the name *Der Eigene (The Own)*. The magazine was created by Adolf Brand and was published in a highly liberalised Germany both before and after World War I. The journal inspired other publishers to follow the example of representing the freedom to be oneself. In Zürich Karl Meier turned the lesbian journal *The Friendship Journal* into *Der Kreis (The Circle)*, which became one of the most influential and successful gay magazines ever published. The magazine was the only gay magazine to still be published under the Nazi regime where journals like *Der Eigene* was shut down by the Nazis.²⁴

²² Cannon, Thomas. “The Indictment of John Purser, Containing Thomas Cannon’s *Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplify’d*.” Edited by Hal Gladfelder and Dudley Ryder Knight (2007). *Eighteenth-Century Life* (Duke University Press) 31 (1)

²³ *ibid.*

²⁴ Belonsky, Andrew (2013) Available at <https://www.out.com/entertainment/art-books/2013/05/06/man-who-made-magazines-gay>

It was also in Germany during the creation of *Der Eigene*, the world first ever gay rights organisation was created. The organisation was officially founded in 1897 by Sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld who named the organisation *Wissenschaftlich Humanitäres Komitee* (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee). The initial focus of the organisation was to force a repeal of paragraph 175, which made homosexual acts between men a crime. The petitions submitted during nearly 30 years were signed by famous people such as Albert Einstein and Leo Tolstoy, but no changes were made to the law until 1969. Magnus Hirschfeld saw potential in reaching a wider audience by the medium of film. In collaboration with the Austrian filmmaker Richard Oswald in 1919, the movie *Anders als die Andern* (*Different from the Others*) was made.²⁵

The first widely known recipient of sex reassignment surgery was American Christine Jorgensen, who in 1952 travelled to Copenhagen to undergo the surgery. For years it was falsely believed that she was the first to ever undergo such surgery, but in reality, the surgeries had been performed prior to the Nazi regime in Germany during the twenties and early thirties. The first ever known recipient of the surgery was German Dora Richter and another very famous recipient was Danish Lili Elbe, who was later pictured in the Academy Award winning film *The Danish Girl*.²⁶

On the 28th of June 1969 a happening in New York caused the original spark that created a rise in LGBTQ+ political activism, which later led to the creation of the LGBTQ+ movement. The New York City Police raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay club in Greenwich Village, New York City. A riot was sparked among the patrons of the bar and the residents of the neighbourhood as police kicked employees and patrons out of the bar.²⁷

This led to six days of protests and clashes between protesters and the police outside and in neighbourhoods near the now famous bar-site. For years the LGBTQ+ people of New York had met up in gay bars and clubs to seek refuge and to freely socialize and express themselves. The police were regularly raiding the bars and harassing the patrons accusing the mere gathering of homosexual as being “disorderly”.²⁸

²⁵ Britannica (2022b) Available at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Magnus-Hirschfeld>

²⁶ Meyerowitz, Joanne (2002) “How Sex Changed”. Harvard University Press 1st ed. Pp 1-2

²⁷ History (2021) Retrieved 7 April, from <https://www.history.com/topics/gay-rights/the-stonewall-riots>

²⁸ *ibid.*

Most of the gay bars in the Greenwich Village were owned by the Genovese Mafia and had bribed the police to ignore the activities in bars such as the Stonewall Inn, which also allowed the Mafia to cut the cost wherever possible, leaving the Stonewall Inn without a fire exit, overflowing toilets and alcohol that was watered down, and the wealthier patrons who wanted to keep their sexuality a secret were even blackmailed.²⁹

The bar became very known for being a large part of the LGBTQ+ community as a place to gather and as a place where gay runaways and homeless could stay at night. Three days before the famous raid the Stonewall Inn had been stormed by the police, but the bar had been tipped off and could hide all illegal activities before the arrival of the police.³⁰

On the 28th of June however the police raid came as a surprise. With a warrant the police entered the club, found illegal alcohol, arrested a number of people who violated the New York state's gender-appropriate clothing laws. Female officers would take suspected cross-dressers into the bathroom and check their sex. People were aggressively manhandled by the police and within long a crowd had gathered outside the Stonewall Inn and the riot began.³¹

On the 28th of June 1970 the first ever official pride parade was walked in Chicago and simultaneously, on the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall riots thousands of people marched from the Stonewall Inn to Central Park chanting "Say it loud, gay is proud".³²

Activist Jerry Hoose, who was present at the march, said in an interview in 2019, on the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots:

"As we kept going, the crowd grew and grew. No one who was there can talk about it without goosebumps. I always say that gay liberation was conceived at Stonewall in 1969 and born at that first march."

Jerry Hoose, activist³³

²⁹ Op.Cit. History

³⁰ *ibid.*

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*

³³ Blakemore, Erin (2021) Available at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/inside-the-first-pride-parade-a-raucous-protest-for-gay-liberation-lgbtq>

In the following weeks after the 1970 parade other parades like it were held across the US, and wherever the parades went, they were met with resistance, mainly from the police departments, who refused to issue permits to the paraders and in some cases, like in Los Angeles, bashed the gay community, and compared them to criminals that would have to post million dollars' worth of insurance in order get permits. The marches however continued and evolved each year, gathering more and more people. The first prides started as risky gatherings where people showed up in public as open members of the LGBTQ+ community, maybe, for the first time.³⁴

Today pride parades are common around the world and seek to bring light to the accomplishments and sacrifices of the movement, as well as a chance for self-expression and highlighting the still existing problems experienced by LGBTQ+ people in the world. Reverent Joe Cherry in an interview with OutHistory spoke about his first pride experience in 1995 saying as follows:

“It changed forever my concept of what it meant to be part of the gay community. When I am tired, or feel overwhelmed, or even when I wonder if anything is really ever going to change, I think... about the humanity I saw there, for the first time in such a huge quantity, I hear the chants, feel the love, and I square my shoulders and get back to work.”

Rev. Joe Cherry³⁵

This quote perfectly mirrors the thoughts of countless other parade goers, who feel the undeniable love and humanity at the parades. Today more than two hundred prides are celebrated each year across the world.³⁶

As mentioned, the LGBTQ+ community has always been met with hatred and adversity all over the world, both in areas with acceptance towards the LGBTQ+ community and the areas where there

³⁴ Op.Cit. History

³⁵ Op.Cit. Blakemore

³⁶ Op.Cit. Gaypridecalendar

are prejudice and violence.³⁷ In Florida a new bill has been passed called the “Don’t say gay” bill.³⁸ The aim of the bill is to limit the discussion of LGBTQ+ in schools, and it mainly consists of three big overarching subjects:

“1. It bans instruction or classroom discussion about LGBTQ issues for kindergarten through third grade.”, additionally the discussion of gay and transgender issues must be “Age appropriate” for older students.³⁹

“2. It empowers parents to sue the school district over teachings they don’t like.” prompting schools to pre-emptively shut out conversations about LGBTQ+ issues.⁴⁰

“3. It requires schools to tell parents when their child receives mental health services.” This could remove the school’s ability to serve as a safe place for possible LGBTQ+ students to talk about their gender orientation or sexuality.⁴¹

Hatred and laws against the LGBTQ+ community like mentioned above is just a part of the still very big resistance, this even though a big part of the western world is miles away from the conditions that were met by LGBTQ+ people just a couple of decades ago.

LGBTQ+ Tourism

LGBTQ+ tourism is a niche within the tourism industry like other types of tourism, where there is a very specific focal point of the individual type of travelling. In this case the focal point is LGBTQ+ oriented events or destinations that offer a special form of entertainment directed at the LGBTQ+ community or offer a sense of security and safe space for LGBTQ+ members.⁴² This type of tourism is fairly new compared to other types of tourism and is therefore not yet considered a tourism

³⁷ Armstrong, Mark (2021) Euro News. Available at <https://www.euronews.com/2021/06/27/pride-parades-marred-by-clashes-and-arrests-in-turkey>

³⁸ Phillips, Amber (2022) Washington Post. Available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/04/01/what-is-florida-dont-say-gay-bill/>

³⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ *ibid.*

⁴² CBI (2020) Available at <https://www.cbi.eu/market-information/tourism/lgbtq-tourism/market-potential>

segment, but the LGBTQ+ tourism is rising in popularity with the continued rise in numbers of LGBTQ+ people and the bigger acceptance and inclusivity in the world towards the LGBTQ+ community, which could possibly lead tourism to becoming a tourism segment. Especially the European market looks promising for LGBTQ+ tourism.⁴³

At the start of 2020 it was estimated that approximately 5.9% of the European population was LGBTQ+ and LGBTQ+ tourism in Germany, UK, France, Italy, Spain, Poland, and the Netherlands had a combined market value of €64 billion with an estimated growth of 1.4% per year.⁴⁴

The first signs of a combination between the LGBTQ+ community and tourism is not seen until the 1920s where some destinations become open to receiving gay tourists, such as Mykonos in Greece, the Schöneberg neighbourhood of Berlin and Sitges in Catalonia, Spain. In the 1940s places like Fire Island, New York and Provincetown, Massachusetts likewise opened to mainly receive gay visitors. These destinations were not widely known in societies as vacation destinations and where also not publicly promoted, but among the gay community these destinations were known as safe spaces where life could be lived like nowhere else for the gay men.⁴⁵

A big leap forward in the LGBTQ+ tourism came in 1963, when American businessman Bob Damron published *the Address Book* which was a guide of bars, restaurants, and neighbourhoods safe for gay men. The resource to the book changed frequently as new places opened and others were shut down by police actions.⁴⁶ This book, in combination with the Stonewall riots and the subsequent pride marches and increasing focus on the gay community, lead to geographer Hanns Ebensten founding the first ever tour operator exclusively targeting the gay community.⁴⁷

During the late seventies and early eighties many positive things happened for LGBTQ+ tourism. In 1979 the first LGBTQ+ tour to Israel opened, in 1982 the first Gay Games was held in San Francisco.⁴⁸

⁴³ Op.Cit. CBI

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Abellan, Núria (2020) LGBTQI community and tourism: between capital and life. *Responsible Tourism*.

⁴⁶ Sosin, Kate (2019) Los Angeles Magazine. Available at <https://www.lamag.com/culturefiles/damron-address-book/>

⁴⁷ Op.Cit. Abellan

⁴⁸ Op.Cit. GLSEN

In 1983 the still existing International Gay Travel Association was created. In 1997 the organisation added the L to the name, by then known as International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association.⁴⁹ As mentioned under *Why LGBTQ+?* the association changed its name once again in 2019, now known under the name the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association, although keeping the abbreviation “IGLTA” in everyday talk. The change was made as a symbol of a new chapter with a new name and logo and was addressed as follows:

“We are excited to share our new branding as one of many parts of our transformation, highlighting the foundation IGLTA was created on while showcasing the evolution of the association. Our refreshed logo and streamlined brand architecture convey the continuing evolution and growth of LGBTQ+ tourism, and proudly displays the characteristics we want to communicate to travelers and the industry at large”

John Tanzella, IGLTA president/CEO⁵⁰

The Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA⁵¹ describes the importance behind the name change as: “It’s [the LGBTQ+ community] not only limited to gay white people. We are trying to break that stereotype, because the LGBTQ+ community is very diversified, it has a lot of different backgrounds... it’s really important to be inclusive for us, especially for the transgender community and the non-binary community... they [Heterosexual people] only think about gay men. All of the other members of the community are completely neglected. And that’s what we are trying to achieve, were trying to give every member of the community... the fair share it deserves.”⁵²

The IGLTA was created to give information to all LGBTQ+ tourists around the world and at the same time to spread LGBTQ+ tourism and give visibility to the LGBTQ+ cause.

⁴⁹ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

⁵⁰ IGLTA (2019) Available at <https://www.iglta.org/Blog-Article/ArtMID/11781/ArticleID/930/IGLTA-INTRODUCES-ALL-NEW-VISUAL-IDENTITY-WITH-REFRESHED-BRANDING-AND-LOGO>

⁵¹ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

⁵² Ibid.

“The idea behind it [the IGLTA] was to create a safe network where travel agents can network with each other and kind of promote LGBTQ+ tourism... Long story short, [the idea behind IGLTA] is to promote and advance LGBTQ+ travel on a business level... mostly what we do with IGLTA is to help our business members create a safe experience for the travellers. We’re not in direct contact with the travellers, but instead we’re in contact with the businesses of the tourism industry that will help create an experience that will be more or less safe for LGBTQ+ travellers. So, what we do is we provide free resource for example for hoteliers or tourism specialists in order to know what the behaviour of the LGBTQ+ community is, what are the motivations and how they can meet these motivations and give the LGBTQ+ community what they need exactly in tourism,”

Foundation Coordinator, IGLTA⁵³

In 1994 the first marketing campaign directly targeting the LGBTQ+ community was created in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. After the campaign followed campaigns by American Airlines and others of the world tourism’s biggest actors⁵⁴

Several destinations now market themselves as being LGBT+ friendly. One of these destinations is Denmark and specifically Copenhagen. According to VisitDenmark, choosing a destination based on your sexuality should not be necessary, but if it is, Denmark is a safe choice, especially due to the Danish history of LGBTQ+ and the general free and inclusive culture of Denmark.⁵⁵

“The history of our LGBTQI+ community plays an important part of Denmark’s modern history. It’s at the core of our culture, and our progressive and inclusive way of thinking. And we simply want to welcome you with open arms (which is why you ought to come visit us).”

VisitDenmark⁵⁶

⁵³ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

⁵⁴ Op.Cit. Abellan

⁵⁵ VisitDenmark (2022) Available at <https://www.visitdenmark.com/denmark/things-do/lgbtqi-copenhagen>

⁵⁶ *ibid.*

Denmark was one of the first countries in the world to officially embrace and allow the LGBTQ+ culture and is considered one of the safest countries for LGBTQ+ people. It is however just one country among a lot, that is relatively safe for LGBTQ+ travellers.

Researchers Asher and Lyric Fergusson have studied the safety of LGBTQ+ people travelling in the world. The two researchers have created an LGBTQ+ travel safety index⁵⁷. The index is based on nine main criteria:

1. Legalised same-sex marriage
2. Worker protection
3. Protections against discrimination
4. Criminalisation of violence
5. Adoption recognition
6. Is it a good place to live?
7. Transgender legal identity laws
8. Illegal same-sex relationship
9. Propaganda / Morality laws

Points are given (or taken) based on the 9 criteria.

The first criteria tell if a country has legalized same-sex marriage, legalized civil union or partnership, or recognizes foreign marriages, or neither of the three.⁵⁸

The second criteria tells whether a country has protection for sexual orientation and gender identity, protection for sexual orientation alone, limited protections or no protection at all.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Fergusson, Asher & Lyric Fergusson (2022) Retrieved 15 April, from <https://www.asherfergusson.com/lgbtq-travel-safety/>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

The third criteria covers whether a country has constitutional protections, broad protections, limited protections, or no protections against discrimination.⁶⁰

The fourth criteria tells whether or not a country categorises violence against LGBTQ+ people as a hate crime, incitement, or no crime at all.⁶¹

The fifth criteria covers if a country recognizes adoption among LGBTQ+ people with joint and second-parent adoptions, second parent adoptions alone or not at all.⁶²

The sixth criteria is based on a Gallup poll, which asked the question “Is the area where you live a good place to live for gay or lesbian people?”. The percentage was divided into four parts with 100-76% positive answers ranking the highest and 0-25% positive answers ranking lowest.⁶³

The seventh criteria covers whether a country has legalised changing gender without gender reassignment surgery, with gender reassignment surgery, or if transgenderism is illegal.⁶⁴

The eighth criteria cover the range of punishments against same-sex relationships. This is everything from jail time to the death penalty.⁶⁵

The ninth and final criteria cover if a country has laws that prevent the discussion of pro-LGBTQ+ issues.

The country deemed as the most unsafe for LGBTQ+ people based on these criteria is Nigeria. Homosexuality gives up to 14 years in prison, and death penalty in states with Sharia laws. It is furthermore deemed by the Gallup poll as a country that is very bad for LGBTQ+ people to live in, and it is criminalised to discuss LGBTQ+ rights and gender expression. Nigeria is followed by

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ *ibid.*

⁶² *Op.Cit. Ferguson*

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

countries such as Saudi Arabia, where homosexual acts (As interpreted by Sharia law) can be punished by death, whips or banishment and crossdressing can result in flogging.⁶⁶

The top scorer in the index and therefore deemed as the safest place to travel for LGBTQ+ people, is Canada where same-sex marriage is legal, there is protection laws in place both for workers and for discrimination and hate against LGBTQ+ people is penalised as hate crime. Furthermore, both joint and second-parent adoption is possible, and it is legal to change gender without gender reassignment surgery.⁶⁷

Canada is followed by most west and northern European countries among others in the top. Surprisingly a country like the United States of America is far outside of the top ten, ranking as the 20th safest place to travel for LGBTQ+ people. This is due to the big difference in LGBTQ+ laws across states. Because this study looks at whole countries and not just states or cities considered gay friendly, or even gay hubs, countries like the US scores lower. This is also the case for Australia, which has several LGBTQ+ friendly cities and general laws, but not when looking at the overall country with all state laws considered.⁶⁸

Even though it is the “LGBTQ+” travel safety index it is vital to point out that there are differences in the safety aspect in being homosexual, bisexual etc. and of being transgender. In this study it is included as a deciding factor, but it also means that low scoring countries could be so because of their transgender laws, not necessarily making said country dangerous for e.g., homosexuals.⁶⁹

In 2018 travel industry researcher and founder of Generation C Traveller Consultant Services, Peter Jordan produced a handbook on the LGBTQ+ travel segment for the European Travel Commission. The handbook was commissioned to provide an understanding of the LGBTQ+ segment of tourism for the European Travel Commission.⁷⁰ Referring to the UNWTO Global Report on LGBT Tourism, the handbook points out six reasons why the LGBTQ+ community is worthy of special attention from European destinations.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Op.Cit.* Ferguson

⁶⁸ *ibid.*

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Op.Cit.* European Travel Commission

“1. Europe is perceived positively by LGBTQ consumers in its key source markets and is home to some of the world’s most iconic destinations and events of special interest to this segment.”⁷¹

This point refers to the large interest from the LGBTQ+ community towards tourism in Europe, based on the rich LGBTQ+ history and progress in Europe. Europe is also home to a big number of events catered directly to the LGBTQ+ community, which gathers a lot of LGBTQ+ tourists.^{72 73}

“2. Destinations welcoming LGBTQ visitors openly convey a powerful image of acceptance and respect.”⁷⁴

According to UNWTO countries supporting LGBTQ+ rights are globally seen as supporters and forerunners when it comes to human rights.⁷⁵

“3. Destinations that treat their LGBTQ citizens with respect are not only attractive for LGBTQ travellers, but also to those who support them.”⁷⁶

As the LGBTQ+ community gains more visibility the community also gains allies in family members, friends, colleagues etc. The allies are also significant in choosing destinations and products from companies that are supporters of the LGBTQ+ community.⁷⁷

“4. There is an economic opportunity in improving LGBTQ inclusion and diversity in destinations.”⁷⁸

According to UNWTO, improved living conditions for LGBTQ+ people can contribute to the economics of a destination and can also contribute to the cultural scene.⁷⁹

⁷¹ *ibid.*

⁷² *Op.Cit.* CBI

⁷³ *Op. Cit.* European Travel Commission

⁷⁴ *ibid.*

⁷⁵ UNWTO (2012) “Global Report on LGBT Tourism”. Available at <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284414581>

⁷⁶ *Op.Cit.* European Travel Commission

⁷⁷ *Op.Cit.* UNWTO (2012)

⁷⁸ *Op.Cit.* European Travel Commission

⁷⁹ *Op.Cit.* UNWTO (2012)

“5. Progress toward ensuring equal rights for LGBTQ people opens opportunities for the tourism sector.”⁸⁰

According to UNWTO it is proven that an improvement in human rights such as legalising same-sex marriages, creates progress in the tourism and boosts the image of destinations.⁸¹

“6. The LGBTQ segment is highly diverse, and becoming more adventurous.”⁸²

It is shown by UNWTO⁸³ that LGBTQ+ tourists are both more adventurous and more inclined to spend more money than the average tourist, when visiting a destination.

According to Ram et al.⁸⁴ in research done on LGBTQ+ tourists in Tel Aviv, it is an earlier research bias that LGBTQ+ tourists spend more money during a stay than other tourists. The bias was thought to be caused by a big part of the LGBTQ+ tourists being gay men who belong to the DINK (Dual Income No Kids) households, therefore, generally being able and willing to spend more money when travelling, this however is found to not be the case. The bias is thought to be from researchers using a stereotypical view on homosexuality, when researching the LGBTQ+ community, only regarding rich white men as a part of early research.⁸⁵

One of the biggest events attracting LGBTQ+ tourists is Pride. As mentioned in *LGBTQ+ history* hundreds of Prides are celebrated each year across the world typically followed by days of celebrations and events catered towards the LGBTQ+ community.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Op.Cit. European Travel Commission

⁸¹ Op.Cit. UNWTO (2012)

⁸² Op.Cit. European Travel Commission

⁸³ Op.Cit. UNWTO (2012)

⁸⁴ Ram, Yael et al (2019) The benefits of an LGBT-inclusive tourist destination. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, 14

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Op.Cit. European Travel Commission

Other events is including sporting events such as the Gay Games, an inclusive and pioneering event created in 1982 by Olympian Dr. Tom Waddell, who himself identified as gay. The event prides itself on being different from the Olympics by being more focused on sportsmanship, personal achievement, and inclusivity. The event was last celebrated in Paris 2018, seeing more than 10,000 athletes competing over an eight-day period.⁸⁷

Another important event for LGBTQ+ tourism is the Eurovision Song Contest. The music contest itself is not as such created to be an LGBTQ+ event, but during the years it has become known as a place of inclusivity, mutual respect going across borders and pride, both national pride but also gender and sexual pride. The big change in the Eurovision Song Contest started in the 1990's when Dana International as the first transexual performer won the competition, followed by lesbian Marija Šerifović in 2007 and the gay drag artist Conchita Wurst in 2014. The competitions shun all forms of politics and therefore, offer an open-minded environment, which the multi-national audience can enjoy.⁸⁸

Since 2000 WorldPride has been celebrated seven times, attracting the world's LGBTQ+ members to the elected host country, gathering the biggest crowds in Pride history. The first WorldPride in Rome, Italy in 2000 attracted more than 250,000 people, a crowd not seen in Rome for decades at the time.⁸⁹ In 2019 the WorldPride was held in New York City, joining in the 50th year celebration of the Stonewall Riots, gathering more than five million people according to the Mayor of New York City, Bill de Blasio, which makes the New York City Worldpride the largest International Pride celebration ever.⁹⁰

In 2020, because of the Covid-19 Pandemic, more than 500 LGBTQ+ events worldwide were cancelled or postponed. However, in June 2020 when most of the world was still in lockdown, wondering what to do and how to save the many implicated economic and cultural sectors affected

⁸⁷ Gay Games (2022) Available at <https://gaygames.org/Mission-&-Vision>

⁸⁸ Baker, Catherine (2016) The 'gay Olympics'? The Eurovision Song Contest and the politics of LGBT/European belonging. *European Journal of International Relations*, 23 (1). 97-121

⁸⁹ BBC News (2000) Available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/825163.stm>

⁹⁰ Allen, Karma (2019) ABC News. Available at <https://abcnews.go.com/US/million-people-crowd-nyc-worldpride-mayor/story?id=64090338>

by the Pandemic, the LGBTQ+ community was quick-thinking and decided that the festivities had to be held in person - or not, therefore, many of the celebrations were taken online. Different organisations across the globe held virtual streams with celebrations, speeches, entertainment, and workshops.⁹¹ While the digital pride "parades" did nothing financially for the tourism at LGBTQ+ destinations it is possible that the events have served as a great way for the different pride organisations to show their destination, and what aspects are unique and might attract LGBTQ+ tourists to their destination post-Covid.

According to the President and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association, if history is to repeat itself it is LGBTQ+ members who will help save the tourism segment once again.

"They're adventurous and like new experiences. They have a penchant for travel far greater than their heterosexual counterparts. They travel more and spend more when they travel. They're the darlings of the travel industry when it comes to spending and dollars"

Roger Dow, President, and CEO, U.S. Travel association⁹²

Research by Ram et al.⁹³ shows signs that LGBTQ+ friendly destinations have shown a possibility of being more resilient towards different safety crises. This might show an advantage of being an LGBTQ+ destination in the post-covid era, which mirror the before mentioned Roger Dow's views on the importance of the LGBTQ+ tourism right at this moment.

Safety and motivation in tourism

According to Pizam and Mansfeld,⁹⁴ Peace, safety and security are among the primary conditions for the possibility of successful development in a destination's tourism. Crimes and other safety risk

⁹¹ Wareham, Jamie (2020) Forbes. Available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jamiewareham/2020/05/29/pride-month-500-prides-cancel-amid-coronavirus-global-lgbt-digital-pride-list-events/?sh=5965d93c4576>

⁹² Salvato, Ed (2022) USA Today. Available at <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/travel/2021/05/07/gay-lgbtq-travelers-leading-way-tourism-covid-recovery/4970387001/>

⁹³ Op.Cit. Ram

⁹⁴ Mansfeld, Yoel and Abraham Pizam (2006) "Tourism, security and safety". Taylor and Francis, 1st ed. P 16

factors happen almost every day at the worlds' destinations, however, it is pointed out by Pizam⁹⁵ that people rarely are in a position to change the place in which they live, but no one can be forced to vacation in a place where their safety might be compromised. The different risks to safety come in many different variations; Human caused disasters, natural disaster etc.⁹⁶

Lehrman⁹⁷ observed that tourists are soft targets to e.g., terrorism, because improved safety measures towards targets such as politicians and embassies, have made these more traditional targets less attractive for terrorists. Tourists are also more vulnerable because they don't have the same knowledge of an area as locals do, and therefore do not necessarily know which dangers to look out for.

The different risks in tourism safety can be considered from different perspectives: the traveller, the tourism destination, or the business operator. Subsequently the risks can be divided into absolute risks or subjectively perceived risks. The focus of absolute risks is often the risks that are a part of the travellers' considerations while subjectively perceived risks is the focus of researchers.⁹⁸

The definition of a tourism crisis was described by Sönmez et al.⁹⁹ as: *"any occurrence which can threaten the normal operation and conduct of tourism related businesses; damage a tourist destination's overall reputation for safety, attractiveness and comfort by negatively affecting visitors' perceptions of that destination; and, in turn, cause a downturn in the local travel and tourism economy and interrupt the continuity of business operations for the local travel and tourism industry by the reduction in tourist arrivals and expenditures."*

There is a big difference in the recovery time after an occurred safety-endangering crisis. Some are over fairly quickly such as terror attacks, where natural disasters such as earthquakes can take years

⁹⁵ Pizam, A. (1999). A comprehensive approach to classifying acts of crime and violence at tourism destinations. *Journal of Travel Research*,38(1). PP 5–12

⁹⁶ Op.Cit. Pizam

⁹⁷ Lehrman, C.K. (1986) When fact and fantasy collide: Crisis management in the travel industry. *Public Relations Journal*, 42 (4), pp. 25-28

⁹⁸ Ritchie, Brent and Jiang Yawei (2019) A review of research on tourism risk, crisis and disaster management: Launching the annals of tourism research curated collection on tourism rick, crisis and disaster management. *Annals of Tourism Research*, p. 79

⁹⁹ Sönmez, S.F. et. al. (1994) "Managing tourism crises: A guidebook". Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management, Clemson University, p. 22

to recover from because of damage to the infrastructure. In other cases, the time of recovery is very difficult to predict such as in the case of the Ebola-induced tourism crisis in The Gambia.¹⁰⁰

The most recent risk of safety that has been in focus is the before mentioned Covid-19 pandemic.

In a study by Sharifpour et. al¹⁰¹ the tourists' risk perception is explored. By survey three main types of risks was identified – *Physical risk*, *Destination Specific*, and *General risk*.

Physical Risk are items such as crime, terrorism, political instability, and food safety. In the study this is the biggest group of concerns for the respondents.¹⁰²

The group identified as *Destination Specific* covers the risks of an unpleasant reception, lack of satisfaction, a bad reflection on tourists' personality, and waste of time and money. The content of this group is all things that are seen as lack of the benefits that are normally interpreted as things you achieve from travelling.¹⁰³

General Risk covers things such as extra cost, breakdown of equipment, bad weather and performance of a certain product in a package. These things are all unforeseeable things that can occur at any destination, beyond the control of the tourist. This was the group of concerns the least amount of the participants deemed risks considered before travelling.¹⁰⁴

According to the study there was a difference in risk perception depending on the respondents' former international travel experience. *Physical Risk* and *Destination Specific* risks were bigger concerns for respondents who had visited less than five countries, while *General risk* was seen as a bigger concern for respondents who had visited ten or more countries.¹⁰⁵

From the viewpoint of tourists, the evaluation of risks when traveling is very different from one tourist to another. In research done by Marion Karl,¹⁰⁶ it is concluded that many existing academic studies agree that uncertainty and risk play a role in the choice of destination, how and when

¹⁰⁰ Op.Cit. Ritchie

¹⁰¹ Sharifpour, Mona et. al. (2014) Risk perception, prior knowledge, and willingness to travel: Investigating the Australian tourist market's risk perceptions towards the Middle East. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 20 (2), pp. 111-123

¹⁰² *ibid.*

¹⁰³ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Karl, Marion (2016) Risk and Uncertainty in Travel Decision-Making: Tourist and Destination Perspective. *Journal of Travel Research*, 57 (1), pp. 129-146

different factors influence tourists are ambiguous and often lead to contradicting results. In her research on destinations choice based on risk, Karl¹⁰⁷ segmented respondents to a survey into a Tourist Typology, which resulted in 5 different types of tourists: *Risk and Uncertainty Avoiders*, *Risk Avoiders*, *Safe Novelty Seekers*, *Adventurous Novelty Seekers*, and *Risk Takers*.

The *Risk and Uncertainty Avoiders* have an aversion to risk and uncertainty when travelling. They seek familiarity and prefer destinations with highly developed infrastructure, familiar food and holidays organised by tour operators.¹⁰⁸

The *Risk Avoiders* are very likely to revisit destinations they find familiar, where safe activities are offered. They stay away from spontaneous travelling and prefer preplanned trips but do try local food and prefer to organise their own holidays. This type of tourist is more likely to travel with young children than other types.¹⁰⁹

The *Safe Novelty Seekers* prefer new and unfamiliar destinations and like to explore local food and preplanned trips organised by tour operators.¹¹⁰

The *Adventurous Novelty Seekers* are much like the *Safe Novelty Seekers* but instead of letting a tour operator organise everything, they largely prefer to organise their own holiday. This does add extra risks such as having to deal with on-site problems by themselves. This type also prefers more adventurous activities during their holiday.¹¹¹

The *Risk Taker*, as the name suggests is the most prone to taking risks when travelling. This type of tourists accepts uncertainty and prefer destinations where individually organised trips do not have defined routes or timetables. There is a big chance that this type of tourist is well-travelled and travel several times a year.¹¹²

Uncertain factors such as natural disasters, terror etc. also effect the choices of the tourists. In research by Park and Reisinger,¹¹³ the response from tourists of different socio-demographic and economic profiles on natural disasters is the focus. The research resulted in a clear picture that

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Op.Cit.* Karl

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ Park, Kwangsoo and Yvette Reisinger (2010) Differences in the Perceived Influence of Natural Disasters and Travel Risk on International Travel. *An International Journal of Tourism Space, Place and Environment*, 12 (1), pp. 1-24

people are much more effected by natural disasters that are not native to their own land. For example, Asian and South American respondents saw hurricanes as a bigger risk than the respondents from the USA, where hurricanes normally occur. The research further showed that high-income respondents perceived natural disaster as less of a risk compared to the low-income respondents. This might be connected with their level of education, which tend to be higher for people that are high-income. Single respondents, while perceiving natural disasters as less of a risk than families and couples, did however perceive psychological factors as higher risks than others, likely, because in the event of a natural disaster a single person will be alone in dealing with the event psychologically, while others travel with a known person, they can share their worries with.¹¹⁴

Usai et al.¹¹⁵ in their research on LGBTQ+ tourism in a so-called heteronormative world, found that several interviewed LGBTQ+ tourists felt “stress, discomfort, anxiety, and worry, related mostly to how their sexuality would be perceived while traveling”.¹¹⁶ The change between the different types of LGBTQ+ members even showed to be visible in the research. While gay, lesbian, and bisexual interviewees expressed worries about being with their same-sex partner at a destination, the transexual interviewees had very different safety concerns.

Among the Transexual interviewees there were concerns such as feeling unsafe for wearing make-up and using the bathroom. Among these tourists there were also concerns for the behaviour of airport security guards. One interviewee had found it a norm to be checked because of the mismatch between appearance and official travel documents stating a birth gender not corresponding with their presumed gender. Among the homosexual interviewees, the research showed an anonymous feeling of fright towards locals’ response to daily life activities, such as same-sex show of affection in public. This fear showed to be a deciding factor among the interviewees when choosing their travel destination.¹¹⁷

Another, at times, fearful segment in LGBTQ+ tourism is the travelling LGBTQ+ families, the ones who don’t fit into the heteronormative “Mother-father-children” paradigm. According to Lucena et

¹¹⁴ Op.Cit. Park

¹¹⁵ Usai, Roberto et. al. (2020) A Queer Perspective on Heteronormativity for LGBT Travelers. *Journal of Travel Research*, 61 (1), pp. 3-15

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*

al.¹¹⁸ LGBTQ+ families as a topic in tourism research is largely neglected. In their research several gaps in knowledge have been discovered on topics such as travel motivations and destination choices, which may differ from the heteronormative family's thought process. It is pointed out that the lack of research on the topic, is the focus in previous quantitative research which has a large emphasis on the importance of generalisability, whereas sexuality is a subject that is hard to generalise.¹¹⁹

In research it is visible that LGBTQ+ people in some instances are distressed by social interaction in a travelling context, because of the gap between heteronormativity and the LGBTQ+ lifestyle.¹²⁰

The main concern for some is places where mostly straight, in some cases drunk, men travel. This type of tourist often tends to be verbally and physically aggressive, and especially in groups, they are seen as a threat of safety, by LGBTQ+ people. It is exactly this group that is pointed out by many interviewees in research on gay men's perception of risk in tourism done by Hughes¹²¹.

One person disclosed: "I tend to avoid certain kinds of straight men that seem aggressive, I can't explain it, but you just get a feeling that you should be careful about your behaviour when they're around."¹²² Another disclosed: "Big groups of straight guys do not make me feel comfortable; in fact, I tend to avoid bars where straight men are the majority and big sporting events."¹²³

While both of these statements are known to be 20+ years old, it is not hard to imagine, that this is still relevant concerns for LGBTQ+ people when travelling today.

In a slightly newer study on gay victimisation in tourism, Brunt and Brophy¹²⁴ also discovered that tourist-on-tourist interactions were among the biggest concerns for LGBTQ+ people. Interviewees on the subject reported to have both endured physical and verbal discrimination and harassment. One lesbian interviewee disclosed: "I've had guys harass me for threesomes in clubs, as they became aware of my sexual orientation."¹²⁵ A bisexual woman told: "Once I was with a girl, and a straight

¹¹⁸ Lucena, Rodrigo et. al. (2015) A review of gay and lesbian parented families' travel motivations and destination choices: gaps in research and future direction. *Annals of Leisure Research*, 18 (2), pp. 272-289

¹¹⁹ Op.Cit. Lucena

¹²⁰ Op.Cit. Usai

¹²¹ Hughes, Howard (2002) Gay Men's Holiday Destination Choice: A Case of Risk and Avoidance. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 4, pp. 299-312

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ *ibid.*

¹²⁴ Brunt, Paul and Kristin Brophy (2006) Gay Tourist Victimisation. *International Review of Victimology*, 13 (3), pp. 275-299

¹²⁵ Op.Cit. Usai

man approached us. He tried to touch us, and we told him to go away. So, he started shouting ‘disgusting lesbians’ at us”.¹²⁶ Transgender interviewees had experienced being deliberately misgendered and a gay man even disclosed “I was in Nice, I took a taxi at night, and three guys harassed me, they punched me, and they stole my stuff... I reported it to the police, but nothing has happened. I’ve also been verbally harassed in clubs”.¹²⁷

This lack of confidence in authorities is not uncommon among LGBTQ+ people. Several people reported that they would not report a crime to the authorities out of fear, that the police would not be on their side. It is also a conclusion in the research that many LGBTQ+ people tend to avoid destinations targeted at families. It was a common theme among some during the interviews that the problem was not the children, but rather the parents. A transexual explained: “I feel like I’m looked at like a sexual predator by parents of children I don’t know, and I fear that they could approach me questioning that I made their children aware of my gender identity.”¹²⁸ Other LGBTQ+ people however felt motivated to travel to family destinations to be in the presence of children to purposely expose them to other cultures. Several interviewees agreed that children generally are very openminded, and the chance to expose them to something different than their heteronormative upbringing might give something valuable to society.¹²⁹

In some cases, sociocultural, political, and religious factors play a role in the LGBTQ+ tourist’s choice of destination. Several LGBTQ+ people interviewed by Usai et al.¹³⁰ mirrored the assumptions made by Hughes et.al.¹³¹ on LGBTQ+ tourists’ and hosts’ attitude, which reflected a frequent avoidance of destination with strong roots in heteronormativity.

One interviewee said “I always look at the socioeconomic state of a destination and the level of acceptance of gay people. In the case the country is not accepting, you have two options. Either risk prosecution or avoid being themselves. I would feel uncomfortable visiting Africa and Islamic countries. I’ve travelled to Bali, but I would avoid the rest of Indonesia.”¹³²

¹²⁶ *ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Op.Cit. Usai*

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ *ibid.*

¹³¹ *Op.Cit. Hughes*

¹³² *ibid.*

In other cases, this was a bigger worry, when travelling with a partner, in which their sexuality became more public: “If I had to go on holidays with my partner, I would avoid the Middle East; Maybe I’d go, but you need to be more careful. You can’t behave freely with the person you are with.”¹³³

These concerns also existed among the transexual interviewees, with one stating: “As a transgender woman, I could never go to certain countries. You cannot hide who you are; you cannot blend in. I wouldn’t be able to enjoy myself if I know I’m in danger. I would not go to places in Africa, Russia, and South America, which has a very high violence rate against transexual women.”¹³⁴

One interviewee even pointed out structural difficulties when travelling as a transexual person: “Being transgender definitely affects your destination or accommodation choice. I would not go to many places in Asia, Dubai, or Russia. I wanted to go to Australia, but I haven’t as most flights stop in the Middle East and countries that are not accepting of trans people.”¹³⁵

Bisexual interviewees however did not in a high degree come across these structural heteronormative problems. One Bisexual person stated: “I do not feel restricted to certain countries. I am planning to visit Afghanistan, I have applied for jobs in northern Iraq, and I’ve previously lived in Africa. However, I do feel more privileged compared to other members of the LGBT community. I am quite straight passing, and I am also white.” As a bisexual, identifying as their assigned-at-birth gender, there does seem to be a feeling that, they can pass as being straight, when not travelling with a person of the same sex, which can be seen as a privilege, when the focus is on LGBTQ+ struggles, where all LGBTQ+ people are often seen as one unit.¹³⁶

Many of the interviewed agreed that when travelling they preferred going to queer spaces, where they feel at home and in a familiar and safe environment. They also preferred choosing accommodation that specifically marketed themselves as LGBTQ+ friendly, as a way to feel safer.¹³⁷ Some however pointed out that precisely that was not a big priority when travelling in western

¹³³ *ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Op.Cit.* Hughes

¹³⁵ *ibid.*

¹³⁶ *ibid.*

¹³⁷ *ibid.*

countries with relatively wide acceptance of LGBTQ+ people. One person noted: "I don't worry too much whether the accommodation is gay-friendly when traveling in western countries as it is assumed that it should be that way. It would be too risky for a business to stand against gay rights in the West, as the level of backlash would ruin them. For example, even if it didn't happen in the West, Royal Brunei is being boycotted for this reason."¹³⁸

As a whole the research done by Usai et. al.¹³⁹ concluded that heteronormativity does in fact play a major constraint for the LGBTQ+ industry when it comes to travelling.

Lewis et. al.¹⁴⁰ has researched the travel behaviour of Australian LGBTQ+ people after Covid-19 and the push and pull factors attracting the LGBTQ+ tourists to a destination. The study identified four motivation segments: *Social Butterflies*, *Escapists and Safety Seekers*, *Blurring Binaries*, and *conformists*.

Social Butterflies are driven strongly by both their orientation but also the pleasure of travelling. They have a strong focus on creating friends and possibly finding partners when travelling. Among the segments the respondents belonging to this segment showed most pride in the LGBTQ+ community. Before Covid-19 this segment largely travelled within Australia.¹⁴¹

Escapists and Safety Seekers are driven by the chance of escaping the heteronormative home environment, and the possibility of learning new things. This segment does not have sexuality as a big motivation but still searches for an environment where they can be themselves and safely explore their own sexuality or gender. Respondents from this segment largely travelled internationally to capital cities or regional centres.¹⁴²

Blurring Binaries are driven by being able to engage in behaviours they would not feel comfortable doing in their home environment. It is both sexuality- or gender identity- and general pleasure travel motives that drive this segment. The majority travelled either to international rural destination or to regional centres of Australia.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Op.Cit. Usai

¹³⁹ Op.Cit. Usai

¹⁴⁰ Lewis, Clifford et. al. (2021) Linking travel motives to identity and travel behavior of the Australian LGBT market during COVID-19. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 38 (7), pp. 725-741

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*

¹⁴² *ibid.*

¹⁴³ *ibid.*

The last segment *Conformists* are largely driven by the general mainstream pleasure travel motives and seek to escape everyday life. Sexuality is not a key factor for this segment, and they do not mind travelling to heteronormative destinations. According to the responses this segment felt the least belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. This segment travelled minimally within Australia before Covid-19 and mostly visited overseas rural towns.¹⁴⁴

The before mentioned research done by Ram et al.¹⁴⁵ found that the tourism at destinations supporting diversity, such as LGBTQ+, might be more resilient when it comes to the overall safety in tourism. The positive image created when a destination is LGBTQ+ inclusive and friendly helps when said destination experience disasters such as terrorist attacks, because the inclusivity and safety towards LGBTQ+ people can be seen as a safety and a general care towards all tourists.¹⁴⁶

Looking at research done by the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) a survey was done in 2020 to research LGBTQ+ travellers' attitude toward travel in the face of the Covid 19 pandemic. About the research John Tanzella, IGLTA president and CEO said as follows:

*"We wanted to document their [LGBTQ+ travellers'] sentiments during this particularly challenging moment in time to remind the tourism industry at large that LGBTQ+ travellers should be a valued part of their recovery plans. Messages of inclusion have the potential to resonate even more strongly with LGBTQ+ travellers now."*¹⁴⁷

The research done between April 16th and May 12th, 2020, showed that as much as 66% of the respondents wanted to travel again before the end of 2020, with established global timelines and safety protocols. Almost half of the respondents answered that they would not change the type of destination they choose to visit post-covid, which show a high level of loyalty despite the big uncertainty in the world.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Op.Cit. Ram

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ IGLTA (2020) Available at

<https://www.iglta.org/Portals/79/docs/2020%20IGLTA%20Docs%20Research%20pdfs/IGLTA-Post-Covid-19-LGBTQ-Travel-Survey-Results.pdf?ver=2020-06-02-131735-770>

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

Nearly a year after the first research on LGBTQ+ travellers post-covid, another similar survey was done. Because of the uncertainty of the time in which the first survey was done, it was important for IGLTA to redo the survey in 2021, a year where more was known about the global situation.¹⁴⁹

“We wanted to revisit this project a year into this challenging time to reinforce the resilience of LGBTQ+ travellers, and to champion the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion in destination outreach. Again, the results undeniably show that LGBTQ+ travellers are ready to travel, and represent a valuable, loyal audience for tourism businesses that make the effort to genuinely welcome them.”

John Tanzella, IGLTA President and CEO¹⁵⁰

In the 2021 survey almost three quarters of the respondents wanted to plan their next major vacation before the end of 2021. Almost a quarter of the respondents had made travel reservations in the past week of them responding to the survey. 43% of the respondents expressed the desire to attend a pride event or an LGBTQ+ festival within the next six months, also signifying the want to reconnect with the LGBTQ+ community.¹⁵¹

Both of these surveys show the importance of travelling in the LGBTQ+ community, whether it is a personal need or a necessity to escape everyday life.

Many different types of research have been made of risk assessment and safety concerns in the tourism industry, during the last decade, some researchers agreeing more than others. There is however a big gap in focus on the LGBTQ+ community, while it has been attempted filled both by researchers and the IGLTA, the research is far in between.

¹⁴⁹ IGLTA (2021) Available at <https://www.iglta.org/Portals/79/2021%20%20LGBTQ%20POST%20COVID%20TRAVEL%20SURVEY/Global%20Presentation%20-%202021%20LGBTQ%20Post%20Covid%20Travel%20Survey%20Final.pdf?ver=47JHHxDQLLeSQiSrgM1Kg%3d%3d>

¹⁵⁰ Op.Cit. IGLTA (2021)

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*

Methodology

The choice of topic was based on a personal interest. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community I already had existing knowledge on the community, but it was early on decided to not include this biased knowledge in this research, but rather an open mind to researching both heteronormative tourism and LGBTQ+ tourism. The topic however played a big role in motivation for me because of the personal connection, and outside praise for choice of subject from members of the LGBTQ+ community.

This research is done with a constructivist approach. The ontology of the constructivism philosophical paradigm is described as an approach that asserts that understanding and knowledge of the world is constructed by people who themselves experience things and reflect on those experiences. The thought of constructivism is based on students being fully engaged in teachings. Only through experience does one acquire knowledge. Epistemologically a part of the process in the construction of knowledge is through a process of accommodation and assimilation. In the accommodation process individuals construct new knowledge from their experiences. This process involves framing one's mental representation of the world to fit new experiences, thereby giving room for new experiences in a mentality where old experiences already exists. Another process known as the assimilation process, is where new experiences are incorporated into an existing framework of old experiences. An example of this is given by Adom et al.¹⁵²:

“A certain PhD student may feel that attending an educational workshop is not very important based on an old experience he has amassed based on a previously attended an educational workshop. His perception of educational workshops may however change when he acquires a new experience of an educational workshop which proved very helpful and relevant. The old experience and the new experience will both co-exist in his mental faculties, but his perceptions of the world may or may not change based on the new experience”¹⁵³

¹⁵² Adom, Dickson et. al. (2016) Constructivism philosophical paradigm: Implication for research, teaching and learning. *Global Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4 (10), pp. 1-9

¹⁵³ *ibid.*

Moreover, the constructivist view also asserts that reality is subjective because it is based on an individual's view, which in a qualitative constructivist research gives a multiple and varied study when involving different participants. With the constructivist approach the essence of an object cannot be definitely known because reality is constructed by each individual.¹⁵⁴

In this study society's paradigm of the heteronormative person, and assumption that everyone is straight, and that sexual and romantic relationships are between a man and a woman is a part of this research. The paradigm was first defined by Warner¹⁵⁵ in 1991, at the height of the global AIDS pandemic. The paradigm was created to acknowledge the gay movement and the privileges of heterosexual culture. The definition of heteronormativity is in part based on reproduction, as it in a heteronormative world is seen as the logic behind sexuality, that the race would die if everyone was queer and therefore not able to reproduce. This paradigm closely relates to the paradigm that everybody lives and identifies as the gender assigned at birth.¹⁵⁶

The world has changed a lot in the 30 years since Warner's definition of the heteronormative paradigm. Since then, a shift in paradigm has happened where what in under the heteronormative paradigm was seen outside of the norm, is now a part of a new world and a new paradigm. The homonormative paradigm sees privileges of the heteronormative ideals constructed onto LGBTQ+ identity and culture. The norms within heteronormativity such as marriage, children, and in general living the same life as a heterosexual person, is present in homonormativity, just in a queer relationship.¹⁵⁷

A paradox in tourism is explored in this research, the risk-fear paradox. Generally, in tourism fear exceeds risk, but in the context of LGBTQ+ tourism the case is often that risk exceeds fear. Fear has long been a part of travelling, the fear of something unknown, strangers, strange cultures, and

¹⁵⁴ Op.Cit. Adom

¹⁵⁵ Warner, Michael (1991) Introduction: Fear of a Queer Planet. *Social Text*, 29, pp. 3-17

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Mowlabocus, Sharif (2021) Introduction. *Interrogating Homonormativity*, pp. 1-14

strange foods. For LGBTQ+ people there are possible risks when travelling. The risk of being jailed, violated or even worse, killed.¹⁵⁸

Collected data

A semi structured interview was conducted with the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA), selected specifically for their large expertise on LGBTQ+ tourism as a whole, LGBTQ+ travel agencies and in some degree LGBTQ+ tourists. The semi-structured interview was chosen to ensure a good structure in the interview, but with room for follow-up questions. The IGLTA was initially contacted regarding a possible interview, because they are a very large association that works with many different tourism businesses and are a very large figure in LGBTQ+ tourism. The first contact was made through the association's webpage where an interview was requested. Via email it was informed that the request had been redirected to a department that could possibly be a part of an interview. Contact was made with the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA. He was very interested in participating in an interview and an online interview via Google Meet was subsequently planned. It could have been favourable with an in-person meeting, but with interviewees location in Morocco an interview via Google Meet was deemed second best. In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation the interviewee was asked about whether he wanted to be anonymous in this research. According to him he preferred being referred to in this research under his title of Foundation Coordinator and not by name, in order to protect himself as a gay man living in a non-LGBTQ+ friendly country.

Before the interview an interview guide¹⁵⁹ was set up with relevant structured questions and possible follow up questions prepared, depending on the answers given to the questions. It was planned beforehand that questions could arise during the interview, depending on the flow of the interview. The interview was divided into several themes: the idea behind the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association and the name of the association, safety in LGBTQ+ tourism, the future of LGBTQ+ tourism, and finally the Covid-19 Pandemic. During the interview some questions in the interview guide was skipped because the questions were, more or less, answered by interviewee without directly being asked.

¹⁵⁸ Mawby, R. I. (2000) Tourists' perceptions of security: the risk-fear paradox. *Tourism Economics*, 6 (2), pp. 109-121

¹⁵⁹ Appendix 1 – Interview Guide IGLTA

The interview¹⁶⁰ progressed with only a little disturbance from interviewees side, which was solved by closing a window. Furthermore, there was some disturbance from unavoidable lagging occasionally.

Because of the, at times, personal subject behind the interview, and the natural, friendly, and calm flow in the interview, there were times where the natural conversation of the interview got very personal. These sections have not fully been included into the transcribed interview,¹⁶¹ as they have been deemed too personal and not relevant to this research. Furthermore, interviewee's name has been removed from the transcribed interview, to keep the anonymity of interviewee as wished.

In order to research what LGBTQ+ travel agencies focus on when promoting travels to the LGBTQ+ community, a comparative analysis is made. In the study several LGBTQ+ travel agencies' webpages have been researched, picked out by looking at the top 20 international LGBTQ+ travel agencies according to LGBTQ+ travel guide and social page ellgeeBE¹⁶². Some of the agencies apart of the top 20 were not included, because of different factors such as work being done on their webpages, missing webpages, or insufficient information on the webpages. The travel agencies chosen, and their web pages are listed below.

RSVP Vacations - <https://rsvpvacations.com/>

Olivia Travel - <https://www.olivia.com/>

HE Travel - <https://hetravel.com/>

Atlantis Events - <https://atlantisevents.com/>

Out Adventures - <https://www.outadventures.com/>

GaySail - <https://gaysail.com/>

Diva Destinations - <https://www.divadestinations.co.uk/>

The different webpages selected are compared to find the most common key words on the pages. This is done firstly by putting the travel agencies into a table, which shows the travel agencies' target

¹⁶⁰ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² ellgeeBE (2022) Available at <https://www.ellgeebe.com/en/collections/20-top-international-lgbt-travel-companies>

groups, the key words of the webpages, the destinations available and the native country of the agencies. This is hereafter compared to academic studies on LGBTQ+ tourist's travel behaviour.

Academic articles have been collected mainly by searching for a set of keywords via Aalborg University online library, aub.aau.dk. The keywords were e.g., 'LGBTQ+ tourism', and 'tourism safety'.

Books were found via Google Books and Aalborg University online library. Several news articles have been used in this research. Each article has been carefully used based on the validity of the news site, and the relevance to the subjects researched. Furthermore, information has been collected from several LGBTQ+ businesses, travel agencies and organisations.

Positionality

Even though I have not included my own opinions or experiences within the LGBTQ+ community in my research, it is important to point out that I by being queer might have prior knowledge of resources and information within the community, that a non-LGBTQ+ person might not have had. This might also have played a part in the possibility of being able to interview the IGLTA. In the initial email to the organisation, it was pointed out that I am a part of the LGBTQ+ community, which might have had an advantage. Also, during the interview I was directly asked about my membership of the community, which did create familiarity and understanding between interviewee and myself. Admittedly the interview could have gone much differently, had I not been an LGBTQ+ member myself.

In the research of data, it can also be seen as an advantage that I as a person am very openminded and accepting, and have no difficulty putting myself in others' shoes, which for some might be a challenge because the topic of sexuality and gender identity for some is seen as difficult, very personal, and sometimes controversial. This can both come down to personality but also to a degree one's upbringing and native country's look on the LGBTQ+ community. As a person from a Danish, working class, socialist family, I might have been exposed to things a person from a religious and conservative family might not have, which might have given me an advantage in the know-how of

the chosen subject of the LGBTQ+ community, which in combination with my studies on tourism has led to the researched subject, LGBTQ+ tourism.

Delimitations

It is important to mention in researching and writing about the LGBTQ+ community, that the whole community cannot always be seen as one. The different difficulties do not always carry on to all sexualities or genders. The problems faced by transsexuals do not always correlate to those faced by lesbians and at the same time the lesbians' problems do not always correlate with those faced by gay men. In this paper the LGBTQ+ community will be seen as one entity, but with different individuals, who face different problems. It is also noteworthy that a lot of the first academic papers on the subject only focus on gay white men, with no children, from the Global North, and not the whole LGBTQ+ community, therefore the number of academic papers on the LGBTQ+ community is limited in quality and quantity compared to other subjects.

With all of this in mind, this research is done with a holistic approach, looking at the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, but still acknowledging that within this whole there most likely are some differences between the united whole.

In the process there were initial plans to interview several LGBTQ+ travel agencies. Many were contacted, but only one was initially willing to answer some questions via email. After further correspondence, the willing travel agency, however, decided to also decline answering questions. Some agencies did not respond back, and most responded with a wish to answer but with a lack of time, because of the added pressure of the return after the COVID-19 Pandemic. The one initially willing to answer questions informed that working hours at the moment are raised to more than 150%. The offer of an email response on questions, was not considered as the best possible method of the desired interviews, because a semi structured interview then would not be possible, but it was still deemed as an opportunity to get some good responses on questions directly to an agency with direct knowledge of LGBTQ+ tourism, however as this was not a possibility, a comparative analysis of said travel agencies webpages was made instead to still gain knowledge of the agencies and their way of promoting towards the LGBTQ+ community.

Comparative analysis

There are many different types of travel agencies catering to many groups within the LGBTQ+ community. In order to see how these different agencies, promote themselves towards LGBTQ+ tourists a comparative study is done of the travel agencies' webpages. Because of the many different types of agencies, the chosen agencies have been found on a top 20 of International LGBTQ+ travel agencies made by the LGBTQ+ community site ellgeeBE.¹⁶³

Table 1 – comparative study

Name	Caters to	Key words	Travels to	From
RSVP vacations	LGBTQ+	Gay-focused, welcoming, likeminded people, comfortable environment,	Cruise Caribbean	Los Angeles, USA
Olivia Travel	Lesbians, LGBTQ+ women	Safe space, welcoming	Big variety	San Francisco, USA
HE Travel	Gay men	Intimacy, camaraderie, safety, diversity	All over the world	Key West, USA
Atlantis Events	Gay men	Welcoming, Comfortable, freedom	Cruises Europe and North America	Los Angeles, USA
Out Adventures	LGBTQ+	Safety, support, privacy, like-minded travellers, small groups	40+ countries	Canada
GaySail	Gay men	Safety, small groups	10+ destinations	Amsterdam, Netherlands

¹⁶³ Op.Cit. ellgeeBE

Diva Destinations	LGBTQ+ women and non-binary	Relaxed, friendly environment, inclusion, like-minded people,	Variety	England
Sources: ^{164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177}				

RSVP Vacations

This cruise agency established in 1985 has a strong focus on gay tourists but also welcome other members of the LGBTQ+ community, while also welcoming non-LGBTQ+ members. Even though everybody is welcome there is a strong focus on the gay tourists throughout the webpage both in the writing and in the pictures. The agency has a focus on the fact that everybody on their different cruises are all like-minded and everybody can be comfortable in the environment created on the cruises. Between 120-3500 people travel on the cruises at a time, depending on the size of boat for the trips going to the Caribbean.^{178 179}

Olivia Travel

The idea behind ‘Olivia’ started as a music label, which developed into Olivia Travel in 1990. The agency caters mostly to Lesbians but also other LGBTQ+ women, including trans and non-binary people. Throughout the info on the webpage there is a constant focus on Olivia Travel being safe and providing a safe space for everybody who travels with them and wants to make sure that

¹⁶⁴ Op.Cit. ellgeeBE

¹⁶⁵ RSVP Vacations (2022) Available at <https://rsvpvacations.com/our-company/>

¹⁶⁶ RSVP Vacations (2022b) Available at <https://rsvpvacations.com/frequently-asked-questions/>

¹⁶⁷ Olivia Travel (2022) Available at <https://www.olivia.com/experience>

¹⁶⁸ Olivia Travel (2022b) Available at <https://www.olivia.com/faq-and-contact>

¹⁶⁹ HE Travel (2022) Available at <https://hetravel.com/about-us>

¹⁷⁰ HE Travel (2022b) Available at <https://hetravel.com/faq>

¹⁷¹ Out Adventures (2022) Available at <https://www.outadventures.com/gay-travel/our-company/>

¹⁷² Out Adventures (2022b) Available at <https://www.outadventures.com/gay-travel/faq/>

¹⁷³ Atlantis Events (2022) Available at <https://atlantisevents.com/our-company>

¹⁷⁴ Atlantis Events (2022b) Available at <https://atlantisevents.com/explore/atlantis-answers>

¹⁷⁵ GaySail (2022) Available at <https://gaysail.com/info/team>

¹⁷⁶ GaySail (2022b) Available at <https://gaysail.com/contact-faq>

¹⁷⁷ Diva Destinations (2022) Retrieved 20 May 2022, from <https://www.divadestinations.co.uk/why-book-with-us.html>

¹⁷⁸ Op.Cit. RSVP Vacations (2022)

¹⁷⁹ Op.Cit. RSVP Vacations (2022b)

everybody feels welcome. They offer many different types of tours, both big Caribbean cruises and small intimate river cruises and resort trips.^{180 181}

HE Travel

This agency was founded in 1973 by the previously mentioned Hans Ebensten (see *LGBTQ+ Tourism*). The agency has a strong focus on gay men but are also welcoming towards other LGBTQ+ members and their heterosexual friends and family members. HE Travel mainly has small intimate tours with six to thirty people and focuses on the groups establishing a camaraderie with each other, which creates a safe and friendly environment. This agency offers a lot of diversity as many types of tourists travel on the tours. People of all ages and walks of life are welcome. HE Travel offers travelling to several different destinations all over the world.^{182 183}

Atlantis Events

In 1991 Atlantis Events had its start with an all-gay resort event in Mexico. The agency mostly cater to gay men, but also welcome bisexual and lesbian women. On their webpage there is a focus on tourists feeling welcome and comfortable on their vacation. They pride themselves on providing travels which offer the tourists freedom to be who they want to be. The main offer is cruises, mainly in North America, around the United States, Mexico, and the Caribbean but also in Northern- and Western Europe.^{184 185}

Out Adventures

This Canadian travel agency caters to all members of the LGBTQ+ community. While their focus is on LGBTQ+ members, they do allow non-LGBTQ+ members to join their tours. On their webpage there is a number of key words that cater to the LGBTQ+ community. They offer safety, support and privacy to the tourists and ensure this especially to the transgender, non-binary, agender and two spirited tourists, who might feel especially unsafe. They also offer tours with small groups who are

¹⁸⁰ Op.Cit. Olivia Travel (2022)

¹⁸¹ Op.Cit. Olivia Travel (2022b)

¹⁸² Op.Cit. HE Travel (2022)

¹⁸³ Op.Cit. HE Travel (2022b)

¹⁸⁴ Op.Cit. Atlantis Events (2022)

¹⁸⁵ Op.Cit. Atlantis Events (2022b)

all like-minded, making sure that the group feels safe together. Out Adventures offer tours to more than 40 different countries, with a queer crew that knows the local customs and attitudes of the LGBTQ+ community to make sure the tourists can feel safe.^{186 187}

GaySail

This agency was started in Amsterdam, Netherlands, who offer sailing trips for gay men. The trips consists of groups of 10-30 people at a time and has a focus on everybody feeling safe both among the group, but also feeling safe on the boats, which are staffed by experienced skippers and cooks.¹⁸⁸

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Diva Destinations

This agency based in England caters to LGBTQ+ women and non-binary. They have a focus on creating a relaxed, friendly, and inclusive environment on their tours with like-minded people. A variety of mainly European tours are offered, both city breaks, cruises, beach holidays and sporting holidays.¹⁹⁰

Comparative analysis

There are many travel agencies world-wide offering travels to the LGBTQ+ community. Most are based in the US and cater to gay men but are also welcoming towards other members of the LGBTQ+ community. The travel agencies' webpages have a lot of similarity. There is a strong focus on safety, both with the travel agencies, but also in the groups. Many offer a safe space, where the tourists are allowed to be who they want to be, no matter what walks of life they come from. It is important that the tourists experience a friendly and comfortable environment. The mostly used words when looking at all of the webpages is "like-minded". It is emphasised many times that the groups are likeminded, meaning that everybody support each other, and no one should feel wrong or unwelcome, because of their gender or sexual orientation.

¹⁸⁶ Op.Cit. Out Adventures (2022)

¹⁸⁷ Op.Cit. Out Adventures (2022b)

¹⁸⁸ Op.Cit. GaySail (2022)

¹⁸⁹ Op.Cit. GaySail (2022b)

¹⁹⁰ Op.Cit. Diva Destinations

All webpages have a “Frequently asked questions” page, except Diva Destinations.¹⁹¹ On the “Frequently asked questions” page there is a lot of information about safety, the “physical make-up” of the average traveller and questions regarding the sexuality of other travellers.

It seems like, by the webpages, that there is a big difference between the different travel agencies based on what is visually represented on the webpages. The webpage of HE Travel could pass as an average travel agency. The pictures presented on the main page are standard travel pictures of sights and nature. The webpage of Atlantis Events, however, is filled with men holding hands, pictures with groups of men and a few of female couples, which unmistakably shows the agencies main focus on LGBTQ+ travellers.

There is likewise a big difference in the language of the webpages. The webpage of Atlantis Events is very informal and made in a joking manor for example by mentioning the very muscular men in many of the pictures depicted on the webpage. A supposedly frequently asked question posted on the webpage about whether you need a fit body to fit in amongst the other tourists is answered: *“Very funny. Seriously, while we have some great bodies in our brochure and website (remember it IS marketing!), Atlantis is really all about being yourself and feeling great about who you are. Whatever shape you’re in, you’re going to feel right at home on Atlantis. We promise.”*¹⁹²

Another example of the varying languages is on Diva Destinations’ webpage. On the subject of a solo travelling, the text on the webpage is almost made motherly and in a very understanding and protective tone: *“We understand that booking a holiday on your own is a big step. We all want to visit wonderful places but not necessarily on our own... our Diva Destinations representative is with you throughout, hosting group meals so you never need to worry about eating alone. We also run our own events on many trips, ensuring you have time to make new friends and to share your holiday experiences.”*¹⁹³

Generally, the webpages catering both the whole LGBTQ+ community and LGBTQ+ women seem more understanding, protective and delicate in their language than those with a focus on gay men.

¹⁹¹ Op.Cit. Diva Destinations

¹⁹² Op.Cit. Atlantis Events (2022b)

¹⁹³ Op.Cit. Diva Destinations

As an example, Out Adventures write about their policy when catering for e.g., transgender tourists: *“We are firmly committed to protecting the safety and privacy of our transgender, agender, non-binary, and two spirit travellers. While we collect passport details including your documented sex marker, we fully respect your true identity. We will only share the sex marker listed on your passport with employees and partners on a need-to-know basis and can consult you on when this would be required so that you are aware. It is also worth mentioning our team will always refer to you by your correct pronounce.”*¹⁹⁴ On the webpages catering to gay men the tone of the information given are more light-hearted and fun e.g., this example from Atlantis Events who write about connecting with people on their trips: *“Every Atlantis vacation is chock full of parties, events, and gatherings that make it easy for you to introduce yourself to other guests. And we have our Atlantis team the whole time to facilitate fun and interactions.”*¹⁹⁵

There is, furthermore, a difference in the definition of the groups catered to, which can seem confusing. All webpages either by the frontpage or the “frequently asked questions” pages define what sexualities are welcome, however on the webpage of GaySail it is not per say described. Given the name of the company and the pictures on the webpage it could be clear that the tourists are only gay men. As it is explained under *Why LGBTQ+?* “Gay” is also sometimes used to define everybody in the LGBTQ+ community, this could be misleading, and lead to confusion for viewers of the webpage.

¹⁹⁴ Op.Cit. Out Adventures (2022b)

¹⁹⁵ Op.Cit. Atlantis Events (2022b)

Analysis

It is relevant to ask the question when thinking about LGBTQ+ tourism, what differs the LGBTQ+ tourist from the average tourist. What safety measures must a LGBTQ+ person take, that the average tourist does not have to worry about? First of all, it is relevant to look at the average safety measures the average tourist must consider when travelling. Aside from the Covid-19 pandemic, the last few decades have seen terrorism as one of the biggest worries for tourists.¹⁹⁶

For LGBTQ+ people there are added safety worries, that heterosexual tourists do not have to worry about. For example, if a lesbian couple and their two children, carried and born by one of the women, want to go to a holiday destination, they need to consider if it is safe for them as a couple to hold hands, if they can share a bed, if anything were to happen to the birth mother will the secondary parent still have rights to take care of the children? This is all things the average tourist will never have to worry about because heteronormative laws protect heteronormative families, and not necessarily LGBTQ+ families.¹⁹⁷

One of the biggest organisations behind LGBTQ+ tourism is as mentioned under *LGBTQ+ Tourism*, the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA). The organisation is working with a lot of different LGBTQ+ tourism businesses, like the travel agencies included in *Table 1*. The IGLTA is a big part of ensuring the safety in the tourism business for LGBTQ+ people and at the same time promoting the LGBTQ+ businesses and helping them evolving. One of the IGLTA's focusses is on emerging destinations where the LGBTQ+ community is not necessarily widespread.¹⁹⁸

“In emerging destinations where the LGBTQ+ infrastructure is not established, we have this program with our foundation called “The emerging destination program”, for LGBTQ+ owned businesses... Basically, we have members from all over the world and they become members and we give them visibility and help them with marketing in order to have a reach with the customer. But for these emerging destination businesses that are located in for example homophobic countries, what we do is we reduce the fear of the membership, so for example a regular member will pay 245 dollars, for an LGBTQ+ business who is based in an emerging destination, they will only pay 79 dollars for an annual rate. So, we kind of help them grow and have a visibility at a lower rate. Because the idea behind it is not only to grow the business

¹⁹⁶ Op.Cit. US Travel Association

¹⁹⁷ Op.Cit. Usai

¹⁹⁸ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

but to give these LGBTQ+ owned businesses feet to walk.... That's what we want to do because we all know that... it can be really complicated to grow an LGBTQ+ business. At the same time if you are proud of what you are and you truly believe in what you are working on you need the support from huge organisations like IGLTA. That's what we're trying to achieve with the IGLTA foundation, and actually that's the kind of thing that we are trying to do with the transgender community because even though the LGBTQ+ community as a whole has made a lot of progress over these past years, the transgender community is still neglected in that kind of way. So... what we have done with the IGLTA foundation is the creation of a task force for the transgender community where transgender leaders gather and collect idea on how we can advance this kind of travel..."

Foundation Coordinator, IGLTA¹⁹⁹

The IGLTA works on some of the most vulnerable parts of the LGBTQ+ tourism and tries to develop the destinations and remove the fear of going to emerging countries. It is visible in *Table 1* that a lot of these travel agencies with ties to the IGLTA is venturing more out into the world and is starting to arrange travels beyond the most LGBTQ+ friendly destinations. Among the countries considered emerging in LGBTQ+ tourism are the following as described by the IGLTA: *“Bolivia, Cambodia, Cayman Islands, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, Ecuador, Grenada, Guatemala, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Moldova, Nepal, Nevis, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, St. Kitts, Surinam, Ukraine, and Vietnam... Most countries in Africa and the Middle East.”*²⁰⁰

With this the IGLTA show openness to a lot of countries that by some are considered dangerous to LGBTQ+ people. When looking at the mentioned countries on the LGBTQ+ Travel Safety Index²⁰¹ Jamaica is the one, out of the before mentioned countries, ranked the lowest on the list, as one of the most dangerous places to be a part of the LGBTQ+ community. The act of “Buggery”, as explained in *LGBTQ+ History*, can be punishable by 10 years in prison and hard labour. Furthermore, the country has no adoption recognition laws and does not have any LGBTQ+ protection laws and being transgender is illegal. It is however at some degree necessary for IGLTA to look at destination where LGBTQ+ is illegal because their presence alone maybe could make a change. The investment

¹⁹⁹ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

²⁰⁰ IGLTA (2022) Available at <https://www.igta.org/-DRAFT-Emerging-Destination-Program-for-LGBTQ-Owned-Businesses>

²⁰¹ Op.Cit. Ferguson

in emerging destinations is also a good investment to assure that an infrastructure for the LGBTQ+ community can be established.²⁰²

According to the British Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries (CBI), as pointed out by the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA, emerging destinations will be key for the expansion of LGBTQ+ tourism. Because of strict regulations on the European tourism providers, it is however, difficult to expand LGBTQ+ tourism to emerging destinations, that are not safe for LGBTQ+ people. These regulations are in place to ensure the safety of LGBTQ+ tourists and include The European Package Travel Directive, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and Liability Insurance and Insolvency Protection.²⁰³

It is however not just from European side that there is a big focus on the safety of LGBTQ+ tourists. According to the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) it is the duty of the governments and the tourism operators to protect the human rights of LGBTQ+ people. This includes the following: *“Protect individuals from homophobic and transphobic violence. Prevent torture and cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment. Repeal laws criminalising homosexuality and transgender people. Prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Safeguard freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly for all LGBTQ people”*²⁰⁴

It is evident in much of the previous research done on LGBTQ+ tourism, that the experience of travelling as an LGBTQ+ member is very different from one person to another. The experience of a gay man is not the same as a lesbian woman, and a transexual person has very different struggles. Bisexuals often either share the struggles of a gay or lesbian person, or they can sometimes pass as heterosexual. This makes it very difficult to include every single aspect, when talking about LGBTQ+ tourism as one big segment. It is very different needs and worries that has to be put into one, quite narrow, box. There is also a very large difference in the experience depending on whether it is solo travel or travelling with a partner or with family. Again, the result will further depend on if the research is on homosexuals, bisexuals or transexuals. This also then correlate with the experience

²⁰² Op.Cit. IGLTA (2022)

²⁰³ Op.Cit. CBI

²⁰⁴ *ibid.*

of safety in travelling, as is the subject in this research. This is also highlighted by the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA,²⁰⁵ who said:

“As a gay person for example if I want to travel the first thing I will check is “Is this country safe for me or not?”. For example, a heterosexual person who travel, they would not really ask that kind of question. So, gay people think twice or more than twice before going to a destination especially if the destination is not LGBTQ+ friendly.”²⁰⁶

Looking at *Table 1* it is evident, like in research done by several researchers, that safety is a large thing considered by LGBTQ+ tourists and therefore it is a large part of the thought behind promotion of tourism catered towards LGBTQ+ people.

It is also important for the travel agencies to draw attention to the fact that only like-minded people travel together on their tours, whether that is only gay men, lesbian women, or other LGBTQ+ people and non-LGBTQ+ friends and family, because it creates safety to know, that people you are travelling with, will not attack you or judge you for your sexuality or your appearance, whether it is heteronormative or not.

It is important for the agencies to make sure that the tourists know that no matter who they are travelling with they are safe to be who they want to be. This does not mean that LGBTQ+ people should not travel with non-LGBTQ+ travel agencies, but by traveling with agencies that cater specifically to the LGBTQ+ segment they can be sure that they will not be harassed by other tourists travelling with the same agency, based on their sexual orientation or gender. That is not saying that a scenario like that is a given when travelling with an agency that does not cater directly to the LGBTQ+ community, but the safety focus in the average large travel agency is not per say based on whether the tourists are like-minded and friendly between each other, but more the general safety of the tourists at a destination. The average safety concerns of tourists are largely relating to disasters such as terrorism, criminality, and natural disasters. The safety concerns of an LGBTQ+ person, besides the concerns of disasters, are much more relating to acceptance and legality of their

²⁰⁵ Appendix 2 – IGLTA Interview

²⁰⁶ *ibid.*

non-heteronormative sexual orientation or gender identity. This is also a thing focused on by the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA²⁰⁷ who points out:

“The main motivation of the LGBTQ+ community is first and foremost the safety of the country. You can find tourists who are LGBTQ+ that will cancel their trip just because the country is not safe. So, I would say it’s the first criteria of picking a country for the community. However, for heterosexual people... they think about safety in a place but more, safety from a societal level like “are we going to be robbed?”, “Are we going to be lost?”. For example, the LGBTQ+ community they will start asking questions like “What if I’m way to gay for the community that I’m visiting?”, “What if my appearance is not adequate with the country that I am visiting?” and that’s really frustrating if you think about it. It is really frustrating especially for people who do not conform with the norms of the country that they will be visiting. For example, in Morocco it could be really dangerous for transgender people because the norm is a cis-gender male and a cis-gender female, once you break out of that zone you can be in danger, so as a transgender person for example you should ask yourself a million question before going to a destination. Meanwhile as a heterosexual person you don’t even have the thought to ask yourself these questions.”²⁰⁸

There is a sense in the researched travel agencies (See *Table 1*) that solo travelling is something not uncommon for the LGBTQ+ travel agencies. Travelling solo might add an extra safety uncertainty, both possibly being outside of your own country and surrounded by strangers.

The research by Ram et al.²⁰⁹ pointing towards LGBTQ+ friendly destinations being more resilient might not necessarily make sure that all tourists perceive a destination as safe even after a disaster, but there is certainly a chance that LGBTQ+ people might choose to travel in spite of a recent disaster, because of the bigger focus on the safety in inclusivity and freedom to be LGBTQ+, while the general safety seems to be prioritised less, that not saying that LGBTQ+ people do not worry

²⁰⁷ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

²⁰⁸ *ibid.*

²⁰⁹ *Op.Cit.* Ram

about the general safety at a destination. This view is also shared by the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA²¹⁰:

“The LGBTQ+ community is resilient from day one. Not only in the travel sector but in every sector... Society shaped us to be resilient, to grow stronger and to always move further. We always move on from things. So, once Covid ended we said “okay, we stopped for one and a half year or two years. Now it’s time to travel again.” I don’t think that will be the case for heterosexual people because there is always going to be that fear of “What if they close the borders?”, “What if something happens while I’m out of the country?”. For an LGBTQ+ person they will be living a new experience. Whatever is the experience, we are just going to live with it and move on to something else.”

Foundation Coordinator, IGLTA²¹¹

In order to show this resilience and to show the face of the LGBTQ+ community it was important for LGBTQ+ organisations to still represent the community during the Covid 19 pandemic. This was also the case for IGLTA, who in 2020 collaborated with AirBnb and created more than 100 online experiences representing the LGBTQ+ community. John Tanzella, president, and CEO of IGLTA said about the collaboration:

“This partnership provides an exciting way to elevate the voice of IGLTA business members and to promote their LGBTQ+ travel experiences to a new and expanded audience. We also appreciate Airbnb Experiences’ commitment to the IGLTA Foundation, which will create visibility and funding for our LGBTQ+ tourism industry initiatives and goals.”²¹²

²¹⁰ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

²¹¹ *ibid.*

²¹² Airbnb (2020) Available at <https://news.airbnb.com/online-experiences-hosts-bring-to-life-a-global-celebration-of-pride/>

The importance of the visibility during the Covid 19 pandemic is something also highlighted by the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA²¹³:

“I believe that in hard times, that’s when we really should be visible. That’s really the time where we shouldn’t put our heads down because there are people out there who needs us, and we really should fight and give them the visibility and to tell them that ‘You are not alone in this. We are all in this together and we are doing our effort to help you and make a better life out of this crisis.’. So, I think it is really important for IGLTA to have collaborated with AirBnb in order to give enough visibility for LGBTQ+ people to get out of the crisis”²¹⁴

This again mirrors the opinion of Roger Dow, president, and CEO of U.S. Travel Association, about the LGTBTQ+ segment being the first to go travelling because of the LGBTQ+ peoples enjoyment of new experiences, and a bigger love for travelling than heterosexual people.²¹⁵

Despite this positive light on the LGBTQ+ community’s resilience in the face of the Covid 19 pandemic, that is not the whole story. This is also the opinion of the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA and the IGLTA²¹⁶:

“The Covid crisis impacted everyone, but for the LGBTQ+ community, we were already vulnerable before Covid so after Covid we became more vulnerable. Especially in job losses. A lot of people in the tourism sector lost their job, a lot of people couldn’t pay their bills so they ended up being homeless, and do you know how hard it can be for an LGBTQ+ person to be homeless? It’s kind of a vicious circle that happened after Covid and it really changed a lot of people’s lives.”²¹⁷

²¹³ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

²¹⁴ ibid.

²¹⁵ Op.Cit. Salvato

²¹⁶ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

²¹⁷ ibid

Even though as an entirety the LGBTQ+ community is seen as a resilient force, there were people within the community and within the tourism industry who were very hard hit by the Covid 19 pandemic.

Whether we will ever have a world in which safety will not be an issue for LGBTQ+ people is hard to say. There are many safety issues in the tourism sector as it is, with both natural disaster, such as hurricanes, tsunamis and earthquake and human-made disasters such as terrorism and war, and more than ever safety in tourism is a worry. When asked about the possibility of a world in which LGBTQ+ people did not need to worry about their sexual identity or their gender identity when travelling, the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA²¹⁸ answered as follows:

“No, I still think because... we should not forget that there are people who still live in emerging destinations, where being gay is punishable by the law. We shouldn't forget these people, because they are a part of our community and I think it is our duty to help them as well. You know when you hear for example, in Iran gay people can go to a death penalty, it really breaks my heart, and what can we do to help these people? Not only on the trouble aspect here, but these people are also trying to live, being who they are. So, I think we still have to do a lot of work and I think international organisations have the duty to help these people out, because we cannot reach equality if it is not reached in destinations where gay people and lesbian people and transgendered people are being stoned to death. We will never reach equality if we neglect these people because they are a part of us, we are a part of them... Everybody helps everybody, until one day, hopefully, in the future... I hope it's the near future... we will reach equality, just for being who we are. We are just trying to live.”²¹⁹

The Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA is therefore putting a focus on that yes, it would be good with a tourism world in which safety is not an issue for LGBTQ+ people, but when you see it from a different perspective there are people being punished each day for living their true selves, in their

²¹⁸ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

²¹⁹ *ibid.*

own countries, and that should be the big priority of the world. As the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA points out it is the large organisations, such as IGLTA who must step up to help the LGBTQ+ community. Undoubtedly every little pride parade and every little demonstration works little by little, but something large has to happen to change the opinion of the whole world. One of the biggest issues, according to the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA,²²⁰ is the lack of education on the LGBTQ+ cause.

“You cannot change the mentality of a person who has been received traditional thoughts since she or he was born... we can make progress and that progress will take a long time but in a shocking way it will never change. We should educate the communities, the local communities, we should make them learn about the LGBTQ+ community and that we are not doing any harm to anyone. We are just trying to live and love and be in peace with everyone. That’s what we’re trying to do... go on vacation, like everyone. But going into a conversation and start arguing... about accepting my homosexuality for example will get me into trouble, I’m pretty sure... Like for example with my parents when I did my coming out. [It] was complicated because they weren’t educated about this subject... I know they didn’t accept it, but they are living with it, so what I am trying to do now... is educating them about the subject and that’s the key, I think. Raising awareness is really important. Raising awareness about the subject... is really important and will change lives and that cannot be done in any one minute or two minutes it will take a long time, especially for mentalities who are homophobic. That’s unfortunate but that’s how it is.”

Foundation Coordinator, IGLTA²²¹

One of the factors that can put a break on the education on the LGBTQ+ community is for example the mentioned “Don’t say gay” bill of Florida (see *LGBTQ+ Tourism*). If other states and other countries start moving in the same way, it might have consequences for the LGBTQ+ progress.

²²⁰ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

²²¹ *ibid.*

Discussion

It is important to point out that, as the research by Lewis et al.²²² shows, it is not all LGBTQ+ people who have a focus on their sexuality being a motivation when travelling. The research showed that some parts of the respondents did not even take their sexuality into consideration when travelling, purely being driven by the mainstream motivations of travelling. At the same time the research highlights the difficulty in putting LGBTQ+ people into certain boxes, with some respondents technically with the limits put on the research, fitting in to more than one typology, which is a common theme in the LGBTQ+ community.²²³

When looking at *Why LGBTQ+?* it is visible that while there are certain terms and names to categorise one's sexuality and gender into, it is sometimes difficult to do so, as it is a very big life question. It also factors in that even the name of the community is ever changing. Just a decade ago it was necessary to fit into the so-called LGBT community, even if neither of the 4 acronyms could possibly cover every LGBTQ+ person. Even though there now are numerous definitions and explanations to the different sexualities and gender identities, it is still not a given that every person fits under one specific category.²²⁴

Furthermore, it is important to have in mind that there is a lot of stereotypes surrounding the LGBTQ+ community as it is pointed out both by the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA and Ram et. al.²²⁵ and therefore it can be harmful to define and box different LGBTQ+ people.

As it is seen with the LGBTQ+ travel safety index²²⁶ there is a difference in how countries look at the different LGBTQ+ members, which highlights the difference in risk for the different type of members. In truth an index could probably be made of the safety index only relating to same-sex couples' risk when travelling. There might not be much difference, but there will be countries ranking higher, because a lot of their LGBTQ+ negative laws are based on the ban of being transgender, and lack of transgender rights and not necessarily laws directly forbidding

²²² Op.Cit. Lewis

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Op.Cit. Gold

²²⁵ Op.Cit. Ram

²²⁶ Op.Cit. Ferguson

homosexuality. Whether an index as the proposed could have an effect on the destination choice for same-sex couples is hard to say. There could be a sense of sympathy for the transgender community that could affect homosexual people, because as it is described by the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA,²²⁷ there is a sense of togetherness in the whole LGBTQ+ community and a sense that the world is not equal before all humans, no matter the gender or sexuality, are respected and accepted.

It is evident that the collaboration between LGBTQ+ businesses and other actors in the tourism sector is very important. This is also the opinion of co-author of the “Handbook of LGBT Tourism and Hospitality”, Jeff Guaracino: *“LGBTQ consumers have the power to make change and support LGBTQ-friendly companies and destinations by choosing to spend their travel dollars with those that support our community... As a community, we can support LGBTQ-owned and friendly businesses and their employees by spending our travel dollars with them first.”*²²⁸

The same point is made by the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA, when talking about IGLTA’s collaboration with Airbnb during 2020, where it was more important than ever standing together for all of the tourism industry and also the LGBTQ+ community.^{229 230}

²²⁷ Appendix 2 – IGLTA Interview

²²⁸ Op.Cit. Salvato

²²⁹ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

²³⁰ Op.Cit. Airbnb

Conclusion

Tourism and the LGBTQ+ community alike have evolved very quickly the last few decades. In tourism risks are encountered and things like natural disasters and terror threaten the safety of the tourists and the progress of the evolution of tourism. For LGBTQ+ people the risk encountered in tourism are far from those experienced by non-LGBTQ+ people. In many destinations around the world, it is, not only dangerous to be an LGBTQ+ member, but even at some destinations illegal and punishable by death.

The history of the LGBTQ+ community is both horrifying, sad, but also hopeful and filled with brave people who have paved the way for others, in order for everybody to live their true life. Despite progress the LGBTQ+ community still experience hatred and counteractive laws such as the Floridian “don’t say gay” bill, forbidding LGBTQ+ issues being discussed in schools, and provides teachers from giving pupils mental service help.^{231 232}

LGBTQ+ tourism was first seen in the 1920s where several destinations became open to receiving gay tourists. Since then, even more destinations have opened up and several kinds of events are held each year celebrating the LGBTQ+ community such as the large amount of pride parades held each year.²³³

The International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) is a large actor in LGBTQ+ tourism. They help promote and advance LGBTQ+ tourism businesses in order to help the LGBTQ+ community and to promote safety in LGBTQ+ tourism. It is the opinion of IGLTA that large organisation must stand together in order to promote and ensure safety for LGBTQ+ people in tourism.²³⁴

Furthermore, an LGBTQ+ travel safety index has been developed, which shows both the most LGBTQ+ friendly countries of the world, but also the most LGBTQ+ unfriendly countries. The index is a good indicator for where members of the LGBTQ+ community are safe and without major risks

²³¹ Op.Cit. Armstrong

²³² Op.Cit. Phillips

²³³ Op.Cit. Gaypridecalendar

²³⁴ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

can travel to.²³⁵ Some of the countries considered the most dangerous for LGBTQ+ people is however by IGLTA seen as emerging countries where the laws and views potentially can be changed by the presence of IGLTA alone and with help to already existing LGBTQ+ tourism businesses in the countries.²³⁶

Even though the LGBTQ+ community is often viewed holistically, and counted as one big community, when it comes to safety in tourism it is hard to look at the community collectively. The experience of a gay man is not necessarily the same as that of a lesbian woman, and not the same as that of someone transgender. A same sex couple could be met by hatred and in some countries could be given jail time for kissing or holding hands, normal things done by heterosexual couples. Transgender people could likewise be met by hatred or even be attacked for being perceived from the outside as someone dressing as the opposite gender. By the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA it is pointed out that the big compassion and togetherness within the LGBTQ+ community could affect not only one type of LGBTQ+ member but all, when there is inequality e.g., in tourism, potentially keeping away all LGBTQ+ people when risks are considered for one type of LGBTQ+ member.²³⁷

The tourism segment is not only by IGLTA but also the European Travel Commission seen as a segment worthy of attention not only by LGBTQ+ businesses but all actors in tourism. Referring to the Handbook on LGBTQ tourism by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) the European Travel Commission point out the importance of looking in to and catering to this segment.²³⁸

The risks in tourism can be perceived differently from a traveller's perspective and tourism actors such as the destinations and travel agencies. In LGBTQ+ tourism it is important for the travel agencies to be aware of this travel motivation of safety as a large focus for LGBTQ+ tourists. Researching several different LGBTQ+ travel agencies it is visible that the safety aspect is widely discussed and there is a large focus on the tours offered being in groups of like-minded people, where everybody can be themselves and feel safe in their surroundings.

²³⁵ Op.Cit. Ferguson

²³⁶ Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Op.Cit. European Travel Commission

One of the main difficulties for LGBTQ+ tourists is the heteronormative world that exists today. It can cause anxiety and stress having to worry about how locals and other tourists at a destination will react based on an LGBTQ+ person's sexuality. While some LGBTQ+ tourists do not mind being in a heteronormative environment when travelling, many LGBTQ+ tourists tend to travel to places where they can be among other LGBTQ+ people in order to feel safer.

While the whole world has been negatively affected by the Covid 19 pandemic during the last few years, tourists are now starting to make their way into the world again, and LGBTQ+ people has been seen as one of the segments most brave when it comes to travelling after the pandemic.²³⁹ This is both by travel agencies, researchers and the IGLTA seen as a symbol of LGBTQ+ tourism as a resilient force within the tourism industry. The large focus on safety and risk perception has made the LGBTQ+ community very resilient, which is now visible for the large actors in the tourism industry. Both at the start of the pandemic and a year into the pandemic research showed that LGBTQ+ members were constantly ready to travel, under the right safety regulations according to the progress of the pandemic.^{240 241}

Despite the positive progress in LGBTQ+ tourism it is hard e.g., for the IGLTA to envision a world in which LGBTQ+ tourists do not have to consider risks other than those considered by the average tourist, but according to the Foundation Coordinator at IGLTA, there will always be hope that someday, hopefully in the near future, it is possible for LGBTQ+ people, to travel without fear based on sexuality or gender identity.²⁴²

²³⁹ Op.Cit. Salvato

²⁴⁰ Op.Cit. IGLTA (2020)

²⁴¹ Op.Cit. IGLTA (2021)

²⁴² Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

Reflection

In future research it could be interesting to further research the difference in perception of safety in tourism by the different LGBTQ+ members, with an extensive survey among the LGBTQ+ community. It could, furthermore, be interesting to look at different types of LGBTQ+ members, both people in same-sex relationships, bisexual relationships, polyamorous relationships, solo travellers, and LGBTQ+ people travelling with children. This could also further highlight the difference in travelling with a partner, with children, but also solo travelling which seems to be a very under researched topic.

This research could also lead to further research in the travel agencies' role in the tourists' way of perceiving safety. This could be done by cooperating with a number of LGBTQ+ travel agencies and a possible access to a number of tourists that have travelled with the agencies, to also research their motivations and choice of destination. There could also be a difference in how safety in tourism is perceived by LGBTQ+ people who are openly out and people whose sexuality is closeted, and the difference in LGBTQ+ people who live life very LGBTQ+ centric (E.g. Only going to LGBTQ+ bars, engaging in the community) and LGBTQ+ people whose sexuality has no influence on their day to day life and who only sees it as one aspect of their life and not a defining part of how they live their lives.

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Appendix 1 – Interview Guide IGLTA

- Signifies a main question
 - Signifies a support question

- What is the idea behind the IGLTA?
 - What do you see as your most important job in the LGBTQ+ community?

- Of course, visibility of IGLTA is important everywhere, but are there any countries that need your guidance and presence more than others?
 - Which countries and why?

- I have read about the IGLTA story and in that also about your change first from the International Gay Travel Association to the International Gay and Lesbian Travel association to now the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association. How important is the name change and that recognition of not just Gay men and Lesbians but also other members of the community?
 - What was the thought process behind it?

- How much does safety play a role when LGBTQ+ members go travelling and what makes them different from the “average” tourist?
 - What are some of the biggest safety concerns when LGBTQ+ members go travelling?
 - What are the specific things looked at by the LGBTQ+ travellers? Is it what religious beliefs are at a destination? Is it the direct laws on LGBTQ+? Is it what others are saying about a destination?

- Considering both the progress in the LGBTQ+ cause and at the same time instances where it feels like we have taken several steps back like for example the “don’t say gay bill” or the now scrapped anti-LGBTQ+ zones in Poland, do you think we are far from a world where it’s no longer needed for LGBTQ+ people having to consider their safety when travelling?
 - Do you think it will ever be a possibility?

- Has the Covid-19 Pandemic effected the progress of LGBTQ+ tourism? If yes in what ways?
 - I’ve seen in different new articles that you partnered with Airbnb during 2020, making virtual experiences. How important was it during that difficult year to still be visible, and still get your message out into the world?

- How is LGBTQ+ tourism recovering from COVID-19, and is it any different to the rest of the tourism industry?
 - Has or will the bigger focus on safety in LGBTQ+ tourism play(ed) a role in the recovery?

Appendix 2 – IGLTA interview

J – signifies interviewer Jill

A – signifies interviewee's answers

A – I'm just gonna introduce myself really quick. My name is X, I'm from Morocco. I'm currently based in Morocco. I am the IGLTA Foundation Coordinator. So, everything related to the foundation... I'm the person that you'll be asking questions to, so yeah, feel free to introduce yourself and let me know, how can I help?

J – First of all, I would like to thank you so much for speaking to me.

A – No worries. With pleasure.

J – As I mentioned in my initial message, I am from Aalborg university in Denmark. I am studying for a master's degree in Tourism and as my final thesis I have decided to write about LGBTQ+ tourism, and specifically about safety in the LGBTQ+ tourism, and in my research, I've met your organisation a lot of times. My initial question to you is what is the idea behind the IGLTA?

A – okay so, the idea behind IGLTA... first of all it only started with travel agents who were based in Florida who were completely gay. Back in that time only gay travel agents... Lesbians and other people from the community weren't included back in the time. It was in 1983, so the idea behind it was to create a safe network where travel agents can network with each other and kind of promote LGBTQ+ tourism. But with time, and as you may know the community is growing, we had to be more and more inclusive so then after that it became the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association, but now it became the International LGBTQ+ Travel association, so we're trying to include every member of the community. So, the reason behind it, long story short, is to promote and advance LGBTQ+ travel on a business level.

J – Okay. What do you see as your most important job for the LGBTQ+ community?

A – What we do? Well mostly what we do with IGLTA is to help our business members create a safe experience for the travellers. We're not in direct contact with the travellers, but instead we're in contact with the businesses of the tourism industry that will help create an experience that will be more or less safe for LGBTQ+ travellers. So, what we do is we provide free resource for example for hoteliers or tourism specialists in order to know what the behaviour of the LGBTQ+ community is, what are the motivations and how they can meet these motivations and give the LGBTQ+ community what they need exactly in tourism, because as you may know, the principal motivation for the community for example if I want to travel to a country... As a gay person for example if I want to travel the first thing I will check is "Is this country safe for me or not?". For example, a heterosexual person who travel, they would not really ask that kind of question. So, gay people think twice or more than twice before going to a destination especially if the destination is not LGBTQ+ friendly. So, what we do is we provide free guides and free resources for the community in order to help them achieve that...

J - Of course, visibility of IGLTA is very important everywhere, but are there countries that need your guidance and presence more than others?

A – exactly, for example in emerging destinations where the LGBTQ+ infrastructure is not established, we have this program actually with our foundation called “The emerging destination program”, for LGBTQ+ owned businesses. So, what we do... for example we have... You know how IGLTA works? Basically, we have members from all over the world and they become members and we give them visibility and help them with marketing in order to have a reach with the customer. But for these emerging destination businesses that are located in for example homophobic countries, what we do is we reduce the fear of the membership, so for example a regular member will pay 245 dollars, for an LGBTQ+ business who is based in an emerging destination, they will only pay 79 dollars for an annual rate. So, we kind of help them grow and have a visibility at a lower rate. Because the idea behind it is not only to grow the business but to give these LGBTQ+ owned businesses feet to walk and to dependant on their own. That’s what we want to do because we all know that... I live in a homophobic country, and I know it can be really complicated to grow an LGBTQ+ business. At the same time if you are proud of what you are and you truly believe in what you are working on you need the support from huge organisations like IGLTA. That’s what we’re trying to achieve with the IGLTA foundation, and actually that’s the kind of thing that we are trying to do with the transgender community because even though the LGBTQ+ community as a whole has made a lot of progress over these past years, the transgender community is still neglected in that kind of way. So, what we do is... what we have done with the IGLTA foundation is the creation of a task force for the transgender community where transgender leaders gather and collect idea on how we can advance this kind of travel...

J – Now you already told a bit about the IGLTA story and the coming from being the International Gay Travel Association to the International Gay and Lesbian Travel association and now the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association. How important is that name change and that recognition of not just Gay men and Lesbians but also other members of the community?

A – Yeah, it’s really important. Actually, we are trying to... I joint IGLTA back in March last year so it’s only one year that I have been working with IGLTA, but we are trying to be as inclusive as possible, because... I don’t know if you are a part of the LGBTQ+ community?

J – I am

A – Okay, so you really know how complex it can be and how many identities we can have in the LGBTQ+ community, and it’s not only limited to gay white people. We are trying to break that stereotype, because the LGBTQ+ community is very diversified, it has a lot of different backgrounds. I am Arabic, I am gay, I am Muslim and growing up I didn’t relate to any person that I saw on tv, so for a long period I thought that I was the only gay person in the world, and that kind of scared me, it brought me into depression and thanks to IGLTA I realised that it’s okay to be gay, it’s okay to have a different background and still be gay, it’s okay to open up to the world and meet people who are different from you and thank to IGLTA I came out to my parents this year