



Pink tourism: Holidays of gay men and lesbians

Howard L. Hughes

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In *Pink Tourism: Holidays of Gay Men and Lesbians*, Howard Hughes decided to take primarily a marketing perspective of gay and lesbian tourism, a step which should be applauded as, to date, such a text was lacking. Today, inspired by a feminist research approach when discussing gay and lesbian tourism, it is common to emphasize the social construction of the tourism experience and issues linked to power relations. Unfortunately, the current body of research ignores aspects which are essential to the management of gay and lesbian tourism. Hughes emphasized elements relevant to the marketing and management of gay and lesbian tourism, and devotes less space to more theoretical discussions which may be of major academic importance, but are not at the core of the management of pink tourism.

The introduction states that the book will be very helpful to students of tourism, hospitality, leisure, and recreation management courses. Furthermore, the author claims that the book could also assist students of sociology, anthropology, human geography, and environmental psychology. Let me add that this book could also assist practitioners (whether gay men, lesbians or heterosexuals), a group we currently ignore in the academic literature.

The first of the book's nine chapters outlines the structure of the book, and, in a departure from common practice, the author clearly states his position as a researcher and as an individual. Moreover, the author declares, somewhat apologetically (which is not needed), that the

book does not emphasize (although it does not ignore) theoretical discussions about patriarchal heteronormative society, but focuses more on issues relevant to the management of gay and lesbian tourism. Chapter 2 begins with a discussion of concepts important to understanding that being gay and lesbian is not solely about sexual orientation. Issues such as the nature of homosexuality, homosexuality and identity, homosexuality and community, as well as homosexuality and gay space are clarified. What follows is a discussion of the gay and lesbian population as a market segment which should be recognized and addressed by marketers. The text goes on to detail those elements that differentiate gay men and lesbians as a market segment in general and in tourism in particular. In this chapter Hughes discusses discrimination, homophobia, and attitudes of heterosexual society towards gay men and lesbians. This chapter lists points such as the estimated size of the gay and lesbian population in different countries, their estimated economic power, and the quality of the current research into representativeness of the gay and lesbian population. A shortcoming of this chapter is that it is rife with examples, which, at times, hinder readability. Furthermore, it would have been appropriate in the context of this chapter to compare lesbophobia and homophobia, and not to ignore heterophobia. This comparison is important to those who manage gay and lesbian tourism, as it affects people's travel experience. Moreover, this chapter should have discussed the coming

out process and its potential links to leisure and tourism. Chapter 3 focuses on some of the specific demands of gay and lesbian tourism, and includes issues such as gay and lesbian market size and its degree of growth, as well as a description of common holiday patterns. In addition, this chapter identifies the reasons for holiday-taking, elaborating on those important specifically for gay and lesbians. Finally, the chapter clarifies topics important for understanding gay and lesbian travel patterns (such as: contact between locals and the homo-lesbian guests and sexually transmitted infections during holidays). Chapter 4 points towards elements which could potentially, directly or indirectly, affect gay men's and lesbians' choice of holiday destination. The chapter highlights risks which may be a barrier for gay and lesbian travel experience (such as anti-gay image) and of which heterosexuals may be unaware. This chapter draws attention to issues such as public reaction to gay men and lesbians, and attitudes of suppliers of travel-related goods and services (e.g., airlines and hotels) targeting gay men and lesbians. This chapter includes several issues which are commonly ignored in the literature, such as the fact that even in gay-friendly destinations (or ones portrayed as such), gay men and lesbians are subject to social and even physical violence. Chapter 5 can be divided into two. The first section describes sources of information on gay and lesbian destinations. It begins by criticizing (yet again) the quality of marketing-related surveys on gay and lesbian holiday experience. Following that, several sources of information used by gay men and lesbians are presented. Those sources (e.g., travel guides, advertising, gay magazines) are discussed, while highlighting their unique attributes as relevant for gays and lesbians. The second section provides a description of well-known popular destinations for gay men and lesbians. Chapter 6 centers on the supply side of gay and lesbian tourism, and covers organizations such as tour operators (regular, specialist, lesbian), online travel companies, trade associations, and accommodation services. The chapter

also reviews certain events which are deemed attractive to this specialized sector, such as sports events, legislation of marriage, circuit parties, festivals, and parades. Chapter 7 relates to issues with specific relevance to the marketing process. This chapter also includes theoretical discussion on marketing as a social force which affects gay and lesbian identity, in line with heteronormative social interests. Of specific importance are the discussions of gay friendliness and the backlash that the presence of gay and lesbians may cause. It should be emphasized that gay men and lesbians are most frequently reported in the literature as a market segment all should target, ignoring the fact that from a marketing perspective the presence of gays and lesbians may prevent other segments of the population from visiting a site. The chapter ends with a discussion of advertising opportunities for gay men and lesbians. Chapter 8 is more theoretical in nature, and deals with the link between concepts such as consumerism, citizenship and contested space. Of interest is the de-gayng process which tourism may cause to local gay and lesbian communities due to the presence of heterosexuals as well as gay and lesbian tourists. The final chapter reiterates the main points raised in the text and summarizes them.

As the author notes, this book was not designed to be fully comprehensive. Nevertheless, I believe several issues specifically important to tourism management should have been highlighted. The book emphasizes successful case studies, yet, because it is written from a marketing perspective, it should have also included unsuccessful cases, noting the reasons for the failure. Furthermore, I find that the text suffers from a paucity of information relevant to marketers, for example, it is crucial to note, for the site profiles, how these locations became gay and lesbian tourist destinations. Using a human-geography perspective based on Butler's life cycle could enrich this section. Learning about places that did not succeed in targeting gay men and lesbians and the reason for this



could contribute to this book. Moreover, historical overview of locations which had been — but are no longer — popular destinations, and the identification of the reasons for this, can be beneficial to marketers and planners alike. The same is true for advertising campaigns. The readership might like to learn what kind of campaigns did not succeed and why (information about campaigns targeting the gay and lesbian population as well as other minority groups is available). Furthermore, there is room to separately indicate (as was done throughout the book in different sections) what future research is needed to better manage and understand gay and lesbian tourism.

Hughes presents his cases and arguments clearly, despite some repetition. For example, it was made very clear at the onset that the

current research is not representative of the gay and lesbian population. It was therefore unnecessary to elaborate on this in different sections of the book. Furthermore, and especially in light of the target readership, some of the theoretical discussions could have been minimized. These points notwithstanding, *Pink Tourism* is a valuable contribution to the tourism literature in terms of its potential to assist students and researchers. Moreover, unlike other books, it has the potential to assist practitioners and should be recommended to those who intend to be involved in tourism management.

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