

PINK EVENT TOURISM: THE CASE OF POST-APARTHEID CAPE TOWN

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ABSTRACT

Cape Town has become one of the world's top pink destinations since South Africa's post-Apartheid establishment of an equitable, non-sexist society. Gay festivals were developed to attract the lucrative gay market, and to raise Cape Town's profile as a pink destination. Despite gay tourism growth, little is known about gay events and tourists. Quantitative research from the annual Mother City Queer Project (MCQP) reveals that festinos are mostly 'mature explorers' who spend their income on an array of hedonistic tourism-related activities. South Africa's recognition of gay rights and high-profile gay events should underpin Cape Town's pink tourism positioning strategy.

Key Words: pink tourism, gay events, gay tourists, Apartheid, MCQP.

INTRODUCTION

From a tourism growth perspective, the gay market offers huge potential as one of the biggest spending niche segments in South Africa. Gay couples are said to have a higher average income than straight (heterosexual) couples who do not have children and, therefore, higher discretionary income to spend on tourism related products (Ballegaard & Chor, 2009). Cape Town's ascendance into one of the world's top pink destinations occurred since the 1994 South African post-apartheid liberation movement's commitment to remove all forms of discrimination and oppression, which extends to the protection of gay rights (Rydström, 2005). This resulted in the development of Cape Town's gay-friendly society and well-established urban gay space (Visser, 2003), which allow the city to benefit from the lucrative pink tourism segment (South African Tourism, 2011). Another development area, which attracts visitors and raises the city's profile as a pink destination lies in event tourism, since tourism activity is generated by gay festivals (Saayman & Saayman, 2004). Five annual gay festivals are hosted in South Africa, one of which is the Mother City Queer Project (MCQP), which celebrates the right to sexual differences in post-Apartheid Cape Town (Steyn, 2006).

Despite the growth of pink tourism (Waitt & Markwell, 2006), not much is known about gay event tourism and the characteristics of the gay niche market in Cape Town (Tebje, 2002) and, as a result, a need has emerged for a better understanding of this niche market's characteristics, if positive experiences, repeat visitations and competitive positioning should be achieved. The aim of this paper is to use the 2009 MCQP as a case reference to report on the characteristics and tourism activities of gay tourists at the festival (festinos) and, at the same time, discuss Cape Town as a pink tourism destination.

PINK TOURISM IN CAPE TOWN

According to one of the largest professional service firms in the world, the Klynveld, Peat, Marwick and Goerdeler's (KPMG's) demand generator survey, two specific segments have been identified within the overall gay market (City of Cape Town, 2000):

- ‘Pink Ravers’ – a young, carefree group that tends to be single or in young relationships who like to travel to well known and popular gay destinations, for example, Miami and Thailand. A well-established gay scene, which sports a busy and glittering nightlife, is a strong draw-card for this segment. Other specific features of the destination that attract this segment include gay nudist beaches, hot sunny climate, pro-gay events, cultural attractions and value for money.
- ‘Mature Explorers’ – are older, wealthier and hold professional positions. They are normally couples in an established relationship and their choice of travel destination is not so much dependant on the presence of a large gay scene and energetic nightlife. This market segment is less price sensitive than the ‘pink ravers’, and their choice of destination is based on less well-known and undiscovered destinations that are gay-friendly or tolerant, and offer a combination of attractions, high standard facilities, good quality restaurants and a unique experience. Natural, historical and cultural attractions, outdoor activities and the ‘good life’ are appealing to this market. A strong gay community and infrastructure are considered an added bonus.

Destinations that compete with Cape Town as a gay tourism destination differ depending on the market segment that is targeted (‘pink raver’ or ‘mature explorer’), and the location of the source market in relation to the destination. The main competitors for Cape Town in the ‘pink ravers’ segment include Ibiza, Miami, and Sydney, while Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires are also popular. South Africa and Cape Town specifically, is generally known in the international gay community as gay-friendly with a gay tolerant public. Few destinations can compete with Cape Town for the ‘mature explorer’ segment as it offers such a wide range of attractions and activities apart from a lively gay scene. Other destinations that compete with Cape Town for this market segment include Sydney and Thailand (City of Cape Town, 2002).

Ballegaard and Chor (2009) argue that sexuality is of less importance than other characteristics when the gay community chooses a holiday destination. They believe that an extra dimension might be important in relation to destination choice, namely ‘gay space’. Waitt and Markwell (2006: 178) define gay space as a “homogenous, bounded and fixed place” in a metropolitan area, which often comprises bars, restaurants, cafés, shops and residential areas. Cape Town has a well-established gay space in the form of a clustering of gay leisure facilities in an area, which is known as De Waterkant. It has consolidated its identity as a ‘gay village’, which is a first for both South Africa and the African continent (Visser, 2003). A variety of gay bars, night clubs, spas and massage studios (gay men only), accommodation and restaurants comprise the gay tourism infrastructure of Cape Town (Gay Pages, 2008). A range of gay tourism and leisure activity linkages have contributed to the physical transformation of the area which promotes gay-based urban tourism and a collaboration between the gay community and Cape Town’s Tourism Bureau have done much to establish the city as a top destination for gay tourists. The following are examples of how Cape Town has engaged with the gay niche market (Tebje, 2002):

- A pink visitor’s map listing the city’s gay-friendly facilities has been developed and is updated annually;
- A gay tourism section is included in the official visitor’s guides to the city; and
- Representation of Cape Town’s gay tourism industry on international bodies such as Interpride International, a body with members who are responsible for overseeing gay pride celebrations world-wide.

The following table lists a number of strengths that render Cape Town as an attractive destination for both the ‘pink raver’ and ‘mature explorer’ segments in the gay tourist market. Few weaknesses appear to exist. Negative issues include support infrastructure issues and a lack of marketing focus and information provision (City of Cape Town, 2002).

Table 1
Strengths and weaknesses of Cape Town as a gay tourism destination

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenic seaside location with pleasant climate and year round sunshine. • Vibrant gay scene with established gay infrastructure and nightlife providing a 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long flying time and high cost of flights. • Perceptions of high crime rate in South Africa and concern over health issues, especially HIV/AIDS, malaria and cholera.

<p>comfortable, relaxing gay atmosphere.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favourable exchange rate providing value for money. • Wide variety of attractions in and around the city, for example, V & A Waterfront, Table Mountain, beaches, Winelands, Garden Route, and easy access to other top attractions in the country and southern Africa such as the Kruger National Park and Victoria Falls. • High standard of facilities and services for gay tourists. • Cosmopolitan city with a mosaic of cultures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative reputation as a result of Apartheid history, although this is seen as slowly changing. • Expensive public transport (taxi). • Inefficient marketing of South Africa and Cape Town as gay-friendly destinations and a general lack of information available to gay tourists.
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PINK EVENTS: THE MOTHER CITY QUEER PROJECT (MCQP) -A PRODUCT OF POST-APARTHEID CAPE TOWN

Implemented in 1948, the Apartheid system included attempts to regulate sex and sexuality, as well as spaces where they could be realized (Visser, 2002). The situation under Apartheid was such that gays or any person who could possibly be identified as such through action or association, could potentially be subject to sanctioned homophobia, discrimination, repression, persecution and arrest, and would have to employ a level of denial or censure as a matter of personal safety or avoidance (Steyn, 2006). From 1994 to the end of 2003 South Africa experienced its first 10 years of democratic rule and subsequent political liberalisation. The social and cultural conservatism of Apartheid rule was replaced in 1994 by the main liberation movement and new governing party of post-Apartheid South Africa, namely the African National Congress (ANC), which set about dismantling the social relations of Apartheid to forge a new democratic, equitable, non-racist and non-sexist society (Steyn, 2006). Against this background, the Cape Town based MCQP began in 1994 to celebrate freedom from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, which was later enshrined in the South African Constitution (1996).

Steyn (2006:114) indicates that the first MCQP in 1994 was a “timely celebration of the unexpected constitutional recognition of the right to sexual orientation difference”. The MCQP capitalised on the euphoria and celebrated this achievement of fundamental change at a time when gay communities in other countries were still fighting for the same rights as their heterosexual counterparts. The liberal constitution of the country plays a key role in the protection of gay and lesbian identity, setting a context for the development of a gay leisure market (Visser, 2002).

The first MCQP was themed ‘The Locker Room Project’ in 1994, and described itself as a “mega-deluxe ultra-vivid, lush-galore fancy-dress sporty-art-party that was designed to celebrate and showcase Queer culture in the Mother City” (Steyn, 2006: 100). The MCQP’s policies of non-ageism, non-sexism and non-racism, and its key elements of costume, team participation and unifying creative theme around which to collaborate, was effectively promoted as an art festival, which incorporates a celebration of sexual difference and so-called queerness (Steyn, 2006). The term ‘queer’ encompasses a more complex understanding of group identity than ‘gay’ and ‘lesbian’. Queer includes all kinds of sexualities that are different from heterosexuality such as gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered (Ballegaard & Chor, 2009). The MCQP is an annual one-day festival, which offers live entertainment that is provided by South African artists and international DJs in an event setting comprising themed dance floors, live performance stages, numerous bars, and VIP-areas. It is reiterated that in order to broaden understanding of pink event tourism and to competitively position Cape Town as a pink destination, the research of this niche market’s characteristics is imperative.

METHODOLOGY AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative research methods were used to collect data from festinos by means of a visitor questionnaire. Slabbert (2004) notes that quantitative methods are most suitable to collect demographic data such as gender, age and income. The visitor survey was conducted on the evening of 19 December 2009 at the MCQP by seven fieldworkers, who are trained in research methodology.

A sample size (S) of 367 is recommended for any defined population (N) of 8 000 (Sekaran, 2000). Attendance numbers gathered from the MCQP event directors ranged from between 3500 at its 1994 to 8000 in 2005, therefore, the target was to administer 420 questionnaires to ensure that sufficient questionnaires were completed. Successfully administered questionnaires numbered 396, which indicate a 94 percent response rate.

The visitor surveys were interviewer-administered and a destination-based survey was conducted, where interviews were held on-site during the event. Different sites were chosen to limit response bias towards a specific group of festinos. Use was made of systematic sampling - a method of selecting individuals from a population according to a predetermined sequence (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Tustin *et al.* 2005). This method of sampling ensures that an exact representation of the population is reflected (Zikmund, 1999). The fieldworkers selected attendees in equal intervals (every third person) as they entered the particular venues. A pilot study was conducted prior to the festival at randomly selected gay bars and nightclubs in Cape Town to test the validity and reliability of the research instrument. Data was collated and analysed by a registered statistician by using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 18.0.

Gay tourism literature often claims that gay space has less significance for women; that more leisure space exists for gay men than for lesbians; that a majority of gay space is male dominated and that the gay market is assumed to be a gay male market (Ballegaard & Chon, 2009). The percentages in Table 2 below indicate that a majority of gay space is indeed dominated by gay men.

Ballegaard and Chon (2009: 22) found that gays who attended events were mainly young, well-educated and wealthy people. Festinos were asked to categorize their age in order to test this theory (Table 2). The research results, therefore, do not correspond with the above theory as more attendees in the over 35 age group were attracted to the festival. The age group 18-25, that consists of mostly students, may have found the ticket prices (R250-R450) to be too expensive, and this could explain the relatively low attendance of 27 %.

Table 2
Festino profile summary

Category	2009 MCQP Figures
Gender	Male (61 %) Female (34 %) Transsexual (5 %)
Age	18 – 25 (27 %) 26 – 34 (33 %) Over 35 (40 %)
Occupation	Professional (26 %) Self employed (20 %) Management (11 %) Sales (11 %) Unemployed student (10 %) Technical and Administrative (12 %) Other, including retired (10%)
Income	R 0 – R10 000 (23 %) R 10 001 – R 30 000 (32 %) R 30 001 – R60 00 (13 %) R61 000 and more (11 %) Confidential (21 %)
Sexual identity	Gay male (45 %) Bisexual (26 %) Lesbian (14 %)

	Heterosexual (6 %) Other (9 %)
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Various authors of gay tourism studies (Waitt & Markwell, 2006; Howe, 2001; and Philip, 1999) claim that gay events are dominated by well- educated, wealthy gay men and, consequently, are exclusive and limited to those people who look good and have money to attend. Festinos were asked to indicate their respective occupations and their incomes (Table 2) to test this theory. When combined, 56 % of respondents earn more than R 10 000 per month. This could be owing to the fact that 40 % of respondents were above the age of 35, and also contribute to the high occupational levels of a combined 57 % of festinos who occupy professional and management positions, or are self employed. Therefore, the above statement may be regarded as correct, since the income level of gays, in line with their occupational level is relatively high.

Howe (2001: 50) defines sexual identity as a ‘fluid set of meanings, which hinge on notions of sexuality and gender’. Presently, the Constitution of South Africa prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Respondents were asked to indicate their sexual preference in order to learn what percentage of festinos are comfortable enough to attach themselves to a sexual identity and to determine, if any, the percentage of non-gay festinos that attend the festival. According to Table 2, the total LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgendered) attendance accounted for 85 %, collectively. Interestingly, 6 % of the festinos indicated that they are heterosexual. The reason for their attendance is arguably as a result of the new Constitution, which allows for a liberal city and an open-minded local community. However, Ballegaard and Chor (2009) point out that heterosexual tourists who attend gay events want a freak show and are hence re-establishing heterosexuality as the norm, and when gay sites and events are converted into tourist attractions, ‘degaying’ of events might likely occur.

Festinos were asked to select tourist activities in which they engaged during their stay. This should indicate what activities (other than MCQP) gay tourists enjoy while on holiday, which may assist with future gay event tourism planning. It is interesting to note that 66 % of total respondents of the study indicated that they engaged in other tourist activities, and Table 3 below provides a breakdown of the type of activities these respondents selected.

Table 3
Type of tourism activity

Activity	% of tourism activity respondents
Wine/dine and night life	100 %
Sun/sand/sea	95 %
Shopping	90 %
Key tourist attractions (such as Table Mountain, Robben Island and the V&A Waterfront)	55 %
Gay Village	68 %
Cultural experiences	35 %

The data in Table 3 may be indicative of the fact that the 2009 MCQP festinos are a celebratory crowd, since 100 % participated in wining, dining and night life as one of the other tourist activities that they engaged with during their visit.

In order to determine effective event marketing, festinos were asked how they were informed of the 2009 MCQP. Results in Table 4 indicate that festinos learned about the festival through word-of-mouth (WOM). This reiterates the responsibility of festival organisers to create memorable experiences as word-of-mouth marketing on

social networks increase public and personal comments about event experiences, which lead to either positive or negative WOM.

Table 4
Communication media

Type of communication medium	% of respondents
WOM	54 %
Website	10 %
Social networks (such as Facebook and Twitter)	16 %
Newspapers and press	8 %
Radio	3 %
Other (such as posters and competitions)	9 %

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to report on the characteristics and tourism activities of gay tourists at the 2009 MCQP and to discuss post-Apartheid Cape Town as a pink tourism destination. The research was motivated by limited market intelligence relating to pink event tourism and the gay tourist market in Cape Town. In order for Cape Town to remain successful in attracting the international gay market, Cape Town's tourism planners, marketers and local community should be continuously reminded about the economic worth of gay tourists, as a weak rand and high standards of gay facilities render the city attractive for gay visitors who bring along foreign currencies. Understanding the characteristics and tourism needs of gay tourists by using the 2009 MCQP as a case reference is, therefore, of paramount importance for Cape Town tourism and events marketers to ensure that they target the gay market effectively at present and in future.

Activity choices and further attractions for non-local partygoers beyond the 2009 MCQP included 'wine/dine and nightlife.' A total of 100 % of respondents opted for this; 95 % indicated 'sun/sand/sea' activities; 90 % selected 'shopping'; and 55 % chose 'visiting popular tourist attractions'. A total of 68 % spent time at the De Waterkant gay village, and 35 % were involved in cultural activities. As the host city of the MCQP, Cape Town offers a wide variety of these sought after activities for gay tourists. It is, therefore, important for tourism destination marketers to continue research on the lucrative pink segment and their tourism needs in order to remain competitively positioned as a top pink tourism destination. A total of 26 % are professionals and the majority (56 %) earns R10 001 or more per month. This confirms the high spending power of the gay community, which may result in greater economic impact and benefits for the local community in the long run, if pink event tourist's needs are met. The strongest communication medium is WOM (54 %) and this reiterates the importance of Cape Town to host well-organised gay festivals and create positive experiences for gay festinos who visit the destination.

The popularity of South Africa as a gay tourist destination is influenced by its new, liberal Constitution which has set a context for the development of a pink tourism. It is vital for tourism authorities to continuously collaborate and cooperate with the gay community towards the common objective of establishing a gay-friendly destination. As a gay event, the 2009 MCQP has played a significant role in raising the profile of Cape Town as a gay destination, and has furthered the liberal nature of the city.

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