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HOW PINK ARE YOU?
Creating Awareness of the Gay Market

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ABSTRACT

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<p>The objective of the thesis was to gather information on as well as draw attention to the Gay Market among representatives connected to the tourism business who met during the international fair Matka Expo 2012 held in the Helsinki Exposition and Convention Centre. The aim was to seek to improve the future situation on this particular niche market through increased interest and knowledge, which would lead to better understanding, cooperation and prejudice release. The thesis was aimed to make readers realize that this rich, influential market in many areas undiscovered and underestimated which is a potential loss for different branches of business today.</p> <p>The theoretical framework of the thesis focused on the description of the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community including a variety of aspects supported by specific examples in accordance with the discussed subject. The research method used in this thesis was quantitative questionnaire survey. Surveys were conducted with questionnaires, in order to gather empirical data from representatives connected to the business field. In total, 40 questionnaires were collected and the questionnaires were available only in English. According to the research questions, the data was systematically and carefully categorized and later analyzed. The questionnaires had global dimensions due to the fact that the respondents came from different nationalities, countries, continents and represented varying age groups.</p> <p>The outcome revealed that respondents had certain knowledge on the pink market but still in many cases it was not being considered separately. Furthermore, some representatives were not interested in participating due to the given topic that was examined. However, other participants considered gays as profitable customers that may increase an income of certain business departments. Also they believed in increasing the tolerance of society and more destination choices for gays in the future. The majority of the respondents were female and respondents from two age group division of 21-30 and 30-40 had the highest amount of participants. All professionals chosen randomly belonged to the tourism and travel sector trade. The questionnaires provided data that clearly demonstrate that this niche market is under-researched and companies do not try to reach potential clients via different marketing strategies, such as, advertising its gay-friendliness in gay media or becoming a member of the IGLTA.</p>		

Key words

business representatives, Gay Market, global dimension, influential costumer, Matka Expo

ABSTRACT
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1 INTRODUCTION

In the business world, tourism as other business branches, try to attract, retain and gain new devoted customers while facing high competition and crucial economic times. In order to be successful, companies need to understand the changes in society in terms of needs as well as size, to create accordingly long-term strategies based on key trends. This thesis will deal with the Gay and Lesbian Market which is an undervalued and unexplored market niche.

The main goal of the study is to measure the level of knowledge from representatives connected to a variety of departments in the tourism industry. Secondly, the author hopes that conducting this questionnaire will encourage interviewees to make further research about this affluent, educated and loyal customer. Thirdly, living in a modern, free world full of moral or immoral debates where individuals are constantly controlled in one's choice of lifestyle with restricted options, political correctness, prohibited activities and many other life limitations inspired the author to research deeper into the topic in order to understand the needs of minorities being many times repressed only due to their sexual orientation. The overall aim is to be able to realize that this niche is an undervalued, unexplored market as it has been previously mentioned above, that is not included in the many marketing strategies of the companies.

The topic was chosen because of the author's interest in the particular minor market and the belief in the purchase power of pink customers. Furthermore, observing political changes in Poland, the home country of the writer, where in 2011, a unique, single pro-gay political party entered the parliament and the recent 2012 presidential election in Finland where one out of two last candidates was a gay man. As well given twice the support by Finnish citizens to the previous president Tarja Halonen that was a chair member for SETA non-governmental Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community ensured the author in the rightness of the made choice. What is more, these world movements demonstrate an increasing acceptance as well as liberalization among the public towards homosexuals though given uphold for that politicians. Also the meeting with gay friends

during the writer's study period abroad in different countries, was an additional factor contributing to the gathering of additional information about this niche market.

The first chapter of the thesis explains the importance on correct time framing and future-focus on the discussed topic followed by an explanation of basic concepts helping the reader to become familiar with the gay and lesbian terms. Also in the first section of the thesis a historical background of gay codes is given, as well as examples of how companies communicate their gay-friendliness. The following chapter outlines benefits that gay consumers have, with data proving the worldwide discrimination acts and problems the gays are facing in their daily lives. The future predictions are the last theoretical part including future expected orientations as well as a supporting theoretical background given in the research methodology. The research consists of a questionnaire conducted during the international Matka Fair 2012 in Helsinki from where the received data was analyzed and presented in the results. Finally, the conclusions of the results and discussions are presented in order to clarify the viewpoint of the author on the entire process of writing this thesis.

2 TRACING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PINK MARKET

In this chapter the importance of correct time framing which helps to understand different processes happening in our past, presence and future, is explained. Also foreknowledge of market segmentation in accordance to gays is given. The second sub-chapter focuses on explaining a variety of terms and concepts concerning the LGBT community. Under the sub-heading establishing gay-friendliness, examples of services and actions are described. The last subchapter consists of a historical background to gay symbols.

2.1 Time framing

The understanding of the current world is based on people's time horizon. When the future is not considered in the long term of 10, 20 or 30 years, then there is no capacity to anticipate changes, or take appropriate action in response. According to Ian Yeoman, it is necessary to picture what the world could look like as a consequence of change, taking into account circumstances that occurred a long time ago in order to comprehend the cycle of events when they will happen again. In addition, Yeoman believes that time scale has to be extensively extended in a sense of past time and future perception to get a clear view of the present. (Yeoman 2008, 4.)

The business industries will not be successful without having adequate preparation for future challenges. The modern, hyper-changeable world is affected by many factors, such as, consumer expectations, technology, social progress, the environment and the nature of work. Futurists are able to create visions by having sufficient foresight, imagination that enables them to think about the unthinkable and recognize unfulfilled needs. Ian Yeoman claims that the key is scrutinizing trends rather than looking at events. The author of *Tomorrow's Tourism* believes that is important to look at the long run trends according to population shifting, and powerful, dynamic changes affected by rapid technology development. The future is being shaped by trends, trends find their reflections in scenarios and scenarios visualize the future. Scenarios are explained as a way of setting the scene that for instance include obstacles to growth, such as human beings' need for security.

(Yeoman 2008, 4-5.) For decades, people having a different sexual orientation than heterosexual, have been living under cover. Invisibility still occurs in everyday places, streets, media or marketplaces but due to the effort of many people involved in a variety of communities and organizations, promising and potential gay consumers are being more recognized and accepted (Alderton 2011).

The more tourism professionals know about travelers and are aware on how to meet their needs, the more successful and professional their business will be (Cook, Yale & Marqua 2010, 17). Tourists can be divided into sub-groups and market segments due their diversity. By grouping travelers in market segments an organization is able to create the most suitable marketing mix to fulfill the needs of particular targeted visitor segments well and effectively. In addition, the same characteristics as well as common needs are being shared by individuals that are included in single market segments. (Cook et al. 2010, 18.) Howard Hughes discusses the concept of the gay market in his book *Pink Tourism*. Hughes points out that market segmentations are normally categorized by undertaken factors, such as demographic, socio-economic, geographical, behavioral and psychographic factors. According to the writer, gay and lesbian may be covered by the previous groups but may have an overriding influence. Holiday makers may be possibly more meaningful only if they have a knowledge themselves of gays separately. (Hughes 2006, 8.)

2.2 Concept and terms

Understanding and using the correct terms is very important in order not to offend anybody. Reality changes all the time and the present world affects the description of current terms and vocabulary. Words create our reality and these changes in describing the matter are valuable sources of information, and assumptions on how gay and lesbian perceive themselves, what social reaction they cause or how gay people live their lives. (AVERT 2011a.)

The National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association (NLGJA) made a stylebook supplement on GLBT terminology, that describes the word gay as an adjective that has largely replaced “homosexual” in referring to men who are affectionally and sexually attracted to men. Furthermore, it is allowed to describe both gay men and lesbian by using

the term gays. Some lesbians are favored to be called gay rather than using the phrase lesbian, but if it is possible, a request for the individual's preference term is suggested. Lesbian homosexuality relates to sexual orientation to the same sex members. Bisexual is the capability of having sexual and physical attraction toward both men and women. NLGJA also defined gender identity as being female or male in a psychological and emotional sense. Also the description of transgender can be found as an umbrella term for those whose gender identity is usually non-operative, preoperative or postoperative; transsexuals who do not match to their physical, sexual characteristics. Gender identity does not compulsorily reflect the same biological identity of individual. (NLGJA Stylebook 2010, 2,4,8.)

Sexual preference should be avoided as a term due to political incorrectness provoking tension that sexuality is a matter of conscious choice and not in-born sexual attraction. The term sexual orientation is used instead. Ex-gay as an adjective form may be described as a movement aiming to change same-sex to opposite-sex sexual attraction. Mostly ingrained in conservative religions and in scientific circles it is being discredited through forms of therapy. A domestic partner is the same or opposite sex unmarried partners living under the same roof. Some countries, states and municipalities recognized this type of relationships by giving the same benefits in comparison to married couples such as, for example, in case of insurance and legal matters. (NLGJA Stylebook 2010, 3-4,7.)

One of the largest concepts is a gay traveler. Jeff Guaracino in his book *Gay and Lesbian Tourism*, described it as process of celebrating and valuating diversity. Moreover, gay-friendly, according to Jeff, means being authentic. Authentic invitation is understood as creating a supportive environment for the GLBT, free from prejudice, which is non-judgmental, with equal policies that do not penalize customers or employees with a different sexual orientation. Jeff Guaracino illustrates this term as conducting business in a way that it embraces human diversity and welcome gay people. Gay welcoming is a equivalent world to gay-friendly, both can be used in exchange and are more commonly used by suppliers or destinations. Welcoming in other words mean being acknowledged as gay consumers and reveals an interest in taking part in that business. (Guaracino 2007, 31-32.)

Hughes quotes Hindle (1994), who defined gay space as a concentration of bars, clubs, shops, cafes, public places: streets, parks etc. and residences for social interaction. Gay scenes give a chance to interact with other homosexuals, expose the own identity freely without fear of being verbally or physically abused. (Hughes 2006, 22.) Pride march or day is a term denoting the celebrations of Stonewall sequence of violent and impulsive demonstrations to commemorating the start of the sexual minorities' rights movement. Usually it is held in June. (NLGJA Stylebook 2010, 6.)

AVERT is an international HIV and AIDS charity which illustrates homophobia as a broad range of different attitudes and viewpoints. These include: negative feelings, dislike toward homosexuality communities, fear, prejudice or physical attacks towards gay people. Also AVERT defines "coming out" as a public disclosure of the sexual orientation or gender identity. Other synonyms which stand for this public revealing are "being out of the closet" or "outing". To conclude, for many uncovering is considered as a positive experience but it may have negative effects on the life, work, school or social collaboration of the person, and on both his/her self-satisfaction and self-esteem. (AVERT 2011b.)

2.3 Establishing gay-friendliness

According to Guaracino, insurance companies can include in the travel insurance package note that costs resulting from any medical emergencies, trip cancellation, baggage lost, or damage will be covered for those having an insurance and also for person's domestic partner without specifying whether it is a married straight couple or gay couple. At the same time rental car companies may also lead a discrimination policy by imposing additional fees for concubine couples only because they are non-married partners. (Guaracino 2007, 108.)

Furthermore, gay and lesbians are being recognized an increasing number of costumers that use airline services, and are due to that a very important target group. For example, American Airlines gained much more benefits since it introduced partnership benefits for the same sex coupled, gay supported policies that cover gender identity and sexual orientation. Moreover, since 1991, American Airlines (AA) earned 100 percent in the Corporate Equality Index in Human Rights Campaign. Increase in gay travel dollar was

achieved by AA also through regular sponsoring of gay and lesbian events such as, Gay Games taking place in Chicago. (Guaracino 2007, 107-109.)

In the similar manner hotels may communicate their gay friendliness visibly and discretely. According to Guaracino, discrete is being understood as training hotel staff and providing sufficient education for employees. For example, a hotel concierge is aware where in the neighborhood there are gay bars, pubs, restaurants or front desk will not ask uncomfortable questions while seeing two men asking for a king bed. In addition, establishing gay friendliness can be done through the cooperation with the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association, using the logo of IGLTA in gay advertising or website of the hotel, through financial support given to local gay events which usually should be marketed online, and at the same time extending the potential customers' knowledge about the hotel, which is a convincing way to communicate gay welcoming. Also having gay staff members entertain guests at visible positions could be a sign of gay-friendly policy as well. (Community Marketing Inc., 2006a, 75.)

Furthermore, gay friendliness can be demonstrated in the ability to satisfy all type of entertainment in the own hotel room. Likewise an adult entertainment geared should be available in the same way as for straight travelers if a hotel provides those types of movies. That is why it is important to be conscious of gay travelers visiting certain hotels in order to be ready to offer everything what guests could demand which would be then translate into higher income. If somebody is willing to pay, the other side should be willing to provide certain services. (Guaracino 2007, 108-109.) According to the 11th LGBT Travel Survey, gays are more aware of hotel choice, business and vacation destinations due to their promotion of a gay welcoming. Therefore, gay men and lesbian women as being travelers, require more from the chosen destination. In addition, the gay-friendly politics, amenities and locations are main factors influencing the decision process of the GLBT community. (Community Marketing Inc. 2006a, 75.)

Also, cruise lines can, in order to be authentic in its gay welcoming, host gay and lesbian meetings each sailing, work together with travel agents that cooperate with local GLBT organizations to bring onboard gay groups. Marketing strategies of mainstream cruise sailings may include gay media to fill empty cabins during heterosexual and homosexual

mixed cruises. Guaracino quoted Kenneth Kiesnoski, Destinations Editor for Travel Weekly when saying that:

In many ways, gays and lesbians are no different than the straight consumer when selling cruises. What the agent or cruise line is selling is gay friendliness. Cruisers are interested in the wow factor, bragging rights and value.

Gays are the dream cruise customer. They spend more on incidentals and special restaurants reservations. They sail more often and spend more. It is not a matter of social policy, there is money to be made in gay. (Guaracino 2007, 116.)

Furthermore, the writer of *Gay and Lesbian Tourism* based on his own experience criticized the brochure of Princess Cruise Line made in 2006 as being not authentic. In marketing its general brochure no sign of gay code was included even though the company declared to be gay welcoming. If a company wants to be seen as credible it is obligatory for it to use logos, images showing same-sex couples or everything that is familiar in a gay community as well as what they could be interested in seeing, such as, gay event calendars including events at gay bars. (Guaracino 2007, 89.)

Additionally, companies may try to become more gay welcoming through cooperation with GayComfort and Community Marketing, Inc. which is explained as follows. GayComofort provides professional training in five languages for staff in order to deliver the highest quality services for the LGBT travelers according to mutual understanding and needs expectations. Also the company cooperates with different partners around the world, hotels, tourist attractions and leading destinations that are awarded by the organization with a Partner Status. Moreover, by joining it helps to convince future visitors about gay friendliness of a certain company, as the GayComfort lists are regularly review and checked. In addition, users have the possibility to give feedback ensuring GayComfort that all provided information and services are relevant to the company policy or that no contract rules have been broken between the parties. (GayComfort 2011a.)

Likewise, both Community Marketing, Inc. and GayComfort operate two TAG Approved worldwide known programs, Accommodations and Attractions TAG Approved. The first programme of Accommodation targets B&Bs, resorts and LGBT hotels. Also in the Travel Alternative Group Approved Accommodations Programme participants come from

different parts of the world, nowadays more than 1800 hotels are members and provide services to the LGBT community. An increasing number of participants demonstrates that being a member brings benefits, four out of ten are explained below. Firstly, Web Directory enables users to get directly to the web pages of the hotels through www.tagapproved.com, where the hotel is searchable and listed. The second benefit is Travel Directory that is captivating resource books sent to travel agents, top LGBT travelers, press and meeting planners via direct mail. In total 20,000 copies are being published. Also Travelocity Partnership gives a opportunity to be listed at www.GayTravelocity.com and increase the scope of promotion. The fourth advantage of being a member is free entry to annual Community Marketing, Inc.'s (CMI) research reports on LGBT tourism. (Community Marketing, Inc. 2012a.)

The second programme, Attractions TAG Approved, targets B&Bs, tour operators, coach businesses, walking tours, museums, theaters, non-profit organizations, cultural or activity institution and many more. In addition, by joining the second TAG Approved Attractions, users are provided with TAG's internet directory and allowance to use TAG Approved® Logo while promoting the company. Furthermore, a monthly newsletter is available and direct marketing programs on LGBT are discounted. Additional benefits are webinars access where companies can learn how to conduct diversity training and gain interest of the LGBT community by frequently holding sessions that enable new staff and members to join the program at anytime. (Community Marketing, Inc., 2012b.)

A majority of the respondents 71% out of 6, 721 gays that took part in travel profile survey conducted by Community Marketing agreed with the fact that they are more aware of countries as well as cities actively wooing LGBT travelers, and their travel decisions are favorably influenced by that factor. Also the other majority 66%, stated that advertising in gay stream media affects their travel choice. (Community Marketing, Inc. 2006b, 6.)

2.4 A historical glimpse on gay codes

Gay friendliness can be communicated through symbolic, powerful codes. According to Guaracino, the rainbow flag within the gay community is the most recognized symbol. The

design was made by Gilbert Baker in 1987 and represents six equal stripes in different colors: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet. This racy of rainbows typify the diversity of the GLBT society. (Guaracino 2007, 31.) According to Baker, each color reflects different aspects of lesbian and gay life. An explanation is given as follows: “red for life, orange for healing, yellow for the sun, green for nature, blue for art and violet for spirit” (Lambda GLBT Community Services 2004).

Also the pink triangle nowadays is recognized by gay communities as a gay pride symbol. The pink triangle dates back to the Second World War where in the concentration camps the gay men were forced to wear the pink triangle. (Hughes 2006, 3.) Labeling started in the German paragraph 175 that in the past excluded any relationship between same-sex couples. Furthermore, Hitler while he was gaining more power, enlarged this law, since 1935 homosexual acts, such as embracing, kissing and even any gay fantasies were punishable. Also sterilization was practiced and in most cases castration. Further, convicts were placed in prisons and later sent to Nazi concentration camps. In 1942 the death penalty became a common sentence due to Hitler’s extinction programme. (Lambda GLBT Community Services 2004.) Social hierarchies created by the Nazis through labeling people dependent on their sexual orientation, turned to be a symbol for future world-wide persecution and discrimination. (Hughes 2006, 3.) In the 1970s the upright triangle became a symbol of active fight in contrast to the incapacitation, and in the 1980s gay activists reclaimed it as a memorial to gay oppression as well as a symbol used in campaigns against AIDS. (Hughes 2006, 137.)

“The Human Rights Campaign logo is a yellow “=” sign within a rectangular blue box.” (Guaracino 2007, 69). It is the symbol of the struggle for equal rights for GLBT members. Regardless of the wide logo recognition a variety of marketing strategies are taking place to arouse interest in work of the HRC. Members of over one million civil may locate the logo stickers on cars’ windows or the logo may be seen on a t-shirt, publications, the backpacks of hikers, label of lawmakers, pride celebrations and a variety of other places. Support and involvement of different members communicate willingness for embracing and giving the same rights to minorities like lesbian women, gay men, bisexual and transgender in every aspect of their lives. (The Human Rights Campaign 2011-2012.)

LGBT Outreach: LGBT-inclusive mainstream media

*Orbitz
On General
Market TV*



GRAPH 1. The Human Rights Campaign logo used by Orbitz on General Market TV (adapted from LGBT Community Survey 2011a)

The lambda symbol resembles the Greek letter lambda written in the lower case. At first lambda was chosen by the Gay Activist Alliance in 1970. Gay Liberation Front was a larger community from which GAA in 1969 broke away due to the clear differences in the program and the vision. For Gay Activist Alliance the most important issue that activists wanted to focus only on, was creating the environment where Gay and Lesbian could live without discrimination and with equal rights. In contrast, the Gay Liberation Front wanted to extend its actions by joining liberation of women as well as the black movement which also supported equality regardless of sex, color or sexual orientation, but still the actions of the movement were widely extensive. The lambda quickly began to be recognized and identified by the gay communities as its symbol and became formally accepted by the Gay Activist Alliance which was taking part in sponsoring gay public events and at the same time promoting the lambda. In 1974 the International Gay Right Congress was held in Edinburgh, Scotland, and affirmed it as an international symbol that could be used to express gay and lesbian rights. (Lambda GLBT Community Services 2004.)

The International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (see GRAPH 2.) is a global organization that educates and connects business in LGBT tourism between business partners from more than 80 countries located on six continents (GayComfort 2011b.)



GRAPH 2. International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association official logo (adapted from IGLTA Inc., 2008-2011b)

IGLTA was founded in 1983 and may be considered as a trade organization and business guide. Furthermore, with the initial members of 25, it currently has 2,200 dues-paying businesses members, 3,000 individual ones and over 25,000 constantly growing consumers present on the global scene of association. Members can be categorized such as, airlines, accommodations, cruise lines, car rental companies, local tourist offices, regional and national tourist boards, travel media, travel agencies, tour operators and other industry partners unable to be classified in the above mentioned groups. Companies officially recognized by the organization have the legal right to display in any marketing strategies, the web page of the company and any formal documents on the IGLTA log (see GRAPH 2) in order to communicate its Gay Lesbian Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) support. (IGLTA Inc., 2008-2011a.)

3 GAYS AS BUYERS

The following chapter begins by giving examples of business revenue lost as a result of excluding gay travelers from its invitation. Furthermore, different examples such as, the Hispanic gay man and median gay traveler profiles, will be given in order to clearly demonstrate that a variety of factors affect decision-making process of gay buyers and illustrate the picture of the gay customer. Also a clarifying definition defining the subject will be provided. The following subchapter concerns the risk of perception and anti-gay bias in everyday life in order to convince the reader that different marketing is needed due to the fact that gays are being discriminated in different areas of their lives and need this special invitation that may be understood as special marketing strategies. The final subchapter offers future predictions and presents changes and prediction in the upcoming years regarding the gay market.

3.1 Pink dollar, pink euro and pink pound

Guaracino in his book included results of research which have been commissioned by the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation in order to recognize economic rewards eventuate from gay travelers. It transpired that gay tourism is a profitable market and can be considered as a good business and cities which excluded gay travelers from invitation were losing an income share of a \$54 billion on the travel market. Furthermore, it was stated that in comparison to straight travelers, gays take more trips, earn more and spend more. Guaracino brings up that this market niche is the most under-researched group which will not be taken seriously until more data is going to be collected. However, Witeck-Combs Communications located in Washington D.C as well as Community Marketing, Inc., are private companies conducting credible researches about the gay travel market and in the long view contributes to greater understanding and greater profits for different departments of business. (Guaracino 2007, 29-30.)

Furthermore, the Business Dictionary defines buying power as “an assessment of an individual's or organization's disposable income regarded as conferring the power to make purchases” (WebFinance, Inc. 2012a). Guaracino quotes Bob Witeck, the author of a book

called *Business Inside Out: Capturing Millions of Brand Loyal Consumers*, who defines disposable income as money left after any obligations and taxes have been paid. In practice, that amount money may be spent on rent, home mortgages, transportation expenses, car, food, utility bills, travel and entertainment. (Guaracino 2007, 33.) Bob Witeck points out that being aware of gays' power to purchase is very important because having these information entrepreneurs are able to provide an insight through these data. However, knowledge on buying behavior is the most essential to make a measurable profit. (Guaracino 2007, 34.) Below is an example given by Bob Witeck to clearly illustrate the consumer behavior process of gays:

When is a gay Hispanic man making buying choices as a gay consumer and when is he a Hispanic consumer? The answer is likely both. At different times, he may be influenced more by one part of his identity, background and experience than the other part. When he goes to the supermarket, he probably is more influenced by Hispanic culture and familiar foods he grew up with at home. When shopping for clothes or for travel he may be somewhat more influenced by his gay identity and sense of fashion. In his travel decisions he may want to be surrounded with other gay people, so he might choose an all-gay cruise or take his partner to Key West to get away. Conversely, when he buys dish washing liquid, he is probably more influenced by what his mother purchased for her kitchen.

According to the Witeck–Combs data, gay and lesbian consumers are brand-loyal, trendsetters, fair-minded and online more than heterosexuals. (Guaracino 2007, 34.)

A direct comparison of gays and lesbians to other minority populations is challenging due to the diversity of this population, they have different ethnic backgrounds, are brown, white or black which makes data overlap and not mutually excluded. Furthermore, the invisible gay traveler make statistics hard to estimate correctly because they do not want to travel as a gay despite of identifying themselves totally as homosexual. (Guaracino 2007, 32-33). Bob Witeck quoted in *Gay and Lesbian Tourism: The Essential Guide for Marketing*, emphasizes that gay couples on average tend to have fewer children, both partners are actively working, live in the cities and have better earnings. (Guaracino 2007, 33.)

Thomas Roth, the President of Community Marketing Inc., in LGBT overview report conducted in 2011, stated that lesbians and gay men are owners of bigger amounts of homes, are more often travelers, and their spending on electronics is larger, as well as they

utilize the highest disposable income per capita compared to any other niche market. (LGBT community survey 2011b, 3.) Niche marketing, on the other hand, is defined by WebFinanceas:

Concentrating all marketing efforts on a small but specific and well defined segment of the population. Niches do not exist but are created by identifying needs, wants, and requirements that are being addressed poorly or not at all by other firms, and developing and delivering goods or services to satisfy them. As a strategy, niche marketing is aimed at being a big fish in a small pond instead of being a small fish in a big pond. Also could be called micromarketing. (WebFinanceInc., 2012b.)

Howard Hughes in his book *Pink Tourism: Holidays of Gay Men and Lesbians* quotes Robinson and Novelli that define niche tourism or niche market as interest in arts, sport or heritage. According to Hughes, the end of the 20th century and the beginning of 21st century brought wider new views on niche markets, in other words, named as special interest markets that gained new meaning as being disticted from the mass tourism. (Hughes 2006, 8.)

Trucco mentioned in Hughes book *Pink Tourism*, described gays as being more resistant to negative factors, such as, epidemics, terrorism or recession in comparison to homosexual travelers. Examples where the gay travel sector was not feared of current situation is 9/11 terrorist attack, almost 80% of US lesbians and gays followed their own travel plans after the attack. In addition, Quest quoted by Hughes, points out that a constant slowdown in economy affects the decisions and behaviors of people if traditional families will not be able to afford annual foreign vacations, and then targeting those with money will really start. (Hughes 2006, 8.) Career-focused singles plus work-field life enable single gays with disposable incomes to pay for luxury service and trips (Yeomen 2008, 160). Furthermore, the advantages that many gays may have, are flexibility and lacks of families which enables them to go on a holiday during off-peak season in contrast to opposite-sex couples (Hughes 2006, 8). In other words, they chose the suitable holiday time without being restricted to family members. Furthermore, Community Marketing Inc., in 2006 conducted in the United States among 6,721 respondents the 11thLGBT Travel Survey Profile where a median gay traveler was named Michael due to the fact that this name appeared in the highest frequency. He is described as:

Michael is 45 years old and lives with his partner of 8 years. Michael and his partner have a household income of \$115,000 per year, and do not have any children. Michael has a bachelor's degree and works full time.

Michael likes to travel. He took three vacations last year, plus two trips to see family and friends, and one business trip. Michael has a passport and has used it for travel in the last twelve months. He spent \$6,575 on travel in the last twelve months, and expects to travel about the same amount next year.

Michael was on an airplane seven days and spent 20 nights in hotels in the last year. Internet services and property location are most important in his selection of a hotel. He also likes having a pool or gym, and a quality restaurant onsite. Michael feels that a good concierge has gay-relevant information at hand.

Michael visits destinations and resorts that are gay friendly or gay exclusive, and is very aware of cities and countries that are actively courting LGBT tourism. In fact, he is more likely to visit a destination when its government tourism office markets directly to lesbians and gay men. He also likes to visit places that are restful, and enjoys meeting people from other cultures. Michael and his friends almost always use the Internet to plan and book travel. (Community Marketing Inc., 2006c, 7.)

This online survey conducted by Community Marketing, Inc. accurately identified gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender median adults' travelers. This quote on LGBT consumer provides data and insight into the gay and lesbian tourism industry. Respondents to this survey are high educated, work full-time and do not have any children, which makes them very affluent customers for the company that is worth targeting. They are also subscribers to various Internet and print media, and therefore the lesbians and gay men participants may be easy and fast to reach using the media. Gay men and lesbians travel more than the mainstream heterosexual, and a gay-friendly environment was a very important factor in choosing a destination. It is necessary to be aware that gay men and lesbians are influenced by various factors and represent different data than mainstream travelers.

3.2 Different strategies

Risk perception of individuals is determined by factors such as, antipathy towards risk, consideration of the individual regarding what may happen as a consequence to the behavior of the person, or his/her choice, the possible scale of a danger, the likeliness of

incident and the media news coverage of previous threats and events. In risky situations, where close relatives, friends or the individuals were exposed to danger, may significantly influence the risk perception of an individual before making a decision. (Cooper, Fletcher, Gillbert&Wanhill 2008, 286-287.)

Furthermore, the tourism product includes a variety of aspects that give rise to risky situations that form the above mentioned perception of travelers. For example, for the first-time traveler the product in itself is considered as unknown and may hold risky element in a sense that will not satisfy the expectations of the tourist. Different risks are included in terms of travel such as, terrorism, transport system affected by the weather, accidents, industrial protests and getting lost. Destinations themselves also involve threats in terms of crime, health, inhospitable environments or hotels being simply over-booked. Some travelers are more likely to be strongly affected, whereas for some there is no significant risk. (Cooper et al. 2008, 286-287.) According to the 16th Annual Gay and Lesbian Tourism Report, no discriminating laws or gay friendly reputations are encouraging gay lesbians and gay men to travel to certain destinations or use certain services. Only a third out of 8009 participants would withhold travelling due to unfavorable gay bias. Their reputation of a destination is a better and clearer predictor for gay violence acts than unfriendly gay laws. Although laws against gays in comparison to bashing gay news stories are related to each other, the press is more damaging for the perception. (Community Marketing, Inc. 2011-2012a.)

However, if the threshold for travelling is lower than the perceived risk, the tourist will minimize the risk exposure by travelling somewhere else, or not travelling to a certain destination. Risk perceptions, which are often shaped in a sense that do not follow reality, are still guiding the decision-making process. For that reason, risk perception will still influence the potential behavior of the tourist, even though it may be incorrect or wrong. (Cooper et al. 2008, 286-287.)

In accordance with a report on gay men regarding depression and risk-taking, conducted by executive director Spencer Cox for the Medius Institute for Gay Men's Health, the gay men, in comparison to the general population, are three times more likely to experience depression. Depression is correlated with a high extent of risky behavior and the use of

substances, such as, a variety of drugs. Depressive symptoms raise the probability of future alcoholism, and alcoholism in the same way is a step towards depression. In addition, gay men and bisexuals tend to be more heavy drinkers compared to heterosexual men. Cox points out that depression always has a meaning and in order to prevent it rather than treating it, it is necessary to understand the factors that cause it, and be aware of why it happens. In general it is a reaction to external events such as, frustration, loss and pain. For instance, gay men suffer from depression due to fact of the homophobia they face in society. Also the desire of “coming out of the closet”, public exposure, may be developing pain and stress resulting in fear of admitting the individual identity. (Cox 2007).

Moreover, loneliness is another element entirely leading to depression. Actually, also communal institutions encumber a person’s development of families, friendship and relationships. This may be understood as anti-discrimination laws, gay marriage and health care as well as other institutions that fail to support gay communities and as a result discourage them from being happy, healthy and broadly in every area satisfied. Furthermore, Cox listed the most common bias that encourage gay men to be more likely to experience depression, such as lack of partner, not being identified as a member of a gay community, gay community alienation, history of endeavor suicide or abuse occurred in childhood. In addition, a higher frequency indicated that gay men are more likely as a whole to be affected by anxiety disorders understood as chronic worrying that is not relevant to the specific situation influencing the daily function performance. (Cox 2007).

According to the “Give a damn” campaign in the 21st century, the societal message still conveys to youth that they should be straight and behave as the gender they represent does. Consequently, well-intentioned parents are not always acting as a gay-coming-out child would wish them to react when the gay “comes out” and announces the truth to the parents. Conducted research presented that transgender or gay youth that were rejected by families, are over eight times more likely to attempted suicide, six times highly depressed, and three times more likely to get involved in drug addictions and unprotected sexual experiences in comparison to their heterosexual peers. Furthermore, self-esteem, social support, satisfaction and in general better health conditions are being recognized to a higher extent when a family accepts their children for who they are. (GIVE A DAMN CAMPAIGN, 2010a). In addition, homelessness is mainly caused by conflicts about gender identity or sexual orientations misunderstanding between parents and youth. A negative reaction is

represented by half of all parents that have homosexual teen. Homeless straight youth are less likely, in comparison to gays, to commit suicide with 29% vs. 62%. (GIVE A DAMN CAMPAIGN, 2010b.)

Furthermore, gay and transgender teenagers are being bullied in higher number and frequency in comparison to their straight peers. According to the “Give a damn“ campaign, 90% of the homosexuals compared to 62% of their heterosexual classmates, had in the past year been physically harassed: punched, shoved, kicked or in exchange assaulted what manifested in the calling of derogatory names. Also out of five gays, three felt unsafe at school, and out three transgender and gay kids one had skipped school in the previous month because of feeling not safe enough at the school facility. (GIVE A DAMN CAMPAIGN, 2010c.)

In 2009 in the United States 6,604 incidents of hate crime were reported. This type of crime involved rape, torture, beatings or even murder and the victims were chosen due to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, race and many other superficial factors. Out of six hate crimes one is committed owing to sexual orientation. (GIVE A DAMN CAMPAIGN, 2010d.) Anti-LGBT crimes are often being unreported, and one of the reasons is the reluctance of gay victims to be identified or outed as homosexuals in police reports, as well as the unwillingness to face the biases of the police department due to their lack of education and inexperience. A hate crime or its equivalent expression in a bias-motivated crime, appears when the victim is selected by the perpetrator intentionally because of who the person is. Violence acts are always a tragic event, but when the crime is grounded on prejudice it has a stronger dimension to it because it displays the hate towards a certain community or group. Throughout the years it has been reported that sexual orientations is the highest ranked motivator causing that crime. As motivators, only race-based bias and religion-based attacks were listed before sexual orientation. Moreover, 54% of LGBT are being concerned of becoming a victim of hate crime, where 27% of lesbians and 20 % of gay men are being extremely concerned. (Libman & Marzullo 2009, 1-2,5,7.)

Even though gay men, lesbian women, bisexuals and transgender people are more resistant than heterosexuals in their risk perception, as has already been mentioned in the previous sub-section, having different strategies where a company will promote itself as gay

welcoming and ensure its authenticity through implementing gay friendliness rules in order to demonstrate its worthiness, is essential in order to interest this loyal and influential buyer. Examples of abuse, violation and misunderstandings on different stages in a gay individual's life was given in order to demonstrate how badly the world treats minorities and why based on a variety of research it is obligatory to take a special care of that niche market.

3.3 Future scenarios

Jeff Guaracino in his book *Gay and Lesbian Tourism*, explains some future predictions of that market. He emphasizes the meaning of symbols like the IGLTA logo or the Rainbow Flag, that they will in the future be included by tourism companies and destinations more noticeably in websites, brochures and other marketing materials. Information for the GLBT community will not be hidden, but it will be considered as a basic announcement given alongside other facts about tourist places. Increasing acceptance and tolerance among the public and shareholders will encourage more boldly advertising towards gay communities without the fear of losing current customers. Marketing campaigns will take into account the homosexual and heterosexual travelers without alienating and separating consumers from GLBT travelers. (Guaracino 2007, 153-154.)

More tourists and future potential recipients regardless of sexual orientation, will be able to find information in the mainstream travel sections about GLBT travel opportunities through access to the publications listed on the websites and newspapers devoted to traveling. Companies will promote products more frequently through the gay media and will enter gay media outlets. The more the financial benefits from advertising translate into media growth the more it will contribute to a larger amount of recipients. Therefore, the marketers will be urged to increase the budget for promotion resulting from the higher demand. In connection with companies being more interested in this niche market, the improvement of the services level will be noticed. The travel product will have to be more thought out and refined to fit the needs of the clients. Higher numbers of offers and destinations opportunities will be reflected in better prices. (Guaracino 2007, 154-157.)

Jeff Guaracino points out that an increased interest in gay market by better market research, which creates larger cooperation, understanding and developing of market strategies will more precisely estimate future revenue and benefits. (Guaracino 2007, 176-177.) As a result, travel fantasy in order to be sold effectively, will be more creative, catchy and showing pictures that stands for a thousand words. The precise photo will enable an easier visualization of people's dreams. (Guaracino 2007, 90.) The maturation of the market and greater tolerance to opposite-sex will outright affect advertising by showing non-heterosexual couples embracing, kissing, touching or in romantic situations (see GRAPH 3). (Guaracino 2007, 177.) According to Yeoman, luxury will gain a more complex meaning due to the fact that people are being more attached to areas of life that offer individual satisfaction, such as relaxation, relationships, knowledge, free time or tranquility. Consequently, to entice and retain demand providers will be under pressure to serve personalized luxury experiences and goods in order to stimulate the interest. (Yeoman 2008, 137.)



GRAPH 3. Key West Gay Brochure (adapted from Monroe County Commission 2010, 1)

Quick development is predicted also due to the desire of gay travelers to seek the opportunities to gather. A travel profile conducted among 6,721 American responders recognizing themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender, indicated with 57% that other gays are the motivating factor for choosing a travel destination. A majority of 64% are more willing to go to certain destinations due to the fact of higher percentage of LGBT visitors or residents. (Community Marketing Inc., 2006d, 6.) Gay destinations are

increasing in number but still it is not a global movement and some places around the world are not gay welcoming, and this may be considered as a potential market that may be visited in the future. (Guaracino 2007, 150.) Finally, there will be fewer and fewer places named by newspapers as “never before”, “first” or “ground-breaking” in relation to gay tourism. (Guaracino 2007, 154.) In addition, more gay-family travel will occur which can be understood as two moms or two dads having children, or gay children having straight parents or gay sisters or gay brothers having straight siblings. Gay-friendly travel in other words, may be expressed as family-friendly, as travel is multigenerational. (Guaracino 2007. 11.)

Moreover, the author of *Tomorrow Tourist*, includes in his book a research made in Great Britain by the Future Foundations to examine the importance of religion in people’s lives. The base of 1000-2000 adults, beginning from those turning 16 years till up 65+ were under research observation that displays data throughout the years, starting from 1983, 1986, 1999 and 2005. In the end, a higher amount of people compared to previous years, do not follow any religion and may be considered as atheists, especially this trend is rising among the younger generation. However, according to Yeoman, people look more for spiritual experiences as well as for a meaningful sense of life. The author defines spirituality as:

[G]reater time for contemplation, whether an exploration of who you are, what goals you can achieve or how you connect to other people. Spirituality manifests itself in terms of self-fulfillment, arguably the search for the quintessential authenticity in modern society and well-being, in which spirituality is an extension of our concern for longevity and health and fitness. (Yeoman 2008, 191-192.)

From a tourism perspective, spirituality may be manifested as desire to escape from everyday life, fulfilled in suitable environment by reaching a spiritual dimension. Self-development and self-actualization experiences will be searchable in authentic attractions and destinations. Society with a rising high disposal income will become more affordable to pay for short-break holidays in order to participate in those activities. (Yeoman 2008, 183-184.) This increase in spirituality may affect believers to become more tolerant due to the fact of living in accordance to your own inner peace and thought, based on your own spiritual experience, instead of strictly following religious fundamental rules interpreted by

human beings, which in case of religion are religious leaders that impose on individuals what is right or wrong, and verbally influence believers' actions.

Furthermore, "Give a damn" is a campaign that tries to increase cooperation between straight and gay communities. Also, it is a place where people can get involved and informed about current issues towards implementing higher levels of equality in society. Cindy Lauper has been working for the campaign for over 25 years, and her famous saying is: "If one of us is not equal, none of us are". In reference to the previous paragraph the "Give a damn" campaign warns that some religious leaders support discrimination towards LGBT communities using sacred texts and its own doctrines to attack. Furthermore, gays closely rooted in faith due to that prejudice are forced to leave the religion that they have been raised in. (Give a Damn Campaign, 2010e; Give a Damn Campaign, 2010f). According to Hate Crimes and Violence Against LGBT People, "religious fundamentalism, orthodox Christianity and right-wing authoritarianism intercorrelate with each other" and lead to negative feeling as well as create tension to gays and lesbians (Libman et al. 2009, 8). No religion is allowed and supposed to teach hate, intolerance and tear people down, therefore, spirituality maybe an option for people becoming more acceptable throughout meaningful experience, as well as gays may find their faith in living in a spiritual way along with honesty, peace and love that will enable them to find a sense of life without fear of being judged by anyone.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will start with introducing the goals and target groups set for this research. The method used in this thesis is analyzed in the following subchapter. The final subchapter presents data collection and design.

4.1 Research goals and target groups

The main goal of this research was to find out the level of knowledge about Gay and Lesbian Market from the representatives involved in different branches in the tourism industry. The additional second goal was to increase the interest in that market segment and hopefully encourage interviewees to search for more information about that niche market. Thirdly, the author believed that any additional researches, books, public debates or educational programmes would increase the understanding towards, in most cases, costumers with a double income and no children. This in turn would result in an increasing tolerance of society that would contribute to future greater comfort of travelers and more destination choices in the long run, as well as an increase in income of a variety of business departments. The overall aim is to be able to realize that this niche market is undervalued, unexplored and not included in many marketing strategies of the companies.

Stephen Smith points out that the nature of tourism is probably the most compound subject in social science. Matters such as, social phenomenon, a human behavior frame, an economic pane, a policy area, a source of environmental, economic and social change makes the topic very complex (Smith 2010, 1.) Therefore, it is obligatory to choose the most suitable target groups. Since all of the respondents were involved in the tourism business and took part in the Matka fair in Helsinki, they were there searcher's captive group. In case of Matka Expo they were professionals that belonged to the tourism and travel sector trade, and through this exhibition had a chance to present their own companies, services and products, such as transportation options, tour packages, services of travel agencies, accommodation facilities and exotic travel options (BizTradeShows 2012).

4.2 Research methods

The research results were analyzed with the use of the quantitative method in the form of questionnaire surveys. Questionnaire surveys collect data from the individuals in which the researcher wants to gather sample information about a certain issue. According to Veal, the division of two forms of questionnaire survey can be made: respondent-completed or interviewer-completed. The biggest difference between those two, is that in the respondent-completed, the respondents fill and read every question themselves independently whereas in the interviewer-completed the interviewer is required to read questions out loud and record the answers of the respondents on the questionnaire. As explained by Veal in the book *Research Methods For Leisure and Tourism*, the respondent-completed questionnaire can be used on sensitive matters, such as Gay and Lesbian market where respondents have more courage to express themselves more freely and honestly, rather than being friendly or helpful towards the interviewer. However, being relatively anonymous also brings the disadvantages in the research analysis which will be incomplete if the answers are not fully given. (Veal 2010, 231-236.) At the request of the interviewees, two questionnaires are interviewer-completed.

Under the quantitative methods several different types of questionnaire surveys, such as user/on-site/ visitor survey, mail survey, street survey, telephone survey, household survey and captive group survey can be defined. The captive group survey will be explained since it has been used in the research study. According to Veal, the captive group gathers in the same place and at the same time where access of belonging is facilitated by having a certain membership. Furthermore, in the questionnaires pre-closed and open-ended questions are introduced in order to collect the necessary information. A self-completed answer gives the respondents the opportunity to be more creative in expressing their opinion and the questionnaire wording categorizing as well as the interviewer will not influence the respondent. In addition, the possible outcome may result in varied material that could otherwise be hidden in the closed-ended questions. However, the open-ended questions are time-consuming and hard to calculate in comparison to pre-coded, which give a multiple choice of answers that are easier to calculate, as well as, do not require high involvement of respondents where the matter of judgment is not used. (Veal 2010, 251-254.) Additionally, open questions usually formulate unstructured questionnaires that are being fabricated of questions that promise from participants free responses, which then are

guided conversations in comparison to structured interviews. Furthermore, the topic guide that refers to a guided conversation, is constructed from the list questions with a visible order, however, it is not strictly set for the participant to follow the apparent sequence slavishly in every detail. Moreover, data understanding is mandatory and measurement may face some difficulties. What is more, decoding the responses may modify the given replies by connecting replies that are not identical, however, this type of questionnaire gives additional value to the valid data via an opportunity of supporting the reply importance in the own words of the respondents. (Market research 2008, 136-137; HistoryLearningSide 2000-2012.)

4.3 Data collection and design

As has already been mentioned, the research took place in January 2012 at the Matka Nordic Travel Fair and was carried out with an Event Advisor, Administration Officer, Cabin Crew Member, Marketing and Communications Officer, Sales and Marketing Director, Tourism Information Consultant and many other representatives of businesses involved in the tourism industry who answered questions regarding the Gay Market. The designed questionnaire was distributed in printed form and because it was an international fair, it was only available in an English version. The actual questionnaire had three closed-ended questions and the majority consisted of open-ended questions (APPENDIX 1/2). The responder profile questions were specifying matters, such as sexual orientation, age group, gender and current occupation. One of the main goals of the author was to find how the representatives perceived and how much knowledge they had about gays without having support of already given answers, which was the main reason that encouraged the writer to design the questionnaire in that form. Due to that reason it was decided to formulate the questionnaire with a majority of open-ended questions, because free options do not influence the outcome on attitude, perception and knowledge of respondents, as has already been explained. All in all, 40 persons took part in the data collection conducted on Friday 20th January 2012. The critical moment in the personal contact was to encourage the respondents to try to put an effort in answering questions that the majority is not closely familiar with, tolerant enough towards or free from prejudice. Many respondents refused to answer, or some committed to sending response through mail which was not delivered later. It is assumed that the sensitive topic discouraged respondents from interacting and

returning the questionnaires. Useable information has been selected and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Programme (SPSS), version 19 and Excel 2010. Review answers helped to categorize the results for easier identification. The data was evaluated corresponding to certain variables for each question.

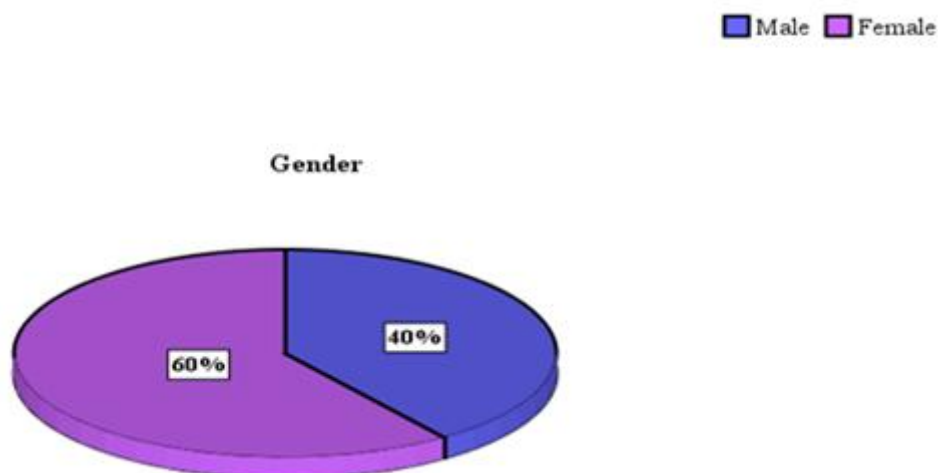
5 RESULTS

This chapter presents the main findings of the range of questions included in the questionnaire in order to provide answers to previously explained goals. As has already been explained, the data has been analyzed with the use of SPSS version 19 and Excel 2010 programme. Invalid and empty responses are not displayed in shown graphs, only the valid results calculated in frequencies and percentages are presented. The following subchapters will describe the responder profile and the open ended-replies.

The total amount of conducted questionnaires during Matka 2012 Nordic Travel Fair gave a sample of 40 people. The respondents were chosen randomly but participants had to be involved in the tourism business according to their current occupation. Visitors were not asked to take part in filling out the questionnaire.

5.1 Respondent profile

Insight into the respondent profile was given by details such as, gender, age group, sexual orientation and current occupation. Graph 4 shows the answer according to gender where the respondents indicated 60% (26) were female, in comparison to male which marked 40% (16).



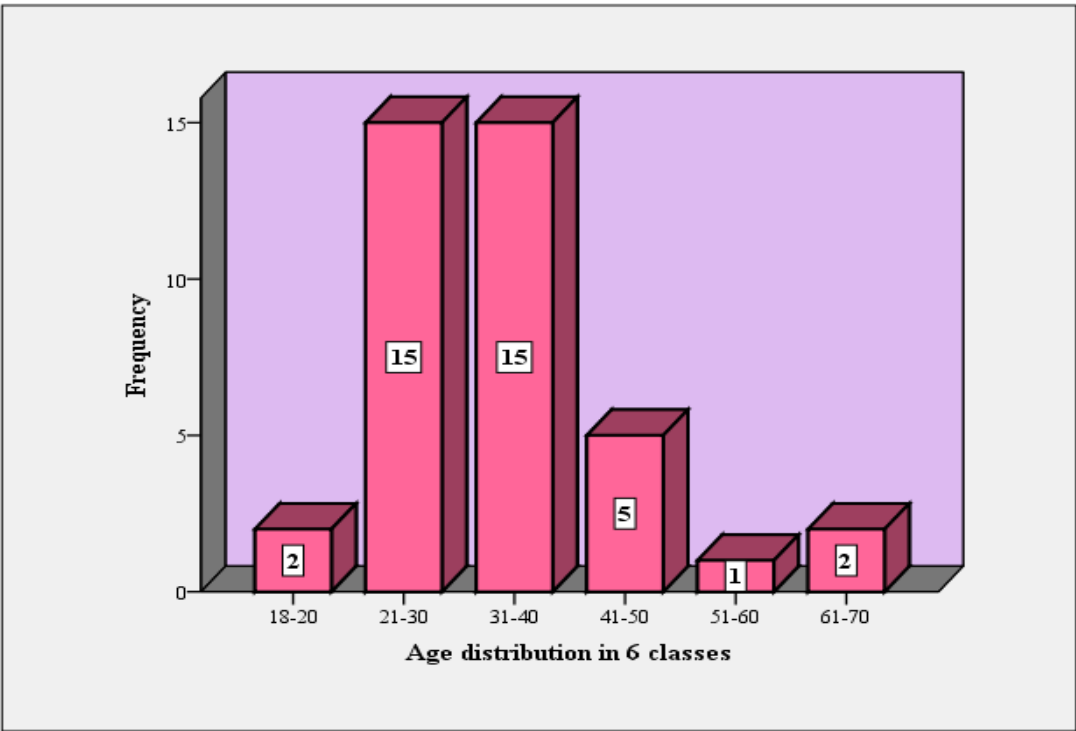
Graph 4. Gender of respondents

Table 1. represents three sexual orientation categories, such as, bisexual, heterosexual and homosexual. A significant amount of participants, 95% are heterosexually-oriented and the remaining two groups homosexual and bisexual represent a minority of 5%. Heterosexuals reflect the frequency of 38 persons but still two respondents are considered to be bisexual (1) and homosexual (1), which represents a total number of two people.

TABLE 1. Sexual orientation of respondents

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Bisexual	1	2.5	2.5	2.5
Heterosexual	38	95.0	95.0	97.5
Homosexual	1	2.5	2.5	100.0
Total	40	100.0	100.0	

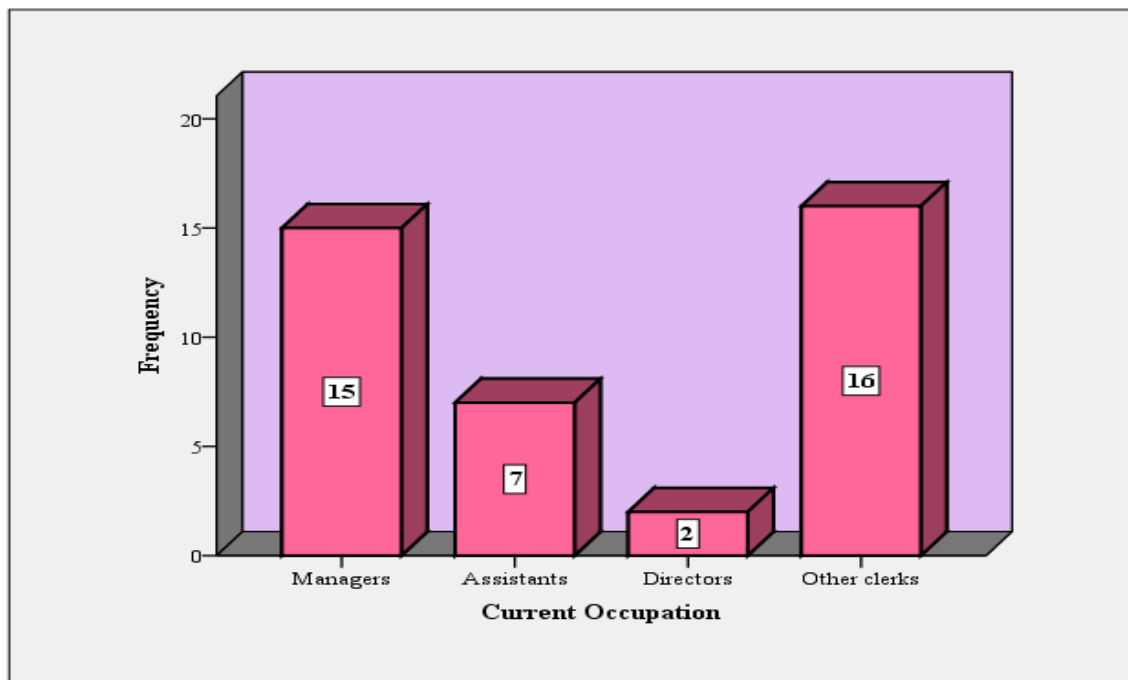
Graph 5. shows that two age groups, 21-30 (37.50%) and 31-40 (37.50%) are equally large, reaching 15 participants. On the third place, the age range of 41-50 (12.50%) was classified. Following the youngest (5.0%) and oldest (5.0%) respondents had two answers each. Only one person was from the age group 51-60 (2.5%).



GRAPH 5. Age distribution in 6 classes

The respondents were asked to state their current occupation and no alternatives were given in the questionnaire. As single staff member is appointed to four categories as follows: managers (37,5%), assistants (17,5%), directors (5%) and other clerks (40%). Classification is based on responsibilities, duties and exercises assigned to their member position. In addition, the work value in accordance to level classification, refers to the required activities at the certain position, skills, knowledge, abilities and qualifications to do the job. Also problem-solving, independence and judgment availability are other classifications of level division of the given position. Responsibility and accountability are determinants included in the work value grouping as well. (University of Houston System Administrative Memorandum, 2010).

Under the assistants' classification professions (see Graph 6) such as Marketing Assistant, Sales Assistant and Tourism Assistant can be found. Furthermore, a director group with two respondents includes, Sales and Finance Director and Sales and Marketing Director. Then the second larger group of 15 managers represents Hotel Manager, Program Manager, Project Manager, Revenue Manager, Sales Manager, Sales and Marketing Manager and Tourism Agency Manager. The last biggest group of 16 members, consists of Administration Officer, Cabin Crew Member, Event Advisor, Marketing and Communications Officer, Sellers, Tourism Information Consultant.



GRAPH 6. Current Occupation

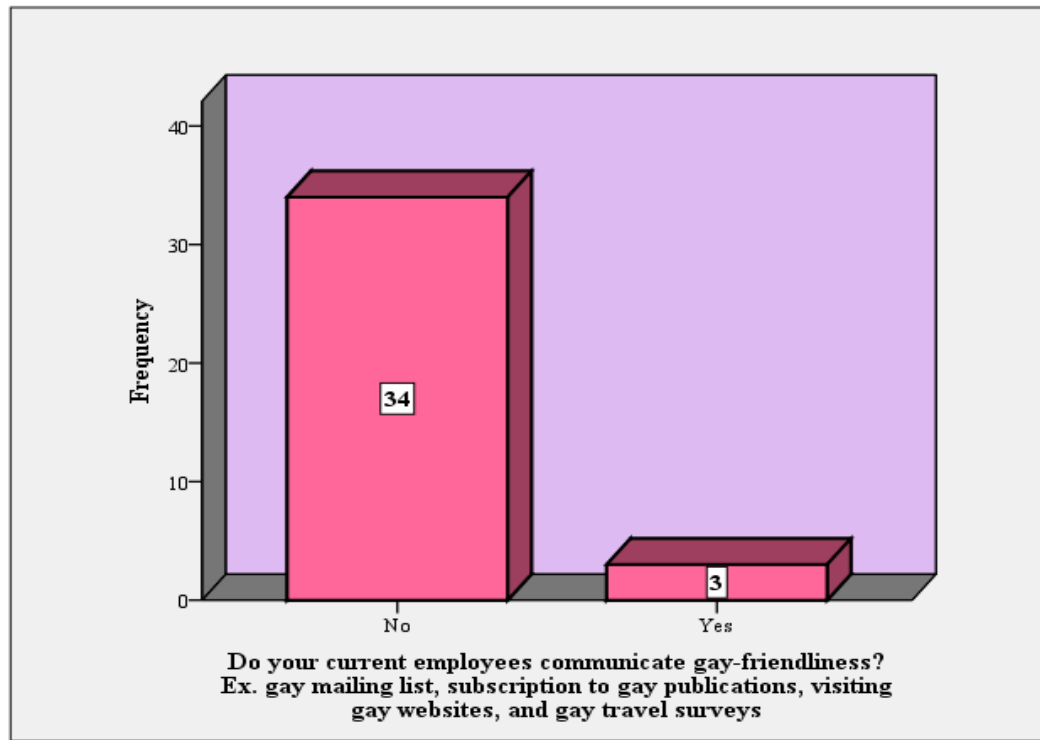
Furthermore, the highest respondents group of 15 people were Finnish (37.5%), on the second place nine (22.5%) Estonian citizens participated, then three (7.5%) Egyptian. In addition, British (5%), Dutch (5%), Georgian (5%), Polish (5%) and Latvian (5%) were nations where two people for each nation gave the answers being calculated in a total of 30%. Then the minorities, such as Indian (2,5%), Lithuanian(2,5%) and Spanish (2,5%) took part in filling out the questionnaire. All in all, the variety of nationalities brought interesting open-ended replies that have been influenced by the indifferent cultural backgrounds and upbringing of participants which brought wider international outlook on the discussed topic.

5.2 Open-ended replies

Answers from 29 out of 40 respondents were gathered to question 6, where a gay-friendly explanation was searchable. A majority of the participants agreed that gays should be treated as every person would like to be treated, which is understood as no-discrimination policy, equality, tolerance, acceptance and being free from prejudice. The second majority mapped out special services, deducted gay content, programs and tourism facilities, for instance hotels, bars, restaurants as gay friendly in the tourism business. Some described this aspect as an interesting business with a financial potential due to double high income, and no kids. One answer emphasized employees' education in gay matters and bringing awareness to customers and staff that the company supports that market. Furthermore, a single respondent pointed out the IGLTA membership and gay oriented advertisement. For four participants, gay-friendly is understood as not having any specific, treatment or attention given the fact that gays are clients as everyone else or minority.

Question number seven has received 37 respondents out of 40 where the majority of the respondents 34 (91,9%), gave the negative answer according to communicating gay-friendliness by participants current employees. Only three (8.1%) answers were positive (see Graph 7). One out of three participants expressed that advice and help could be given by recommending places or gay-friendly attractions, staff should also be aware of which places should be avoided. The second respondent confirmed that an employee should communicate gay-friendliness, but mainly focus on that everybody is welcome. The last

third questionnaire answer showed that the company tries to approach gays with a help of websites and other publications.



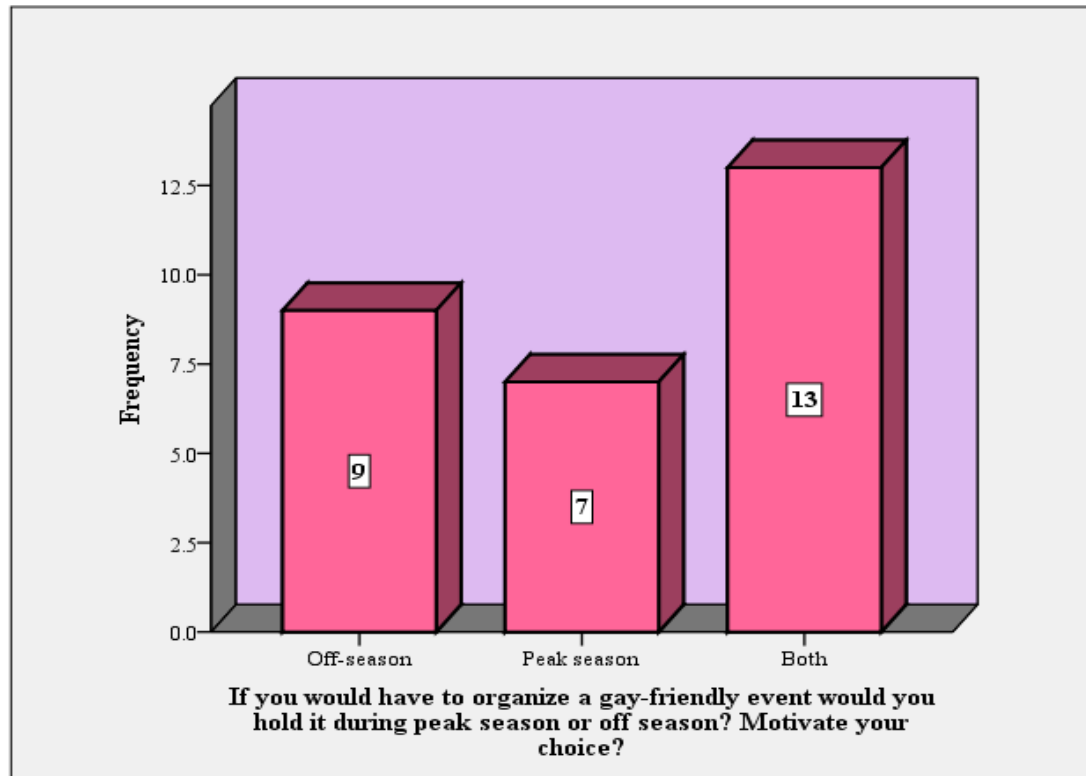
GRAPH 7. Communicating gay-friendliness

The following question was answered by 32 people where the majority of the respondents listed freedom, tolerance and open-mindedness as the main factors encouraging gays to travel. Analyzing the data, the conclusion could be drawn that liberal thinking may find its reflection in safety of travelers and ability to travel while having the same equal rights. Another large group mentioned words like friendliness, under which according to participants' aspects, friendly service, environment like bars, pride festival, special events, attractions, mouth to mouth recommendations and gay opportunities distributed through marketing expressed through gay mailing list, subscription to gay publications, gay travel surveys or visiting gay sites' were included. The third bigger majority associated gay factors with good service, standard, quality, luxury, shopping, boutiques as well as privacy. Other gays, men and sex were listed only once. Religion, culture, liberty and tradition and attitude of society were elements given in questionnaire that influenced the destinations choice as well.

Then 29 interviewers out of 40 gave an opinion about peak or off season event organizing (see Graph 8). The highest amount of 13 (44.8%) respondents decided to organize an event during both seasons. A majority asserted that organizing an event would not depend on sexual orientation but on suitability in regard to season during a year, as well as the targeted destination. Also, all-year-round events were recommended owing to disposable income and being less likely to have child commitments.

The lack of social acceptance was the main reason given by nine (31%) respondents to organized events during off season. A majority of participants would not like to cause conflicts and create attention that could discourage other visitors to come. For instance, a Latvian respondent believed that its country is not fully free from prejudice and some would not be willing to see gays or lesbian on the streets or at bars. In addition to that answer, this time of the year it would be more recommended due to a higher amount of available places and better privacy for costumers. Also, a minority of participants stated gays as the best target groups during off season because they are more likely to come and make the season busy.

Seven (24.1%) respondents that chose the peak season emphasized that holding gay events during high season could help people become more tolerant or break the stereotypes by co-existing. In two cases the weather conditions were mentioned as factors that influenced the respondents' decision. One Spanish and Finnish citizen claimed that the best time would be a summer time to organize gay-friendly activities.



GRAPH 8. Seasons for gay-friendly events

Question ten brought data from 33 out of 40 respondents. The author suggested two divisions based on the range of variety of replies resulting from open-ended questions such as, countries as destinations and the second separation was cities and islands as destinations. All answers were written in the original version and for a better understanding and easier visualization, the respondents were grouped into two fields. The numbers of responses in both categories out of 33 participants are put in brackets. According to Veal, open-ended questions may be presented as the raw material by reproducing data manually without coding the information for further computer calculations (Veal 2010, 268).

Table 2. shows three countries, the Netherlands (7), Spain (7) and the USA (7), that have received equivalently the highest amount of seven responses each. On the second place with six responses, Sweden is classified. Then with one less reply Thailand was listed, followed by countries that have been mentioned only once written in the table. Also, the other side of the table displays Berlin and San Francisco as being the most gay-visited current destinations. Then in given order New York (4), Ibiza (3) and cities such as, Barcelona, London, Los Angles, Miami, Mykons have been mentioned twice. In composition to the 11th LGBT Travel survey 6,721 conducted among homosexual Americans top seven international destinations were chosen: Canada, Mexico most likely

being visited by lesbians, United Kingdom (14%), France (10%), Italy (9%), Germany (7%) and the Netherlands (6%). Furthermore, international destinations attract older interviewers than younger travelers. London, Paris, Rome, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Florence, Venice/ Berlin were classified as the top seven European cities. Due to the fact that American destinations were mentioned in high number, details information according top US destination is given. Los Angeles, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Chicago and Washington DC are the most visited places in the States in the past years. Also top urban areas are being more likely visited by younger lesbians and gay men as well as Provincetown that has also been mentioned by Matka Fair respondents, and Palm are preferred baby boomers travel destinations. (Community Marketing, Inc. 2006e, 5, 28, 37-38, 76). What is more, the 16th Gay and Lesbian Tourism Report conducted in 2011-2012 among 6,775 LGBT participants, showed which destinations were favorable by gays traveler in the past 12 months in Europe such as, England (7%), France (7%), Italy (6%), Germany (5%) and Spain (5%). (Community Marketing, Inc. 2011-2012b, 38).

TABLE 2.Current gay destinations

Countries as destinations	Cities and islands as destinations
The Netherlands (7)	Berlin (5)
Spain (7)	San Francisco (5)
The USA (7)	New York (4)
Sweden (6)	Ibiza (3)
Thailand (5)	Barcelona (2)
Brazil (1)	London (2)
Denmark (1)	Los Angles (2)
England (1)	Miami (2)
Greece (1)	Mykonos (2)
Italy (1)	Amsterdam (1)
Russia (1)	Curacao (1)
The Scandinavian countries (1)	Goa (1)
Turkey (1)	Helsinki (1)
	Malaga (1)
	New Orleans (1)
	Paris (1)
	Pattaya (1)
	Rio de Janeiro (1)
	Provincetown (1)
	Stockholm (1)

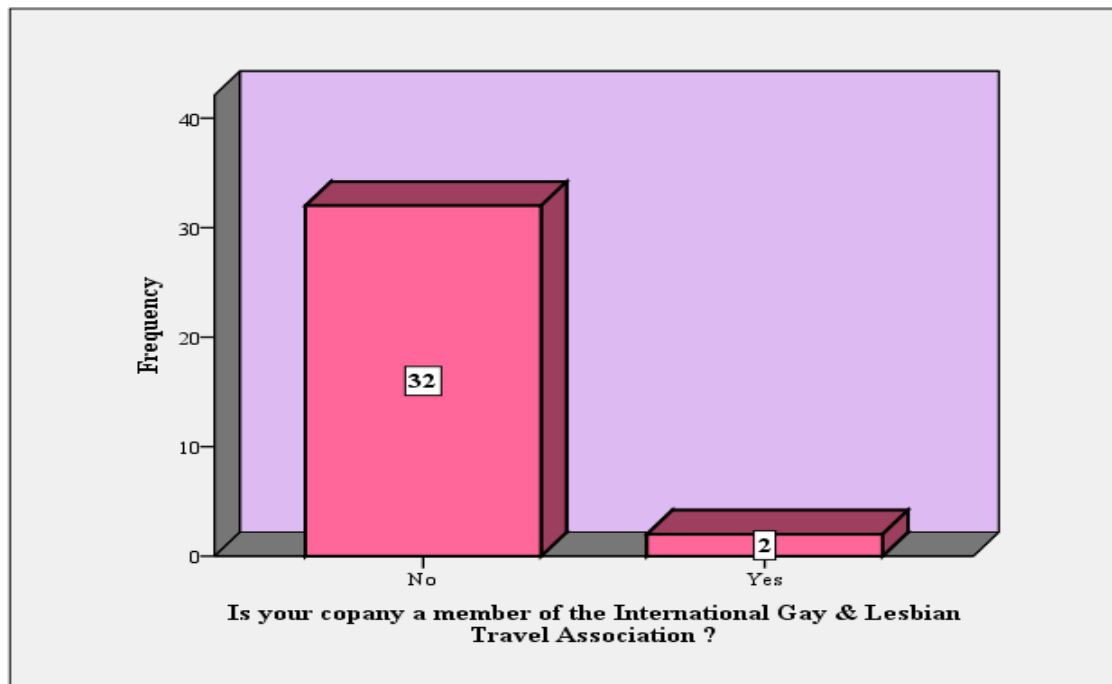
In the same way as in the previous table, two divisions of responses are introduced for better classification of future destinations, such as countries or cities as destinations. The number of responses (see Table 3) in both categories out of 19 participants, are put in brackets which are being estimated as the lowest rate of respondents in the whole questionnaire. Finland is the only country that has been mentioned more than once in accordance to the first grouping. Furthermore, cities such as Barcelona, Helsinki, Moscow are the three destinations listed twice in comparison to other results receiving only one reply.

Interesting is the fact that only four respondents out of 19, listed their home countries as future gay-friendly destinations. Finland and Helsinki were written twice, a British respondent picked London, and Spot was listed by Pole as city destination. One participant responded any country which was also counted as a valid value even though it is not a precise answer, but still it is meaningful.

TABLE 3. Future gay destinations

Countries as destinations	Cities as destinations
Finland (2)	Barcelona (2)
Any country (1)	Helsinki (2)
Black Sea countries (1) bordering by the coastline	Moscow (2)
Denmark (1)	Bangkok (1)
Germany (1)	Bilbao (1)
France (1)	Copenhagen (1)
Italy (1)	Kiev (1)
Jordan (1)	London (1)
The Netherlands (1)	Saint Petersburg (1)
Southern Europe (1)	San Francisco (1)
Thailand (1)	Sopot (1)
	Stockholm (1)

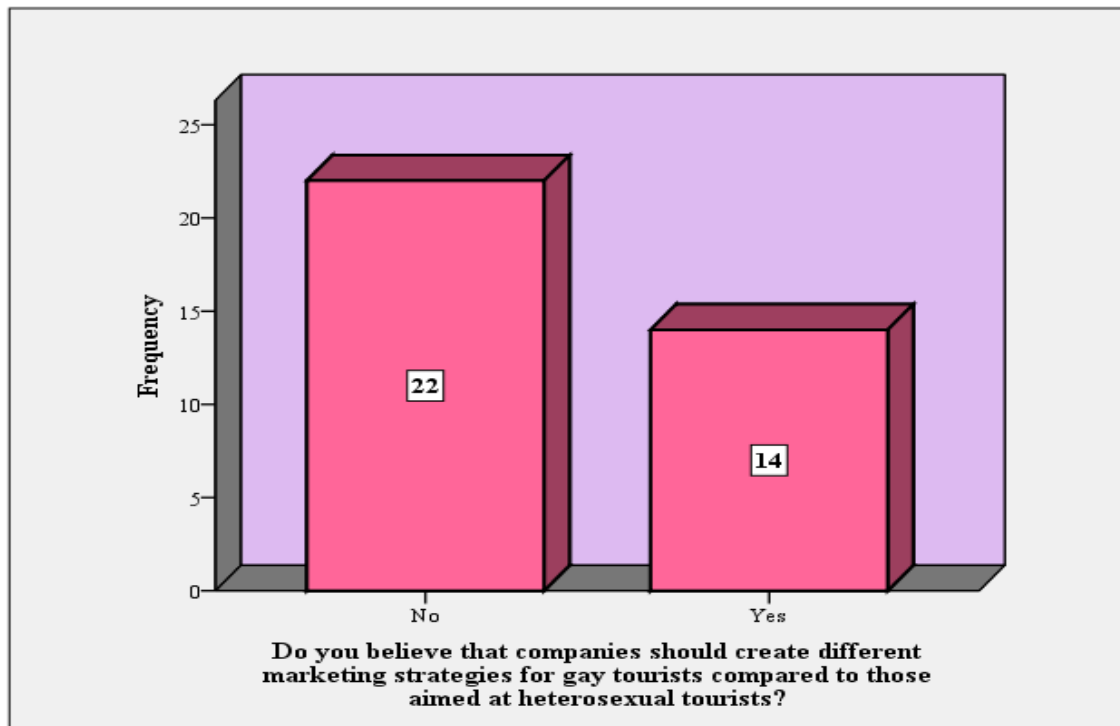
Only two Dutch citizens (5.9%) gave a positive answer in accordance to the question of belonging to IGLTA (see Graph 9), an absolute majority 32 (94.1%) were not members of that association. The total amount of respondents out of 40 was 34.



GRAPH 9. Members of the IGLTA

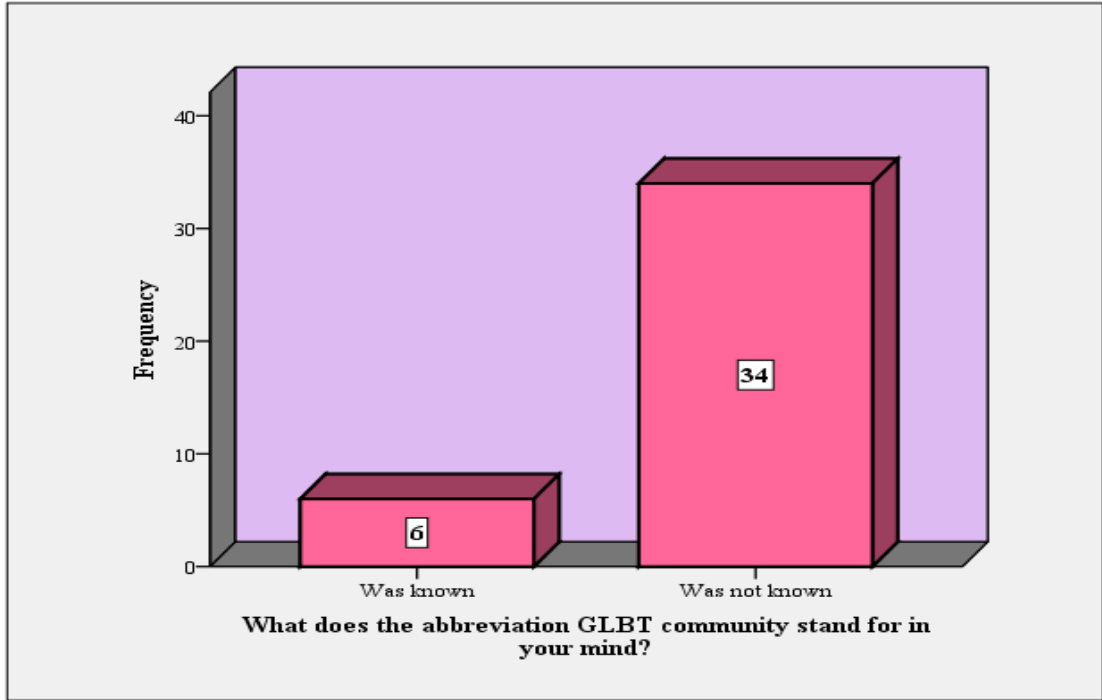
The question regarding to special marketing strategy (see Graph 10) received 34 responses out of the total number of participants (40). Almost two times larger 22 (61.1%) was the negative response regarding the question about different marketing strategies. The respondents pointed out that gay tourists are not different from others and should be treated as everyone else without any special treatment or strategies. At the same time, the market is not large enough what has been considered as a discouraging factor to analyze and examine that customer.

Compared to positive answer 14 (38.9%), some agreed that experiences and motivations of heterosexuals are likely different from holidays of homosexuals, and it was considered important to determine the differences and extend the marketing perspective by for instance showing gay couples in romantic gateways. Also others supported their decision by stating that since it is a different market and some companies have different marketing segments, such as families or couples, some gay information may be included targeting gays especially when companies want to attract these customers and are sure about their business increase through that promotion.



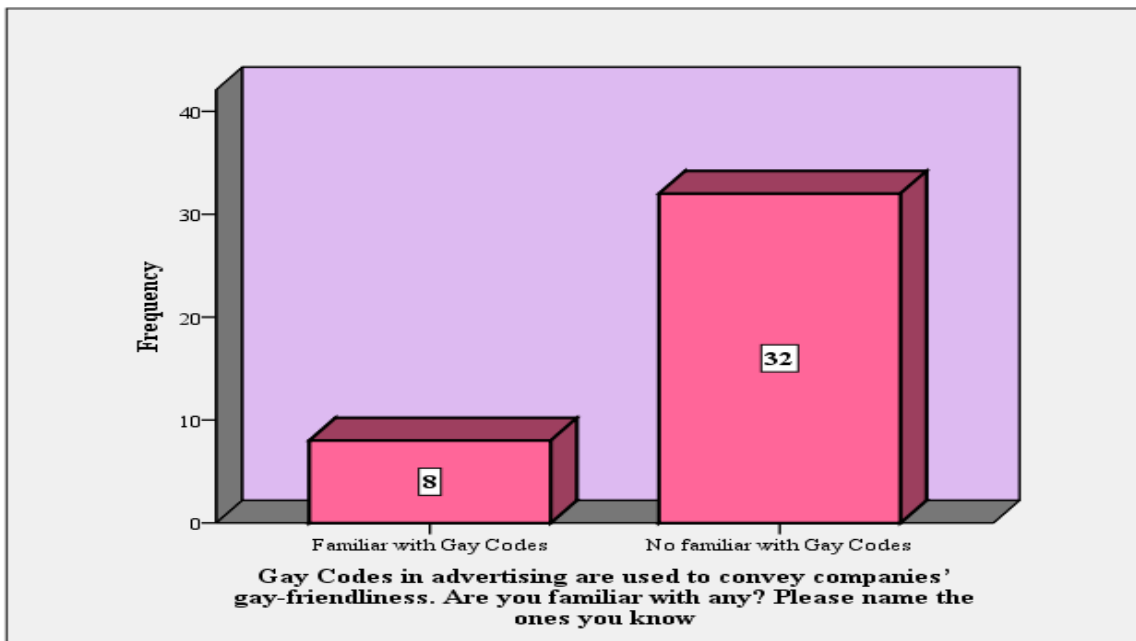
GRAPH 10. Need for different marketing strategies

All participants (40) took part in responding to question about GLBT abbreviation (see Graph 11). Surprisingly 34 (85%) participants were not well-aware of the basic abbreviation Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender community, which may draw the conclusion that representatives and their current employees were not necessary gay-friendly due to the fact that this abbreviation is used on gays' webpages, by gay associations, groups and gay communities. The respondents that were able to explain only two or three letters of the abbreviation were included in the majority group that was unable to explain the abbreviation. Only six (15%) participants were able to give a full answer, two of them being Dutch, and the single responses were given by Spanish, Georgian, Latvian and Egyptian participants.



GRAPH 11. Awareness of the abbreviation GLBT

As well as in the previous question, 40 out of 40 respondents participated. The overwhelming majority of 32 (80%) people were not able to list any gay codes. Out of 8 (20%) respondents the rainbow was mentioned eight times. Only one person knew that showing gay couples in advertising may be considered as gay code as well.



GRAPH 12. Gay Codes familiarity

Community Marketing Inc., in its 16th LGBT tourism study, tried to find out from where the travelers gathered information for the traveling plans. Mainstream destination brochures of destination as well as city-specific travel websites were the only two options mentioned before LGBT maps and travel guides. (Community Marketing, Inc. 2011-2012c.) If the company is aware of what to put and where to attract the attention from gays in mainstream advertisements, then they will be able to bring more customers to certain destinations. As the research has showed, the absolute majority were not able to recognize more than one symbol. The rainbow was picked as code that reminds them of gay community only. In addition, if in the brochure a company decides to include IGLTA, Lambda letter or Tag Approval logo heterosexuals will not have much idea what it stands for in comparison to homosexuals for whom it would be an additional advantage to choose a certain company.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

The entire process of writing the thesis was very interesting and learning as the topic was intriguing, new for the author and at the same time challenging due to lack of appropriate source of literature, good documents and its sensitivity in itself. At first it was very difficult to find the needed information because there were not many good books that discussed gay men, lesbian women, bisexual and transgender from the business perspective. Many books which were found discussed mainly elements such as, being discriminated in society, legal status, law, legislation, same sex marriage issue, liberalization of societies over the years, gay stories, biographies, clarification on homosexuality, identity, sexual orientation or health aspects like depression, alcoholism, powder drugs users addictions, HIV infection or risky sexual behavior. Also for that reason, it was a challenge for the author to find the convincing information in order to encourage the reader to further acquaint with the subject.

It is believed by the writer that the aim of the thesis was achieved and the process went smoothly as well as the information gathered from business representatives during Matka Fair held in Helsinki helped to draw some picture of the discussed matter in the sense of how a pink customer is being considered by companies and the level of knowledge, attitudes represented of employees which is showed in their familiarity with the subject. A majority of the respondents were unable to list gay codes which are additional, important and essential symbols that attract and consequently sell the product to pink customers. In addition, an absolute majority were not members of the IGLTA organization that has such significant influence on gay buyers.

As it has already been explained with the use of research conducted in the USA, more than half of LGBT representatives are more willing to use or buy product from companies that promote gay-friendliness. Furthermore, gay-friendly has been understood by some respondents as equality, services deducted gay content, employees' education, and obviously these responses are the correct answers. However, if we take into account the question that tried to measure gay-friendliness communication of current employee, 91,9% of the respondents stated that the company they worked for did not try to draw any extra attention of that sensitive market by any special marketing strategies. It is believed by the

author that when a company tries to reach different customers, with different backgrounds, from a variety of ethnic groups that may be white, yellow or black, when some commercials shows white men as being a couple with black women, children playing with grandparents and many others, why not show more often gay couples especially if it is a more valuable, affluent and loyal group compared to the straight buyer. The increasing number of pro-gay advertisements and company promotion on mainstream web publications for homosexuals, and at the same time heterosexual becoming accustomed to those practices would increase a mutual understanding that may find its reflection in a higher income of providers or suppliers.

Moreover, respondents were asked if they thought that companies should create different marketing strategies 61, 1% gave a negative response motivating the decision that they were not much different than other. Surely all human beings have the same needs but there are areas that gays are being affected from a gay point of view, and then by all other aspects that the individual has brought from home or the environment the individual was raised in. The author strongly disagrees with respondents who believe that there is no need for special strategies. Also for that reason, it was decided to include in chapter 3.2, examples of how different their lives are in comparison to straight persons, in order to make the reader aware of that even though they have a higher risk of perception, it is extremely important for companies to show a clear welcoming to gain the person's trust, which gays seek for to feel safe and comfortable especially during holiday time.

The author is satisfied with the responses received from questions about gay destinations and events organizing during off or peak season, where the chosen decision depended on the respondents. In many cases, the participants' perception of current gay destinations were similar to gay men, lesbian women, bisexual and transgender choice given in the Community Marketing Inc. research conducted in 2006 and 2011-2012. Also this makes the author believe that people were aware and have a correct perception on the given question. Furthermore, the provided answer according to seasons were very precise, honest, direct and ensured the author that still around the world there is a long process that needs to be undertaken in order to change attitudes of people. In addition, it demonstrated how necessary it is to be able to discuss in peace the future of the Gay Market based on clear arguments and not on prejudice. The information gathered through the questionnaires will help the reader understand that this niche market is underestimated and taken with great reservation because of the lack of sufficient knowledge, fear of companies not being

seen attractive anymore in the eyes of heterosexual customers due to gay-friendly policies or personnel's own anti-gay bias.

The overall on the practical part, the author was satisfied with the research method chosen in the process. It was very important to gather responses that were not classified in any codes in order to receive the individuals' own thoughts. However, open-ended replies are time consuming, therefore the questionnaire required time that some respondents were not able to spend. Some found this as a reason not to take part in the study, due to the fact that people prefer to go through questions very quickly without deep and independent thinking. Also as the author has mentioned previously, a certain group of people refused to participate due to the nature of the discussed topic, which in the author's opinion is unacceptable, especially since those people were not randomly picked, but representatives from and outside of Finland promoting its services abroad and working in the business field. That behavior is unprofessional. The conclusion can be derived that if a person is involved in a tourism business and is ignorant due to its own personal beliefs, the author assumed that the individual is also aware of potential financial loss for the company. Information is commodity and time is money. If there is a shortage on a certain product or service, it always has to be fulfilled sooner or later through certain actions. Judging is improper unless knowledge is proven on the topic. Based on the observed reactions of the respondents it has been supposed that their close-mindedness will always stop from seeing important changes in society. In addition, some respondents declared to fulfill the questionnaire on their own, which later was promised to be sent by mail, but none of the given samples was returned.

SPSS and Excel Programmes were used to analyze the collected information. Open-ended questions covered different reflections of respondents, which was very appreciated and desirable by the author, but on the end very time-consuming in order to do it correctly and provide trustful data. Entering and coding the data required much attention but the presented results were the best reward for the writer. The theoretical background was linked to the practical results that gave a meaningful outlook to researcher's goals.

All in all, the author was satisfied with the chosen topic due to the belief in the purchasing power of the discussed group as well. The research process is considered by author to have been a very educational experience. Furthermore, in the same way as other minorities such as, women were and still are being discriminating around the world, the situation on the

discussed niche market is changing, has changed and will change. Now the question is who and how is going to be dealt with in a professional and diplomatic way in order to make high revenues without insulating and forgetting any segment of the market.

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The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather preliminary data about gay friendly tourism services. It is conducted as a part of a thesis research on “Gay and Lesbian Market” done by the tourism student at Central Ostrobothnia University of Applied Sciences. Disclosed information will be relevant for academic purposes and will not be used by any third party. The questionnaire will take around 10 minutes to fill in. Please, mark your answers clearly with a cross ☒ if needed. Your participation is highly appreciated.

1. Gender

- Male Female

2. Age group

- 18-20 21-30 31-40 41-50
 51-60 61-70

3. Sexual Orientation

-   

4. Nationality

5. What is your current occupation?

6. What does gay-friendly mean in the tourism business in your opinion?

7. Do your current employees communicate gay-friendliness? What marketing strategies does your company use to approach the Gay Market? (Ex. gay mailing list, subscription to gay publications, visiting gay websites, and gay travel surveys).

8. What are the main factors that encourage gay tourists to travel to certain destinations?

- 9. If you would have to organize a gay-friendly event would you hold it during peak season or off season? Motivate your choice?**

- 10. Name three gay and lesbian destinations that are found in the World.**

- 11. What are the future gay-friendly destinations? List at least two.**

- 12. Is your company a member of the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA)?**

- 13. Do you believe that companies should create different marketing strategies for gay tourists compared to those aimed at heterosexual tourists?**

- 14. What does the abbreviation GLBT community stand for in your mind?**

- 15. Gay Codes in advertising are used to convey companies' gay-friendliness. Are you familiar with any? Please name the ones you know**

Thank you for your participation.