

Aloha Members of Hawaii's Media, March 2011

I recently hosted a meeting on how Civil Unions might affect tourism, featuring nine speakers.

It has been speculated that civil unions may present opportunities to boost our economy— especially with the hotel, "wedding planning" companies, and similar expected to benefit.

For your convenience, should you be interested, I have provided the notes from the meeting as background information to supplement your understanding of this issue.

While the notes were *not* thoroughly scrutinized for factual accuracy, we did a surface check and believe it to be overall reliable.

Mahalo,

Tom Brower

State Representative

Waikiki, Ala Moana, Kakaako

Chair, Tourism Committee

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Here are 5 interesting points:

1. To be effective, "It may take a gay-minded marketer to effectively market to gay people." Gays know discrimination, are sensitive to subtle cues.
2. Former Ala Moana Center marketer reports that gay travelers spend more on shopping and dining per day than any other traveler from continental US.
3. Hawaii needs to address its perception of being an intolerant place for gay couples. We need to create a market to attract progressive, educated individuals who want to visit a society that is open to all people.
4. One speaker states that anchor events (like parades and festivals) would help promote tourism in Hawaii by drawing people to travel here. This would help with "shoulder periods" when travel is down.
5. One speaker stated that, worldwide, gay travel represents \$84 billion.

Civil Unions and the Tourist Economy

February 22, 2011

10:00 a.m.

Room 312

Overview:

Part I: Notes from the "15th Annual Gay & Lesbian Tourism Report"

Part II: Notes from the Public Meeting

PART I. Notes from the "15th Annual Gay & Lesbian Tourism Report"

(SOURCE: Community Marketing Inc.)

Background Survey Information:

- This demographic profile represents 4,854 study participants who live in the United States.
- The median age was 47.
- 74% were gay or bisexual men, 25% lesbian or bisexual women, and 1% transgender.
- Of men, 5% consider themselves to be bisexual. Of women 10% consider themselves to be bisexual.
- 38% were single, 51% living with partner, and 11% in relationship not living with partner.
- 6% of entire panel had children under 18 living at home (16% of women reported children at home). 290 with kids = 192 lesbians and 98 gays
- Panel ethnicity was 85% White, 5% Latino, 4% African American, 2% Asian, 4% other/mixed.
- 41% live in a big city, 20% medium sized city, 15% suburb, 11% small city, 6% small town, 6%

rural, 1% resort community.

Points of Interest relating to Hawaii:

Top 25 US Destinations for American LGBT Travelers (Leisure + Business)

Percentage who visited and spent a night in a hotel (as combined leisure and business travel ranking). Percentage rounded to nearest percentage, ties in rankings are indicated.

Total Leisure

+ Business

- 1) New York City 27%
- 2) San Francisco 23%
- 3) Las Vegas 22%
- 3) Chicago 22%
- 3) Los Angeles 22%
- 6) Washington, DC 21%
- 7) Fort Lauderdale 14%
- 7) San Diego, CA 14%
- 9) Boston, MA 12%
- 9) Orlando, FL 12%
- 9) Philadelphia 12%
- 9) Seattle 12%
- 13) Miami 11%
- 13) New Orleans 11%
- 13) Palm Springs 11%
- 13) Atlanta 11%
- 17) Dallas 10%
- 17) Denver 10%
- 17) Phoenix 10%
- 20) Baltimore 8%
- 20) Napa County, CA 8%
- 20) Sonoma County, CA 8%
- 20) Portland 8%
- 20) Tampa 8%
- 25) Austin 7%
- 25) Hawaii 7%
- 25) Key West 7%
- 25) Provincetown 7%

Top 20 Leisure Destinations (Not Including Business Travel)

- 1) New York City 19%
- 2) San Francisco 17%
- 2) Las Vegas 17%
- 4) Chicago 14%
- 4) Los Angeles 14%
- 6) Washington, DC 13%
- 7) Ft. Lauderdale 11%
- 8) Palm Springs, CA 10%
- 9) Orlando, FL 9%
- 9) San Diego, CA 9%
- 11) Boston, MA 8%
- 11) Miami 8%
- 11) Philadelphia 8%
- 11) Seattle 8%

- 11) New Orleans 8%
- 16) Provincetown 7%
- 16) Sonoma, CA 7%
- 16) Napa, CA 7%
- 19) Hawaii 6%
- 19) Denver 6%
- 19) Phoenix 6%
- 19) Key West 6%

- Hawaii is not ranked in the top 10, by age or gender for leisure travel.

Top Travel Brands- these have done the best job promoting themselves to the LGBT community

- Top destination- Las Vegas
- Top hotel brand- Kimpton Hotels
- Best airline- American Airlines
- Most accommodating country- Netherlands

Brower's Staff Comments:

After skimming through the report, Hawaii appears to be underrepresented and will need to vastly improve their approach toward improving their goal of gay tourists.

PART II. Notes from the Public Meeting

It has been speculated that civil unions may present opportunities to boost our economy— especially in "gay tourism," with the hotel, "wedding planning" companies, and similar expected to benefit. How much of a boost it may provide, and what the Legislature can do legislatively to nurture this growth, are the goals of this public forum.

Nine Speakers:

A. Guy Underkofler, AQUA Hotels

Travel Alternatives Group (TAG) directory for GLBT travelers: many Hawaii hotels are now on it. We need to challenge Hawaii Tourism Authority to reach out for more event planning (civil union ceremonies/ receptions)

B. Kamalani Wilson, Lesbian & Gay Business of Hawaii (LGBH)

LGBH does local networking and business guides for gay travelers. Kamalani just got back from an LGBT tourism summit in Seattle that addressed gay businesses from Seattle all the way down to San Diego (west coast only). Kamalani is a member of the West-Pacific Chamber of Commerce. Hawaii is ranked 18 on a list of most desirable places for gays to travel

C. Alan Spector, Equality Hawaii

Critics of civil unions thought that civil unions would be harmful to the economy, but it won't. We could get a lot of business from California, which has a "domestic partnership law" that would honor civil unions. California does not have ceremonies for civil unions; people would be willing to come to Hawaii for that. Hawaii can create the ultimate romantic experience. Hawaii's 1998 constitutional amendment that limits marriage to one man and one woman may make Hawaii to be perceived as an intolerant place for gay couples/ travelers.

D. Don Bentz, also with Equality Hawaii

Need to establish a gay infrastructure. Gay friendly areas are called "Gay ghettos." We have an unofficial one in Waikiki. There is also the Castro district in San Francisco.

Don believes anchor events (like parades and festivals) would help promote tourism in Hawaii by drawing people to travel here.

Anchor event in Palm Desert: "The White Party" - huge concert, big name celebrities and advocates.

E. Janel Dulan, Honolulu Pride Festival Foundation

This organization, which has been in existence since 2007, does research and marketing for the gay community.

She attended a conference attended by 75-80 people from California, Arizona, New Mexico and Utah where she met with the National Pride President and International Pride President to discuss how to promote more gay travelers to our state, how do we make it more effective for gay youth, how to increase visibility, how to collaborate with other nonprofits and give back to their community.

Last year, 2500 paying customers attended the Honolulu Pride Festival. This parade has been around since 1989. Next one will be in September and is being geared as an international, statewide event (as opposed to city).

Janel would like to increase receipts from last year's parade and festival.

Post-meeting, Janel shared that she would like travel agencies to offer discounts (a little encouragement) to bring people here. Aqua Hotels has been helpful in offering discounts to entice travelers.

HPFF has given \$33000 generated from the Festivals to various non profits: Life Foundation, Gregory House, Save the Food Basket.

F. Daniel Chun, Honolulu Gay & Lesbian Cultural Foundation

His organization does the Rainbow Film Festival. This will be their 22nd one.

Daniel used to work for Marsha Weinert (7 years) and with Hawaii Visitors and Convention Bureau so he has a lot of knowledge on this.

We need to create a market to attract progressive, educated individuals who want to visit a society that is open to all people.

Hawaii seems to have been targeting businesses, but now needs to make the shift to tourism.

Hawaii Tourism Authority doesn't fully invest in the gay marketing so Daniel uses his organization to leverage exposure with the gay community, especially during "shoulder periods" when travel is down.

He says that Los Angeles does pride events 365 days per year.

G. JoAnne Adams, GLBT Caucus, Democratic Party of Hawaii

56.8% tourism in 2008 came from jurisdictions where same-sex recognition was involved.

There needs to be equal advertising.

Advertising suggestions:

- "Wide shots" (TV advertisement) should show various kinds of couples, like families with gay couples.
- Create a strong business directory/kiosk that make this information available.
- Utilize press releases- the gay community is hungry for recognition

Worldwide gay travel represents \$84 billion. If would be great if Hawaii could get even 1% of that.

G. Grant Kimura, Paradise Festival

Ala Moana Center reports that gay travelers spend more on shopping and dining per day than any other traveler from continental US.

Local markets that cater to gays: all fashion houses, Miller and Bud.

The media targets demographics watching them. For example, the Doritos' commercial during the Super Bowl showed gay couples.

The markets targeting gay travelers should be marketed by gay marketing firms. Gays know discrimination, are sensitive to subtle cues.

H. Rob Hatch, Honolulu Pride

At latest pride event, 15 of 33 vendors were "straight allies."

25% of gay travel is spent traveling to festivals

36% of gay visitors are from Canada

I. Tony Wagner, Human Rights Campaign (Washington, D.C.)

Works with Fortune 500 companies to incorporate non-discrimination practices

Need to utilize a more subtle approach in advertising to include the gay community.

Orbitz commercial shows actor wearing HRCs logo on his shirt, a subtle advertising for gay people

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