

**Marketing strategies to attract LGBTQ+ tourism in Puebla City****Estrategias de mercadotecnia para atraer turismo LGBTQ+ en la Ciudad de Puebla**

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**Abstract**

The present research aims to create tourism marketing strategies for making Puebla an attractive place for the LGBTQ+ segment, issues related to Puebla City as a gay friendly destination are addressed, as well as tourism marketing strategies to attract this segment taking into account discrimination and exclusion, as well as the lack of training in the area of customer service in touristic companies. The design of this research is quantitative, not experimental and transversal, with a descriptive and exploratory scope. The method of data collection is through an 18-question questionnaire with multiple choice, Likert scale and open answers, applied through the google forms platform to 164 LGBTQ+ tourists who have visited Puebla City. Based on the information obtained, it was determined that most tourists did not know that Puebla city was a gay friendly destination, so the present research proposes different strategies for the attraction of the LGBTQ+ market segment.

**LGBTQ+ tourism, Puebla city, Tourism marketing**

**Resumen**

La presente investigación tiene como objetivo la creación de estrategias de marketing turístico que hagan de Puebla un lugar atractivo para el segmento LGBTQ+, por lo que se abordan temas relacionados con la Ciudad de Puebla como destino gay friendly, así como estrategias de marketing turístico para atraer a este segmento tomando en cuenta la discriminación y exclusión, así como la falta de capacitación en el área de servicio al cliente en los establecimientos relacionados con el recibimiento de turistas. El diseño de la presente investigación es cuantitativo, no experimental y transversal, con alcance descriptivo y exploratorio. El método de recolección de datos fue mediante un cuestionario de 18 preguntas con respuestas de opción múltiple, escala de Likert y abiertas, aplicado mediante la plataforma de google forms a 164 turistas LGBTQ+ que han visitado la ciudad de Puebla. Con base en la información obtenida se determinó que la mayoría de los turistas no sabían que la ciudad de Puebla era un destino gay friendly, por lo que la presente investigación propone estrategias diversas para la atracción del segmento de mercado LGBTQ+.

**Turismo LGBTQ+, Ciudad de Puebla, Marketing turístico**

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## Introduction

Due to cultural changes in Mexico today, the non-binary community (people whose gender identity is neither male nor female) has had a greater presence in various areas of society, for example, the creation of the "Gay friendly" designation for tourist destinations that offer this community respect for their rights, guaranteeing safety and good treatment for those who decide to visit them.

In this sense, it is important to highlight the relevant events that have occurred over the years in terms of this market segment defined as LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer). According to Robert-Brady (2013) the term homosexual was created by activist Karl-Maria Kertbeny in 1868, defining people whose sexual preferences are lesbian, gay, transsexual, queer, pansexual or asexual, and which in English are recognized as: *lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, intersex and queer*.

Years ago, this group of people were not recognized or accepted by society, until "in 1897, the Scientific Humanitarian Committee was created in Berlin against Article 175 of the Penal Code<sup>1</sup>, for the social recognition of homosexuals and transsexuals, becoming the first public organization for the defense of gay rights in the world" (Noir, 2010). During those years, the first social marches of the LGBTQ+ community gave these groups the opportunity to make themselves known and, as a result, to achieve various benefits.

"Officially the gay movement began on June 28, 1969 in New York" (Noir, 2010), so, currently most celebrations of the LGBTQ+ community are commemorated every June 28 in many parts of the world, which promotes that people belonging to this segment make trips, especially on these dates, to cities like New York or Mexico, to be part of very large marches known as "*Pride*" (gay pride).

Currently, this community already has rights that must be respected, however, in some cases they continue to be infringed by different sectors of society around the world (homophobic people, groups of people with religions that do not accept the existence of different sexual preferences and genders, among others).

According to Clift *et al.* (2002):

The beginning of LGBTQ+ Tourism was during the Victorian era in the Grand Tour, in this period homosexuality was tolerable in the eyes of society, this Tour was aimed at aristocratic men from northern countries who traveled to the Mediterranean in search of culture, climate, and opportunities to manifest their real identity in a more ordinary way. According to the International Gay and Lesbian Tourism Association (IGLTA) in the late 1970s and even the 1980s, tourism saw a marked increase in gay vacations with pool parties, ocean views, and nightclubs. (p. 70)

LGBT tourism is defined as "a tourism modality aimed at the LGBT community, i.e. lesbians, bisexuals and transsexuals." (Sandra, 2016). Thus, different tourist destinations have opted to generate specific strategies to attract this segment, such is the case of Puebla, which has obtained the appointment of "Gay friendly" City granted by the Federal Ministry of Tourism (SECTUR), however, to date there are no specific tourism marketing tools, for the dissemination of this appointment, which attract the targeted segment and are known by service providers in the industry to avoid discrimination, exclusion and lack of training in the establishments. That is why this article aims to create tourism marketing strategies to attract LGBTQ+ tourism to Puebla and benefit businesses and tourist destinations in the city, through improved customer service, non-discrimination and non-exclusion.

## LGBTQ+ Movement

Throughout the years, there have been people with different tastes, orientation and sexual attraction, but have not been free to express it for fear of discrimination, to be recognized as a community, there have been several events throughout history.

<sup>1</sup> Which mentions that homosexual relations between male persons were to be punished.

In Mexico, starting in 1978, the first three lesbian-homosexual organizations emerged and according to Gringell (2016) each one had a different purpose:

The Lambda group, born out of the mixed group "Sex-Pol", dedicated to raise awareness and "show their face" in the struggle for homosexual and lesbian liberation and against state repression, was one of the three emerging lesbian-homosexual organizations in Mexico City starting in 1978. On the other hand, the FHAR group was formed in the spring of 1978, both to combat state and police repression and to organize a gay liberation movement. Although women participated in the group, the majority was made up of male homosexuals and transvestites. Finally, the Oikabeth organization, initially originated by a lesbian cell of the FHAR, soon broke away to form an autonomous lesbian organization (p. 5).

Each organization had a *raison d'être* that was respected and ensured the fulfillment of a common ideal: social and political equality.

Over the years people belonging to the LGBTQ+ community have had to struggle to assert their civil and political rights, just as heterosexual people enjoyed them.

According to Grinnell (2016):

With the implementation of human rights mechanisms in the late 1980s by the Mexican state, lesbian and gay activists centered their arguments on the liberal discourse of human rights; they used such discourse during the planning of the 1991 conference of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA), where they claimed, in their petition to the local government, the protection of human rights as a symbol of a modern, democratic state. This change in the dynamics of action illustrates why the participation of lesbians and gays in the construction of these discourses is important for the understanding of the institutionalization of certain sectors of the lesbian-gay movement in this period. (2016, p. 1)

The first gay pride march was held in 1979 in Mexico City. However, it was in 1980 that the movement and the struggle for the search and defense of social equality for the LGBTQ+ segment became official in Mexico, since until that year they had a more notorious presence, since the movement and different organizations had been existing for several years, but not being recognized, and as Grinnell (2016) points out "Since the beginning of their political organization process in 1978, Mexican lesbian and gay organizations have conceptualized their movement as international" (p. 3), thus expanding this movement not only to Mexican territory, but allying with organizations from other countries. Therefore, it is recognized as a social movement that for more than forty years has been consolidating in such a way that today there is talk of a specific tourism to serve this community in this specific event.

In recent years, concepts such as "inclusion", "pride", "equality" and "freedom of expression" have generated changes in political and social actions, such as same-sex marriage, legal sex change and legal protection against discrimination in labor, goods or services in general.

In 1998, the then Mexican Assemblyman, David Sánchez Camacho, together with activists of the women's movement and LGBT activists (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transsexuals) promoted the Sexual Diversity and Human Rights Forum, the first space for discussion in the Assembly -and in general in the country- that addressed the issue of LGBT populations with a human rights approach (Martínez, 2020). Where the importance of the creation of a policy directed towards the LGBT community is noted due to physical violence, discrimination and exclusion by society.

**LGBTQ+ population in Mexico**

Mexico City has promoted the promotion of the social rights of the LGBTQ+ community, by approving and enacting a law that generated a legal figure to realize the union between same-sex couples, which establishes a series of rights and obligations for those who have decided to enter into this agreement and that in its Article 2 mentions that the partnership of cohabitation "is a bilateral legal act that is constituted when two individuals of different or the same sex, of legal age and with full legal capacity establish a common home, with the will of permanence and mutual assistance" (Encinas, 2006).

The National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) reported that "in the 2010 population census, in the country there are around 229 thousand households composed of same-sex couples" (Senado de la República, 2017).

Likewise, according to the National Survey of Values in Youth 2012 "out of 5 thousand young people interviewed, 3 percent of men indicated being homosexual, 1.3 bisexual and 94 heterosexual. 1.5 percent of women indicated being bisexual, while 1.4 defined themselves as lesbian" (Senado de la República, 2017).

According to (Flores, 2017) from 2010 to 2015 there was a 153% increase in the number of same-sex marriages, going from 689 to 1,749 registrations, of the 689 same-sex marriages in 2010, 55.2% were between men and 44.8% between women. By 2015, almost 2 thousand links were counted, which took place in Mexico City representing 82% of the total events of this segment; Coahuila, 9.7%; Colima, 4.1%, and Guerrero 1.1%.

**LGBTQ+ Tourism**

Nuevo (2015) defines LGBT Tourism as "that made by people belonging to this group who come to consume tourism and leisure products related to gay-friendly stores, restaurants, cafes, bars, nightclubs, saunas, beaches".

Gay tourism, LGBTQ+ tourism, homosexual tourism or gay friendly tourism is defined as a type of tourism aimed at the LGBTQ+ community, which is especially popular in Europe, Latin America and some North American countries.

Organizations have been created with the aim of promoting gay tourism. The main one is the International Gay and Lesbian Tourism Association.

This type of tourism has been expanding over the years, so much so that, during 2017, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) published its second report on LGBT tourism and it is through the IGLTA that for the first time LGBT tourism is defined as:

Development and marketing of tourism products and services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Some of these products and services are designed and intended specifically for LGBT travelers, for example, honeymoons and marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples or accommodations or tours designed exclusively for gay men or lesbian women. In other cases, destinations or travel service providers such as airlines and hotel chains seek to ensure that the LGBT consumer, who visits their destination or purchases their product or service feels welcome and respected. (Sosa, 2019, as cited in UNWTO, 2017 p.14).

There are several important factors that influence the decision to visit a destination, such as: personality, expected expectations of the destination, tourist attractions, attractive offers, gender, sources of information about the destination, sexual orientation and type of experience you want to live during the trip, so to consolidate strategies that attract this tourist segment there should be no place for discrimination, exclusion and lack of training in the area of customer service.

**LGBTQ+ Tourism in Puebla**

The city of Puebla de Zaragoza is the capital and most populated city of the state of Puebla and the fourth most populated in the entire country. It is a city in the east-central area of Mexico, southeast of Mexico City. It is known for its culinary history, colonial architecture and handicrafts.

As Delgado (2002) notes:

The high mobility has caused it to be recognized not only as an average city of enormous regional weight, but for many it constitutes an ideal place to access an offer of clandestine sexual encounters in a context that offers the possibility of going unnoticed; this, under the concepts in which the city is thought of in its superficial and anonymous relationships (p. 44).

In March 2016, Puebla obtained the certificate of "gay friendly" city granted by the Federal SECTUR, to make way in this way to the LGBTQ+ community, providing environments of safety and confidence when visiting it, knowing that the main characteristics that this appointment seeks in the destinations is a society respectful of sexual diversity. It is a mix of inclusive policies, legal protections, tourism and commercial offerings.

According to figures shared by the Association of Tour Operators (ATP) LGBTQ+ tourism in this city has had a growth of 30% since its certification as a destination for this sector, so more and more diverse service offers are appearing, giving different attractive options such as bars, restaurants, destinations, nightclubs, among others.

Carlos Rosas Flores president of the ATP commented that "the Angelópolis and the nine magical towns, are the most visited places by those who are part of this community", for his part, Hernandez (2018), indicated:

According to data from their organization, travel agencies reported going from selling 10 packages to 13 per month purchased by people from this community, this increase has led entrepreneurs to create more attractive packages which include discounts and promotions in conjunction with hoteliers and restaurateurs, as it has been identified that LGBTQ+ people spend 40% more than average or traditional tourists. (Hernandez, 2018)

### **Tourism marketing**

For Kotler *et al.* (2011) marketing is "the science and art of attracting, maintaining and growing the number of profitable customers" (p. 41).

Highlighting the importance that marketing is not only sales and advertising, but also involves a series of tasks to be developed and analyzed in order to make good decisions, it is important to apply it to tourism in order to improve.

The model of the four P's of marketing (product, price, place and promotion) is one of the strategies to be used to define how to solve or propose a product, establish a place of sale and how to promote it, are the steps to follow for the tourism sector, where not all products sold are tangible, because they are experiences, which must have marketing strategies to be positioned.

When talking about marketing, it is important to first identify the needs and desires of the market to which the proposal is being directed, analyze the demands required and not taken into account, and thus reach a phase in which companies must make decisions to satisfy these needs, in the specific case of tourism, these decisions will be crucial for its development and growth.

According to Kastenholz (2012, as cited in Zurita *et al.* 2019):

Marketing presents a strategic approach that complements and allows generating competitive advantages in the development of a tourist destination; which facilitates the creation of an integrated and sustainable marketing for the tourist destination that is complemented by social marketing, since it contributes to a more equitable and sustainable planning and management of a tourist destination.

According to Vega (2015) tourism marketing "was born as an analysis tool considering that the first international collaborative efforts on this topic were made at the beginning of the last century, being the result of professionals from different countries, mainly European" (p. 3), thus making this marketing a transforming agent.

Social marketing is also linked to tourism, as it helps to understand what the final consumer needs, wants or is interested in, with the aim of improving his or her well-being and that of society.

Tourism is a sector that faces various social problems that cannot be ignored, such is the case of LGBTQ+ tourism, which needs to be addressed urgently, so that the treatment and customer service should be training topics in tourist destinations, as well as marketing should be oriented not only to obtaining economic benefits, but to the absolute satisfaction of the customer.

### **Marketing strategies**

There are different ways of attracting customers to a product and service, and to do so, the most important thing must be deciphered: how to do it and what strategies to use. Thus, Boone & Kurtz (2014) argue that:

A marketing strategy is a firm-wide program to select a particular target market and satisfy the consumers in that market through a careful combination of the elements of the marketing mix, which are a subset of the overall marketing strategy, with the strategies the firm seeks to have its target identified, and thus direct all its efforts to satisfy its needs. (p. 4).

### **Methodology**

The research design is quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional, with documentary and field technique, and descriptive and exploratory scope.

The data collection method used was the questionnaire, and the universe contemplated for the application of the instrument were people of the Mexican Republic belonging to the LGBTQ+ community. The sample obtained by non-probabilistic and convenience sampling consisted of 164 people who met the following characteristics: over 18 years of age and residing in the Mexican Republic. The questionnaire was sent through social networks from March 11 to April 2, 2021. The questionnaire used consisted of 18 items with 5-level responses on a Likert scale, as well as some others with multiple-choice answers and one with an open response.

### **Results**

Of the 164 people surveyed, 64 of them were bisexual, 52 gay and 24 lesbian, these being the predominant sexual orientations in the questionnaire; 14 of them identify with queer sexual orientation, 6 pansexual and 2 transgender, most of these people are between 18 and 25 years old, which for this study means that most of them are young.

With respect to the preferences and tourist tastes experienced by the LGBTQ+ segment in the service provided by restaurants, tourist guides and tourist service providers in general in the City of Puebla, it was detected that more than half of the people surveyed are satisfied with the treatment provided by these, however, in the hotel service branch in the responses it was reflected that more than half are not completely satisfied so it is of utmost importance the implementation of tourism marketing strategies to improve the service in hotels.

Of the people surveyed, 150 did not know that the City of Puebla had the Gay Friendly designation, which makes clear the need to disseminate this designation to attract tourists from the LGBTQ+ community, taking as a reference events such as the gay pride march (in which 25% of those surveyed have participated), some of the events carried out by María José Flores Serrano, 'Majo', founder of the Association for the Protection of Sexual Plurality and Human Rights (APPS) as some of the most representative, as well as the parties in gay nightclubs and the event of Miss Puebla that could detonate tourism.

Similarly, it was defined that the expenditure for tourism in another city was divided into: 28% between \$1500 and \$2000 pesos, 19.5% between \$3000 - \$3500, 18.3% between \$2000 - \$2500, 17.1% between \$1000 - \$1500 and finally 17.1% of \$3500 or more; which indicates that the attraction of this segment to the city of Puebla could represent economic benefits.

On the other hand, 80.2% of the people surveyed responded that they have not felt excluded, 72.8% have not felt offended and 59.3% have not been discriminated against as tourists in the city of Puebla; however, poor treatment by public service providers such as police and tourist information office personnel stands out. Likewise, it was detected that personnel of tourist establishments (cafeterias and restaurants) provide poor service to tourists in this community, while at the same time there have been social situations such as insults to their person, mistreatment by citizens and establishments, verbal aggression, threats, mistreatment in customer service and physical aggression such as hitting and pushing. Therefore, the people surveyed highlighted that in order to make Puebla a destination to which they would return, they would have to improve aspects such as security in the places they visit, they would also prefer to have more focused and exclusive places for them, including special themes, as well as better and more publicity about the establishments and events that already exist aimed at the LGBTQ+ segment.

Regarding the establishments visited by tourists of this market segment, restaurants occupy the first place with 95.1%, followed by shopping malls with 93.9%; where the reviews and opinions of other people are considered important to visit them. In terms of tourist attractions, the people surveyed prefer to visit natural attractions first, cultural attractions second, and spas third.

Finally, it was observed that the means they use for tourism in order of importance are: reservations on websites, applications for lodging rentals and travel agencies.

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### Conclusions

The creation of tourism marketing strategies that guarantee safety for the LGBTQ+ community in the city of Puebla, can result in an increase of visits highlighting the importance of creating events specifically aimed at the community, where they are guaranteed protection, equality and respect from attendees and public servants.

With this inclusive perspective, the Attorney General's Office of Puebla is at the forefront in investigating crimes affecting the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, transvestite, intersexual and queer (LGBTQ) community.

In such a way that the influence of tourism marketing in this segment is an important factor for the detonation of tourism in the City of Puebla, so the following proposals are presented as:

- Creation of cultural events aimed at the LGBTQ+ community.
- Creation of dance, film and art festivals.
- Leisure and recreational activities exclusively for that community.
- Generate assertive advertising in social networks and media to publicize the city as a gay friendly destination.
- Create a concrete proposal for gay pride month.

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