

WorldPride 2019: An Inclusive Approach to Travel Marketing



Jamie Scalici, Account Director, Public Relations, [Mower](#)

The historic [WorldPride 2019](#) in New York City marked the celebration's first time in the U.S. Spanning the entire month of June, the largest Pride celebration in the world had hospitality brands across the country rolling out the welcome mat for LGBTQ+ visitors with sponsorships, Pride-themed offers and amenities, social media messaging and more. Even though WorldPride 2019 has come to an end, the work doesn't stop when WorldPride travelers return home. The LGBTQ+ market is one that the travel industry is embracing year-round—both in the name of equality and smart business.

GLAAD's [Accelerating Acceptance 2017](#) survey shows that while 12% of the general population identifies as LGBTQ+, that percentage rises to 20% among the 18–34 age group. The same study shows that 73% of the general population reports they know someone who is gay or lesbian, and the majority of millennials (63%), Gen Xers (53%) and baby boomers (51%)

consider themselves allies. An inclusive [marketing](#) approach will pay off not only with the growing number of Americans who identify as LGBTQ+, but with the majority of Americans who support them.

As attitudes shift, there is more of an expectation within the LGBTQ+ community of mainstream acceptance, and that extends to their approach to travel decisions, giving rise to a best practice: Rather than treat LGBTQ+ travelers as a homogenous market, target this segment as parents, partners, friend groups and singles with diverse needs and interests. That means making sure the community is represented in the imagery and messaging you use in mainstream marketing, whether you're promoting family appeals or wedding services. In fact, 68% of LGBTQ+ parents prioritize a child-friendly environment over an LGBT-friendly environment, according to a global study by Community Marketing, Inc.

With that in mind, here are additional best practices to consider:

- Be sure your employees have proper training in making this segment feel genuinely welcomed and comfortable, starting with understanding the vocabulary associated with this market. The proliferation of relationship references (partner, husband, wife) and pronouns (he, she, they, sie, zie) can take time to learn and implement. In advance of WorldPride, Westchester County Tourism offered free training for hotel staff members.
- Check out igлта.org, the website of the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association, to see what other travel brands and organizations are doing and for a calendar of upcoming Pride and LGBTQ+ events and festivals. Joining IGLTA is a great way to ensure your LGBTQ+-friendly promotions get direct exposure with your target market.
- Consider whether to tie in with local, national and international LGBTQ+ events such as WorldPride, Gay Games, World OutGames, National Coming Out Day and

International Family Equality Day. Include them on your social media calendar and craft messaging and social contests around them. For events in your local market, create packages and offers for incoming visitors and look for ways to get involved as a sponsor.

- Review your employee policies and make sure they are as inclusive and welcoming as your marketing outreach.
 - Support and partner with local and national nonprofit organizations dedicated to LGBTQ issues, as well as local businesses owned by or serving the LGBTQ+ community.
 - If you have more than 500 employees and your business is not already tracked by Human Rights Campaign's [Corporate Equality Index](#), ask to participate. The CEI annually scores large private businesses on their treatment of LGBTQ+ employees and consumers.
 - For hotels: Include information on LGBTQ+-friendly attractions on the destination page of your website, in the in-room guest directory and at the concierge desk.
 - For destinations and CVBs: Have a landing page or microsite for LGBTQ+ travelers with a welcoming statement and links to local Pride events, LGBTQ+-friendly attractions, hotel packages and community resources.
 - For spas and other wellness entities: Create a promotion that ties a discounted spa treatment to a donation to an organization serving the mental health needs of the LGBTQ+ community, such as the Trevor Project or It Gets Better.
-



About the Author: Scalici has been with Mower since 2011, excelling at engaging media through strategic pitching, and designing and executing special promotions and events and supporting brand campaigns and leading media relations for various clients across the country.