As we all grow and branch out within the industry as educated professionals, it is imperative to keep up on the ever-changing trends that directly affect our businesses. LGBT tourism is a niche market that has accelerated in recent years. With seventeen U.S. states and many other countries including Scotland recognizing gay unions in the past month, it is not outrageous to trust that this number will only continue to expand over time.

As more states and countries legalize gay marriages, more gay couples are seeking unions, and furthermore, choosing destinations for their subsequent honeymoons. Some gay couples have been waiting for years and even decades to finally unite with one another. In that time, these couples have accumulated ample financial resources to pay for extravagant weddings and vacations. Additionally, although only an estimated five percent of the population identifies as LGBT, due to the not being able to legally unite until recently, the number of members in the LGBT community that will wed in the coming years will be exceptionally larger than if they would have had the ability to be married all along. As industry professionals, it is important that we are aware of the changes and growth of this market and prepare to capitalize on the emerging demand for LGBT weddings and vacation travel in the years to come.

The LGBT market is growing with momentum as they receive more rights as well as maintain exceptional finances, as they are typically dual income families with no kids. Following the growth of this market over the coming years will surely yield significant business opportunities in virtually all aspects of the tourism and hospitality industry.
Gay Marriage Expects to Boost Hospitality Around the World

James Bilter

Growing acceptance and legalization of same-sex marriages around the world will fuel the travel industry through the expected increase in spending by the LGBT community. Countries such as the Netherlands, New Zealand, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, and France, among other nations, have already legalized same-sex couples. Major hotel and airline companies are appealing directly to the LGBT market. Even gay cruises have now reached international locations such as Cambodia, Vietnam, Croatia, Brazil, India, and other parts of Asia. Countries and companies who reach out with open arms to this market are likely to reap the benefits.

Data released in November indicated that in 2014, LGBT tourism spending is expected to reach $200 billion internationally for the first time. Currently the United States accounts for $56.5 billion of LGBT travel spending, followed by Brazil with $25.3 billion. The European LGBT community is expected to reach $66 billion on tourism in 2014. With gay marriage becoming legal in many countries, the potential for destination weddings will become an attractive market globally, considering there have been many same-sex couples waiting to be wed. Acceptance of the LGBT and their rights has allowed people to be open and feel comfortable when traveling. Some destinations such as San Francisco and New York have long welcomed gay tourists, but more recently smaller markets in the United States and around the world have begun to market to the LGBT demographic. Even though acceptance towards LGBT travels worldwide has significantly increased, safety and legal protection are still concerns for gay travelers. These travelers still need to research the rights of LGBT issues in the destinations where they plan to travel. Nevertheless, the increased acceptance towards the LGBT community has opened the door for same-sex couples to travel to new destinations around the world.

Will the IOC Include Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) After Sochi?

Timothy Buck

A recent article published on the Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association (GLISA) website presents the issue that the International Olympic Committee (IOC) may be considering forcing future Olympic host communities to “abide by a specific anti-discrimination rule modeled on the Olympic Charter’s Principle 6.” A charter that states “any form of discrimination with regard to a country or a person on grounds of race, religion, politics, gender or otherwise is incompatible with belonging to the Olympic Movement.” GLISA is currently suggesting that the additions of “Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI)” be added to this charter.

With over two hundred participating nations, thousands of athletes, and millions of viewers around the world, it is imperative that this leading international sporting event, the Olympics, be represented appropriately by all. “Persecution on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity can take a variety of forms and these contravene the basic tenets of international human rights law.”

The Olympic brand is one that represents all of the participating nations. According to the Sochi Olympic website “The Sochi 2014 brand encompasses our commitment to the values symbolized by the Olympic rings, demonstrating our continued support for the universal ideals of the entire Olympic Movement.” If this truly is the vision set forth by the Sochi Olympics, many would consider the games a failure. Universal ideals and the symbolic rings are not represented in a community with such backlash against the LGBT community. The rings represent the joining of the five areas of the world, the union of all representing nations, and all people.

Moving forward, the IOC should consider how their brand is being showcased in host cities around the globe. The Olympic Games are a unique opportunity where collectively, as a world, we come together in the spirit of healthy competition. These cities should be held to a higher standard of equality for all and genuinely exemplify the IOC and their brand.
No one deserves to be discriminated against, especially while on vacation. With the recent discrimination against the LGBT community during the Olympics in Sochi, Russia, it is important that the LGBT community is not discouraged from traveling. Many places in the world are very forward thinking, supportive, and advertise towards the LGBT community. Hopefully, overtime these stricter countries start opening up and being more accepting, but until then it’s important for the LGBT community to know the best places to travel to avoid discrimination.

On a recent survey 37,653 people in 39 different countries were asked if they were accepting to the LGBT community and the US was almost split with 60% saying they were accepting. Within the US there are certain locations that are more accepting; these being Washington DC, Pasadena, CA, Seattle, WA, Cambridge, MA, and Atlanta, GA, St Louis MI, Madison, WI, Salt Lake City, UT, Oakland, CA, Arlington, VA, and San Francisco, CA. San Francisco is even sometimes referred to as the “Gay Disneyland.”

Internationally the most LGBT tolerant countries are Spain, Germany, Canada, Czech Republic, Australia, France, Britain, Argentina, Italy, and the Philippines. Germany recently opened its first gay couple-counseling center showing its movement towards equality. In the Philippines they hold a gay pride march to show support for those in the LGBT community.

However, some places the LGBT community should avoid would be Nigeria, Jordan, Senegal, Uganda, Ghana, Egypt, Tunisia, Indonesia, Palestinian Territories, and Kenya. In some of these places it is actually against the law and can be punishable by jail time if found out by their law enforcement.

It is always important to research any area you are traveling to, especially internationally, and understand their culture. Safety is always a concern when traveling to foreign locations, but for the most part the world is accepting to travelers.

“What if I told you that neither Michael Sam’s announcement to the world that he was gay nor Jason Collin’s signing by an NBA was the biggest story for LGBT acceptance in sports this year? Would you believe me? What if I told you that one of the biggest accomplishments this year for LGBT athletes was made by a 21 year old, heterosexual Swede? Would you believe me? Take a look at Gabriel Landeskog and the other 65 advocates from all 32 NHL teams and see the difference they’ve made in support of the You Can Play Project.

With the Colorado Avalanche’s Captain Landeskog signing on, the NHL became the first North American sports league to have at least one member from every one of its member teams join in the advocacy of LGBT acceptance in sports through the You Can Play Project. You Can Play is an organization that is “dedicated to ensuring equality, respect and safety for all athletes, without regard to sexual orientation and works to guarantee that athletes are given fair opportunity to compete, judged by other athletes and fans alike, only by what they contribute to the sport or their team’s success.” With the NHL now having all 32 teams with representatives to the cause, it is the hope of the You Can Play Project to integrate these values into the respective team’s programs and daily culture. The 66 players within the NHL, along with the countless supporters, coaches, and athletes from high school athletics to professional sport, are all standing together to create an atmosphere of inclusion for all.

It is no surprise that the NHL was the very first league to stand up for the rights of inclusion for LGBT athletes in this organization as You Can Play’s founder is Patrick Burke, a former scout for the Philadelphia Flyers and son of Toronto Maple Leafs General Manager, Brian Burke. The genesis for the program began when Patrick’s brother Brendon died in a car crash at the age of 21 in 2010. Brendon was a gay athlete and an advocate for LGBT tolerance in sport and in life. Patrick took his brother’s message to heart and campaigned for the same cause with the creation of the You Can Play Project follow his brother’s passing. It is the hope of the organization to gain ambassadors from the other major North American sports to carry out the message and importance of inclusion inside and outside of the locker room.

No matter the fan, player, team, or league involvement in LGBT advocacy, the message remains plain and simple: If you can play, you can play.
An interview with Jason Wilkins.

Brooklyn Nets center Jason Collins was the first male professional athlete to come out as openly gay. How do you feel that Collin’s courageous act will change the scope of sports 5 years from now?

I feel what Jason Collins did was extremely courageous to say the least. Being the first openly gay player in professional sports is a huge deal to people because there has never been a player who has openly come out in the public eye. He will most certainly help pave the way for players in all sports to no longer hide their sexuality. In five years and further into the future, I feel like we will be seeing more and more athletes coming out and helping not only other athletes, but all people in the LGBT community to feel comfortable about who they are.

Michael Sam, a defensive end entering the NFL draft from Missouri, will soon be the second male professional athlete to come out as openly gay. Do you feel he will be readily accepted into an NFL locker room? Is the time now?

The time for openly gay athletes to be accepted into the locker room may be now. Jason Collins coming out as the first gay professional athlete could definitely have helped Michael Sam make his decision to come out before he was drafted. Only time will tell whether or not he will be accepted in the locker room. I am sure the situation will spark mixed emotions from teammates, but in today’s society, people have to learn how to accept reality and respect individual decisions.

Last season, the Miami Dolphins had a player leave the team because of verbal and physical harassment and bullying from other players. Furthermore, in an ESPN poll, 86% of players said they would be okay with a gay teammate. This still means that 14% of players would not be okay with it. Do you think this bullying trend could continue as the door opens for more athletes to come out as gay? Or has the Dolphins dispute opened eyes and allowed teams to put an end to this?

I don’t believe the bullying will continue regardless of the situations in the locker rooms. The Miami Dolphins-Richie Incognito disaster was really the first of its kind that has gone public. I know I have never really heard of bullying going on within a professional sport team. I think in today’s sport culture, players are more respectful of teammates because most are motivated and focused on winning championships. Athletes who understand certain consequences keep their noses out of situations like the bullying that went on with the Miami Dolphins. However, I think it is important for veterans on any team to step up and become better leaders to make sure things of that nature do not happen. I now believe that teams and organizations will do a better job of understanding what is really going on within the locker rooms, and put an end to any negativity that could damper their image.

Over the last 10 years, many states have enacted laws legalizing gay marriage. This is a very controversial topic in America, but more states are seemingly leaning towards legalizing gay marriage. How will the future change as state laws continue to affect gay athletes in regards to them openly coming out?

Well, we all know we can’t see into the future, but we can try to plan for it. Gay marriage has been such a controversial topic in America and will continue to be as long as some states do not allow it. The states that have approved gay marriage have certainly broken down barriers for the rest of the country to consider. Will we as a country ever fully accept the idea of gay marriage? That is something we may never know, but we are making positive strides to help the LGBT community and gay athletes as well. We are a unique country with a wide range of diverse individuals and we need to accept each other. A quote from Frank Ocean really exemplifies how I feel about this topic; “Marriage is not between a man and woman, but between love and love.”
As the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi have come and gone, the debate on anti-gay laws in Russia and about 82 other countries has been brought to the forefront and continues to be discussed. Last June, Russia passed a law that banned any pro-gay “propaganda” that was accessible to children. The bill, being very vague, could stretch to prohibit any “pro-gay expression, such as public statements, rallies, rainbow flags, rainbow nesting dolls, or same-sex hand-holding,” says Sarah Dougherty, of the Global Post, in her article about six openly gay athletes competing at Sochi. Under heavy global scrutiny, Russian President Vladimir Putin tried to reassure athletes that they can “feel safe” during their competition. Speaking to Russia’s hope that the LGBT “issue” will straighten itself out by passing anti-gay laws, openly gay Canadian speed skater, Anastasia Busis told the Globe and Mail “I could never promote that message of concealing who you are with all of this going on in Russia.” Busis, like many other openly gay athletes at the Winter Olympics, stood by the LGBT community through the “six-finger salute” representing Principle Six of the Olympic Charter’s anti-discrimination principle or other means.

In order to move forward in becoming a country and world that truly stands by inclusion, there will be many firsts. Sport has always had a way of bringing together people that otherwise would not have crossed paths. With the issues during the Winter Olympics and athletes going public with their sexual orientation, sport can once again become a unifying platform that raises awareness to the human rights entitled to the LGBT community as they are to anyone and open the floor for conversation and understanding.
Every semester, the Senior Professional Development Seminar class hosts an event. This semester we will be hosting an elegant evening affair that will feature several casino-like aspects. Affectionately called “Casino Night,” this event focuses on what the Senior Seminar class has accomplished throughout the semester and is a way for the class to give back to its community. All proceeds from this year’s Casino Night will benefit the Senior Seminar Endowed Scholarship Fund and The Water Project. The Water Project is a newly introduced sustainability project that the Senior Seminar class has decided to participate in and will be a long lasting legacy of corporate social responsibility for senior seminar classes to come. This year’s Casino Night will be held at The Chateau, which is located at 2154 Bridge Street in Philadelphia, on May 2nd. The Chateau is one of the Delaware Valley’s most luxurious banquet rooms and has an extensive background in hosting special events and in food and beverage operations through catering services. Casino Night will feature a full dinner buffet, entertainment through music and mock casino games, raffles, and an open bar for those over the age of 21. Keep an eye out for further details about this wonderful Casino Night event and how to purchase a ticket in order to attend!