Cruising on Changing Tides: Opportunities & Challenges in Developing China’s LGBTQ+ Travel Market

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CRUISING ON CHANGING TIDES
DEVELOP CHINA’S LGBTQ+ TRAVEL MARKET
Today’s Agenda

- Historical, Cultural and Policy Backdrop of China’s LGBTQ+ Community
- Case Study: PFLAG China’s Annual Convention + Cruise Trip
- Recommendations for Developing China’s LGBTQ+ Travel Market
- Q&A
CULTURAL BACKGROUND
Cultural Backdrop

China is an atheistic country and it highly values Confucianism.
Filial Piety

An estimated 20 million Chinese gay men are in heterosexual marriage.
Same-sex Relationships in Chinese History

Duàn Xiù
Same-sex Relationships in Arts and Literature

Left: Chinese Poet Yuan Zhen
Right: Kun Opera Lian Xiang Ban
LEGAL & POLICY BACKGROUND
Legal and Policy Milestones for LGBTQ+ Rights

1912-1949
- Criminalized during Mao era but LGBTQ+ community largely invisible; homosexuality considered a “corruptive Western value

1949-1966
- Decriminalized but homophobia became mainstream due to Westernization
Legal and Policy Milestones for LGBTQ+ Rights

- **1966-1976**: Heavily persecuted during Cultural Revolution
- **1997**: Decriminalization
Legal and Policy Milestones for LGBTQ+ Rights

- 2001: Court Rules Against Conversion Therapy
- 2014: Removed from national registry of mental disorder
Legal and Policy Milestones for LGBTQ+ Rights

2016-2018

- Changsha Court on Same-sex Marriage Hearing
- PFALG Allowed to Officially Raise Fund
- People’s Daily Editorial Supports LGBTQ+ Chinese

2019

- Acceptance of UN HRC’s Recommendation on LGBT+ rights
Inconsistent Censorship Policy

- Anti-Pornography Campaign
- Ban of LGBT Dating Apps
- Censorship of LGBTQ+ Content in Public Broadcast
- Ban ear rings for male celebrities on TV
- Weibo Censorship of “les” and WeChat Censorship of Rainbow Flag
- People’s Daily Editorial embraces LGBTQ+ citizens
Despite censorship in public media, digital publications such as Vice have largely been given freedom to discuss a wide variety of LGBTQ+ issues.
A Chinese sex education text book for elementary school kids has triggered heated debate on Chinese social media about whether it is appropriate to discuss LGBTQ+ gender identity in public schools.
Business Seize Opportunities

Chinese and Western Brands are Quick to Respond to the Growing Acceptance of LGBTQ+ Community
CASE STUDY

PFLAG CHINA RAINBOW CRUISE
About PFLAG China

➢ China’s largest non-profit serving the LGBTQ+ community with 150,000 registered members and 3,000 volunteers in 60 cities across the country

➢ PFLAG China strives to encourage LGBT people to embrace their own identity, to facilitate communication and understanding between LGBT and their families and friends

➢ First Chinese LGBT non-profit to receive government endorsement

➢ Key Initiatives

- Media Advocacy
- Young Leadership Training
- Corporate Workshop
- Family Workshop
- National & Regional Conventions
PFLAG Workshops
Program Overview

What

PFLAG China hosted its 10th annual convention in conjunction with a 4-day cruise trip to Japan.

When

June 14-18, 2017

Where

Shanghai to Sasebo, Nagasaki

Why Cruise

Cost efficiency + Privacy

How Did it Go

• Over 600 PFLAG members and their families attended the cruise, beating original estimate.
• Twenty couples tied the knot in a symbolic wedding ceremony during the trip.
• The positive results generated further interest from members. The 2019 cruise trip to Vietnam has received over 3000 bookings
Inaugural Cruise
How Did PFLAG China Do It?

Sales & Marketing Tactics
- Prioritize PFLAG owned channels
- Word of Mouth
- Strong Partnership
- Flash Sales & Group Discount

Product Design
- Attract both activist and leisure travelers
- Leverage group pricing and low season
- Visa-free destination

Communication Strategy
- Consistent messaging on all channels
- Proactive communication with government
- Transparency
Marketing & Promotion Channels

Planning Committee

- Owned Media
  - PFLAG WeChat, Weibo Official Account and Newsletter

- Word of Mouth
  - WeChat Group

- Partner Org.
  - LGBTQ+ Influencers, Businesses, Media and Non-Profit Organizations

- Volunteer Network
  - PFLAG Local Chapters
Owned Media Channel

- Weibo
- WeChat
- Affiliate WeChat
Word of Mouth

WeChat Group Outreach
Partner Organizations

Hyperbola Choir
Activate Your China LGBTQ+ Market Plan

Target Niche Segments
Target Niche Segments

- Songkran Fest
- Gay Ski Trip
- Gay Games
Find The Right Calling Card
Activate Your China LGBTQ+ Market Plan

- Target Their Interest
- Improve Your Digital Presence
Improve Your Digital Presence

Red
Zhihu
Mafengwo
Dianping
Activate Your China LGBTQ+ Market Plan

- Target Their Interest
- Improve Your Digital Presence
- Channel the Power of Creativity
Channel the Power of Creativity
Activate Your China LGBTQ+ Market Plan

- Target Their Interest
- Improve Your Digital Presence
- Channel the Power of Creativity
- Design Travel Products Based on their Habits
- Educate Travel Trade
- Leverage Influencers
Leverage Influencers

Hu Bing
Austin Li
Gogoboi
Hubert Chen
Activate Your China LGBTQ+ Market Plan

- Target Their Interest
- Improve Your Digital Presence
- Channel the Power of Creativity
- Design Travel Products Based on their Habits
- Educate Travel Trade
- Leverage Influencers
- Be Inclusive in Your General Marketing
- Close the Loop with Content to Commerce
Close the Sales Loop

WeChat Mini Program allows business to convert content into sales within one ecosystem.
Brand Advocacy with Cultural Authenticity

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