

LINE

NAVIGATING YOUR THE YEAR



Getting the pink pot of gold at the end of the gay and lesbian rainbow is starting to look tougher than was initially reported. Research done in 2008 showed 4.8m South Africans were gay or lesbian and earning the decent bucks. This market is called Dink – “dual income, no kids”, so there’s lots of disposable income to spend on cars, tech toys and trips. Top-end brands were licking their lips.

All they had to do was market directly to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) market, the industry players kept reminding us.

Yet the big local industries are conspicuously absent from the party. Yes, there are wedding shows and tour operators turning a profit by targeting this market directly, but the excitement has largely died down and the reason is good old conservatism.

“It’s a slow process to get companies to realise the value of courting this market,” says Donovan Steyl, founder of Lunch Box Media, the country’s only advertising sales agency specialising in LGBT media. “Perceptions are lightening up, but it’s taking place slowly, there are still a lot of misconceptions in this market and it’s largely because of the fear of the unknown and ignorance,” he says.

“Our core consumers are still too conservative, if they saw us advertising

with the gay community, it would reflect negatively on our brand in their eyes,” says a small business owner.

The *Gay Pages*, a glossy magazine and directory, is packed with ads from international luxury brands like Porsche, Air France and Mecer, evidently aware of the potential spending power of the market.

Local companies advertising in the *Gay Pages* consist largely of travel destinations and beauty offerings. Ten percent of aesthetic solutions group Skin Renewal’s advertising budget is spent on the gay and lesbian market. According to the owner, Victor Snyder, the group’s gay customer base is the highest growth segment of their business.

“We’ve targeted this market since we opened six years ago,” says Snyder.

However, according to property agents Seeff, the Pink property sector in Cape Town is not as prominent as it used to be.

“Yes, there is a sector, as in any other demographic group, that wants social-specific surroundings and activities. Generally, in dealing with this demographic, there’s little difference in its needs in terms of accommodation, position or pricing requirements,” says Seeff’s Ian Slot.

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There’s a fine line between building networks and brownnosing. Don’t hand out your business card or your CV at the party.

Don’t be completely a-social. This is the perfect opportunity to get to know people you work with better and improve relationships.

This is a party with your co-workers, not a night club. Leave something for the imagination when deciding on an outfit.

Topics of discussion that should be avoided at all costs include your sex life (no one cares); how awful the year has been; your possible other job opportunities or politics and religion, some people can be exceptionally sensitive.

Don’t arrive at the party intoxicated, first impressions last. Don’t take advantage of the free bar and get wasted – it’s tacky and may cause you to do things you may regret.