

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH RESULTS

### 4.0. Demographic Profile

For the purpose of this study, the data is analyzed based on the three main ethnicity of Malaysia, namely the Malays, Indians and Chinese. Despite the constraint of acquiring their participation, the final number/tally of the participants is as below:

	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10
<i>Age</i>			
20s	2	3	4
30s	6	3	4
40s	0	2	2

\*Number of respondents by ethnicity is shown at the heading beside its name in all tables.

**Table 1: Demographic Profile**

A total of ten Chinese and eight Indians and Malays respectively, participated in this study. The age of the participants ranged from 21 to 45. A total of 77% of the entire participants are employed, 15% are students while the remaining 8% are self-employed. Upon further classification, most of the participants' yearly income is noted to be within the RM 100,000 range. Two participants from each ethnicity has a yearly income in the range of RM100,001 to RM200,000, while three Chinese ethnicity participants earned more than RM200,000 a year. This study also notes two participants of the Chinese ethnicity who are students have zero income presently. However, they are active travellers and receive sufficient allowance that permits them to make these trips, hence, making their contribution to this study valuable.

	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10
<i>Sexual Orientation Status</i>			
Openly Gay	4	3	5
In between	2	2	3
Closeted	2	3	2
<i>Relationship Status</i>			
Single	1	6	5
Dating	1	1	0
In a Relationship	5	1	5

**Table 2: Sexual Orientation & Relationship Status**

To further classify their demographic profile, participants were asked about their current relationship status and more importantly their sexual orientation status. Interestingly, only 50% of those interviewed are openly gay and comfortable with their sexual orientation. The remaining 50% are either closeted or in between, meaning they don't reveal willingly their gay status but feels it is acceptable if the society knew one way or the other. On their Relationship

status, most Malays are currently in a long-term relationship, while most Indians are single. The Chinese demography is equally divided between being single and in a relationship.

#### 4.1. Travel Motivation

The first objective of this study and the corresponding questions asked during the interview is shown below:

● **To examine the travel motivation of Malaysian gay travelers**

- 🌈 What is the main motivation for you to go on a vacation (name one only)?
- 🌈 What are some other reasons you go for a vacation?

	Malays   8		Indians   8		Chinese   10	
	Primary	Others	Primary	Others	Primary	Others
Socialize	0	2	3	1	0	3
Shopping	1	0	0	1	0	1
Self-reward	1	0	1	0	0	0
Relax & rejuvenate	6	0	3	4	10	0
Gay pride events	0	1	0	0	0	0
Explore new places	0	4	1	2	0	6
Culture	0	1	0	1	0	1
<i>Vacations / year</i>						
1-2	1		4		3	
3-5	7		2		4	
more than 5	0		2		3	

**Table 3: Travel Motivations**

Like all avid travelers, the motivations behind the Malaysian gay travelers didn't differ much from the common motives. Here, six out of eight of the Malays cited the primary reason they travel is to relax and rejuvenate. The following respondent sums up the common thinking of the fellow six respondents:

*“I think we all need to take a vacation from time to time. So it's more like to rejuvenate yourself and then, well, you need to reward yourself with a nice trip once in a while. So that's the whole idea, I think.”* (Traveler23\_34\_M)

One other respondent said shopping was the primary reason he goes for a vacation.

*“For me, I'm a very city person. So I usually go for shopping and the clubs and more the city type of breaks. I'm not so much the sun and sea kind of person.”* (Traveler22\_39\_M)

The final respondent stated that his busy and hectic job makes him feel that he needs to reward himself every now and then, making this his primary reason to plan a vacation. However, when asked what are some other reasons they would make a trip, most of them mentioned exploring new places and socializing as an encouraging purpose.

*“I like to travel because to explore and want to get to know the places, the people and want to have more friends. Because, sometimes we don't know, we travel, we get to know friends, new friends. Especially when you travel overseas, because abroad they are really like....uhmm...peramah (warm & sociable).”*  
(Traveler14\_32\_M)

Overall, almost 90% of the Malays take an average of three to five vacations a year while one respondent takes roughly one to two vacations each year.

The Indian travelers had a more diverse reason for their vacations. Only three of them said relaxing is a reason for their travel. Another three participants said socializing with friends as a primary reason while self-reward and exploring new places was the main reason for two other respondents respectively.

*“I guess because we work most of the time. So holiday is more of a reward after working hard. Makes me feel like I've achieved my set goals.”* (Traveler06\_34\_I)

*“I would say the people you are going with matters a lot. Regardless of where you are, if you have the perfect bunch of friends, it doesn't matter where I travel to.”* (Traveler08\_24\_I)

Some other reasons why the Indians take a vacation include shopping and engaging in cultural activities.

*“Any place that is in the city centre, has easy access to food, and shopping. Yeah, that's a priority.”* (Traveler02\_31\_I)

*“I'm a person who loves different cultures. I like to venture into various cultures. I like to see how people of different ethnicity live. That's one of the biggest motivations for me.”* (Traveler04\_23\_I)

Relaxing is also a motivation for them, however, it's more of an offshoot of the primary reason. In total, 50% of the Indians take an average of one to two vacations a year while the remaining 50% is divided in half between three to five times a year and more than five.

The Chinese respondents' results on the other hand, showed a rather unified pattern. Here, 100% of the respondents cited relaxing and to rejuvenate as the primary reason they would go on a vacation.

*"If you work, you need a holiday. It's where you relax yourself, refresh yourself and come back. Because you cannot work all the time, it is tiring, your mind gets tired. So you go for holiday and I think then you come back refreshed and full of energy."*  
(Traveler01\_38\_C)

*"Usually when I want to go for a holiday, it's to be away from the city because sometimes it gets too much and fast paced. I want to slow things down, go and hang out by the beach side. Be away from the internet for a few days. Something to rejuvenate your mind, I guess and to refresh. To get away from the stress. I think that is important to remain sane."* (Traveler10\_23\_C)

Six out of ten of them were of the same opinion that exploring new places is some other reason why they would take a vacation while three others were keener on socializing. The remaining two respondents were more enthusiastic with shopping and exploring the culture of each destination.

*"I enjoy photography. That motivates me to travel to those exotic places, off the beaten track destinations."* (Traveler12\_35\_C)

*"Mostly it's to experience new things. See new things. Eat new things."* (Traveler16\_21\_C)

*"It's nice to see new things, nice to experience the foreign lifestyle. Also, the cost of living here in Malaysia is quite expensive, so you don't feel the pinch when you go overseas. Especially shopping like apparels and shoes, are much cheaper overseas. So I don't normally shop in KL."* (Traveler13\_35\_C)

The Chinese had the highest number of vacations taken in a year with one respondent stating that he takes roughly ten a year. Overall, 40% of the respondents set off for a vacation three to five times a year. Three others take one to two trips while the other three enjoys more than five retreats a year.

#### 4.2. Destination Choice

The second objective of this study and its corresponding questions are shown below:

- To explore their destination choices
  - Where have you travelled to domestically?
  - Where have you travelled to internationally?
  - Do you often find yourself going back to places that you've been to before?
  - Does your sexual orientation influence your travel destination choice? Gay friendly countries?

	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10	
<i>Domestic:</i>				The importance of understanding how this market segment chooses their destination when planning a vacation led to the above-mentioned questions to be asked. Clearly, most of them have travelled most parts of Malaysia. Out of the 14 states, this study narrowed down
Terengganu Islands	3	3	2	
Sabah & Sarawak	3	1	3	
Port Dickson	1	2	2	
Penang	5	5	6	
Melaka	3	3	4	
Langkawi	1	3	4	
<i>International:</i>				
North America	2	1	3	
South America	0	0	0	
Oceania	3	1	7	
Europe	8	5	5	
Asia	8	8	10	
Africa	2	1	0	

**Table 4: Vacation Destinations**

to a number of commonly chosen destinations to understand their travel pattern.

From the data gathered, it was clear that domestically, most travelers regardless of their ethnicity are frequent travelers to Penang. Internationally, there is a slightly different pattern that can be seen. Looking at the Malay travelers, they seem to mostly frequent countries in Asia and Europe with 100% of the respondents having had been to these continents. A few of them have also travelled to North America, Africa and Australia & New Zealand.

The Indians also had Asia and Europe as the top two continents of choice when deciding a destination for vacation. All eight of them have travelled within Asia and five of them have also vacationed in Europe. One respondent had travelled to Africa as part of his yearlong travel which he took while based in Europe before returning back to Asia. Australia was visited by only one Indian respondent and the same was for North America.

The Chinese respondents, once again, showed a more unified pattern. All ten of them have travelled within Asia for their vacation. The next highest choice of destination was within the Oceania continent. Seven out of ten of them have been to Australia and feels that it is a sure repeat destination choice. 50% of the respondents also have travelled to Europe while North America was chosen by three of them. None of the respondents have been to Africa to date. When looked at by continent, interestingly, none of the respondents, across all ethnicity have been to any countries in South America. This is the single continent not explored by this market to date. Even so, it seemed to be a dream destination for two Malays and one Indian. The Chinese however, haven't been and is not altogether keen on visiting countries within the South American continent. Most of the Malay respondents preferred to vacation in Europe and North America. The chosen destinations were New York and Miami in USA, Switzerland, Paris, Czech Republic and Bora-Bora Island in Europe, and Puerto Rico and Peru in South America.

*"I would go back to Switzerland again, because it's the most beautiful place I have seen."* (Traveler09\_36\_M)

*"Oh my god, I would go over and over again to Paris! In terms of the people and culture, things you see and eat, there's just nothing like it."* (Traveler24\_36\_M)

*"I would love to go back to Czech Republic, because I've been to Bel Ami's office. It was fun! It's my first time to see how they film gay porn movies."* (Traveler25\_34\_M)

*"If it's a long trip, I would go to Miami. There are no ugly people there. It's very aesthetically pleasing."* (Traveler22\_39\_M)

*"Probably Puerto Rico. I haven't been to the Americas yet and I from what I heard the men there are really, really hot!"* (Traveler23\_34\_M)

The Indians on the other hand had a wide spread dream destination. Two of them chose Penang

Discriminated Against	0	0	0
Importance of Rainbow Flag	5	2	4
	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10
<i>Dream Destination</i>			
Asia	0	2	1
Africa	0	1	1
Europe	4	2	5
Oceania	0	1	0
North America	2	1	3
South America	2	1	0

and Koh Samui in Asia, whereas two others chose Paris and Andalucia in Europe. The remaining respondents each chose Brazil, New Zealand, Senegal and USA

**Table 5: Destination Choice**

belonging to each separate continent.

*“Brazil. No specific reason. But, I think that part of the world, South America, it looks nice. I've seen it on TV, documentaries and such. Specifically Brazil because I'm a movie person. A lot of movies have been shot there.”* (Traveler02\_31\_I)

*“I'd really love to go to Africa, to places like Ghana or maybe to Senegal because I've never been there, they have a very good football team, I've met people from there, and have been following their political development, it interests me”* (Traveler07\_42\_I)

*“Paris. Because it's the one place which I've been wanting to go to since I was 10. I love art, I draw and paint a lot, I'm into fashion, so Paris to me it's like a fashion capital.”* (Traveler08\_24\_I)

Half of the Chinese respondents would like to go to Europe namely Paris. One dreams of visiting Egypt in Africa, another of Maldives in Asia and the other three respondents would love to visit the USA, namely Hawaii, New York and San Francisco.

*“My next destination I want to go to would be New York. I've seen so much of it on TV, Movies, Sex & the City, so it's a place that's a must go.”* (Traveler13\_35\_C)

*“I think I want to go back to San Francisco. Out of so many places I've seen, it's one of the best.”* (Traveler17\_41\_C)

*“Paris. I’ve never been there before, hearing so much about it and seen so much on TV and movies. I would like to see it before I die!” (Traveler18\_45\_C)*

*“Maldives. I’ve always read about it, seen the travelogs, travel videos and all. It is an ideal destination for me. I’m more of a beach person.” (Traveler19\_27\_C)*

Belonging to a unique market with their own needs and wants, the respondents were asked if it was important that countries flag the internationally recognized Rainbow Flag and if this would aid in their decision making process when planning a vacation. To this, the Malays were the most to agree it was necessary and that it abetted in their decision. Five of the eight of them found that it makes it easier and more comfortable in planning their trips. The Indians on the other hand found it the least important. To most of them, it doesn’t influence their decision in any way. Only two of them thought it would be helpful. Looking towards the Chinese respondents, 40% of the respondents felt it facilitates their destination choice while the remaining six respondents felt that it wasn’t all that important.

*“Yes, it helps my friend who does the planning” (Traveler22\_39\_M)*

*“It helps, but not necessarily.” (Traveler07\_42\_I)*

*“Yeah, definitely. I would choose one that is gay friendly.” (Traveler10\_23\_C)*

An interesting find was that none of the twenty-six respondents had ever been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation while on a vacation.

	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10
Influence of Sexual Orientation	6	3	4
Repeat Destinations	6	7	8
Usage of Gay Travel Sites	2	3	3
Purchase Travel Insurance	4	7	5

**Table 6: Pre-planning Activities**

Based on these information, respondents were asked if their sexual orientation has an influence on the choice of

destination when planning a vacation. To this, the Malays felt the strongest influence with six of them stating so. Both the Indians and the Chinese mostly felt that it had little impact with



only three and four of them respectively saying that it does. However, across board, most of the respondents hardly use the existing gay travel sites when planning a vacation.

*“I think so. Gay-friendly countries, the people, they are very friendly, actually, and are very helpful.”* (Traveler05\_27\_M)

*“Um...no, I don't have that preference. I'm open to go anywhere.”*  
(Traveler11\_25\_I)

*“No, not really. I haven't even thought of it. It never crossed my mind to go to LGBT friendly countries.”* (Traveler20\_34\_C)

Some studies state that it is important for gays to travel to gay-friendly countries in order to feel safe and accepted. To this, the respondents were asked if they always purchase travel insurance prior to a trip. A mere 50% of the Malays and Chinese said they do whereas seven of the eight Indians interviewed said it was a must for them to obtain travel insurance. Almost all of those interviewed also agreed that they would return to the same destinations over and over as can be seen from some of their afore-mentioned dream destination choice.

#### **4.3. Travel Activity**

In this section, we explore on the travel activity findings. Below are the objective and its relevant questions:

- **To examine their habitual activities while out on vacation**
  - When you are on holiday; what is your favorite activity (name only one)?
  - What are some other activities that you engage in when on vacation?
  - Is experiencing the night life part of your vacation activity? Do you go to gay bars, clubs or gay spas?
  - Is meeting others from within your community a common need when on vacation?
  - Have you attended any gay-pride events? If no, would you attend one?

In this section, the travel activities of the respondents are discussed. Primarily, the Malays tend

	Malays   8		Indians   8		Chinese   10	
	Primary	Others	Primary	Others	Primary	Others
Socialize	0	1	1	1	0	4
Sightseeing	1	5	2	7	0	8
Shopping	0	1	0	3	0	4
Relax	2	3	4	0	9	0
Party	5	1	1	0	0	5
F & B	0	4	0	2	1	5
Events	0	1	0	0	0	1

**Table 7: Travel Activities**

to engage in celebratory activities where five out the eight interviewed consented to enjoying the night life. Two others were more focused on relaxing while the remaining one preferred sightseeing. When asked about some other activities, they do list sightseeing, relaxing and enjoying the local cuisine as common doings.

*“Sometimes club, party, drinking, food.”* (Traveler05\_27\_M)

*“I usually go shopping and clubbing! I also go for massages, also try and catch one or two local shows. Oh, and another thing is eating of course!”* (Traveler22\_39\_M)

The Indians focused more on relaxing as their prime activity with 50% of them saying so. Two others preferred sightseeing whereas socializing and night life was preferred by the other two. Here again, they said that sightseeing , shopping, exploring local cuisines and socializing as some other activities they be inclined to engage in.

*“Predominantly, sleep. Followed by, lots of card games, lots of indoor stuff with friends. If at the beach, then beach activities. Mostly all will be interlinked with alcohol.”* (Traveler03\_42\_I)

*“I like to relax and just sleep. Also to explore the local food, sight-see a little if the group wants to go. We also like to patronize the local clubs.”* (Traveler21\_33\_I)

Once again, the Chinese profile seems to be almost unanimous with 90% of the respondents stating that relaxing is their main activity while on vacation. The one other person mentioned that exploring the culinary scene of each destination is what drives him to visit a certain destination. When probed further within this community, many pointed out that partying, enjoying local cuisines, shopping, sightseeing and socializing are regular activities they partake in.

*“Nothing much. Just relax. Sightseeing a little bit. Spend time with local friends there. Once I’ve been to the gay sauna.”*  
(Traveler15\_21\_C)

*“First things first, food, food, FOOD!! Apart from that, if it’s someplace a bit isolated, like let’s say, Langkawi, it’s basically to there, where no one know me. It’s a time for me to virtually be by myself and.....breathe....at my own pace. Just to listen to other sounds, other than the handphone ringing or the TV. Places like Hong Kong, Singapore, naturally these are definitely shopping destinations. So, I would definitely be hopping around malls and pick up books, CDs.”* (Traveler18\_45\_C)

	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10
Tour Packages	1	3	1
Night Life_Gay Bars	8	7	7
Importance of Meeting the Gay Community	5	5	2
Gay-Pride Events_Attended	5	0	4
If NO, would they attend	2	5	5

**Table 8: Gay Related Matters**

Based on this, the respondents were then asked if they generally would prefer to take tour packages or commonly do a free & easy trip. To this, one Malay, three Chinese and one Indian said that they have and will continue to take tour packages when planning a vacation. All others dismissed tour packages citing various reasons.

*“I prefer free& easy. No tour packages because...  
...they go to places I’m not interested in. And there are lots of people and you have to follow them.”* (Traveler26\_29\_M)

*...you have to get up early and follow plan. I’m on holiday, just to relax. I’d plan my own activities. I want to do what I feel like doing when I want to.”* (Traveler07\_42\_I)

*...we have internet on our phones. We can download maps and with GPS, we can just walk around and visit the attractions. It’s maybe for families or older people. Even my straight friends who*

*are young also don't take packages. Information is so easy to gather. Tour packages bring you to those shops where you are forced to buy and they get a commission.” (Traveler13\_35\_C)*

Looking at the number of respondents citing socializing and night life as a regular activity, they were asked if they frequent night clubs, especially exclusive gay clubs and bars. All the Malay respondents agreed that they do while 90% of the Indians and seven out of the 10 Chinese respondents also consented. Although most of the respondents have been to gay bars and clubs, just slightly above 50% of the Malays and Indians said that it was important that they meet the local gay community when on vacation. The Chinese however, felt that it was irrelevant with merely two responded saying that they wouldn't mind meeting the local gay community.

To understand further their travel activities especially when it is gay related ones, questions on internationally held gay pride events were asked. The response on the attendance to these events was five Malays and four Chinese out of the twenty-six respondents. None of the Indians interviewed had ever attended one to date. However, when those who have not been to these events were asked if they would attend one, only five of the eight Indians said they would. Two Malays from the three and five of the six Chinese also said they would.

#### **4.4. Spending Behavior**

As with all industry, knowing the spending power of the potential customer is crucial to their business. With this in mind, the following objective was formed for this study and its corresponding questions are listed below:

- **To analyze their spending behavior when on vacation**
  - On average, how much do you spend on your Domestic vacation?  
On average, how much do you spend on your International vacation?
  - Do you usually travel with budget or full-service airlines?  
What are your criteria when making this choice?
  - Which types of accommodation do you stay in?  
What is the minimum rating?  
How much are you willing to spend for one night's accommodation?  
What are your criteria when making this choice?  
Is it important for you to stay in gay-friendly accommodations?
  - Is shopping a big part of your travel activity?  
Is purchasing branded items important to you?  
On average, how much do you spend on shopping?

	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10	
<i>Domestic</i>				Domestically, six out of eight Malays were found to spend an average of RM1,500 or more. It was the same Internationally, whereby 50% of them spend roughly RM10,000 or more. The Indians on the other hand, spend less than RM1,000 for domestic vacations
less than RM500	0	2	5	
RM501 - RM1,000	2	5	1	
RM1,001 - RM1,500	0	1	2	
RM1,501 - RM2,000	2	0	0	
more than RM2,000	4	0	2	
<i>International</i>				
less than RM3,000	0	3	2	
RM3,001 - RM5,000	2	3	1	
RM5,001 - RM10,000	2	2	6	
RM10,001 - RM15,000	1	0	1	
more than RM15,000	3	0	0	

**Table 9: Average Expenditure per Trip**

and less than RM5,000 for International ones. The Chinese respondents seem to mirror the Indians domestically, as they spend on average less than RM1,000 with the exception of two respondents stating they spend more than RM2,000 per vacation. They also emulate the Malays when asked about their International vacation expenditures with 70% spending more than RM5,000 per trip.

As such, the Malays are seen to be the highest spenders overall on a vacation as compared to the others. The Chinese fall under the middle category and the Indians are seen to travel more on budget.

Since the expenditure of all holidaymakers are key to businesses worldwide, this study further explores the spending behavior of the Malaysian gay travelers in categories such as accommodations, flight preferences and shopping.

First, their accommodation choice is analyzed. From the data gathered, 50% of the Malays

	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10
<i>Star Rating</i>			
less than 3 star	0	2	1
3 star	4	5	7
4 star	2	1	1
5 star	2	0	1
<i>Price Range</i>			
less than RM500	4	8	10
RM501 - RM1,000	2	0	0
more than RM1,000	2	0	0
Gay friendly Accomodation	0	1	1

stated that they would stay in an accommodation that is three stars and above. The remaining 50% is divided by two, with 25% staying in places that is four stars and above and the rest in those that are

**Table 10: Accommodation Preferences**

five stars and above. When asked how much they would spend on a room per night, 50% said anything that is less than RM500 would be acceptable. In accordance to their choice of star ratings, two others stated anything between RM500-RM1,000 would be fine and the final two is willing to spend more than RM1,000 per room per night. The following are some of their criteria when choosing an accommodation.

*“Mostly the service, their food of course, the rooms and swimming pools.”* (Traveler05\_27\_M)

*“The place that we normally stay is at Holiday Inn. They give us early check-in, they provide us with breakfast, first in the queue to check-in to the room which a lot of hotels don’t do. And also the location, it has to be near public transport”* (Traveler09\_36\_M)

*“Normally, I will look at the hotel website first. Facilities like swimming pool, service, if the hotel is clean, and the location of the hotel.”* (Traveler26\_29\_M)

The Indians rated their choice of accommodation slightly differently. With five of them willing to stay in places that are three stars and above and one other stating his minimum requirement would be four stars and above. Two others of the eight Indians interviewed were willing to stay in accommodations that are rated below three stars. Based on these ratings, all respondents unanimously consented that they would spend less than RM500 per room per night.

*“As long as it's clean. And has character. Not too much luxury, I'd feel guilty since there are people with not much.”*  
(Traveler07\_42\_I)

*“Just that it's clean and comfortable”* (Traveler08\_24\_I)

*“Must be comfortable. Clean place and quiet centrally located.”*  
(Traveler02\_31\_I)

The Chinese respondents had a similar approach with seven out of ten of them agreeing to stay in places that were three stars and above. One respondent mentioned his preference was from four stars and above while another wasn't settling for anything less than 5 stars. Oddly enough, while their ratings were somewhat diverse, they collectively stated that they were willing to spend no more than RM500 per room per night.

*“The distance to where I want to be, the room must be comfortable, clean and safe and the reviews online”*  
(Traveler18\_45\_C)

*“As long as it's comfortable and clean, it's fine.”*  
(Traveler10\_23\_C)

*“It should be comfortable, good rooms and breakfast. Must be located in a central location”* (Traveler13\_35\_C)

Uncharacteristically, only one Indian and one Chinese stated that it helps is the accommodation is gay-friendly. None of the Malays and the rest of the Indians and Chinese found this status to be relevant.

	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10
full-service	6	1	1
budget	0	4	5
both	2	3	4

**Table 11: Flight Preferences**

Quite similar in response of their choice of accommodation, six of the Malays interviewed would prefer to fly exclusively by full-service airlines while two others

were comfortable flying both full-service and budget airlines. Most of the Indians patronize budget airlines just as 50% of the Chinese do. Only one Indian and Chinese stated their preference to be flying full-service airline only. The others were willing to fly both types of carriers.

Brand Conscious	3	5	6
	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10
less than RM500	1	3	2
RM501 - RM1,000	2	1	0
RM1,001 - RM3,000	0	4	3
RM3,001 - RM5,000	3	0	3
RM5,001 - RM10,000	2	0	1
more than RM10,000	0	0	1

**Table 12: Average Shopping Expenditure**

The spending behavior when it comes to shopping is fairly alike across board. Three, four and six of the Malays, Indians, and Chinese respectively spend on average between

RM1,000 to RM5,000 on shopping. However, the Indians are seen to spend lesser on shopping with three of the eight spending less than RM500. Those with a higher spending stance are the Malays and Chinese with two respondents each spending more than RM5,000 on average. Interestingly, only three of the eight Malays are brand conscious in their purchases although they do splurge on shopping. The Indians are more brands cognizant with five of them agreeing to always preferring to choose branded items. This contradicts with their spending amount behavior which leads to the notion that even though they generally spend less in total amount, they probably purchase a lower quantity but higher quality. Six of the ten Chinese respondents echoed the Indians on this matter.

#### 4.5. *Sexual Behavior & Health*

Lastly, one part of the interview included the respondents' sexual behavior and health. Here, we look at the final objective and its corresponding questions.

- To examine their sexual behavior and health screening habits
  - When on vacation, do you usually engage in sexual activities?
  - Does it include strangers/locals?
  - Do you always practice safe sex?
  - How often do you do HIV checks?



A very sensitive but necessary topic that is constantly associated with the gay community is

Sexually Active	4	3	6
Safe Sex	8	8	10
	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10
<i>HIV Checks</i>			
Bi-Monthly	0	0	1
Half Yearly	3	2	3
Yearly	3	2	5
Every 2 years	1	0	0
Rarely	0	2	0
Never	0	2	1
HIV +ve	1	0	0

**Table 13: Sexual Behavior and Health**

their sexual health. There seem to be a further need to understand their sexual behavior especially when they are on vacation. As such, the respondents for this study were asked some of these sensitive questions to recognize the Malaysian Gay traveler's behavior. Across board, roughly 50% of the

respondents consented that they are sexually active while on vacation, especially with unfamiliar persons.

*“Not anymore. It's just because I'm in a good relationship and have been with the same person for 11 years. But when I was single, I was all about having a good time”* (Traveler24\_36\_M)

This led to an enquiry on whether all respondents practice safe sex at times that they do engage in sexual activities regardless if they were on a vacation. Fortunately, 100% of the twenty-six respondents' practiced safe sex at all times.

*“Oh yes, of course, safe sex is a must. Let's put it this way, you don't want to give somebody something, neither do you want to take back something. You don't want to be Santa Clause and neither do you want to be on the receiving end”* (Traveler18\_45\_C)

It was also necessary to gather further information on how regularly they partake in HIV checks. Most respondents perform their checks half-yearly or at least once a year. Seven Malays recurrently take this test while regrettably one respondent doesn't any longer as he has been tested positive. The Chinese respondents are the same with the exception of one respondent who has never taken one to date. Unfortunately, the awareness of the importance of performing regular HIV checks is not well ingrained enough amongst the Indians. This can be seen with two respondents having never taken one and two others rarely doing so.

*“I have not been for a HIV test, though I've been wanting to. I've not had the time.”* (Traveler08\_24\_I)

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.0. *Conclusion*

Based on the results discussed in Chapter 4, the following are the conclusion of the findings of this study. It is shown here again by category as it was in the afore-mentioned sections. Finally, a specific profile by ethnicity is created and recommendations are given on what should be looked at when deciding to tap into this lucrative market.

#### 5.0.1. *Travel Motivation*

Based on existing studies, Lück (2004) found that the main purpose for gay travelers to go on a holiday was to visit family & friends and for cultural reasons. He found that a good nightlife and gay destinations were the least motivating factors. Clift & Forrest (1999) found that they tend to place a high value on comfort, relaxation, guaranteed sunshine and good food as the main motivation. Pritchard (2000) & Herrera and Scott (2005) on the other hand found that they would go on a vacation just to escape the heterosexual favored world.

This study on the other hand found that relaxation and rejuvenation was cited as a main motivation with 70% of the respondents citing this. Besides relaxing, 12% said that they would go on a vacation to socialize with friends, 12% for self-rewarding reasons, and 4% each for exploring new places and shopping. Ten out of the twenty-six respondents stated exploring new places as a motivating factor. This study found that none of the respondents indicated that they would make specific trips to attend gay pride events. A 100% of the respondents also were found to have never been discriminated against because of their sexual orientation.

Looking at these results, this study had similar results to the one done by Clift & Forrest (1999) as relaxation is the biggest motivating factor. Akin to Lück (2004), gay related reasons were not a motivating factor for these respondents. However, the study showed a high interest in the respondents making special trips just to engage in shopping activities.

These factors could have to do with the fact that Malaysians in general tend to work long hours. Therefore, there is a high need to escape the stressful working environment. The fact that none of the respondents have ever been discriminated against could be a reason why gay related reasons are not a priority. Having most items, especially branded goods, sold at a very high price here, respondents prefer to travel to neighboring countries like Singapore Bangkok, and Hong Kong, purely to do some shopping.

### **5.0.2. Destination Choice**

When it came to choosing a place to vacation in, Community Marketing Inc (2011) found that a destination's reputation for being gay-friendly, was by far the biggest reason for USA gays. Pritchard et al. on the other hand found that most respondents were uncomfortable with going to countries where homosexuality was illegal. Hughes (2002a) found that the prospect of socializing with others from within the community was a big contributing factor to making a destination choice. He also found similar results as Pritchard et al. where the local juridical conditions were a significantly important factor. Lastly, he established that the sexual orientation of those interviewed does influence the booking plans and methods as well as the choice of accommodation, packages and destinations. This was similar to the findings by Bruce (2007) which states that respondents referred to the internet gay travel sites as well as physical gay guide books when deciding on a destination choice. Ballegaard & Chor (2009) had findings akin to the others whereby personal interest trumps their sexuality when planning a vacation.

This study however found that the gay-friendly status that is declared by various countries worldwide, using the rainbow flag as an indicator, doesn't seem to have much of an impact. Most of them did not even consider this factor when planning a vacation. A total of 65% of the respondents didn't feel that meeting other locals and foreigners alike from within the gay community was important to them and they would not seek it in general. Only 9 of the respondents felt the need to socialize with the local gay community while out and about.

This could be because of the fact that half of the respondents were either still closeted or in between with the openness of their sexual orientation status. Therefore, they prefer to keep it under the radar and it is not so important that the countries they travel to are gay-friendly. Culturally as well, in general, Asians are not that open with public affection and being gay and the fact that it is not widely accepted here yet makes it even harder. As a result, it doesn't play a significant role if the countries they travel to have a gay friendly status. Their shy nature could also be a reason why they wouldn't really mingle with the locals while on a vacation.

The Malaysian gays were also found to prefer to return to destinations that they have been to citing service and comfort as main reasons. Most of them attest that they are creatures of habit. Although, should they have had an uncomfortable experience, they tend to reject the place altogether, striking the destination from their choice.

### **5.0.3. Travel Activity**

Lück, (2004) found that majority of the gay community would travel either with friends or alone. Another study on the other hand, found a vast majority would go on a vacation purely to

attend LGBT events (Community Marketing, Inc., 2011). This study though found that relaxing was the main activity of choice. This is very much in line with their main travel motivation to begin with. Similarly, Bruce (2007) found that cultural reasons are the main activity the Irish gays participate in when on vacation. His respondents placed very low priority on gay related activities. The cultural offerings of a destination were more appealing to them and they look forward to engaging in museum sightseeing as opposed to gay-themed offerings. This was also supported by the study done by Ballegaard & Chor (2009) who found that the respondents preferred mixing their activities to have a diverse experience from each vacation.

Besides relaxing, sightseeing was the next highly engaged in activity. Shopping ranked next. This is usually done throughout the day. At night, twenty-one out of the twenty-six respondents said that night life including gay club, bar, and saunas are a big part of their travel activities. Interestingly, as stated in Chapter 4, an astonishing 69% declared they have not attended an LGBT event in their life.

Here again, it could be a cultural effect. It is widely known that Malaysians loves to do shopping during their leisure time. They also prefer to explore new places and to sightsee as much as they can. This is again a similar pattern found with those vacationing either domestically or abroad. Not that much different from the heterosexual community. However, the difference would be in the night life whereby most of them prefer to go to a gay-related activity spot instead. Here again, this could be because, within Malaysia, it is not widely recognized for clubs, for example, to be open solely for the gay community. Instead, they organize a gay-night or lesbian night for a day within the week. This would be the only time they are able to mingle within the community in an environment of such. Therefore, to be able to openly go to these spots anytime of the week while travelling abroad definitely has its appeal. Again, the fact that most of the respondents are not openly gay, could be a contributing factor to them not wanting to be a part of the highly publicized gay-pride events held worldwide.

#### ***5.0.4. Spending Behavior***

Previous studies show that these groups of people are one that travels more (Roth & Luongo, 2002) and with a higher spending power (Stuber, 2002). The respondents surveyed by (Lück, 2004) spent around USD2,430 per trip and they make something within the range of between 1 to 10 trips in a year. A study by (Community Marketing, Inc., 2011) showed that 35% of USA gay travelers chose to stay in mid-range hotels while only 8.3% stayed in rented apartments or condominiums.

Looking at the figures as stated in Chapter 4, it further proves the high spending power that is available within this target market. The average expenditure doesn't differ that much from those with Stuber, (2002)'s study. The Malaysian gay travelers also like the USA gay travelers, prefer mid-range hotels but in this case not necessarily gay-friendly ones. Based on these findings, it shows that the gay community does spend luxuriously and are those who wish to travel frequently.

All twenty six respondents are young, within the age group of 20-50 years and have a study income. This is with the exception that three of them are at present student but, as they are in their early twenty's it is safe to assume that they will join the work force soon and continue or even steadily increase their travel expenditure behavior. Having this income in place, naturally, they are willing to splurge on a vacation where they can feel comfortable, safe and most importantly free to express.

#### ***5.0.5. Sexual Behavior & Health***

Studies have found that MSM's have a higher tendency to engage in casual travel sex and have multiple sexual partners while abroad (Vivancos, Abubakar, & Hunter, 2010). The gay tourism is often associated with sex and many of them engage in sexual activities at gay bars, saunas and so on (Clift & Wilkins, Travel, sexual behaviour and gay men, 1995). Some of them also travel specifically to engage in sexual activities with male prostitutes. Another study though, found that the pursuit of sexual encounters is not a motivation for gay travelers to go on vacation (Clift & Forrest, Gay men and tourism: destinations and holiday motivations, 1999). Interestingly, Hughes found that those within his sample had the same sexual behavior while at home or away on vacation.

Clift & Forrest (1999), found in their study that some of their respondents also travel with the expectation of being sexually active and engage in gay-related activity while on holiday (Clift & Forrest, Gay men and tourism: destinations and holiday motivations, 1999). They are also far less likely to engage in unprotected sex while on vacation. However, there is an uncertainty about their HIV status as there was a small group of people who engaged in unprotected sex.

This study however found that 50% of the respondents do engage in sexual activities while on vacation. All twenty-six respondents affirmed that they always engage in safe sex. 77% of the respondents carried out HIV test on a regular basis. Three out of the total respondents, have never done a HIV screening to date. One respondent is no longer required to perform a HIV screening as he has already been tested positive.

This result is in line with the findings of (Vivancos, Abubakar, & Hunter, 2010) as the Malaysian gay travelers also are sexually active while on vacation. Here again, it could be the fact that they can't really be openly gay in Malaysia and therefore found more freedom while on vacation, especially abroad. However, with the growing global awareness on the spread of HIV, it is safe to say all respondents are well-educated enough that they strongly engage in only protective sex. Unfortunately though, not all of them have placed enough importance to getting screened for HIV. This could be due to the fact that they do practice safe sex and therefore feel that it is safe enough and do not require getting tested for any sexually transmittable diseases.

### **5.1. *Malaysian Gays\_Profile & Recommendation***

The purpose of this study was to examine the travel behavior of Malaysian Gays. Here, the general profile of an individual gay traveler by ethnicity is discussed. To refresh, following are the objectives of this study:

- To examine the travel motivation of Malaysian gay travelers
- To explore their destination choices
- To examine their habitual activities while away on vacation
- To analyze their spending behavior when on vacation
- To examine their sexual behavior and health screening habits

Based on these objectives, a detailed profile of the respondents is created and analyzed in-depth. Below is the overall summary of the profiles mentioned above:

	Malays   8	Indians   8	Chinese   10
Travel Motivation	Relaxing & Partying	Socializing with Friends	Relaxing
Average number of vacation	3-5	1-2	3-5
Influence of Sexual Orientation	Yes	No	No
Repeat Destination	Yes	Yes	Yes
Usage of Gay Travel Site	No	No	No
Purchase Travel Insurance	No	Yes	No
Importance of Rainbow Flag	Yes	No	No
Travel Activity	Party	Sightseeing	Relaxing
Purchase Tour Packages	No	No	No
Night Life_Gay Bar	Yes	Yes	Yes
Importance of Meeting the Gay Community	Yes	Yes	No
Gay-Pride Events_Attended	Yes	No	No
<i>Shopping</i>			
Brand Concious	No	Yes	Yes
Average Amount	RM3,000 - RM5,000	RM1,000 - RM3,000	RM3,000 - RM5,000
Flight Type	Full-service	Budget	Both
<i>Destination</i>			
Frequent Destination Choice	Europe, Asia, Penang	Europe, Asia, Penang	Asia, Oceania, Penang
Average Amount_Domestic	RM2,000 and above	RM501 - RM1,000	less than RM500
Average Amount_International	RM 10,000 and above	RM3,001 - RM5,000	RM5,001 - RM10,000
<i>Accommodation</i>			
Star Rating	4*	2*	3*
Average Amount_per room per night	RM500 or >	< RM500	~RM500
Gay friendly Accomodation	No	No	No
Sexually Active with Unfamiliar Person	Yes	No	Yes
Safe Sex	Yes	Yes	Yes
HIV Checks	Yes	No	Yes

**Table 14: Overview by Ethnicity**

### 5.1.1. Malays

In total, eight Malay gays were interviewed. From this group a general profile can be drawn. Firstly, they are people who are open about their sexual orientation and are mostly, out of the three ethnicities discussed, in a relationship. More often than not, they travel alone or with their partner. They are successful, employed individuals earning wages up to RM200,000 per annum. As such, they take an average of three to five vacations a year. When pre-planning, they take a minimum of one week to two months to plan their vacation details. The required information is obtained from the internet and recommendation from friends. They typically do not use gay travel sites but often visit the specific destination sites as well as blogs. They do, however,

regularly inquire information from bar tenders and hotel personnel at the specific destinations. In general, they prefer not to take tour packages as they feel it is not flexible, are forced to be in a group with strangers and have different interest from the packages provided. When it comes to insurance, the Malays are not concerned to purchase one.

Overall, the Malays spend between RM2,000 to RM10,000 per trip. When it comes to their choice of flight, they prefer to fly full-service airlines. This is primarily because they seek comfort and good service while on holiday. The schedule of flights and minimum delay is imperative to them. The same goes for accommodation. High level of service is expected and the location of the hotels must be within the vicinity of gay spots. A minimum of 4\* rating is required for the accommodation of choice.

The Malays travel mainly for relaxation and partying purposes. They prefer to relax during the day and party hard through the night. In the day, they love spending their earnings shopping in all their vacation destinations, on average, about RM3,000 to RM5,000. When it comes to shopping, they are not brand conscious. However, they are very style conscious. It is important for them to look tasteful from head to toe. They are confident to wear stylish and unique clothes and often feel that it is more about how one carries themselves instead of wearing a brand.

This can also be seen in their choice of destination, whereby, the Malays are highly influenced by international celebrities as well as factors that are aesthetically pleasing. A lot of inspiration

DREAM DESTINATION

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*New York. The celebrities are always there. Who knows, I might bump into them, Lady Gaga, maybe. ~T05\_27\_M*

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*Bora-Bora Island. It's the influence of Kim Kardashian. ~T14\_32\_M*

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*Miami. Because there are no ugly people there. It's very aesthetically pleasing. ~T22\_39\_M*

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*Puerto Rico. I heard the men there are really, really hot! ~T23\_34\_M*

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of their next destination choice comes from watching shows on television. Once they are comfortable in a specific destination, they tend to revisit this site often.

The night life is a very important part of their vacation. At night, the Malays love to patronize gay clubs and bars to celebrate through and through. It is a place where they feel safe and free from raids, which often takes place in Malaysia. They also feel while within their community at these spots, a common language is spoken and they can understand each other more. They also actively participate in gay pride events abroad. Celebrations are a key to their life.



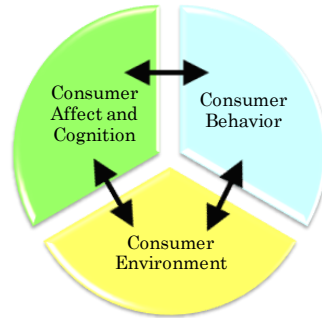
While on vacation, the Malays actively engage in sexual activities with unfamiliar people. They are comfortable meeting new people from within their community and to keep in touch, leading to the possibility of having local friends in all places. They practice safe sex at all times and conduct regular HIV screening to protect themselves and maintain good health.

### **Recommendation**

Looking at the profile above, the following marketing point-of-view can be applied to target the Malaysian Malay gays for tourism purposes:

- ☞ Service, service, service! It is of utmost importance to focus on service; regardless of with business is being engaged. They seek a friendly environment and an open comfort level. Luxury, style and class is ingrained in them and would influence their decision making process significantly. Accommodations and transportation industry should focus on comfort and luxury when marketing to this target market.
- ☞ The most effective and efficient way to advertise to this group of individuals is through subtle marketing and WOM. The Malays rely on others and their own personal experiences when deciding on where and when to take a vacation. The usage of brand positioning in international TV series, movies and reality shows are just right. It could be a main platform that is used by marketers to reach and sway them.
- ☞ Events and entertainments are crucial. Build the events market with gay pride elements to it and their attention is caught. Events such as the Gay Pride Parade, Gay Film Festival and Mardi Gras connects with their interest and would engage their attention significantly.
- ☞ A high price model can be applied as they focus more on comfort and are willing to spend to achieve this. Monetary value such as the Rainbow Card, which was introduced in USA for gay charity purposes, would be well received by them as they are proud and openly gay.
- ☞ Direct selling approach can also be used as they would return to a country, restaurant, bars, and so on, if they have had a pleasant experience.
- ☞ People are crucial to their overall experience. Staffs should be warm, friendly and well-informed on gay related matters such as the hot spots available in the vicinity and so on.
- ☞ The rainbow Flag can be utilized as it has an impact on their choice of destination and accommodation when planning a vacation.
- ☞ Overall, an aesthetics approach should be implemented throughout.

The Malaysian Malay gays are more emotionally driven when it comes to their decision making process. Here, they are more concern on how an experience makes them feel and this is a deciding factor on all of their choices and purchases. Focusing on the affects of these individuals is essential when engaging this market segment.



Source: J. Paul Peter, Jerry C. Olsen; Consumer Behaviour & Marketing Strategy; Page 19; adapted

### 5.1.2. Indian

Eight Indians were interviewed for this study. Based on the findings the following profile is drawn. To begin with, they are mostly closeted when it comes to their sexual orientation. They are single, employed with an average income of within RM100,000 per year. When it comes to travelling, they tend to do it in groups with friends and planning begins between two weeks to a month. Most of the information is gathered from the Internet and some recommendation from friends. They do not visit gay travel sites but more commonly use the Google search engine to find exotic locations to explore. When on vacation, they prefer to make their own plans and prefer not to purchase travel packages that often. Reason being, they prefer to just relax when on vacation and not rush and strictly follow a certain timetable. On the other hand, packages that are more in line with flights and accommodation are welcomed. Travel insurance is also a must for them whereby they obtain one before each trip.

The main reason they plan a vacation is to socialize with friends and to sightsee. They prefer

DREAM DESTINATION

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*USA. Because of the culture and how open the people are. ~T11\_25\_I*

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*Andalucia. Culture purposes and they're a bit of a nature worshipper. It's quiet. ~T04\_23\_I*

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*Paris. I love art, I draw and paint a lot. I'm into fashion, so Paris to me it's like a fashion capital. ~T08\_24\_I*

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*Brazil. I think that part of the world, South America, it looks nice. I've seen it on TV, documentaries and such. ~T02\_31\_I*

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cultural locations as opposed to modern cities. Places with high heritage values are seen to be their preferred choice. As such, while on vacation, moving around the city, exploring history is a common activity for

them. While they do travel to new destinations every now and then, they still tend to return to previously visited locations on a regular basis, especially to domestic sites. Besides visiting the local tourist attractions, they also patronize gay clubs and bars every now and then. They do however prefer to spend time with their own group that they travel with. Typically, the Indians do not attend gay pride events.

On average, they spend between RM500 to RM5,000 per trip depending if it is domestic or international. When it comes to flights, they prefer to fly budget airlines. Cost is an important factor to them when planning a vacation. They look for special offers available and make their plans accordingly. This is also because they are inclined to travel in groups, which therefore makes it more cost effective to fly with budget airlines. The same applies to accommodation. The Indians are not too particular when it comes to choosing a place to stay. As they prefer to sightsee and spend more time outside, a simply 2\* accommodation or a backpacking hostel is sufficient. However, the place has to be clean and comfortable. Cleanliness makes or breaks they decision in this matter.

Shopping is another preferred activity by the Indians. They spend between RM1,000 to RM3,000 just on shopping. This amount is also because they are brand conscious individuals. The pre-conceived notion of high price plus brand equals quality is very much ingrained in them. Therefore, they be likely to purchase branded items especially so when on vacation abroad.

When it comes to sexual health, the Indians do not engage in sexual activities with unfamiliar people while on vacation. This is also in line with the fact that they are mostly closeted when it comes to their sexual orientation. Nonetheless, the times that they do, they always practice safe

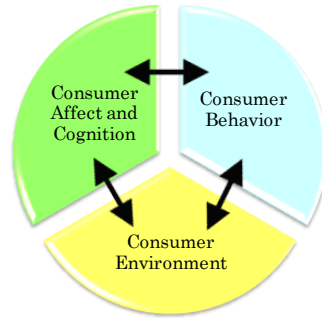
sex. This leads them to undervalue the importance of regular HIV screening; hence, they do it sparingly.

### **Recommendation**

The Indians have an apparent profile and trend. Most of the existing strategies just need to be enhanced and created more specifically for the gay market. Following are the possible strategies that can be implemented.

- ❖ The economy or value pricing should be used. They are cost conscious individuals and look for valuable packages that cater to their needs.
- ❖ Bundle packaging such as flight and accommodation packages are an attraction to this target group.
- ❖ Cleanliness of an accommodation, regardless of its star rating, is the best way to garner their attention as this is a high priority to them.
- ❖ Information should be distributed online. SEO and SMO are highly important when marketing to the Malaysian Indian gays. They rely heavily on information online which is where they do most of their research.
- ❖ Content optimization should be included in marketing strategies as they tend to look at various sites as part of their pre-planning activities.
- ❖ Matters relating to culture, heritage and history are of utmost interest to this group and therefore these should be highlighted in all promotional areas.
- ❖ Existing tourist attractions can be shown through co-operating marketing with travel agents with additional highlights on gay spots and activities.
- ❖ Companies in the retail industry could focus on its brand presence and emphasize more on the quality of their products and services which is in line with their high placement of value when making purchase decision.
- ❖ As a community that is conscious of physical safety, travel insurance is a great angle to pursue as an added deal.
- ❖ *As an added point to highlight, governments, NGOs and countries could further emphasize and educate on the importance of regular HIV screenings. Especially so for those organizations in Malaysia, they should aim to alert and inform the Malaysian Indian gays on this matter.*

While their general mindset may seem to be cost effective, the Malaysian Indian gays are definitely willing to spend their money if they were to see a value behind it. Their belief system is held closely to their principle in life. Therefore a mixture of affect and cognitive approach must be used here. They have a need to understand the knowledge of the available information and belief in its value.



Source: J. Paul Peter, Jerry C. Olsen; Consumer Behaviour & Marketing Strategy; Page 19; adapted

### 5.1.3. Chinese

A total of ten Chinese gays were spoken to and based on the information provided, a general profile of them is created. They are either single or in a relationship, are openly gay, employed and have a high income of an average RM200,000 per annum. When it comes to travelling, they mostly travel alone while sometimes in small groups. In order to plan their trip, they make a thorough research planning well in advance, taking between three to six months. However, they do make spontaneous trips when it comes to domestic destinations. In terms of information, they get ideas of places to visit through peer discussions. They also do detailed research online and with guide books but almost never use any gay sites to make plans. As they are more tech savvy and depend highly on technology, they prefer to plan all their activities on their own and not take tour packages. With information being available at all times, they prefer to relax and enjoy their own plans and it is also cost effective. Travel insurance is not important to them and they are indifferent about purchasing it.

The main reason they go on a vacation, is to escape their stressful work life and to relax and rejuvenate. As they prefer to travel alone, they do engage in low-intensity activities and choose to just relax.

However, shopping is a big part of their travel plans, whereby some vacations are planned specifically to shop. Retail therapy is another way to relax for them. Therefore,

DREAM DESTINATION

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*Paris. Because it's where u find true love and also it's great for shopping. ~T16\_21\_C*

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*San Francisco. It's a beautiful city, it's the best I've been to. I'd love to go back there again. ~T17\_41\_C*

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*Hawaii. I've been there many times, and I like it. ~T12\_35\_C*

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*St. Helena. It's remote. I find it different. Undisclosed. ~T15\_21\_C*

their choices of destinations are mainly cities. Besides relaxing and shopping, they do enjoy sightseeing the city and explore the local food and beverages.

On average, they spend about RM500 to RM10,000 per trip, depending on the location. When choosing their flights, they are not too specific on the type of carrier. However, what is important to them is that the schedule is in accordance to their plans. Long haul flights make them choose full-service airlines as they find it more comfortable, convenient and they are able to enjoy the loyalty programs. But domestically, it is irrelevant to them and they are willing to fly budget airlines just as long as the schedule is right. Likewise, choosing an accommodation also sees them wanting it to be at the best location. This simply means that it is close to public transportations, so they are able to move around and keep to their own plans. Comfort is also of importance to them since relaxing is their main motivation and activity. Therefore returning to a comfortable room is crucial. This means they are agreeable to stay in places that are at least 3\*s and above.

As mentioned before, shopping is a big part of their vacation. The Chinese spend easily RM3,000 – RM5,000 per shopping spree. They are also mostly brand conscious in their purchase. However, the quantity and time spent shopping has a higher value to them than the individual purchase in itself.

While on vacation, they also frequent gay bars and clubs. Since they do thorough research and engage in a lot of peer discussions, they are curious and usually look into the night scene at these destinations. Along with that, gay pride events are not of utmost importance to them. Sometimes they do plan specifically to attend these events, but mostly it is not all that imperative to them.

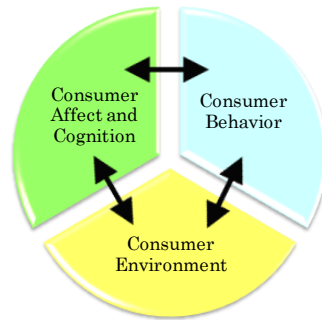
On the topic of sexual behavior, the Chinese do engage in sexual activities with unfamiliar persons while on vacation. This is in line with them travelling alone. And the times that they do partake in these activities, they always practice safe sex. They are also very health conscious and perform regular HIV tests to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

### **Recommendation**

When focusing on the Malaysian Chinese gay market, the principle knowledge that marketers should have is that they orientate more towards facts and figures. Therefore the following could be considered when reaching this market segment.

- ☛ Information is vital. They are hungry for detailed facts and figures. The focus should be on the various ways to disseminate the required information.
- ☛ SEO and SMO are vital here. They are tech savvy and constantly prefer to refer to the internet and digital contents before making decisions. Developing specific apps and utilizing mobile marketing and video marketing to the fullest would be an effective method. This would garner their attention and influence their decision making process.
- ☛ Online Gamification is another aspect that can be tapped into. Using the existing online platform, contest and games can be made available to entice them to participate in activities or to travel to a specific destination.
- ☛ City centers, modern and powerful environment appeals to them. These are aspects that can be highlight in promotional strategies. As shopping is a big part of their time abroad, information with regards to best shopping places or destinations could be brought to light.
- ☛ Pride events are products that can be used to entice them, though not to the highest degree. They are however, keen on these annual events that are held in the Greater China region and Australia. This could be due to the fact that they are more comfortable mingling within their community and ethnicity.
- ☛ Food and Beverage industry can also benefit from this target group. They are extremely keen on exploring local delights and is a major activity during their travel away from home.
- ☛ Price is not entirely a major factor as they are comfortable spending more so on shopping and comfortable accommodation while on vacation.

The key here is to provide them with sufficient information and knowledge. Data, facts and figures are crucial to them when making a decision. Within all industries, if they can prioritize to make the relevant information available, they would instantly have the attention of the Malaysian Chinese gays. A cognitive approach must be taken in order to entice them.



Source: J. Paul Peter, Jerry C. Olsen; *Consumer Behaviour & Marketing Strategy*; Page 19; adapted

## 5.2. *Limitations of the Study*

Although this study achieved its aim and objectives, there are some inevitable limitations. Firstly is that the findings may not be accurate as many of the respondents who participated in this study lived within the Klang Valley, which has a large gay community and a busy gay scene. This may not be the most accurate representation of the entire gay community in Malaysia. Should there be a similar survey done in another city which has a lesser visible gay community a different travel pattern may emerge. It is possible that gay men who live in rural areas or small towns which do not have a visible gay community may be more attracted to holidaying in gay destinations. (Clift & Forrest, *Gay men and tourism: destinations and holiday motivations*, 1999, p. 623). However, to engage respondents from the capital in itself would mean targeting those with significant spending power and therefore travel more. This would be relevant to marketers who are looking to tap into this lucrative market.

Another possible limitation is the fact that this is purely a qualitative study where the findings may be too subjective. It is more of a personal approach and is mostly semi-structured which makes it difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, the main aim of this study is to explore in-depth on the travel behavior of Malaysian gays by ethnicity and not to quantify the findings. Therefore, this study was able to achieve its objective in finding a deep meaning behind some decisions made by the gay travelers.

Similar to the limitation posed by a quantitative study, the possibility that the data collected is not a hundred percent accurate is present. Especially since this is a sensitive topic, respondents may be inclined to avoid answering certain questions that makes them uncomfortable.



Fortunately, the respondents from this study answered all of the interview questions with the exception of just one respondent who initially declined to state his relationship status as well as the level of his sexual activity while on vacation. Here again, the possibility in probing further in a qualitative methodology enabled the study to eventually obtain an answer to these questions although in an indirect form.

Lastly, the findings in this study could be said to have an undue influence of the researcher's interpretation (Clifton & Handy, 2001). However, as semi-structured interview strategy was used, there was minimal deviation when it came to interviewing all respondents. The analysis using NVIVO also enables the findings to be grouped together and a similar pattern can emerge unbiased. From this data analysis which is valid, consistent and reliable, the conclusions and recommendations were drawn.

### **5.3. *Suggestions for Future Research***

The purpose of this study was to fill the gap on the lack of knowledge on the travel behavior within the Malaysian gay community and to profile them by ethnicity to further understand their needs. Overall, the study found a similar pattern existing among the main three ethnicities. As such a profile was created for each group to enable marketers and those involved in the tourism industry to understand this lucrative market's needs and wants.

From this study, many other possible researches can be conducted to study the Malaysian gay market thoroughly. Firstly, a quantitative survey based study can be carried out to further measure the findings of this study. This would solidify the findings uncovered here. A mixed method study could also be conducted which would produce rich and valuable data. As mentioned in the limitation, the scope of this study can be expanded further to the rural areas of the country to garner a more diverse source of information which could aid in understanding this market segment.

As homosexuality is at present considered illegal in Malaysia, it is impossible to determine an accurate number of gays in Malaysia. A possibility to uncover them nationwide and especially to discover those who are still closeted would prove to help the tourism industry and many others, in a concrete manner. Quantifying the market segment would add significant value to all studies done regarding this subject.

Researchers could also consider conducting a study that defines the respondents by their age groups or generations, such as Baby Boomers, Gen X and Gen Y. It may be worthwhile to

explore to see if there are any significant differences that exist between generations or if they tend to cluster together within the group when it comes to their preferences.

Another important aspect that can be further developed upon is the sexual behavior and health aspect of their travel habits. This study found most of those interviewed to be sexually active and do practice safe sex at all times. However, not all have been screened for HIV on a regular basis. This is an important aspect in a tourism study. Therefore, a more in-depth study may be explored to investigate the potential health risks that exist among them and on how successful AIDS and safe-sex awareness campaigns of support groups like PT are.

Lastly, having explored the travel behavior of the three Malaysian gay ethnicities in-depth in this study, it would be fruitful to reflect on another angle, specifically on exploring the other communities within the LGBT group. There is still ample knowledge that needs to be uncovered on the lesbian, bisexual and transgender group. One can explore to observe if similar patterns emerges or if they require completely different attention.

As a final indication, overall, the gay market is unfortunately understudied especially so among Malaysians. It is with hope that this study provided a wider perspective to an existing lucrative market segment which is readily available to be tapped into.