



Linnæus University

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Master Thesis

An Exploratory Case Study of Intersectionality in LGBTQ+ Tourism

Applying Roger's Diffusion of Innovation Theory



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Abstract

LGBTQ+ tourism is an important segment of the tourism sector. Although the LGBTQ+ community includes a large variety of sexual- and gender-diverse people, the research on LGBTQ+ tourism has mainly taken a homogenous approach with a focus on LGBTQ+ travellers. Consequently, there are several knowledge gaps in LGBTQ+ tourism research, including a lack of focus on diversity and intersectionality, as well as business perspectives and innovation research. Hence, the field lacks focus on the complexity and diversity within the community.

Concepts like intersectionality offer new research opportunities in the tourism industry and a possibility to rethink tourism from a social sustainability perspective. This research project applies Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory to an exploratory study of intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ tourism industry. It answers the question '*how do LGBTQ+ tourism businesses account for intersectionality as an innovation in their business practices?*'. The data is based on open interviews with representatives of eight LGBTQ+ tourism organisations in variable subsectors and locations that include intersectionality as a core value in their business.

The results confirm that intersectionality can be considered a radical market innovation in LGBTQ+ tourism. However, there is still a long way to go before intersectionality can become the norm in the industry due to several barriers, including a lack of resources in the sector. Intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism can create positive effects on both the tourism sector and society at large, but more research is necessary to ensure that organisations are fully prepared to include everyone under the rainbow umbrella.

Keywords

LGBTQ+ tourism; Intersectionality; Innovation; Diffusion of Innovation; Social Sustainability; Diversity; Marketing



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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|--------|---|
| DMO | Destination Management Organisation |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IGLTA | International LGBTQ+ Travel Association |
| LGBTQ+ | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/ Questioning, and more |
| TERF | Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist |
| UN SDG | United Nations Sustainable Development Goals |
| UNWTO | United National World Tourism Organisation |
| VR | Virtual Reality |



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1 Introduction

This project applies Rogers' diffusion of innovations theory to an exploratory study of intersectionality in the LGBTQ+* tourism industry. In this first chapter, the groundwork for this project is provided. Firstly, a connection between LGBTQ+ tourism and social sustainability is made. Secondly, the research gaps regarding intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism are addressed. Thirdly, the research aim and question are explained. Afterward, the research contributions are briefly highlighted and finally, the content and structure of this paper will be outlined. Since this paper uses a lot of LGBTQ+-specific terminologies, and the author is aware that not everyone is familiar with this vocabulary, all LGBTQ+ terms that will be used throughout this paper will be defined in a glossary in appendix 2 and marked with an Asterix (*).

1.1 LGBTQ+ Tourism and Sustainability

Diversity is a valuable and essential element of the tourism industry (Hagelund, 2016; Higgins Desbiolles, 2020), after all, tourism is a celebration of the variety of cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds, and thrives on the endless different destinations the world has to offer. Diversity is defined by minority groups based on race, ethnicity, religion, politics, sexuality, gender, disability, and nationality (Elkhwesky et al., 2019; Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017). According to Kalargyrou and Costen (2017, p. 71), "diversity is the key to business growth" in the tourism industry. Research shows that an inclusive management approach to diversity can have positive effects on company staff, customer satisfaction, competitive advantage, financial profit, and innovation (Elkhwesky et al., 2019; Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017). Including diversity in tourism businesses and the sector at large is thus promising for company profits, but also for the workforce and for tourists. However, tourism is a historically Western concept and the focus on the topic of diversity is a recent addition to tourism studies (Higgins Desbiolles, 2020).

New approaches and concepts, such as intersectionality theory, gender diversity, and queer studies, offer opportunities for research on diversity in the tourism industry by pushing for rights and recognition of minorities and encouraging a "rethinking of tourism" (Higgins Desbiolles, 2020, p. 30). Consequently, diversity is an increasingly



important topic in tourism studies (Costa et al., 2020; Higgins Desbiolles, 2020; Tarlow, 2020), as are gender* and sexuality* (Coon, 2012; Lucena et al., 2021; Monterrubio, 2019; Mooney, 2020; Ong et al., 2020), specifically as part of the social sustainability discourse around the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) (United Nations, 2015).

The topics of diversity, intersectionality, and LGBTQ+ rights are part of the sustainability agenda. After all, gender and sexuality are part of the UN SDGs. Specifically, gender inequalities are included in Goals 5 and 10. Goal 5 focuses on gender equality, with targets aimed at ending violence and harmful practices against women, and discrimination based on gender, as well as enabling equal opportunity and participation of women in political, economic, and public life (United Nations, 2015). Including gender diversity in the SDGs could, arguably, be a natural extension of Goal 5 and could be considered a missed opportunity by some. Additionally, Goal 10 focuses on reducing inequality in general, and on creating “social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status” (United Nations, 2015, p. 23). Other goals discuss topics connected to gender and sexual equality, like human rights, inclusivity, and the idea of leaving no one behind (Ong et al., 2020). Thus, despite sexuality not explicitly being mentioned in the UN SDGs, it is inherently linked to gender and sex* and is part of the ‘other status’ under Goal 10. Consequently, this study considers equality for everyone in the LGBTQ+ community an inherent part of the UN SDGs and the sustainability agenda.

According to the United Nations, “social sustainability is about identifying and managing business impacts, both positive and negative, on people” (United Nations, n.d.-b). This approach will lead the perspective of this research project. Therefore, this study pursues to define social sustainability within tourism as *creating more positive social impacts than negative ones*. This translates into respect for “socio-cultural authenticity of host communities”, as well as conservation of cultural heritage and values, and supporting “inter-cultural understanding and tolerance” (UNWTO, n.d., par. 2 sec. 2). In short, social sustainability within tourism is about creating and balancing net-positive impacts on local communities, and cultures, as well as for tourists, and all other stakeholders.



1.2 Knowledge Gap

This research project focuses on intersectionality in the sub-segment of LGBTQ+ tourism. The term *LGBTQ+ tourism* has been defined as “the development and marketing of tourism products and services to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people” (Kutschera, 2018, para. 3). Thus, the LGBTQ+ tourism sub-segment is specified by a focus on members of the LGBTQ+ community, including but not limited to lesbian*, gay*, bisexual*, and transgender* people, and their travel motivations and goals (Hagelund, 2016; Kutschera, 2018). However, there is a lack of research on the diversity within and intersectionality between gender and sexuality in tourism studies (Mooney, 2020).

LGBTQ+ tourism is an important sub-segment of the tourism sector and many tourism businesses focus on LGBTQ+ travellers (Coon, 2012; Keith et al., 2019; Lucena et al., 2021). Although the LGBTQ+ community includes a large variety of sexual- and gender-diverse people, the research on LGBTQ+ tourism has mainly taken a one-sided approach to LGBTQ+ travellers’ behaviour, motivations, experience, and representation (Coon, 2012; Monterrubio, 2019; Monterrubio et al., 2021; Ong et al., 2020). The field lacks a focus on the complexity and diversity within the community as a result of, for example, mainly focusing on gay men and women (Ong et al., 2020). Although barriers to diversification have been pointed out by several authors, there is a lack of information on gender-diverse travellers, generational differences, and changes in queer* culture and spaces (Hagelund, 2016; Lucena et al., 2021; Ong et al., 2020)

Consequently, there are several knowledge gaps in LGBTQ+ tourism research, including a lack of focus on diversity and intersectionality (Lucena et al., 2021; Mooney, 2018; Ong et al., 2020), as well as a lack of focus on business perspectives (Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021; Ong et al., 2020) and innovations (Shin & Perdue, 2022). The first knowledge gap is reflected in the amount of research focusing on white, young, well-educated, middle-class, gay men and, to a lesser extent, lesbian women (Coon, 2012; Ong et al., 2021). At the same time, there is a lack of research on within-group differences, including on other identities in the LGBTQ+ community beyond gay and lesbian and especially in the case of non-binary* and transgender travellers (Atewologun, 2018; Ong et al., 2020). This leads to a limited understanding of



diversity by destinations, hospitality managers, and others within LGBTQ+ tourism (Ro et al., 2017), as well as gatekeeping and exclusion of non-binary and transgender persons, queer people of colour, and other members of the community who do not fit the notion of what Puar (2002, p. 943) calls “the good homosexual”.

The second knowledge gap is reflected by the focus of LGBTQ+ tourism research on travel motivations, demographics, and behaviour of LGBTQ+ travellers (Johnston, 2018; Monterrubio, 2019; Ong et al., 2020; Puar, 2002; Ro et al., 2017), while LGBTQ+ tourism management and innovations in the field have been largely ignored (Kalargyrou & Costen, 2017; Ong et al., 2020; Shin & Perdue, 2022). This leaves a knowledge gap in the business and management perspectives of LGBTQ+ tourism, especially for tourism businesses other than accommodation providers (Shin & Perdue, 2022). This is unfortunate since LGBTQ+ tourism offers big economic and social potential, but also comes with its unique challenges (Coon, 2012; Hagelund, 2016). Research focusing on LGBTQ+ tourism businesses could help tourism providers adapt to the needs of LGBTQ+ travellers and innovate for diversity and inclusion in LGBTQ+ tourism. These innovations can prepare LGBTQ+ tourism organisations to welcome everyone under the rainbow umbrella.

1.3 Aim and Objective

This research paper aims to contribute to the knowledge gap created by the lack of research on intersectionality and innovation in LGBTQ+ tourism businesses. Intersectionality is “the idea that we experience [...] discriminations [and] benefits based on a number of different identities that we have” and that these identities are colliding in different ways (Lafayette College, 2015, 0:45). This project will determine how LGBTQ+ tourism organisations approach intersectionality as an innovative idea in their activities.

The project applies Rogers’ diffusion of innovations framework as it lends itself well to uncovering the relational and temporal perspective of intersectionality as an innovation, as well as the barriers, opportunities, and managerial recommendations to foster intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector. The diffusion of innovations framework is a well-researched and widely-used framework to investigate business innovations (Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021; Pikkemaat et al., 2019; Shin & Perdue,



2022), however, it has seldom been applied in tourism research (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016; Hjalager, 2010).

The following research question will guide this project:

How do LGBTQ+ tourism businesses account for intersectionality as an innovation in their business practices?

To answer the research question, the researcher takes on a qualitative, interpretivist approach. The data is based on open interviews with representatives of eight LGBTQ+ tourism organisations in variable subsectors and locations who indicate intersectionality to be an integral part of their business practices. This case study approach provides an in-depth and real-life insight into the specific phenomenon of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism (Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Saunders et al., 2019). The subjective lens of interpretivism aligns well with intersectionality as a critical theory (Atewologun, 2018). Additionally, due to the lack of research on the subject, an exploratory method with abductive coding methods provides the flexibility necessary for this research (Saunders et al., 2019).

The innovation of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism is relevant due to the disadvantaged position of the LGBTQ+ community as a whole combined with the privileged positions of some subgroups over others within the community, for example gay cis men who are privileged compared to queer people of colour, transgender people, and other more marginalised groups. This research project consequently addresses the knowledge gap on intersecting identities and within-group differences in LGBTQ+ tourism (Atewologun, 2018). Additionally, the project approaches intersectionality as an innovation in LGBTQ+ tourism. This addresses the research gap on innovation, specifically the lack of research on social sustainability innovations, in (LGBTQ+) tourism (Shin & Perdue, 2022).

1.4 Disposition

This paper consists of seven chapters. After this introduction in the **first chapter**, a literature review of the relevant topics for this research project will be discussed in the **second chapter**, which includes information on LGBTQ+ tourism, intersectionality, and innovation in tourism literature. In the **third chapter**, the theoretical



framework, Roger's innovation diffusion theory, will be discussed. In this chapter, the four elements will be explained, with a focus on the most important aspects for this project, as well as some criticisms and shortcomings of the theory and research field. In the **fourth chapter**, the methodology will be explained, including the philosophy of science that guides this project, its research design and quality, and the ethics and limitations. **Chapter five** will focus on the results of the data analysis. This chapter is divided into five subchapters, discussing intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism and how it relates to the four elements of the theoretical framework. The **sixth chapter** includes the discussion which connects the results to the literature highlighted in chapter two. The **final chapter** reflects on this project and formulates several conclusions, theoretical and practical contributions, and future research recommendations.



2 Literature Review

This research paper focuses on intersectionality as an innovation in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector. Hence, this chapter will discuss definitions and past research on these topics. First, the concept of LGBTQ+ tourism will be introduced, including a definition of LGBTQ+ and the history of LGBTQ+ tourism as a phenomenon. Afterward, the concept of intersectionality will be discussed in depth. This part will define intersectionality theory, its relation to sexuality and gender studies, and past research on intersectionality in tourism literature. Lastly, the chapter will go more into depth on innovation research in tourism, with a specific focus on research gaps and the diffusion of innovations.

2.1 LGBTQ+ Tourism

The first sub-chapter of the literature review will focus on LGBTQ+ tourism as a phenomenon. First, the chapter will introduce several important definitions. Secondly, the history of LGBTQ+ tourism will be briefly discussed. And lastly, this chapter will review important LGBTQ+ tourism research, focusing specifically on the research gaps in this research body.

2.1.1 Defining LGBTQ+

Within the LGBTQ+ community, gender, sex, and sexuality are essentially different concepts and are innately linked to concepts like gender expression* and orientation*. While this paper does not go into depth on the complexities of gender and sexuality, it is useful to highlight the meanings of the most common terms.

The acronym *LGBTQ+* stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans(gender), Queer or Questioning*, and other identities (e.g., asexual*, non-binary, polyamorous*). The LGBTQ+ community is generally considered to include all gender and sexual minorities which fall outside the heterosexual* and cisgender* categories. More recently, the queer* community uses a variety of acronyms to better represent sexual and gender diversity, but the most common acronym is LGBTQ+. To better reflect the inclusion and diversity of all sexual and gender minorities, I have decided to use the acronym LGBTQ+ instead of LGBT, even though the latter is more commonly used in tourism research.



Gender is defined as a social construct and is related to concepts such as masculinity*, femininity*, and androgyny*. A person's gender is reflected in their gender identity* (internal perception or sense of gender) and gender expression (external appearance). There are two binary* genders: woman and man. If someone identifies with the gender they were assigned at birth, they are cisgender. However, if they identify with another binary or non-binary gender, the person is considered transgender. In the LGBTQ+ community, many other non-binary genders, such as genderqueer* and agender*, are represented.

Gender differs from (*biological*) *sex* which is a medical label based on genitalia, chromosomes, hormones, and other sexual attributes. Sex is usually assigned at birth by a doctor and traditionally consists of the binary of male or female. In society, gender is usually assumed based on a person's sex and physical appearance. (*LGBTQ Terms and Definitions*, n.d.; *List of LGBTQ+ Terms*, n.d.; Monterrubio et al., 2020; Mooney, 2020)

*Sexual orientation** or *sexuality* reflects a person's "sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction [...] for others" (*LGBTQ Terminology*, n.d.). Labels for sexuality are, for example, hetero(sexual), homo(sexual)*, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, etc. However, not everyone chooses to label their sexuality, but rather to describe who they feel attracted to and in which way(s). For example, the term women loving women is often used to include all women and feminine genderqueer people who are in some way attracted to other women and feminine-representing people.

2.1.2 History of LGBTQ+ Tourism

LGBTQ+ people have always travelled as they have always existed throughout history, but a clear notion of LGBTQ+-focused tourism surfaced in the 19th Century (Hagelund, 2016; International Gay & Lesbian Travel Organisation (IGLTA), n.d.). During these times, LGBTQ+ travellers from northern Europe travelled south on a Grand Tour, to countries such as Greece and Italy, where homosexuality was more accepted (Hagelund, 2016). After World War II, tourism became more affordable and accessible to the middle class, and so did LGBTQ+ tourism (Hagelund, 2016). However, the segment remained segregated to places where it was safe to travel for gay men and lesbian women, contributing to the concept of gay space*, until global rights



expanded and the community became more accepted (Hagelund, 2016; IGLTA, n.d.). Gay space can be defined as a safe place for LGBTQ+ people which contributes to the “creation and formation” of LGBTQ+ identity in a safe environment without fear of discrimination or homophobia* (Hagelund, 2016, p. 6). Gay space is often equated to queer space. Marketing of LGBTQ+ tourism during this early period was therefore limited to word-of-mouth and subtle advertising through gay travel guides, to keep gay space invisible to heterosexuals (Coon, 2012). This is in sharp contrast to the current advertising of LGBTQ+ tourism through public campaigns for specific LGBTQ+ travel destinations, which are highly visible to heteronormative* society but lie sometimes completely outside of heteronormative spaces (Coon, 2012).

A pivotal turn in acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community came after the Stonewall riots in New York in 1969 (IGLTA, n.d.; Keith et al., 2019), as well as after the Gay Liberation movement in the 1970s (Coon, 2012; IGLTA, n.d.; Keith et al., 2019). Stonewall was also the origin of Pride events in the U.S. and later in Europe and other parts of the world (IGLTA, n.d.; Keith et al., 2019). (Gay) Pride Parades* are outdoor celebrations of “social and self-acceptance, achievements, legal rights, and pride” commemorating the Stonewall riots, as well as demonstrations for equal rights of the LGBTQ+ community (“Pride parade”, 2022). Today, Pride tourism is a major part of LGBTQ+ tourism and many queer people travel specifically to Pride events all over the world to celebrate their identity (IGLTA, n.d.; Keith et al., 2019).

During the subsequent decades, the LGBTQ+ community started to be considered a viable market segment; travel organisations started focusing on LGBTQ+ tourists, and specialised travel providers popped up, which focused on gay cruises, LGBTQ+ tourism destinations such as Greece and Israel, and lesbian adventure trips (Coon, 2012; Keith et al., 2019). Coon (2012) connects this increasing acceptance into consumption as a sign of citizenship for the LGBTQ+ community, which is reflected in participation in society, as well as cultural practices and representations. He argues furthermore that this “marketplace participation in a capitalist society is an essential entry point into political debates about rights and opportunities” (Coon, 2012, p. 514). In other words: acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community into the market, including the tourism market, leads to an increasingly important voice in political and Human



Rights discussions, something which has been repeated by numerous other scholars (Hagelund, 2016; Lucena et al., 2021; Ong et al., 2020).

Increasing visibility of LGBTQ+ movements and culture, to which LGBTQ+ tourism partly contributed, has led to a simultaneous increase in acceptance and legalisation of LGBTQ+ identities and rights. This in turn led to the popularisation of certain destinations for LGBTQ+ travel. For example, due to the early recognition of same-sex partnerships and same-sex marriage, countries like Denmark and the Netherlands have become particularly popular LGBTQ+ tourism destinations (IGLTA, n.d.; Keith et al., 2019). Although homosexuality and being transgender are still criminalised in 73 countries around the world (Ong et al., 2020), many countries have legalised or at least acknowledged same-sex marriages (Keith et al., 2019), and many more LGBTQ+-focused and -welcoming tourism organisations have become available (IGLTA, n.d.). International organisations, like the UNWTO, now also focus on the topic of LGBTQ+ tourism (as reflected in their 2012 Global Report on LGBT tourism), often in collaboration with the International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA), who represent an international network of LGBTQ+-friendly businesses and promote LGBTQ+ tourism worldwide (*About IGLTA*, n.d.).

Despite the increasing importance of the LGBTQ+ community as a customer segment for tourism businesses, there is still a long way to go before equal travel opportunities are achieved for this minority group (Coon, 2012; Keith et al., 2019; Lucena et al., 2021; Ong et al., 2020). Consequently, options provided by gay spaces and LGBTQ+ tourism to escape from an often hostile, or at least intolerant, heteronormative society are still relevant and necessary. Additionally, the intersections of gender, sexuality, representation, and acceptance are still important to consider for LGBTQ+ tourism businesses.

2.1.3 LGBTQ+ Tourism Research

Over the past decades, the increase in LGBTQ+-focused tourism has led to a simultaneous increase in LGBTQ+ tourism research (Ong et al., 2020). During the 1990s, the focus was still very much on topics concerning sexual identity and sexual health (Ong et al., 2020). This research investigated why and how (mainly) gay men travelled (Ong et al., 2020) and focused heavily on the “city/ beach/ sex combo” (Lucena



et al., 2021, p. 428). In the 2000s, topics such as discrimination and destination avoidance emerged as well (Ong et al., 2020). This research reflected the early focus of the social sciences on the homosexual as the other and its studies of prejudice, discrimination, and social stigma towards the (mainly male) homosexual (Seidman, 1994).

As stated before, the focus on gay men and ignorance of other identities within the LGBTQ+ community was quite persistent until the early to mid-2010s, while the focus on lesbian women increased a decade earlier (Coon, 2012; Monterrubio, 2019; Ong et al., 2020; Ro et al., 2017; Usai et al., 2022). This reflects the male domination in the general research field (Mooney, 2020). Additionally, literature on LGBTQ+ tourism from the past three decades mainly focuses on the Western hemisphere, with most papers focusing on North America (Monterrubio, 2019; Olson & Reddy-Best, 2019; Ong et al., 2020; Ro et al., 2017) and the United Kingdom (Monterrubio, 2019; Ong et al., 2020), as well as Australia (Johnston, 2018; Monterrubio, 2019; Ong et al., 2020) and, more recently, on South America (Monterrubio et al., 2020; Monterrubio et al., 2021). Literature from Europe also seems to be underrepresented in LGBTQ+ tourism studies (Ong et al., 2020). This could be because there is generally more acceptance and tolerance for LGBTQ+ communities in Europe than in other parts of the world, which might reduce the need for safe gay spaces.

The main topics of research on LGBTQ+ tourism are the context of LGBTQ+ identities and identity construction during travel, as well as how tourism can provide an escape from heteronormativity and enable the creation of gay space (Hagelund, 2016; Olson & Reddy-Best, 2019; Ong et al., 2020). Other well-researched topics focus on event perception and experience at, for example, Pride parades, LGBTQ+ communities and diversity, and representation in the media (Ong et al., 2020). Although this list of topics may seem to represent a diverse research field in LGBTQ+ tourism, and the variety in the research field is indeed increasing, the topics are usually closely connected and reflect the previously mentioned one-sided perspective of LGBTQ+ tourism research (Ong et al., 2020).

Consequently, this means the complexity of the LGBTQ+ community and the individual experiences of sub-minorities are underrepresented in literature (Ong et al., 2020). Ong et al. (2020) therefore advocate for more research into “the



homogenisation of LGBTIQ+ communities” (p. 18) and intersectionality within the LGBTQ+ tourism field to counter the absence of bisexual, transgender, and other minority voices. At the same time, Mooney (2018) calls for more intersectionality in tourism research to increase more critical perspectives and Lucena et al. (2021) acknowledge that recent literature is starting to recognise the heterogenous and intersectional nature of the LGBTQ+ communities.

While the travel motivations, behaviours, and needs of LGBTQ+ travellers are not necessarily different from straight tourists, the need to escape from heteronormative society and expectations still plays a role in LGBTQ+ tourism (Hagelund, 2016; Lucena et al., 2021; Ong et al., 2020). Furthermore, LGBTQ+ tourists have been identified as being a “demanding segment” (Hagelund, 2016, p. 48) because they avoid not only destinations considered homophobic, but are also often conscious of other ethical practices in a country or region, such as migration policies (Hagelund, 2016; Lucena et al., 2021). After all, the LGBTQ+ community is aware of how discrimination and stigmatization can heavily influence someone’s life and happiness and thus often does not support those sentiments towards other minorities. The same could be said for solidarity within the LGBTQ+ community, because, while gay men and lesbian women are generally accepted in contemporary (Western) society, transgender, genderqueer, and other sub-minorities might not experience the same acceptance and tolerance. It can thus be expected that more privileged minorities in the LGBTQ+ community will not tolerate discrimination towards their less-privileged peers.

Nevertheless, as many authors point out, it is hard to focus on and diversify for some subgroups of the community due to the lack of research on, for example, transgender and non-binary travellers (Hagelund, 2016; Lucena et al., 2021; Monterrubio et al., 2021; Ong et al., 2020). After all, research has provided evidence that trans people’s travel motivations, experiences, and challenges differ significantly from those of gay, lesbian, and other sexual minorities (Hagelund, 2016; Monterrubio et al., 2020). For example, transgender travellers face challenges concerning airport security, binary spaces such as restrooms and swimming pools, and checking into restaurants and hotels (Olson & Reddy-Best, 2019). Additionally, since many transgender and non-binary people live in poverty, they have fewer travel opportunities than their cisgender peers (Olson & Reddy-Best, 2019). Travel push and pull factors also significantly



differ for transgender travellers compared to their LGBTQ+ peers. Monterrubio et al. (2020) found that transphobia* and cisgenderism are not important push factors for transgender travellers, while homophobia is often mentioned as a push factor for gay and lesbian travellers. However, transphobia is mentioned as a factor contributing to travel avoidance (Monterrubio et al., 2020). Additionally, a destination's safety is a much more important pull factor than opportunities for socialisation with like-minded people or the availability of (trans) queer spaces* (Monterrubio et al., 2020).

LGBTQ+ tourism organisations also face other challenges, such as the profound generational and structural changes which have taken place within the community over the past decades, which lead to different needs and behaviours depending on the tourists' age (Hagelund, 2016; Lucena et al., 2021). Additionally, changes in gay space, gay culture, and the meaning of symbols such as the pride flag* and Pride parades, lead to commercial and political challenges (Hagelund, 2016). Especially the mainstreaming and heteronormalisation* of gay space is objectionable to some members of the LGBTQ+ community (Hagelund, 2016; Lucena et al., 2021). After all, these spaces are representations of gay culture, as well as physical and emotional safe spaces for many LGBTQ+ people which are now being commodified as tourism destinations for both queer and non-queer travellers, or replaced by alternative spaces (Coon, 2012; Lucena et al., 2021). All this bears the question if gay space should be preserved, altered, or discarded altogether (Lucena et al., 2021).

Graham's (2002) distinction between gay and queer tourism is connected to this sentiment. Where the former is a celebration of gay culture that leaves the marginalization and heteronormative dichotomy intact, the latter celebrates queer existence in heteronormative spaces (as cited in Coon, 2012, pp. 515–516). Gay tourism can be perceived as a type of commodification of gay space, but also as a safe haven for those who face discrimination in their daily life (Coon, 2012). Contrarily, queer tourism focuses more on the integration of the LGBTQ+ community in heteronormative society and tourism, for example in mainstream destinations (Coon, 2012). This is more in line with queer theory that takes a critical stance on identity-based and societal binaries (Hagelund, 2016; Jagose, 2005). Both gay and queer tourism can be found in LGBTQ+ travel (Coon, 2012), and the type of tourism a queer person will



choose depends on their needs and desires, and their situation in their location of origin.

Even though there is organisational evidence that LGBTQ+ individuals face many challenges in a variety of environments and situations (Vongvisitsin & Wong, 2021), there is a big research gap in the business and organisational perspectives of LGBTQ+ tourism (Ong et al., 2020). However, this research is necessary for a practical approach to behaviours and needs of LGBTQ+ travellers (Ong et al., 2020). Hagelund (2016) found that tourism boards still mainly focus on the economic aspects to identify stakeholders which leads to LGBTQ+ tourists being targeted because they are profitable. Due to a lack of knowledge about several sub-minorities in the LGBTQ+ community, the main targets of tourism destinations are still gay men, and to a lesser extent lesbian women. As such, the diversity of the LGBTQ+ community is not always acknowledged by travel organisations (Hagelund, 2016). There is also a specific focus on and a difference in treatment of LGBTQ+ travellers, perpetuating heteronormativity by separating this group from 'regular' travellers (Hagelund, 2016). Gay space has been proven to be important for LGBTQ+ tourism (Hagelund, 2016) and businesses that specifically focus on queer travellers can contribute significantly to the creation of these safe spaces. However, if the needs and challenges of LGBTQ+ travellers are not clearly identified, it can be hard for LGBTQ+ tourism businesses to create appropriate gay spaces, as well as products and services for LGBTQ+ travellers.

In conclusion, LGBTQ+-focused tourism businesses face a multitude of challenges, including changes in society and its values, diversity within the LGBTQ+ community, lack of knowledge about the community, and challenges connected to the aim of maintaining an inclusive image while simultaneously cooperating with other organisations (Hagelund, 2016). All these challenges stem from heteronormativity in society (Hagelund, 2016), which can be countered by a more intersectional and diverse approach in LGBTQ+ tourism organisations. However, as pointed out by Lelo de Larrea et al. (2021), there is a lack of research on organisational processes, specifically in tourism innovation research that tourism organisations could lean on to fill their knowledge gaps. Consequently, LGBTQ+ tourism organisations are presented with the challenge to find a balance between competitive advantage and authenticity to



ensure the further existence of LGBTQ+ tourism. More research on intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism, as well as an increased focus on LGBTQ+ tourism businesses' practices is necessary to further social sustainability in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector.

2.2 Intersectionality

This subchapter will focus on intersectionality, its origin, its theoretical background, and its connection to queer theory, in order to explain its use in LGBTQ+ tourism research and practice. While intersectionality is often quoted as a theory, there is considerable discussion about this between scholars, and over time it has been called a metaphor, a concept, a research paradigm, an experience, a movement, an ideography, a knowledge project, and much more in the literature (Al-Faham et al., 2019; Atewologun, 2018). Consequently, there is no consensus on the interpretation of the concept in literature and different definitions and explanations of it are reflected in this paper. It is also not the aim of this project to create a conclusive definition of intersectionality and it can even be argued that the concept does not lend itself to be defined (Atewologun, 2018).

This researcher chooses to consider intersectionality as a paradigm, lens, or perspective, in line with Atewologun (2018). This reduces the theoretical weight of the concept and allows this project to define it as an innovation which is and can be applied in different fields and contexts. Nevertheless, to explain both intersectionality and queer theory and in order to provide a literature review on these concepts, this chapter also goes into the theoretical background and application of the theory. Henceforth, when this paper talks about 'intersectionality theory' it specifically refers to the original theory by Kimberlé Crenshaw.

2.2.1 The Intersectionality Paradigm

Intersectionality is a critical framework used to investigate and understand the "interconnections and interdependencies between social categories and systems" (Atewologun, 2018, p. 1), as well as the experience of heterogenous members of a social group (Al-Faham et al., 2019; Atewologun, 2018). The concept originates from black feminism activism and studies in the U.S. and has traditionally been applied in legal, political, and sociology studies, but has recently gained significant traction in business and management studies (Al-Faham et al., 2019; Atewologun, 2018). The



origin of intersectionality as a theory is based on the idea that people can experience discrimination on the basis of several different factors at the same time and that these interact and multiply in significant and complex ways (Higgins Desbiolles, 2020). Intersectionality theory was originally developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the 1980s (Atewologun, 2018), based on previous frameworks from Black, lesbian feminists from the 70s (Clark, n.d.), and focused on the “racialized experiences of minority ethnic women” (Atewologun, 2018, p. 1). However, both the theory and the concept can be applied to other identities, like the intersections of gender, sexuality, and other sociodemographic factors such as race, disability, religion, etc. (Johnston, 2018).

Intersectionality is related to minority experiences, the configuration of privilege and disadvantage, systematic power dynamics, and issues such as discrimination, subordination, racism, patriarchy, and heteronormativity (Atewologun, 2018). The framework includes both micro- (individual) and macro-levels (sociostructural) and thus focuses on both individual experiences, within-group, and between-group differences (Atewologun, 2018; Chan & Howard, 2020). Intersectionality also critically examines these identity categories as linked, complex, and dynamic categories (Chan & Howard, 2020). Hence, it challenges within-group homogeneity and provides a theoretical insight into the different experiences of heterogeneous members of a specific social group (Atewologun, 2018; Chan & Howard, 2020).

Intersectionality is based on three assumptions:

- (1) people are recognised and characterised as a part of multiple social categories, and these are intertwined with each other;
- (2) there are power dynamics and relations embedded in these social categories;
- (3) and these social categories include both individual and contextual factors which link social and personal identities to institutional processes and structural systems

(Atewologun, 2018; Collins et al., 2021).

According to intersectionality, knowledge is situational, contextual, relational, reflexive, and connected to both economic and political power (Atewologun, 2018). Hence, intersectionality in itself is a disruptive concept (Al-Faham et al., 2019). Consequently, intersectionality research often implements a qualitative research focus to



give a voice to minorities and examine their experiences and narratives (Atewologun, 2018). After all, “intersectionality acknowledges that power relations play a fundamental role in the construction of thought, experience, and knowledge” (Atewologun, 2018, p. 7) which makes it important to investigate these power relations and reflect them in the research process. This further relates to the positionality of the researcher, who is also influenced by the intersectional narrative of their association with social categories (Atewologun, 2018; Collins et al., 2021). Hence, personal intersectional reflexivity should be more prevalent in research projects (Atewologun, 2018).

Intersectionality has been criticised for being a catch-all concept and some scholars have warned against mainstreaming the concept as a “generalised theory of identity” (Atewologun, 2018, p. 12). To avoid this, researchers should focus not just on the individual factors of identities, but also on the contextual, social, institutional, and structural elements which influence privilege and power dynamics (Atewologun, 2018). After all, intersectionality focuses primarily on discrimination and oppressed identities, including race, gender, sexuality, social class, and disability (Clark, n.d.). If intersectionality is to remain a critical theory, research should increasingly focus on non-binary identities and within-group differences (Atewologun, 2018) which is one of the aims of this research project. Additionally, there is a lack of research on parallel systems of privilege, especially in the case of advantage and disadvantage co-existing and intersecting (Atewologun, 2018). For example, in the case of the LGBTQ+ community, there is room for exploring the privilege of cis white gay men in contrast to queer people of colour, transgender people, and other more marginalised groups.

2.2.2 Intersectionality and Queer Theory

Intersectionality is closely linked to another critical theory: queer theory. Queer theory focuses on removing the barriers between sex, gender, and sexuality and acknowledges the fluidity of these concepts (Hagelund, 2016). Additionally, queer theory wants to reduce and remove the impact of heteronormativity in society (Hagelund, 2016). Consequently, the goals of intersectionality and queer theory are similar in that they both try to address systematic power and privilege dynamics and focus on the



fluidity and subjectivity of social relations and knowledge (Atewologun, 2018; Chan & Howard, 2020; Jagose, 2005; Seidman, 1994).

Queer theory emerged from the field of sociology as an alternative to and critique of the sociology of sexuality, gay and lesbian studies, and social constructionism during the 1980s and 90s (Seidman, 1994). Additionally, it was a critique of the naturalisation and medicalisation of sexuality as well as the identity politics during the AIDS crisis, mainly by queer people of colour (Jagose, 2005; Seidman, 1994). The term 'queer' refers to anything and everything that is considered out of the ordinary and diverging from the norm (Brintnall, 2021; Hagelund, 2016) and is generally considered undefined and sometimes even takes on contradicting meanings (Jagose, 2005). Therefore, the term implies intersectionality and is not exclusively related to the LGBTQ+ community (Brintnall, 2021). However, in the case of queer theory, queer has been coined as a shorter term for everything related to gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender studies (Seidman, 1994; Jagose, 2005).

The term 'queer theory' was first coined by Teresa de Lauretis (Jagose, 2005). Although she later criticized and rejected the concept, her characterisation of queer theory is still considered as its foundation (Jagose, 2005; Seidman, 1994). De Lauretis (1991) characterised queer theory threefold:

- (1) as the refusal of heterosexuality as the norm in society;
- (2) as a way to critically interrogate lesbian and gender studies from a gender perspective and its assumption as a homogenous subject;
- (3) and as a way of re-defining sexuality from a race-perspective.

Consequently, queer theory is a critical theory that combines feminism with lesbian and gay studies from an anti-normative, deconstructionist, and intersectional perspective. The concept accepts sexuality and gender as social constructs and rejects the binaries of hetero/homosexuality and cis/transgenderism (De Lauretis, 1991; Jagose, 2005; Seidman, 1994). Queer theory embraces the messiness of individually and socially constructed identities and frames it in a political and historical context (Chan & Howard, 2020) and consequently acknowledges the social and political power relations through which gender and sexuality are framed (De Lauretis, 1991). However, queer theory cannot be considered an actual theory, since it does not have systematic



principles, consistency, or foundational logic (Jagose, 2005). Rather, it is a field of analysis or a viewpoint from which to critically examine the normative frameworks in society (Jagose, 2005). Due to its resistance to definition, it is constantly reinvented and does not know a linear or single origin (Jagose, 2005).

The plurality, instability, and subjectivity of gender and sexuality in queer theory celebrate the infinite possibilities in which identities can be composed, including and related to those beyond sexuality and gender, such as race, gender, ableness, nationality, and age (Seidman, 1994), as well as the fact that people can and do identify with multiple identities simultaneously (intersectionality) (Chan & Howard, 2020; Hagelund, 2016). After all, no one performs the social expectations related to their sexuality and gender perfectly (Brintnall, 2021) and not everyone relates to existing labels of identity. This can explain the diversity within the LGBTQ+ community, as these infinite possibilities of being queer result in new identities being constructed when someone differs too much from the norms and expectations of a particular identity, such as physical or behavioural expressions. Queer theory thus attempts to expand and complexify “the ways that we conceptualize and construct sexualities” (Brintnall, 2021, p. 3), as well as embraces the inconsistency of sexuality descriptions (Jagose, 2005). Consequently, queer theory still centres on sexuality but, in contrast to gay and lesbian studies, considers this to be a messy and diverse concept, acknowledges its power relations, and critically examines it based on not just gender, but also other elements of identity, such as race, (Chan & Howard, 2020; Jagose, 2005) and is thus inherently intersectional.

2.2.3 Intersectionality in Tourism Research

Since intersectionality investigates the individual and social experiences of social roles, diversity, and intersecting identities, in society (Mooney, 2018), it can logically be applied to the very diverse and social phenomenon of tourism. However, the tourism literature has scarcely used the lens that is offered by intersectionality (Cole, 2017; Mooney, 2018). Even so, this could provide a great opportunity for the research field since there is a significant Western-centric approach and a lack of critical perspectives on demographic and intergroup differences (Higgins Desbiolles, 2020; Mooney, 2018). This results from significant positivist assumptions in Western



tourism research so that studied groups, e.g., ‘women’, ‘Europeans’, or ‘queer people’, are considered to be homogeneous and that within-group differences are overlooked (Mooney, 2018). Intersectionality could be part of the solution to this problem and additionally could further social justice issues in tourism (Mooney, 2018).

Tourism research that considers intersectionality often focuses on intersections of gender with other identities, such as race (Chambers, 2021; Kipp et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2019), religion (Nisha & Cheung, 2022), disabilities (De Pascale et al., 2022), or calls for general gender equality in (sustainable) tourism development (Alarcón & Cole, 2019). Others focus on specific issues in tourism, such as the intersection of gender and water in tourism (Cole, 2017), or specific tourism sectors (Rydzik et al., 2021).

According to Chambers (2021), it is impossible to separate gender from ethnic identities and race. Additionally, tourism spaces and practices are often Westernised while (non-Western) tourism operators tend to favour Western travellers (Rydzik et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2019). This becomes apparent in, for example, abroad wedding tourism, voluntourism, and solo tourism, where gendered and racialised identities are accentuated (Kipp et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2019). For example, when researching the construction of places and people in abroad wedding brochures Rydzik et al. (2021) found that marketing of wedding tourism reflects the white, heterosexual, able-bodied, and conventionally attractive hegemonies of Western society. In these brochures, stereotypical representations of couples are the most prevalent, while diverse representations are often singular (either same-sex, or non-white, or mature couples) and marginalised in small, non-prominent pictures (Rydzik et al., 2021). In the case of voluntourism, Kipp et al. (2021) showed that these gendered and racialised identities lead to renegotiation of experiences of fear and care as well as perpetuating gender and racial power dynamics. Both Kipp et al. (2021) and Yang et al. (2019) call for more cross-cultural learning, reflection, understanding, and inclusion in tourism.

The specific focus on gender as a study subject for intersectionality in tourism can be explained by the extensive focus on gender in tourism research (Chambers, 2021) and the origin of intersectionality in feminism studies (Higgins Desbiolles, 2020). Additionally, when discussing equity and justice issues, which are important for



sustainability in tourism (Chambers, 2021), gender is often at the forefront of this discussion as it impacts half of the population and is a prominent social issue in the UN SDGs. Additionally, the lack of intersectionality in tourism studies can be partly explained by gendered processes and gatekeeping which privilege male researchers in both research and industry events (Mooney, 2020). For example, the idea that gender research is about women and that femininity is defined in relation to men contributes to the failure to critically analyse gender disadvantages and inequalities in tourism research (Mooney, 2020).

These ideas can also be extended to LGBTQ+ tourism and connected to queer theory. Since queer theory rejects binary concepts and embraces fluidity, one could argue that it does not solely focus on the LGBTQ+ community but on everyone's gender and sexual identities, including those of cisgender and heterosexual people and travellers. For example, the term gay-friendly can be considered inherently discriminatory and exclusionary from the focus of queer theory, since "it suggests that LGBTQI+ people are 'allowed in'" (Lucena et al., 2021, p. 429), which still marginalises and stigmatises the LGBTQ+ community as the other. From the perspective of queer theory, one could even argue that LGBTQ+ tourism in itself is othering and discriminatory (Hagelund, 2016). However, from an intersectional perspective, the LGBTQ+ community, and LGBTQ+ tourism by extension, is already diverse and intersectional due to within-group differences. Consequently, discrimination and othering can occur also within these social groups. This othering is, according to this author, the reason that a lot of tourism organisations specifically focus on the most prominent sub-groups in LGBTQ+ tourism and that LGBTQ+ tourism research is still one-sided and lacking diversity.

2.3 Innovation in Tourism

The third part of the literature review will focus on the topic of innovation in tourism research. Firstly, innovation will be defined in a tourism context. Secondly, a brief overview of innovation research in tourism will be discussed based on four literature reviews. And lastly, this chapter will go deeper into the topic of innovation diffusion in tourism research with a focus on the research gaps that this project attempts to address.



2.3.1 Defining Innovation

The innovative capacity of an organisation is an essential element of its competitive advantage (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010). Innovation is a complex concept that has become somewhat of a buzzword (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Hjalager, 2010; Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021). Hence, there are many different definitions of innovation, depending on the discipline, the topic, and the research focus at hand (Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021). The most often used definition is the one by Schumpeter (Pikkemaat et al., 2019), who defined innovation as “an activity through which inventions are carried out in the market for a commercial purpose” (Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021, p. 1). While all definitions of innovation have the aspect of newness, change, and knowledge in common (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Pikkemaat et al., 2019), Schumpeter’s definition focuses specifically on the economic and market orientations that characterize innovations (Pikkemaat et al., 2019).

Innovations are contextual and are the result of modifications and introductions of (new) organisational elements (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Pikkemaat et al., 2019). There are four types of innovations: product or service innovations, process innovations, organisational innovations, and market innovations (Hjalager, 2010; Pikkemaat et al., 2019). These types are often interlinked and reciprocal so that oftentimes multiple innovations are implemented together in a value chain approach (Hjalager, 2010; Pikkemaat et al., 2019). **Error! Reference source not found.** defines each innovation type and presents several examples.

| Innovation | Definitions (Pikkemaat et al., 2019, p. 185) | Examples (Hjalager, 2010) |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Product/Service | “new products or services used in the market or company” which are directly observed by the customer | Low-price hotels, summer season in winter sport, new services/products in heritage tourism |
| Process | “a new or significantly improved production or delivery method” which increases efficiency and productivity (Hjalager, 2010) | ICT, food service technologies, automatic check-in, technologies impacting energy consumption and climate impacts |
| Organisational | “implementation of a new organizational method” which facilitates internal collaboration, staff empowerment, career development. | HR instruments: training and socialisation, promotion, enforcement of corporate values, benefit packages, customer participation |
| Market | “use of market-oriented skills to better address customer needs” which changes communication and relationships with customers | New, ground-breaking marketing concepts, loyalty programs, internet marketing, social media marketing, co-production of brands |

Table 1 Types of innovation



2.3.2 Innovation Research in Tourism

While most tourism innovations are incremental (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Hjalager, 2010; Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021), some examples of ground-breaking (radical) tourism innovations have contributed to the creation and development of tourism and its sub-sectors. Research often refers to Thomas Cook's innovation of efficiently organised tourism packages for the many, the Disney theme parks' creation of a whole new experience attracting both local and international audiences, and the introduction of the all-inclusive concept by Club Méditerranée (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Hjalager, 2010). These radical innovations introduce whole new products, services, and processes to organisations and markets and thus reflect all four innovation types as described in **Error! Reference source not found.**, while incremental innovations focus more on improving already existing innovations and often reflect only one innovation type (Shin & Perdue, 2022). However, incremental innovations can still contribute to bigger changes over time.

Because traditional innovation research has often focused on manufacturing and patenting industries (Hjalager, 2010), literature on service and software technology innovations needed to adapt the approaches, methodologies, and instruments to research innovation (Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021). Consequently, tourism innovation research has focused on both converging and diverging methods in order to improve the position of tourism innovation research in the overall field (converging) as well as to establish tourism as a phenomenon instead of an industry that requires a different research approach (diverging) (Hjalager, 2010). However, while most innovation research has a more quantitative focus, tourism innovation research has used more qualitative approaches, such as explorative and case studies (Hjalager, 2010).

Furthermore, since there is little to no radical innovation in the tourism industry (except for the odd examples such as those mentioned before), there has been more extensive research on incremental innovations (Brooker & Joppe, 2014; Hjalager, 2010; Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021). Brooker and Joppe (2014) even defined a third in-between category, called liminal innovation, to reflect the reality better. Their typology is based on the innovator categories discussed in Rogers' innovation diffusion theory. The first category, the artist or innovator, is the creative outsider pushing for unique, new ideas (radical innovation), while the second category, the artisans or early



adopters, prefer challenging existing perspectives by introducing new elements from other sectors (liminal innovation), and the third category, the painters or majorities, are more realistic and stick to smaller changes and improvements to increase short-term profits (incremental innovation) (Brooker & Joppe, 2014). They argue that the industry needs all three categories to maintain stability while supporting continuous improvements and that their typology “promotes inclusivity rather than exclusivity” (Brooker & Joppe, 2014, p. 506).

Different literature reviews have identified a wide range of topics in innovation research: the process of tourism innovations, including the categorisation, driving forces, and determinants of innovative behaviour; the innovative activities, contexts, and networks which lead to information collection and knowledge expansion in organisations; the knowledge, capacity, and technology diffusions and absorption; the immediate and wider impacts of innovations, including their success; the policies impacting innovations and innovative behaviour; and emerging fields, such as eco-innovations, open innovations, and co-production (Hjalager, 2010; Pikkemaat et al., 2019; Shin & Perdue, 2022).

Hence, while the literature already includes a lot of knowledge on tourism innovations, especially on product and process innovations (Shin & Perdue, 2022) and tourism innovation as an economic phenomenon (Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021), there are still a lot of gaps in research which require extra attention (Hjalager, 2010; Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021; Pikkemaat et al., 2019; Shin & Perdue, 2022). These research gaps include research on drivers and barriers for tourism innovation (Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021), diffusion of innovations (Shin & Perdue, 2022), policy studies (Hjalager, 2010), organisational processes and absorptive capacity (Shin & Perdue, 2022), family-owned micro-businesses (Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021), open innovations (Shin & Perdue, 2022), eco-innovations (Pikkemaat et al., 2019), and innovation research focusing on social sustainability (Shin & Perdue, 2022). This project aims to address three of these research gaps: diffusion of innovations, organizational processes, and innovations related to social sustainability. The next sub-chapter will go deeper into innovation diffusion in tourism research as well as innovation related to sustainability in tourism.



2.3.3 Innovation Diffusion Research in Tourism

Research on innovation diffusions goes back to the 1940s when several independent research disciplines studied specific types of innovation in their respective fields (Rogers, 2003). Even though the interaction between these fields was minimal to non-existent, they came to similar conclusions about the diffusion process (Rogers, 2003). In 1962, Rogers wrote his first version of his book on diffusion of innovations with the goal to “describe a general diffusion model” and create a bridge between the findings from several disciplines (Rogers, 2003, p. 39). Rogers’ innovation diffusion theory has been the most prominent and important in developing the research on diffusion of innovations (Hjalager, 2010; Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021; Pikkemaat et al., 2019; Shin & Perdue, 2022). The theory has been successful in bridging the gap between different research disciplines and created “a more unified cross-disciplinary viewpoint” in innovation diffusion research (Rogers, 2003, p. 40). It has proven to be effective at explaining both adoption and rejection of innovations in a variety of disciplines (Shin & Perdue, 2022).

Unfortunately, there was no literature review found that focuses on innovation diffusion research in the tourism industry. This should be remedied in future research, since a lot of different topics have been discussed and a literature review could provide the field with a better understanding of current findings as well as an overview of research gaps. However, a quick search on Web of Science with the keywords ‘innovation’, ‘diffusion’, and ‘tourism’, leads to a wide range of articles that apply an innovation diffusion perspective to tourism research. While it is not the purpose of this paper to perform a systematic literature analysis on this topic, this sub-chapter will give a brief overview of the most researched issues and the most prominent findings relevant to this project.

Innovation diffusion research in the tourism industry is still in its infancy (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016; Hjalager, 2010). Many papers focus on digital and technological innovations, something that also Shin and Perdue (2022) point out in their literature review on innovation in tourism research. These innovations include smart technologies (Buhalis et al., 2022; A. Huang et al., 2021; Stylos et al., 2021), VR tourism (Kim et al., 2020), green technologies (Dhirasasna et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2021), ICT innovations, social media, and mobile applications (Cheng & Cho, 2011; Ferreira et al.,



2022; Kim et al., 2020), Airbnb as an innovation (D. Huang et al., 2021; Yi et al., 2020), and online marketing and sales (Lim et al., 2022; Misganaw & Singh, 2020). These research projects often apply the diffusion of innovations framework, sometimes combined with the Technology Acceptance Model, the Theory of Planned Behaviour, or other behavioural theories (Cheng & Cho, 2011; Ferreira et al., 2022; Lim et al., 2022; Misganaw & Singh, 2020).

Additionally, multiple papers focus on tourism innovations related to sustainability. Most of these focus on topics in environmental sustainability (Khonje et al., 2020; Le et al., 2006; Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011) and eco-innovations (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016; Horng et al., 2017) or tourism sustainability in general (Dabphet et al., 2012; Ganglmair-Wooliscroft & Wooliscroft, 2016; Lesar & Weaver, 2022). However, besides one paper on business ethics in the tourism industry (Wu, 2016), this author was not able to find any literature on social sustainability in tourism innovation diffusion research. This research gap was also pointed out by Shin and Perdue (2022) in their literature review. Additionally, multiple researchers focused on the accommodation and resort sectors in the tourism industry (Horng et al., 2017; Khonje et al., 2020; Le et al., 2006; Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011), however it seems other sectors, such as tour operators, transport, and food and beverage have been partly overlooked. This might be because, according to Horng et al. (2017), hotels have the most important environmental impact and that sustainability practices in this sub-sector are essential for maintaining competitive advantage.

Multiple authors point out the importance of (environmental) sustainability dissemination in the tourism sector (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016; Dabphet et al., 2012; Khonje et al., 2020; Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011). However, due to a lack of understanding of the concept as well as the communication channels necessary for the diffusion, sustainability innovations in the tourism industry are still sparsely implemented (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016; Dabphet et al., 2012). Tourism managers often lack the correct knowledge due to a lack of social networks and active information dissemination, instead they are forced to actively look for information by themselves, mainly on the internet (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016; Dabphet et al., 2012). Dabphet et al. (2012) point out that there is a need for more communication channels, as well as greater integrations between interpersonal and mass media channels, to ensure effective information



dissemination and support from key actors in the industry. Additionally, there is a lack of opinion leaders and change agents in the field, even though these have been proven to be integral to knowledge dissemination and encouraging the adoption of innovations (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016; Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011).

These issues can partly be resolved by increased collaboration between the private and public sectors to promote sustainable tourism, which can result in increased sustainability efforts in the industry (Khonje et al., 2020). The lack of external drivers from, for example governments, funding agencies, and market demand, results in increased importance of intrinsic motivations, such as personal values and search for competitive advantage, to drive the implementation of sustainable innovations by tourism managers (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016). However, these managers first need to overcome significant temporal and financial costs, misunderstandings, and the perception of sustainability as a catchword (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016; Dabphet et al., 2012).

Rogers' theory of innovation diffusion has been applied in several research papers. The most important factors influencing the adoption of sustainable management practices are innovation characteristics, specifically complexity, and to a lesser extent, relative advantages, social pressure, competition, and customer demands (Le et al., 2006; Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011). However, since the diffusion process is still in its early stages (Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011), scepticism is still high and advantages of sustainable practices in tourism are not yet as clear (Le et al., 2006; Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011). Consequently, the marketing image and strategies around sustainability innovations seem to be important to strengthen competitive advantage as well as increase available knowledge in the network (Horng et al., 2017; Le et al., 2006). This essentially supports the arguments made by Dabphet et al. (2012) and Smerecnik and Andersen (2011) that communication channels and social networks need to be strengthened in order to diffuse sustainable innovations in the tourism industry.





3 Theoretical Framework: Rogers' Innovation Diffusion Theory

This research project uses Rogers' Theory of Innovation Diffusion as a framework to organize and interpret the results from the interviews. Accordingly, intersectionality is approached from an innovation perspective within the LGBTQ+ tourism industry. Innovation is a systemic phenomenon, which results from "a continuing interaction between different actors and organisations" (Fagerberg et al., 2006, p. 4). Innovative ideas are constantly applied, adapted, and re-invented to new circumstances, resulting in a continuous, heterogeneous process of improvement (Fagerberg et al., 2006). Hence, while some researchers do not consider diffusion a part of the innovation process but something that occurs afterward (Fagerberg et al., 2006), this project considers the diffusion of intersectionality as an important step in the ongoing innovation process of integrating intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ tourism industry.

Rogers defines diffusion of innovation as "the process in which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system" (Rogers, 2003, p. 5). Hence, the theory includes four main elements: the innovation itself, the channels of communication through which it is spread, the time aspect, and the social networks or systems in which the diffusion takes place (Rogers, 2003). In this chapter, we discuss the most important aspects of these four elements for the research project.

3.1 Innovation

The first element of Rogers' theory of innovation diffusion is the innovation itself, which he defines as "an idea, practice, or project that is perceived as new by an individual or other unit of adoption" (Rogers, 2003, p. 12). Similarly, Schumpeter defined innovation as a "new combination of existing resources" (Fagerberg et al., 2006, p. 6). Hence, innovation is the result of subjective perceptions and the circumstances in which an idea is applied. The invention or idea does not have to be new per se. As long as it is perceived as such in the context in which it is applied, it will still create the possibility of an innovation.



While the term innovation is often equated to technological novelties, the definitions by Rogers and Schumpeter leave room to also consider other innovative ideas and concepts, including political philosophies, religious ideas, and policies (Rogers, 2003). Hence, intersectionality as a new idea in the LGBTQ+ tourism context can be considered an innovation.

Innovations are characterised by uncertainty. Consequently, the decision to (not) implement an innovation includes an information-seeking and -processing activity to reduce uncertainty caused by the perceived attributes of the innovation. As such, the perceived attributes of an innovation influence the rate of innovation. The most important attributes are relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. However, other potential attributes can also influence the innovation diffusion process. All attributes have been found to be positively correlated with the rate of adoption, except for complexity. (Rogers, 2003) Below, we discuss these five attributes in detail.

3.1.1 Perceived attributes of innovation

Relative advantage

The relative advantage of an innovation is “the degree to which an innovation is perceived as better than the idea that supersedes it” (Rogers, 2003, p. 15). This aspect builds on the subjectivity that defines innovations as described above. The relative advantage is usually economic profitability and/or social prestige and its perception depends on the nature of the innovation and the potential adopters. This attribute reflects the costs and benefits of adopting (or rejecting) the innovation. (Rogers, 2003)

Compatibility

An innovation’s compatibility is defined as “the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters” (Rogers, 2003, p. 15). Compatibility ties into the context and circumstances in which an innovation is or is not adopted. Additionally, a high compatibility score gives meaning and familiarity to the innovation (Rogers, 2003). Sociocultural beliefs and norms often influence the compatibility of an innovation and can explain why a certain innovation is more easily adopted in one social system compared to another. Consequently, incompatibility between the sociocultural aspects of



a system and aspects of the innovation can even lead to non-adoption of the innovation. (Rogers, 2003)

Complexity

The complexity of an innovation is “the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand or use” (Rogers, 2003, p. 16). The complexity of an innovation is a continuum and is negatively correlated with the rate of adoption. While the influence of complexity on the rate of adoption depends heavily on the type of innovation, it can create an important barrier to the adoption of certain innovations. (Rogers, 2003)

Trialability

An innovation’s trialability signifies “the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with on a limited basis” (Rogers, 2003, p. 16). The opportunity to try out an innovation on a smaller scale or in one aspect of an organisation can reduce uncertainty about its use, advantages, and disadvantages. While a personal trial is important to reduce uncertainty, later adopters often rely on results from vicarious trials by their peers. (Rogers, 2003)

Observability

Lastly, an innovation’s observability reflects “the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others” (Rogers, 2003, p. 16) and thus offers the opportunity to learn from others’ experiences and trials. Observability can replace trialability for later adopters (Rogers, 2003).

3.1.2 Re-invention

Innovations are constantly processed and adapted to fit their context (Fagerberg et al., 2006; Rogers, 2003). Especially in an organisational context re-invention is important to ensure adaptation to the organisation’s structure. Re-invention may occur during the diffusion process of an innovation, and specifically at the trial stage. Re-invention is “the degree to which an innovation is changed or modified by a user in the process of adoption and implementation” (Rogers, 2003, p. 17). Hence, the flexibility with which an innovation can be implemented and customised has an important effect on the rate of adoption. (Rogers, 2003)



3.2 Time

The second aspect of Rogers' theory of innovation diffusion is time. Time can be defined on different levels: the system level of innovation diffusion, which is reflected in the rate of adoption, the interpersonal level within the social system, which defines the individual innovativeness, and the personal or unit level of the innovation-decision process (Rogers, 2003).

The rate of adoption is "the relative speed with which an innovation is adopted by members of a social system" (Rogers, 2003, p. 23) and can be "measured by the length of time required for a certain percentage of the members of a system to adopt an innovation" (p. 23). Research has shown that the rate of adoption in a particular social system is characterized by an S-shaped curve with varying slopes. The rate of adoption is influenced by, among other variables, the perceived attributes of the innovation, the type of innovation-decision, the norms and system-level qualities, and the behaviour of different members of the system. (Rogers, 2003)

Individual innovativeness is "the degree to which an individual or other unit of adoption is relatively earlier in adopting new ideas than the other members of a system" (Rogers, 2003, p. 22). In other words, it reflects when a certain individual in the social system adopts an innovation compared to their peers. It is important to note that these categories are linked to a certain innovation, so one individual or unit of adoption can be an early adopter for one innovation but a laggard for another. There are five categories of innovation adopters: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. These categories exist on a continuum and thus are not always clearly delimited. Members of the same adopter category usually have a lot in common in terms of socio-economic status, education, characteristics, and social ties. (Rogers, 2003)

On the individual level, the innovation-decision process is the process between learning of a new innovation and either the rejection or full integration of the innovation in the individual's life. This process is an information-seeking and -processing activity that decreases the uncertainty over the (dis)advantages and use of the innovation. This process, however, can also occur on the level of an organisation, although it differs slightly. (Rogers, 2003)



3.3 Channels of Communication

Rogers (2003, p. 18) defines communication as “the process in which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding”. This communication happens through channels between multiple sources. A channel can be defined as the way through which a message or idea is spread from one individual to another. Diffusion is a specific type of communication, characterized by the innovation, two individuals or units, and a communication channel. It is a social process that requires “interpersonal communication relationships” (Rogers, 2003, p. 19) and while the individuals are often alike, this type of communication requires at least some degree of difference in their attributes. (Rogers, 2003)

Rogers (2003) considers different types of communication channels: Mass media channels, characterized by rapid and efficient information exchanges between one source and a large number of receivers, and interpersonal channels, characterized by more personal interactions. While mass media channels are an efficient tool to create awareness of the existence of an idea or innovation, interpersonal communication channels have a superior persuasion power. Mass media channels are usually cosmopolite, meaning they link to a source outside the social system, while interpersonal networks can be both cosmopolite and localite, meaning they link two units within the system. The use of these channels depends on the type of innovation and the location of the social network. For example, mass media is less available in non-Western countries and thus interpersonal channels are more important there to spread initial awareness. The internet has become a third type of channel which lies somewhere between interpersonal and mass media channels as it can reach a wide audience, but can also create very close, interpersonal connections and be highly effective tool for persuasion. (Rogers, 2003)

Additionally, communication channels are characterized by a certain amount of homo- or heterophily. Homophilous interactions take place between individuals with a similar socioeconomic status, belief system, education, etc. These interactions are more likely to occur and more effective in information transfer. However, to ensure the diffusion of an innovation, a certain degree of heterophily is necessary to transfer new ideas and knowledge. Heterophilous interactions often take place between units with weak ties and thus create a bridge between relatively homophilous networks.



These interactions are important for information spreading while strong, homophilous ties are more effective at influencing decisions. The balance between homo- and heterophily in interactions is important as heterophilous, weak connections can lead to ineffective communication, while homophilous, strong connections are necessary for effective interpersonal influence. (Rogers, 2003)

3.4 Social System

The last element in Rogers' theory of innovation diffusion is the social system in which innovation diffusion and implementation occur. A social system is "a set of interrelated units engaged in joint problem solving to accomplish a common goal" (Rogers, 2003, p. 23). The social structure of this system creates regularity, stability, and uncertainty reduction for the individual units of the system. This system creates system effects, which might facilitate or impede innovation diffusion. Hence, the social structure and norms of this system influence both the innovation and individuals' innovativeness. (Rogers, 2003)

Within the social system, certain actors play important roles. Firstly, innovators bring an idea into the system. However, they are usually deviants, and their credibility is disregarded by most other units in the system. In contrast, opinion leaders are highly regarded and are able to influence attitudes and provide information and advice to other members of the social network about innovations. Lastly, change agents are external individuals trying to influence the (non-)adoption of an idea or innovation. Both innovators, opinion leaders, and change agents can act as gatekeepers to an innovation. (Rogers, 2003)

The consequences of an innovation are most important on the level of the social system. These can be desirable or undesirable, direct or indirect, and anticipated or unanticipated. Oftentimes, effects which are desirable are also direct and anticipated. These are the effects change agents try to affect. However, there is usually a lack of focus on the undesirable, indirect, and unanticipated effects within the social system. (Rogers, 2003)



3.5 Shortcomings and Criticism

Since the diffusion of innovations paradigm is heavily applied in a large variety of disciplines (Rogers, 2004), it has come under some criticism. The most notable criticism it has received is that the classic paradigm focuses too much on the expert-driven, top-down approaches of change agents and agencies (Singhal & Svenkerud, 2019). Consequently, local solutions, indigenous knowledge, and that of minorities are often overlooked or rejected in innovation diffusion studies while these could be very valuable and even work better for the community than the externally recommended innovation (Singhal & Svenkerud, 2019). This even led to the creation of a new paradigm called 'positive deviance' which approaches diffusion differently and focuses on internal community knowledge and change agents (Singhal & Svenkerud, 2019).

Rogers (2003) also touches upon shortcomings within innovation diffusion research. While the field is multidisciplinary, pragmatic, and has a relatively straightforward research methodology, it also holds several simplifying assumptions and constrictions to simplify the complex reality it studies (Rogers, 2003). These include a pro-innovation bias, an individual-blame bias, a recall problem, and an issue of equality.

The pro-innovation bias in innovation diffusion research assumes that it is beneficial for everyone in a system to adopt a certain innovation and that diffusion thus must happen as fast as possible (Rogers, 2003). Consequently, it holds a negative stance toward re-invention and rejection of an innovation (Rogers, 2003). This leads to a faulty worldview because the field focuses less on re-invention, rejection, and discontinuance of innovations as well as anti-diffusion programs (Rogers, 2003). This is also pointed out by Dearing and Cox (2018) who indicate that competing, complementary, and failing innovations are often overlooked in innovation diffusion research. Additionally, the phenomenon of deceleration, abandoning a prior innovation when adopting a new one, is understudied (Dearing & Cox, 2018). The pro-innovation bias can be avoided by increasing research that focuses on unsuccessful innovation diffusion, rejection and discontinuance of innovations, and re-invention of innovations. More research needs to be done during the innovation diffusion, instead of afterward, and motivations for both adoption and rejection of innovations need to be more thoroughly understood. (Rogers, 2003)



Since most research on innovation diffusion is done after an innovation has been adopted by the whole system and the diffusion process has been completed, researchers often rely on the recall memory of their study subjects. However, this memory might not be fully accurate and thus bias the results. A possible alternative is to gather data at several points in a period of time during the innovation diffusion process. Alternatively, checking recall data with records might be a possibility in some situations. (Rogers, 2003)

The individual-blame bias in innovation diffusion research holds an individual responsible for the problems they face instead of looking at the systemic cause of individual issues. This leads to researchers and change agents stereotyping late adopters and laggards, even though it might be perfectly reasonable for them to not adopt the innovation. (Rogers, 2003) This bias also ties into the criticism that the diffusion of innovation framework focuses too much on externally promoted innovations and too little on local solutions (Singhal & Svenkerud, 2019). Research should thus keep in mind that social problems are often systemic and that (potential) rejectors of an innovation might have legitimate reasons for their actions. (Rogers, 2003)

According to Rogers (2003), innovation diffusion researchers tend to be unaware of how social issues and socioeconomic differences might affect the innovation diffusion process. Additionally, the benefits and disadvantages of an innovation might be diffused unequal among a social system. Certain innovations have the possibility to decrease social equality, but with a lack of appropriate diffusion strategies, social equality might be increased instead. More research into the issue of equality in the innovation diffusion field is therefore necessary. (Rogers, 2003)



4 Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology and philosophy guiding this research project are disclosed. The first subchapter explains the chosen philosophy of science, interpretivism, and goes deeper into the impact of this philosophy on the research project. Afterward, the qualitative research design will be described in detail, including the chosen case study, how the data is collected, which organisations are included in the data sample, and how the data is analysed. In the third part of this chapter, the research quality will be discussed based on dependability, credibility, and transferability. Furthermore, the ethical considerations of this research project will be discussed as well as the researcher's self-reflection. Lastly, the researcher will include a short overview of the limitations of the research design.

4.1 Philosophy of Science

The philosophy of science explains the perspective and assumptions of the researcher on their research (Saunders et al., 2019). It reflects the objectivity or subjectivity of the ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions made by the researcher (Saunders et al., 2019). In this research project, interpretivism is used to reflect the researcher's perspective. Interpretivism focuses on the social meanings created by humans and follows a subjective ontological, epistemological and axiological point of view (Saunders et al., 2019). This approach is appropriate as it attempts to counteract the positivist assumptions of Western tourism research (Mooney, 2018).

Ontology is the nature of reality and the studied phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2019), in this case intersectionality. This researcher considers the studied reality to be a subjective, socially constructed, and complex phenomenon with multiple meanings. After all, intersectionality is a social construct that reflects the interaction between other social phenomena (gender, sexuality, race, disability, etc.). Furthermore, this research considers the epistemology of this project to be subjective as well. Epistemology is the nature of knowledge, scientific methods, and concepts used in the project (Saunders et al., 2019). This researcher considers knowledge to be subjective and scientific methods and concepts to be a simplification of reality. Rogers' innovation diffusion theory is used as a guiding framework during this project. However, it is not



a complete representation of reality, as it relies on the perspective of an entity on the newness of the idea (Rogers, 2003). Additionally, this project focuses on the subjective narratives and perspectives of the interviewees and aims to contribute new understanding and knowledge about intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector. Lastly, the role and impacts of values and ethics on the research process (axiology) (Saunders et al., 2019) are considered to be subjective as well. This project is value-bound, due to the intersocial and complex nature of the studied subject (intersectionality). Hence, this researcher will aim to critically reflect on their perspective and relation to the topic throughout the project. This reflection will be included under paragraph 4.5, but also in the other chapters of this paper.

Since this research includes a critical theory, namely intersectionality, it aligns with the subjectivity of interpretivism. A critical theory approaches reality as it is shaped by values and links research to social justice goals and equality (Atewologun, 2018). Since gender and sexuality are inherently linked to social justice and equality, as reflected in the UN SDGs (see 1.1), they are logically connected to intersectionality as a critical theory since it recognizes and disrupts the status-quo and social hegemonies of heteronormativity in tourism research. In this sense, the use of intersectionality theory is in itself disruptive (Al-Faham et al., 2019).

4.2 Qualitative Research Design

While interpretivism can be combined with both a quantitative and qualitative research design, it lends itself best to the latter (Saunders et al., 2019). For this project, a qualitative exploratory research design was chosen to make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings of the studied phenomena of intersectionality, LGBTQ+ tourism, and innovation (Saunders et al., 2019). An abductive method was chosen in which a theory is used as a basis for research and then improved or enriched upon (Saunders et al., 2019).

Since the purpose of this project is to determine whether and how LGBTQ+ tourism organisations account for intersectionality in their business practices, and there is little to no research into this topic, this project implements an exploratory research purpose. This is reflected in a rather unstructured, flexible, and adaptive research process (Saunders et al., 2019). An emergent case study method was chosen to create an in-



depth inquiry into the phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2019). A case study is “an in-depth inquiry into a topic or phenomenon within its real-life setting” (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 196) which in this research project is the integration of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism. A combination of similar cases with contextual differences were selected for research to ensure both literal and theoretical replication and provide strong support for the theoretical conclusions (Saunders et al., 2019). This approach is in line with the abductive method which started deductively (by selecting a theory as the basis) and developed inductively (by enriching and building upon this theory) (Saunders et al., 2019). The abductive method is also reflected in the coding process, which uses both pre-determined structural codes based on the theoretical framework, combined with initial, in vivo, and process codes to reflect patterns in participants’ ideas, values, emotions, and actions.

The data was collected through open interviews with LGBTQ+-focused tourism organisations. The interviewees were selected from organisations that are members of IGLTA, an international LGBTQ+-focused tourism network promoting equality and safety while helping companies to create LGBTQ+-friendly and -focused tourism (*About IGLTA*, n.d.). A preparatory interview with IGLTA gave the researcher deeper insights into the LGBTQ+ tourism industry, as well as relevant organisations for this research project, who were consequently contacted for an interview. The selected organisations provide a tourism service and at least mention LGBTQ+-friendliness on their website. Since this is an exploratory study, the focus was on the most common types of tourism organisations: tour operators, accommodation providers, and Destination Management Organisations (DMO). Lastly, the selected organisations need to clearly mention diversity or intersectionality, either on their website and/or as mentioned by the IGLTA interviewee. The sampling method was a combination of snowball sampling (through the IGLTA interview and website) and homogenous purposive sampling (organisations that adhere to the aforementioned criteria) (Saunders et al., 2019). While a phenomenological case study is not generalisable, it can provide a good insight into a specific phenomenon (in this case intersectionality) in a specific context (LGBTQ+ tourism) (Rudestam & Newton, 2007; Saunders et al., 2019).

The sample of this study consisted of eight LGBTQ+-focused or -friendly tourism organisations. It includes five travel agencies, one accommodation provider, one



DMO, and one international association. The researcher attempted to find a balance between smaller and larger organisations, as well as the location of these organisations (three in Europe, three in North America, one in South America, and one in Africa), however, a focus on international audiences by the organisation was not a necessity. The organisations that were included in the sample are described in appendix 1. However, to ensure anonymity in the data, the demographic information of interviewees is not provided.

The data for this research was collected through non-standardised, open interviews. These are an appropriate choice for exploratory case studies due to their flexibility (Saunders et al., 2019). The one-to-one interviews were conducted through online calls via Zoom or Google Meet. To ensure high fidelity and structure, the interviews were immediately transcribed during the interview and the transcription was reviewed by the researcher right after the interview to correct any mistakes by the program (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

The interviewer prepared a few preliminary questions to guide the interview to relevant topics, which were sent to the respondents in advance. The preliminary questions were based on pre-determined, structural codes which defined the focus of the interviews (see Table 2). However, the selection and order of questions were contingent on the answers of the respondent and follow-up questions were abundant. There was also a lot of space for the interviewees to bring up important concepts themselves and talk about their experience. Since opinions and reflections are highly valued in this research project, the interviewees input was given centre stage during the interviews. Additionally, there was room for topics to evolve and change during the interview process to reflect ideas brought up by other participants.

| Elements | Coding |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Innovation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Perceived attributes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Relative advantage ▪ Compatibility ▪ Complexity ▪ Trialability ▪ Observability ○ Re-invention |
| Communication channels | |
| Time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rate of adoption ○ Individual innovativeness ○ Re-invention |
| Social system | |

Table 2 Pre-determined structural codes for data analysis



The data was transcribed and analysed in the program MAXQDA. A combination of structural, initial, and in vivo coding was used. The coding was informed on one hand by the theoretical framework literature, which created a frame for the coding data analysis. On the other hand, it also used inductive codes based on the researcher's reflection and the interviewees terminology. Since the project is abductive and interpretivist in nature, not much can be said about the data analysis in advance (Rudestam & Newton, 2007).

4.3 Research quality

Since this research project utilizes an interpretivist approach, reliability and validity are not considered appropriate criteria to assess the research quality (Saunders et al., 2019). Instead, this project uses dependability, credibility, and transferability to reflect the research quality.

Dependability expresses the trustworthiness of the research process (Saunders et al., 2019). Although exact replication is not possible due to the complex nature and subjectivity of the research process, dependability requires this researcher to record and describe every step of the research process to make sure it is understood and can be evaluated by others (Saunders et al., 2019). This is done both in this methodology chapter as well as in the results section.

Credibility considers that the collected data is correctly represented and interpreted by the researcher (Saunders et al., 2019). This can be ensured through multiple methods. However, this researcher will ensure credibility by reflecting on and careful questioning of the research process (see 4.5 Ethics). With this technique, interviewer and participation bias will be reduced.

Transferability ensures that other researchers are able to replicate the research project as well as possible (Saunders et al., 2019). This is done by including an in-depth description of the research project, including the design, context, findings, and interpretations. Since the research questions were open ended and varying between interviews due to the specific context of each organisation, these are not reported upon. Additionally, the project will relate the research to existing research to demonstrate the significance of the research process and the interpretation of the data.



4.4 Limitations

There are several limitations in this research project. Firstly, even though this research focuses on intersectionality and diversity, there is a lack of diversity in the research sample. Many LGBTQ+ organisations, even those who focus on intersectionality, are founded by white gay men. Consequently, during this project there was an overrepresentation of male participants. Only three participants were women and only one of them was the CEO and founder of the company she represented. Additionally, only one participant was non-white, even though several organisations were located in the Global South. Conclusively, even the organisations in which intersectionality is a core value are often headed by white gay men.

The project also lacks diversity in the type and location of the organisations which are included. Most organisations are tour operators in some capacity, there was only one DMO and one accommodation provider included in the sample. Additionally, most organisations were located in Europe and North-America, only two organisations were located in the Global South (South-America, Africa). However, multiple emails were sent to organisations in Asia, South America, and Africa, as well as other DMOs and accommodation providers. Nevertheless, most of these organisations did not reply or were not available for an interview. This might have also been influenced by the timing of the interviews, which was in June – July of 2022, right at the beginning of the summer season and the first one after the Covid-19 pandemic. Future research might want to try focus on different organisations, locations, and in a different time of the year.

Lastly, while the data analysis was appropriate for the chosen topic, the researcher was not very familiar with the program before the project. Consequently, the coding process took longer and in the beginning there was a steep learning curve involved. In retrospect, it would have been beneficial for the project if the researcher started coding already during the interview process instead of after all interviews were conducted. In that case, it would also have been possible to phrase questions to participants based on previous interviews. Consequently, the first two interviews which were conducted did not reach full potential, also because one of them was conducted with an employee instead of the CEO of the organisation who would have more knowledge on the topic.



4.5 Ethics

As this project considers several sensitive topics which are also closely related to the researcher's personal life and identity, this chapter will go further into the ethical considerations of this research paper.

Firstly, it is necessary to note the data protection and management steps taken to ensure the consent and anonymity of the interviewees during the research process and data analysis. To inform interviewees of the purpose of this research, the researcher asked them to sign an interview consent form and informed them of what would happen with the information given during the interview. Additionally, all interviewees consented to either recording or transcribing the interview. Recordings and transcripts are held on a safe drive to which no one has access except for the researcher. During the data analysis, the interviewees' names were anonymised and only the organisations' names were used. In the same way, only the organisations who contributed to the research project are mentioned in the research paper where these are never linked to specific quotes or conclusions.

It is necessary to note that the researcher is a young, white, non-binary woman who is part of the LGBTQ+ community. Furthermore, this person interviewed mainly older white gay men. Only three interviewees identified as women and only one interviewee was of Asian descent. Additionally, most of the interviewees were located in the Global North, while two of them were located in the Global South. As mentioned in several of the interviews and as experienced by the researcher, it is hard to find LGBTQ+ tourism businesses which are owned by women, trans or non-binary persons, people of colour, and people with disabilities. Hence, the overall white, able-bodied, and cisgender perspective on this project needs to be noted.

Due to the close connection the researcher has with the topics of LGBTQ+ tourism and intersectionality, it is possible they influenced the interviews or results at one point or another by sharing their own experiences, thoughts, or feelings. However, since the project takes on an interpretivist approach, which includes a subjective and value-bound perspective of both interviewees and researcher, this does not pose an ethical issue as long as it is reported upon. Additionally, the topic itself is intersectional and relates to social issues and thus the researcher is not able to interpret it from



an objective perspective. Especially since they are a part of the LGBTQ+ community themselves. Therefore, some of the interviews turned more into conversations by the end and include input from the researcher. The perspective coming from a person experiencing intersectionality themselves (as a queer, non-binary woman) could also contribute to this project by not just increasing representation in the research field, but also by giving unique perspectives on the matter that might have been interpreted differently or even been overlooked by researchers outside of the community.

During the interviews and data analysis, several concerns and sensitivities came up that need to be addressed further as well. In one case, the racial aspect of LGBTQ+ tourism was discussed. However, since both the researcher and the interviewee are white, and although the interviewee was in an interracial relationship at the time of this research project, this conversation cannot reflect a racial minority perspective on the topic. Additionally, during several occasions an interviewee was looking for the right words to use. This reflects the sensitivity of topics such as intersectionality, diversity, racism, equality, Human Rights, and oppression. Consequently, during this project the researcher attempted to avoid using binary expression in both language and categories as well as sensitive terms. However, in some instances, such as the distinction between the Global North and South, there was no choice but to make these binary distinctions. In these cases, the researcher opted as much as possible to use language used by the interviewees and minorities.

4.6 Self-reflection

Atewologun (2018) points out the importance of personal intersectional reflexivity as part of intersectional research projects. Additionally, since this research is closely related to the researcher's personal life and identity, a subchapter discussing self-reflection is appropriate for this research project.

Firstly, while reading through the interviews and preparing them for coding, the researcher realised they became better at interviewing over time. Consequently, some questions which are asked during later interviews were not include in earlier interviews. Additionally, the first interview with IGLTA was originally meant to be an exploratory interview which would not be used extensively in the data analysis. However, after careful consideration, the researcher decided that too much interesting and



important info supporting other statements were available in that interview and included it as an eighth organisation in the data analysis.

Thirdly, some interviews are impacted by the (geo)political decisions and situations that were relevant at the time of the interview. As the interviews were held between May and July of 2022, the topics of the Covid-19 pandemic, the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the United States, the Russian war in Ukraine, and the rise of extreme right-wing politics in many countries are addressed in several interviews. These topics influence both the interviewees, the researcher, and the LGBTQ+ tourism sector and thus influence the results of this project which are location- and time-sensitive.

Lastly, as the central topic of this research project is intersectionality, it was inevitable that this topic also influenced the research project in itself. Consequently, the decisions regarding language and terminology used in this research paper as well as the approach to the research project were taken from an intersectional perspective. After all, the researcher and interviewees themselves are intersectional and influenced the design of the research project due to their perspectives on the discussed topics. The complexity and sensitivity of the topic then also influenced the researcher in their personal life which also influenced this research project and vice versa.





5 Results

In the following chapter, the results of the data analysis will be discussed. The chapter is divided into five subchapters. The first will discuss general intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism, including its definition, values, perspectives, and relation to sustainability which were discussed during the interviews. Afterward, the chapter is structured according to Roger's diffusion of innovation theory, with the second subchapter discussing intersectionality as an innovation, the third subchapter discussing the time aspect, the fourth subchapter discussing the channels of communication, and the fifth and final subchapter discussing the social system.

5.1 Intersectionality in LGBTQ+ Tourism

While focusing on intersectionality as an innovation, the topic of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism in general also comes up during the interviews, specifically during the preparatory interview with IGLTA. Hence, this subchapter discusses the definition of intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ tourism industry, the values and perspectives related to it, and the connection between intersectionality and sustainability.

5.1.1 Definition

Intersectionality is defined by multiple organisations as a mindset or perspective from which to approach LGBTQ+ tourism. One participant defines intersectionality as “a lived experience”. However, while most organisations understand what the concept stands for, even if they have not always heard of it before, all of them agree that it is not a well-defined concept. One interviewee even claims it has become a “buzzword” of which the original meaning has been forgotten.

Although it is not possible to provide a single all-encompassing definition of intersectionality based on the interviews, some organisations go into depth on their approach to intersectionality. One explanation of intersectionality which is used by multiple participants is a Venn diagram in which different identities overlap and interact, as well as the link to Human Rights. The connection between intersectionality and grassroots perspectives is also apparent during some of the interviews. The concept is connected to activism, local and indigenous knowledge, and diversity multiple times. However, since this research project focuses on LGBTQ+ tourism



organisations, all participants describe sexuality and gender to be at the centre or starting point of intersectionality, with other identities such as race, religion, and socioeconomic status revolving around them.

Furthermore, the concept is explained to cover different levels, communities, and aspects of society. One organisation characterises intersectionality in the context of discrimination and inequality, connected to sexuality, gender, and other identities which interact with and disproportionately increase the chance and severity of discrimination experienced by LGBTQ+ travellers. For example, they talk about black and transgender LGBTQ+ travellers experiencing “bigger issues”. In contrast, other organisations frame intersectionality from a more positive perspective; creating freedom, comfort, and breathing room for people, reflecting tolerance, representation, and respect, and including diversity as a core element of the organisation.

It has also become clear that diversity is not the same as intersectionality. Rather, diversity is an element of intersectionality but it does not address systemic issues. It also misses the grassroots, activism, and lived experiences reflected in intersectionality. Consequently, diversity refers more to a numerical characteristic of the different identities in a group rather than to the perspective towards those identities, the group, or the inter- and intragroup differences which are relevant to intersectionality. Hence, a group of people or an organisation does not necessarily have to be intersectional to be diverse but will always focus on diversity if they value intersectionality.

Diversity is apparent in all layers and parts of the organisations who include intersectionality as a core value. The organisations focus on creating an inclusive, safe space for their employees and customers, but also focus on diversity in collaborations with partners and local communities. Some organisations are particularly active in looking for diverse employees from the LGBTQ+ community as well as marketing their products and services towards a diverse audience.

5.1.2 Values

Every organisation in the research pool has intersectionality as a core value. This is already clear from their company website as well as the description of the organisations on the IGLTA website, but it is also confirmed during the interviews. Some of the organisations started their business from the perspective of intersectionality in the



first place. These organisations know what the term intersectionality means and have very consciously included it in their business model and practices. Others present themselves as a tourism organisation with a focus on LGBTQ+ travellers first. These organisations were often not aware of the term intersectionality before the interviews and focus more on the essence of their organisations as a tourism business, by for example emphasising their purpose as a luxury safari lodge on their website with little to no mention of their LGBTQ+-ownership or intersectional perspective. However, they still confirm intersectionality to be a core value after learning its meaning.

The LGBTQ+ tourism organisations implement intersectionality by focusing on interconnected identities. These identities are not just visual or outside representations of socio-economic demographics, but also internal mindsets and perspectives on society. They include physical and psychological identities, such as disabilities, body positivity, neurodiversity, HIV and other illnesses, as well as gender identities including non-binary and transgender identities, racial and national identities, and socio-economic identities including age groups, religion, and family situation. One interviewee also mentions heritage as part of one's identity and notes that this can also be intersectional due to contexts of colonisation, slavery, and migration. Some participants also refer to privileged identities. Specifically, the privilege of white gay men in the Global North, cisgender privilege, and the topic of Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminists (TERFs*) are addressed. TERFs are mentioned to go against intersectionality or even embody "negative intersectionality" as there is a significant amount of lesbian TERFs, specifically in the Global North.

5.1.3 Perspectives

As mentioned before, intersectionality embraces different perspectives and identities. These perspectives differ depending on socioeconomic backgrounds and geopolitical locations. For example, intersectionality is more common in the Global South, while there is more division in the Global North. This is reflected in the fact that TERFs are more commonly found in the Global North than the Global South, according to one participant.

During the interviews, the perspective on travellers is very prominent. Most organisations mention that they still receive mainly (white) gay men, even though they focus



on intersectional groups and create inclusive services, products, and marketing. However, some organisations do manage to reach a diverse audience and bring together people with matching values from different backgrounds. They do this by creating comfortable and safe spaces for their customers and accepting everyone, including straight people, as long as they embrace diversity and believe that “love is love”.

Another important perspective which is addressed by all organisations is the one on their employees. The organisations focus on creating a diverse employee group and creating representation in their team. Additionally, multiple organisations mention they provide information for their staff about the diverse identities of their customers. They also value the input and varying perspectives that a diverse employee pool contributes. On the system level of LGBTQ+ tourism, however, diversity is mainly located on the ground level while the upper levels of tourism organisations still mainly include white, cis men and women. Therefore, multiple of the organisations in this project break stereotypes by employing men in typically female roles like housekeeping, by having LGBTQ+ women as founders and CEOs, and by hiring a diverse group of people who align with the company’s intersectional values.

The relationship between LGBTQ+ tourism organisations and local communities is also perceived as important. The organisations often mention economic and social benefits they bring to the local communities they operate in, specifically in small rural areas and locations impacted by historical issues such as colonisation, slavery, migration, and racism. One organisation reports different and sometimes contradicting perspectives by remote rural communities on the LGBTQ+ tourism industry. When they first started their business, they encountered a lot of backlash and suspicion due to homophobia and stereotypical perspectives on gender. However, while these perspectives still exist in these rural communities, they have now embraced the organisation more because of the positive impact it has on the community. Additionally, the organisation was able to create an interest and curiosity for the LGBTQ+ community within the local perspectives.

This shows the opportunity for LGBTQ+ tourism to offer different perspectives and have local communities, as well as employees, travellers, and partners learn from them and maybe change their own perspective. One participant points out that to



increase intersectionality and representation in LGBTQ+ tourism, there is a need to actively work towards accepting everyone in the LGBTQ+ community, including different gender, racial, religious, neurological, and international perspectives. Therefore, they provide resources for other organisations and partners concerning intersectional and diverse travellers in the LGBTQ+ community. However, although the ambitions for the future are high, currently most organisations are only taking the first steps to include sexual- and gender-diversity.

5.1.4 Connection to sustainability

Most participants also make a connection between intersectionality and sustainability. The fact that tourism is unsustainable and that there is a need for systemic change from a business-led perspective is very apparent for all organisations. They relate this to intersectionality and claim a similar business-led change needs to happen to create a more equal and diverse LGBTQ+ tourism industry. At the same time, there are exciting innovations coming connected to sustainability, including topics such as responsible tourism and philanthropy.

There are also connections mentioned between environmental sustainability and the inclusion of indigenous communities supporting conservation work. Several organisations support conservation projects towards local fauna and flora. Additionally, the need for tourism to contribute to local communities by having more positive than negative impact and by creating a better situation for future generations is also embodied by several organisations.

5.2 Innovation

In this subchapter, the innovativeness of intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism organisations will be discussed. First, the intrinsic motivation of these LGBTQ+ tourism organisations to adopt intersectionality will be addressed, after which the perceived attributes of intersectionality as an innovation are explained. Furthermore, this chapter will go into aspects of uncertainty, and finally, it will focus on some of the actions which are taken by LGBTQ+ tourism organisations to introduce intersectionality in their business and the sector overall.



5.2.1 Intrinsic motivation

Notably, all organisations in this project showed an intrinsic motivation to adopt intersectionality. While the perceived attributes of intersectionality are also important factors in the decision process to adopt intersectionality, the participants mention that their motivation to include an intersectional perspective comes mainly from a personal interest, intrigue, or caring about the topic. They also mention their own experiences as LGBTQ+ travellers and belief that there is a need for more equality and intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector as motivational factors. One participant also mentions it was not a conscious decision to be intersectional, while another participant states that the transition came organically. This also represents the compatibility of intersectionality with business values of LGBTQ+ tourism organisations who adopt this perspective. Consequently, intrinsic motivation can be considered another attribute of intersectionality as an innovation which influences the diffusion process and the rate of adoption (Rogers, 2003).

The intrinsic motivation of these innovative organisations is reflected in their business practices. Most participants mention wanting to create a queer space where people can feel comfortable and safe, and meet other like-minded people. One participant mentions that the motivation and interest of one employee influenced the organisation to become more intersectional, showing that it does not always have to come from the top tier level. The intrinsic motivation of these organisations are also reflected in how they want to attract customers and partners with similar values and are not afraid to turn them down when they do not align with these values. The organisations especially focus on creating a safe space for their customers and employees to explore their identities through tourism.

5.2.2 Attributes

Four of the attributes of innovations from Rogers' innovation diffusion framework are mentioned during the interviews: perceived advantage, compatibility, observability, and complexity. The only one missing is trialability, potentially because it is difficult or even impossible to try out intersectionality, especially in smaller start-up tourism organisations which made up the majority of participants. However, the first mover organisations can act as a vicarious trial for the LGBTQ+ tourism sector at



large. Additionally, the attributes of innovation often overlap in the interviews, specifically perceived advantage, compatibility, and observability.

The perceived advantages of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism include economic and financial benefits and opportunities, both for local communities and LGBTQ+ tourism organisations, as well as political opportunities to offer a safe space for LGBTQ+ travellers coming from less-welcoming backgrounds. Additionally, the creation of resources and positive experiences for LGBTQ+ travellers and other organisations is mentioned as an advantage. Several organisations also mention that intersectionality creates a sustainable business model and can attract both employees and customers with aligning values. This is also reflected in the exclusive position intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism organisations have in the market. Most organisations also acknowledged the long-term benefits that intersectionality can provide for their organisation and the LGBTQ+ tourism market in general, which also shows compatibility.

Compatibility is often mentioned as a value-based aspect during the interviews since many participants highlight the important of being intersectional. Elements of compatibility in LGBTQ+ tourism organisations include familiarity with the concept, alignment with values, specifically equality, as well as alignment with the goals of LGBTQ+ tourism. Organisations also mention showing this compatibility by telling a story and including it in their marketing practices. They also welcome different perceptions and viewpoints in their organisation, which is the essence of intersectionality, and mention positive feedback from both guests and partner organisations. Organisations create different perspectives organically in their business through diversity hiring, bottom-up approaches, and creating positive impacts in the travel industry.

The observability of intersectionality and its benefits in LGBTQ+ tourism organisations often contribute to positive feedback from partners and customers. One of the participants actually mentions two other organisations in this study as an example for intersectionality innovation and representation. The financial impact and support for local communities is another important observable benefit, as well as the comfort they can offer to customers. One organisation mentions the amount of visitors in a destination or customers in an organisation as a sign that intersectionality is beneficial to



LGBTQ+ tourism. They connect this to aligning values of travellers with the destination or organisation and to changing the perspectives of both travellers and local communities. Another organisation mentions the observable positive experience of one of their lesbian customers on a trip with other gay men and indicate this can create a ripple effect to show intersectionality as a positive element of an LGBTQ+ tourism organisation.

While all participants mention the perceived advantage, compatibility, and observability of intersectionality for their organisation, multiple participants also mention the complexity of the concept. They state it is complicated and hard work to integrate it properly into the organisation. Most organisations have not yet succeeded in fully integrating intersectionality in their business practices, as is exemplified by the fact that many still receive mainly white cis gay men as customers. Some participants also mention limitations and barriers that keep them from completely integrating intersectionality, most importantly lack of information, their small size, and their geographical location. In 5.2.3, the barriers and potential opportunities will be discussed further.

5.2.3 Uncertainty

According to Rogers (2003), adopting an innovation requires uncertainty reduction. However, in the interviews, many participants point out barriers which contribute to complexity and uncertainty when adopting intersectionality as an innovation and integrating it completely in their business practices. At the same time, they often mention ways to turn these barriers into opportunities and create learning opportunities to reduce these uncertainties.

The first barrier which hinders the adoption of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism organisations is an economic one. Multiple organisations mention the lack of budget to attract customers as well as the high costs to develop their products and services. Especially organisations which are located in expensive destinations or origin locations where social mobility of potential customers is lacking report this issue. This is particularly influenced by the recent Covid-19 pandemic, which brought many (LGBTQ+) tourism organisations to a standstill, but also reduced the social mobility of a lot of potential travellers. Consequently, even though the tourism industry is



starting up again, the main LGBTQ+ tourists are the wealthier parts of the community, which are white cis gay men. This economic barrier is also connected to the issue of size, as most LGBTQ+ tourism organisations are start-ups and **SMEs** which lack infrastructure, human capital, and resources to reduce the price for their customers. One organisation even mentions receiving negative feedback from the LGBTQ+ community for the high price of their tours. The socio-economic background of travellers and social mobility in general are topics which are addressed by some of the organisations.

Another barrier which comes into play for all organisations is the geopolitical one. This barrier includes issues of safety, mainly in unwelcoming destinations or regions, political barriers to travel, issues with international travel legislation, and legal barriers. One topic that is mentioned several times is the political struggles and Human Rights issues in the US, such as the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. Another political issue is the (il)legality of being gay or transgender in certain areas of the world or issues with countries where their passport is not accepted which inhibits transgender or non-binary travellers from travelling. Furthermore, if they are able to travel, these people often face issues at the airport where body scanning machines are not set to accommodate transgender travellers. One organisation reports changing the perspective of the local airport by bringing in and receiving feedback from travellers with different backgrounds and identities, including transgender travellers but also Muslima's wearing hijab. Other barriers that are mentioned are geographical barriers, such as the remoteness of the location where the organisation operates, the closing of borders, issue with connectivity, and historic infrastructure. One example is the historic centre of cities, which are often difficult to access in a wheelchair due to their infrastructure. These issues are outside of the influence of most LGBTQ+ tourism businesses.

The issue of geopolitical barriers can also be connected to social barriers, as political and legal barriers create differences in the type of social system which is available in a certain destination. In destinations where LGBTQ+-friendly legislation and societies exist, there is a more open, visible, and engaged LGBTQ+ community. However, in other destinations where being part of the LGBTQ+ community is still frowned upon or criminalised, the community is less visible which creates a barrier to



LGBTQ+ tourism organisations or travellers wanting to connect with the local community. In both instances, there exists an LGBTQ+ community, but it takes on a different perspective and structure.

Social barriers to including intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism organisations are by far the most commonly mentioned. Safety is one of those barriers which is addressed. Specifically the lack of tolerance and acceptance of LGBTQ+ travellers, especially transgender travellers, is an issue. Different identities also experience different barriers. For example, physical disabilities are mentioned as being particularly difficult to accommodate due to a lack of accessibility in many destinations. Different interests of, for example, lesbians compared to gay men, also create barriers to organising a mutual tourism event or tour. For example, one participant mentions that lesbians “don’t like to go out that much” compared to gay men. This creates a barrier as many LGBTQ+ tourism organisations focus on partying during their trips, which then only attracts gay men. The historical dominance of white cis straight men in the tourism industry also makes it harder to find tourism organisations to collaborate with which are owned by people of colour or people of the LGBTQ+ community.

Another participant mentions the generational differences which exist both in the LGBTQ+ community and in the travel industry. They report being turned away with innovative ideas because, according to older tourism managers, there is no market for minorities or marginalised people. However, they believe it is possible to create a market within intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism for those people who are not (yet) travelling, especially since these communities rely a lot on virtual connections, word-of-mouth advertising, and approval of an organisation by their peers (for example by IGLTA). They present their organisation as a laboratory or experiment as they are attempting to create an intersectional organisation focused on minorities. However, while they are unsure if it will actually work, it does empower them and their employees to create communities and provide them with social opportunities.

Several participants mention the lack of informational resources on intersectionality. This is apparent also in this project since about half of the organisations had not heard of the term intersectionality beforehand, even if they implement it in practice. Organisations report unfamiliarity and lack of understanding of intersectionality by others



in the sector, but also of other topics such as LGBTQ+ terminology and symbols (the example of the pride flag is given). Additionally, the lack of access to information and a focus on wrong information create barriers for organisations to create intersectional innovations in the LGBTQ+ tourism industry. The lack of information on intersectionality is also connected to an academic barrier due to lack of education or access to education. This barrier is either caused by financial issues, lack of time, or lack of language skills (specifically English) which leads to a lack of education, but also to the academic world undervaluing non-academic knowledge and experiences. Since there is a lack of interaction between academic knowledge and local and indigenous knowledge, theoretical frameworks are not being connected to solutions for real-life issues. Lack of education also leads to lack of access to positions of power and socioeconomic equity for minorities. This creates a vicious cycle where indigenous and local communities do not have access to academic education and thus their voices and non-academic knowledge are not included in academic knowledge.

Many barriers to create an intersectional organisation interact with one other. For example, a Pride event in an expensive location can create barriers to people from a lower socio-economic status, which makes the event less accessible and inclusive. However, due to social issues such as (hate) crimes, the organisations also need to ensure the safety of its participants which might only be possible in an expensive part of town. Hence, there is a lot of uncertainty that needs to be addressed in intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism.

Even though all organisations mention encountering a variety of barriers to implement intersectionality, they are nonetheless successful. This is because a lot of the organisations mention turning these barriers into opportunities. One participant reports using the time during the pandemic to grow a virtual community for their organisation. Another organisation mentions that in destinations with low tolerance and acceptance for LGBTQ+ travellers the most creativity and innovations are seen. For example, one organisation who had issues with finding and hiring LGBTQ+ tour guides partners with a local LGBTQ+-focused school. They support the local community by providing resources to educate young people and later offering them a traineeship at the organisation.



Several organisations mention that barriers create learning opportunities for implementing intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ tourism industry. This is reflected in communication with guests and employees, valuing different opinions as well as local and indigenous knowledge, and learning from experience. One participant claims that “knowledge is power” and often these learning opportunities provide subtle but important lessons to the organisation. Another organisation talks about how they realised they were not telling the right stories and were omitting or misrepresenting minority perspectives that differed from their own. Hence, they learned through activism and started to hold others accountable through organising intersectional tours.

5.2.4 Actions

There are different levels on which action can be taken by LGBTQ+ tourism organisations to increase intersectionality in their business, from providing a personalised experience to addressing systemic issues, such as structural transphobia, racism, and personal or societal biases. There is a lot of creativity in the sector and some of these actions are not taken deliberately but are introduced organically into the organisation.

One apparent action that is addressed by multiple participants is active learning. This includes getting to know the guests and allowing them to be themselves and express themselves however they wanted, creating connections with local communities and learning from them, creating a culture where employees can learn from each other, creating communication opportunities and resolving communication issues, and simply learning by doing. Community support is another important element for the organisations. This includes listening to local communities and working together with them, as well as creating logistic, economic, or financial support. A lot of these actions happen mainly on a personal or organisational level, but on a systemic level, participants mention activism, learning by doing, and listening to communities as important actions as well to encourage active learning.

All of these actions take time and effort and the work is never done as it is a constant learning process. The organisations also address the necessity for creating more effort and doing more while continuing the learning process. Future efforts relate not just to constant learning and improving, but also to creating more resources, creating change,



becoming a reference point for the community or destination, growing and creating a long-term focus, and contributing to the future of LGBTQ+ tourism.

One organisation also focuses a lot on “taking back the narrative” for indigenous and intersectional communities. Their background is rooted in activism, local community knowledge, and the historical background of their country, including historical issues such as colonialism, slavery, and European migration. They approach tourism from a grassroots and bottom-up perspective and create empowerment for themselves as well as others in the industry and community. They do this by supporting others in developing products and tours focusing on their own perspective and heritage, rather than trying to present all perspectives themselves. By providing logistic support to local guides and communities who want to create history tours, they empower local communities while simultaneously avoiding misunderstandings and misrepresentation because of a lack of research. Additionally, they mention how they have converted their passion for and interest in intersectionality to the communities and guides they work with and how this creates a ripple effect to the local communities and international travellers.

A lot of participants also acknowledge that there was "a lot of talking and not enough doing". Many actors in the LGBTQ+ tourism industry are talking about important topics such as intersectionality and social equity but are not taking action or even listening to others in the sector or the LGBTQ+ community, specifically when it comes to local and indigenous communities. Additionally, it was pointed out that many organisations, communities, and individuals reward themselves for contributing to the conversation without actually taking action.

Some organisations encourage the LGBTQ+ tourism industry to “walk the walk” and use terms such as intersectionality, diversity, gay-friendly, and LGBTQ+ more intentionally. This also includes matching organisational values with communication by creating representation in their marketing practices. Multiple organisations point out that other businesses labelling themselves as ‘gay-friendly’ is an easy win since accepting and treating the LGBTQ+ community well does not require a lot of effort. This, however, does not equal catering to LGBTQ+ travellers according to their specific needs and struggles, which are different from other travellers. The same counts



for people with disabilities, people of colour, and other minorities. The organisations point out that focusing on the LGBTQ+ community requires more effort than just welcoming them. Especially when it comes to getting to know the needs and struggles of specific sub-minorities in the community. Consequently, these participants point out that the labels ‘gay-friendly’ as well as the symbols of the pride flag for example, are overused while being misunderstood or -interpreted by many who use them. This can hinder the communication between LGBTQ+ travellers and LGBTQ+-owned and -focused businesses who, in contrast to their ‘gay-friendly’ peers, are experts when it comes to hosting travellers from the community.

It is clear that intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism is not just a product, but also a market innovation. IGLTA is an important actor in this market innovation and can be considered an opinion leader or even a change agent since they are mentioned as an important source of information and as an influence by other participants (see 5.5). They consciously create information and influence LGBTQ+ tourism organisation in including more intersectionality in their business practices. There is also a clear grass-roots approach to intersectionality in multiple LGBTQ+ tourism organisations as well as a focus on creating new markets. Organisations also postulate that they have an impact on the wider LGBTQ+ community in their destination and country by creating these market innovations. One participant points out the advantage of their customers “having a normal experience” while “feeling comfortable” since the organisations is LGBTQ+-owned and run. However, they also point out the growth potential for and lack of effort by other LGBTQ+-owned organisations. Hence, there is a lot of potential to introduce intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism, but it is not always put into action.

5.3 Time

“It takes decades to move the needle”

This quote from one of the respondents defines the time aspect of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism. All interviewees indicate that innovation is a process and that it takes time for intersectionality to be introduced, evolve, and be integrated in LGBTQ+ tourism. For example, one organisation mentions that it takes time for rural,



LGBTQ+-sceptic communities to accept LGBTQ+ communities. Another participant points out that most organisations do multiple trial runs before they can commit to intersectionality. They phrase this as “dipping their toe”. Hence, it will take time to introduce intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism and the first steps are only now being taken. It is a growing process, a journey, and an exercise to rethink LGBTQ+ tourism and some of this process is being forced through social injustices and activism, such as the Black Lives Matter movement.

However, multiple organisations point out that change is happening and the “one size fits all” approach from before is now diversifying. This is exemplified in how multiple organisations mention that the LGBTQ+ tourism sector originally started by first focusing on gay and lesbian travellers because of convenience and legal rights which are more common for sexual minorities than gender and other minorities in the LGBTQ+ community, and the opportunity to create recognition for the community first through these travellers. Only recently has there been a movement to include more intersectional entities and shift representation towards gender diversity, racial diversity, body positivity, etc.

Future efforts are also mentioned by many of the participants. One organisation focuses on different time horizons. In the short term, they want to “take back the narrative” for local communities and diversify the “monolithic” communication and information that exists in LGBTQ+ tourism. In the long run, they want to empower intersectional communities in their own destination and beyond and encourage the creation of more intersectional travel organisations. They also focus on creating access to international connections and representation channels which go beyond tokenism to ensure a more intersectional tourism sector on all levels. Examples of these future changes relate to the barriers discussed in 5.2.3, especially social mobility and physical disabilities. While geographical barriers are harder to influence by one organisation, creating and distributing the right information can already go a long way to create more intersectionality. However, it does increase the complexity.

5.4 Channels of Communication

Communication is a widely discussed topic during the interviews. There are three main topics addressed: representation and a lack thereof, marketing communication,



and resources. The first subchapter will discuss how representation is presented and communicated by LGBTQ+ tourism organisations. The second subchapter will describe how LGBTQ+ tourism organisations approach marketing of their product and organisation. And the third and last subchapter will go deeper into which types of resources are being created and used in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector.

5.4.1 Representation

Representation is a broad topic which was often mentioned by the organisations. It is mainly reflected in the feeling of belonging and acceptance. Multiple participants talk about creating a place where people belong and feel comfortable and where everyone believes that “love is love”. They also address interracial acceptance in local LGBTQ+ communities and people realising that they might be "different" from the people they know thanks to tourism in their community.

Diverse representation is important to give people that sense of belonging and acceptance, even in queer spaces where straight people are also welcomed. There is a need for aligning values to make everyone feel like they can be themselves. Representation can be established specifically in organisations run by the LGBTQ+ community and by "going the extra mile" in marketing and language. According to several organisations, their customers describe feeling like they "are the majority" and the organisations themselves also focus on getting together "like-minded people" in their business. Some of them mention the possibility of also including straight allies*, as long as they are accepting and share the same values.

Values are an important topic for most organisations. They mention that there are people everywhere, also in countries where being LGBTQ+ is not accepted or legal, and that for them representation is important to not feel alone as well as to further their fight for equality and Human Rights. However, even in destinations where LGBTQ+ travellers are welcome, some organisations still report changing perspectives of tourism stakeholders by bringing in intersectional tourists. Hence, representation is not only important to reduce intolerance and discrimination, but also to change perspectives and create understanding of and adaptation to the needs and barriers intersectional travellers face. Highlighting intersectionality is perceived as a value and a way to represent the community accurately, including the social issues



they encounter. This is reflected a lot in the hiring process as well, specifically in bigger organisations who try to create representation on all levels. At the same time, they indicate it is sometimes hard to find women loving women and trans or non-binary people in the industry.

The lack of representation makes up the opposite side of the coin. One organisation points out that there is a lack of sexuality and gender representation in higher up positions in tourism. There is also a lack of representation of certain sub-minorities in the community, like lesbian women, specifically outside of Pride events. In this context, the topic of pinkwashing is also addressed. This term has a similar meaning as greenwashing and is used when a business attempts to benefit from presenting as inclusive of the LGBTQ+ community but doesn't actually show (much) effort to include the community in their business values and practices or uses it to distract from other, harmful actions (*Pinkwashing*, 2022).

Some participants mention they wish there would be more representation and diversity in the LGBTQ+ tourism industry. Multiple interviewees mention the cliché or stereotype of white cis muscly gay men in LGBTQ+ tourism. This is mentioned as being a typical representation of LGBTQ+ tourism, probably because white gay men are the demography with the higher income and privilege in the LGBTQ+ community and thus historically the biggest market for tourism. However, the intersectional organisations in this research project all mention that they want to move away from that image and diversify both their customers and their marketing visuals. Some participants mention the cliché disturbs them and it doesn't make themselves feel represented, specifically the women who were interviewed. One participant mentions this lack of representation is the main reason why they create more diversity in their marketing and communication.

5.4.2 Marketing

Marketing is an important element of communication in LGBTQ+ tourism and is mentioned by every organisation. Marketing channels are the main means of communication for a lot of organisations, together with their website or booking page, as this is mainly how they reach travellers and customers. Social media marketing is an important element in marketing these days, specifically Instagram, TikTok, and



Facebook are mentioned as often-used social media channels. One participant uses social media to create more representation for the LGBTQ+ community in general. Some organisations also organise media trips or ask guests on their trips to participate in a photography session for marketing purposes.

Participants also mention the importance of marketing aligning with organisational values. Imagery is an important element of marketing and organisations mention they want their marketing to “match the words” they use and show “what the community looks like”. However, some organisations have no reference of being LGBTQ+-friendly or -owned on their marketing channels or website as they want to focus on all travellers. Others do market to the LGBTQ+ community specifically but avoid focusing on one specific group in their communication.

Marketing strategies and visuals also have changed a lot over the past years. Inclusive marketing, especially from bigger tourism brands like the Hilton and Marriot, have a big influence on diversity in LGBTQ+ tourism marketing and marketing is now more visually inclusive and diverse. Multiple organisations report an increase in inclusive marketing towards LGBTQ+ communities around Pride month in June. Some destinations only market to LGBTQ+ communities around Pride month, even though they travel all year round. Consequently, there is still great room for improvement when it comes to intersectional representation in marketing and communication of LGBTQ+ tourism organisations.

5.4.3 Resources

There is a large variety of resources with information on intersectionality, sometimes even created by LGBTQ+ tourism organisations themselves. These resources take time to develop and are used multifunctionally, by both LGBTQ+ travellers and other tourism organisations. The participants also mention their motivation and commitment to continuously learn and grow in their use of resources.

Conversational resources were mentioned most often by participants. These resources were mainly exchanged over interpersonal channels and through the internet. Conversations and communication with customers are one important resource that most LGBTQ+ tourism organisations use. They simply ask how customers would like to be treated, which aligns with the personalised experience a lot of organisations offer.



These conversations happen both online and in real life as well as before, during, and after the trip. Many of the organisations mention the importance they put on listening to their customers and getting as much information as possible to ensure proper communication and service.

Consultants from the LGBTQ+ community were also included in conversations, as well as partner organisations. One organisation reports a recent focus on conversations with trans and non-binary communities. They include them in marketing and consult with them about gender diversity and how to accommodate intersectional travellers. Internal conversations with employees are also deemed important. This communication goes both ways, as organisations set up employee resource groups, guest lectures, and encourage conversations between their employees on a daily basis. For example, one participant mentions the organisation had not heard of intersectionality before as a concept, but this research project started an internal discussion about the topic.

Conversations are deemed very important in all LGBTQ+ tourism organisations, especially since they are people-focused and report other resources, such as the internet, as insufficient to create intersectional expertise within the organisation. These conversations happen mainly through localite connections as most organisations, travellers, and employees are part of the LGBTQ+ community and thus the same social system. Additionally, since most organisations focus on attracting customers with similar values, the connections are mainly homophilous. However, intersectionality also encourages heterophilous connections since it brings people from different backgrounds and perspectives from within the LGBTQ+ community together.

Multiple participants point out there is “a lot of talking, little doing” in the sector. At the same time, several participants mention that political correctness and cancel culture, which is the act of calling out bad behaviour and consequently boycotting organisations and their platforms (*Cancel Culture*, 2021), are more harmful than good for encouraging intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism. Both cancel culture and political correctness reduce or cut off any possible conversation and reduce representation of different perspectives. Hence, conversations and communication are an important element of intersectionality, but are just the start. There need to be actions following



the conversations to enact concrete change. Simply creating conversations about intersectionality and equality and rewarding oneself for it without creating change is insufficient as is cancelling organisations for not doing the right thing without attempting to listen to or change their perspective. Consequently, conversational resources need to be paired with other communication resources, such as trainings and workshops.

Training opportunities, which are closely connected to conversational resources, are an important resource for LGBTQ+ tourism organisation. Communication channels like trainings and workshops are mainly localite, interpersonal, and can occur between both homophilous as well as heterophilous actors. Organisations plan diversity training, staff briefings, transgender education, and workshops for their employees and partners. Specifically organisations working on a membership basis offer trainings and workshops to their members. But smaller businesses also mention training and briefing of their staff and sometimes local partners they work with.

Additionally, the internet is an important resource for most LGBTQ+ tourism organisations. As mentioned in 3.3, the internet is a relatively new type of channel which can create both interpersonal and mass media channels, as well as cosmopolite and localite connections. Internet resources which are mentioned by participants are Google, online blogs, government websites, and general online research. These are mainly mass media channels, but organisations also mention online interaction with customers, which is more interpersonal. The information collected from these resources goes from general knowledge about intersectionality, to safety, diversity, etc. Older organisations mention the importance of technological innovations such as the internet for LGBTQ+ tourism and the creativity happening in that context. Small, specifically rural, organisations mention that internet is one of the most prominent resources since there is little else in the area where they operate.

Other resources which were mentioned less often were travel guides, policies, general (academic) research, and accreditation mechanisms such as badges and awards. It is interesting that research, policies, and accreditation are mentioned so little. Especially the lack of research as a resource is concerning since this would mean that research does not find its way to the LGBTQ+ tourism sector. Additionally, there was little



mention of (social) media as a resource. One participant points out there is a lack of media coverage on the topic of LGBTQ+ tourism, which could explain why there is little mention of the topic. However, there seem to be good connections within the industry as multiple participants mentioned other organisations in this project as a source of information. Consequently, homophilous, localite connections are more common in this social system than mass heterophilous, cosmopolite connections.

5.5 Social System

The social system in which intersectionality takes place in the scope of this research is LGBTQ+ tourism and the LGBTQ+ community in general. This social system includes different sub-systems, such as the IGLTA community, which includes all organisations who are an IGLTA member, and overlaps with other communities, such as local communities in which the LGBTQ+ tourism organisations operate.

IGLTA is an international organisation with representation around the world which includes small, local, queer-owned businesses as well as big tourism corporations and everything in between. It seems to be an important actor in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector as almost all organisations mention their membership even though the researcher did not inform them in advance of finding them through the IGLTA website. Multiple participants also point out the importance of the network IGLTA offers their members. They are an important source of information and partnerships, and they often reach out to the community or create connections during their yearly convention. They also include a foundation, an emerging destination program, a fellowship program, they organise travel shows and conventions, and they provide certification and approval of LGBTQ+-friendly organisations.

In this subchapter, topics related to the social system in which intersectionality is introduced are discussed. These topics include queer space, which is an important element of this social system, collaboration between LGBTQ+ tourism organisations and with other organisations in the social system, as well as impacts of travel and the introduction of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism.



5.5.1 Queer space

Queer spaces, safe spaces, and Pride events (which are queer spaces) are mentioned by multiple organisations as important elements of LGBTQ+ tourism. Pride tourism is an important element of LGBTQ+ tourism and it brings large groups from the international LGBTQ+ community together in an intersectional environment. Queer space, however, is not necessarily defined by exclusivity for the community as many organisations are open to host allied cis straight people as long as they align with their values. Especially organisations who cater to everyone and/or organise family tours embody this idea. Some participants also mention that these safe queer spaces are not only meant for tourists but also for their employees. All participants are themselves part of the LGBTQ+ community and reference both their own as well as customers' experiences in this context. Some participants even mention living in a bubble or utopia due to their profession in LGBTQ+ tourism.

LGBTQ+ tourism organisations create opportunities to meet other travellers from different backgrounds, as well as local communities, in an intersectional environment. One organisation, for example, reports “creating a comfort zone to get people out of their comfort zone” by matching people with similar backgrounds at the beginning of the trip and then combine these ‘pods’ together with other backgrounds and perspectives. Other organisations mention they cater to travellers who live remote and lack access to an LGBTQ+ community at home. Many participants agree that tourism is specifically adept to creating these opportunities.

While connections and solidarity within the LGBTQ+ community are strong, there are also some internal differences. Some participants mention that younger members of the community are more inclusive and intersectional. Additionally, there exist still some strong divisions within the LGBTQ+ community. There is still a lack of intersectionality, and some participants mention their own learning curve and privilege in this context.

5.5.2 Collaboration

LGBTQ+ tourism organisations often collaborate with each other and with local organisations in the destinations they cater to. Collaboration between LGBTQ+ tourism organisations is regularly initiated through IGLTA, but not exclusively. A lot of



organisations mention they focus on targeted collaborations with organisations who share the same values and understand the barriers and needs the LGBTQ+ community faces. IGLTA itself does destination outreach and offers training and informational resources to businesses trying to become more diverse, LGBTQ+-friendly, and intersectional. Some organisations also mention businesses reaching out to them to work together, for example with the goal to support the LGBTQ+ community. A lot of businesses also partner with local organisations and locally owned businesses to give back to local communities. One organisation even created a virtual community during the pandemic since they were not able to start up their business in practice yet.

LGBTQ+ tourism organisations also seek to support local (LGBTQ+) communities, both in their origin location and in the destinations. While they support these communities through events, fundraising, philanthropy, and collaborations, the organisation also learns from and communicates with the community and contributes to local sustainability projects. One organisation reports collaborating with an organisation in a nearby city who brings in international drag queens for events. The organisation offers their services and products to these visitors and consequently creates representation and diversity in a local, rural area. Another organisation supports a local LGBTQ+-focused school where they provide scholarships and mentorships for students who want to go into tourism. Several of the tour operators in the project also mention collaboration with local LGBTQ+ organisations in the destinations they travel to. By collaborating with LGBTQ+-owned and -focused partners, these organisations ensure that "the money stays within the community" and that not just their customers and employees are uplifted but also other LGBTQ+ communities.

5.5.3 Impacts of travel

There are different types of impacts of travel and specifically LGBTQ+ tourism. Firstly, multiple organisations mention the social impact of tourism. From this perspective, LGBTQ+ tourism creates enjoyment for tourists, as well as the opportunity to create international and intersectional connections and networks since LGBTQ+ tourism is "icebreaking". Additionally, LGBTQ+ tourism creates equality, awareness, and empowerment for local communities, as well as job opportunities in the destinations. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ tourism organisations create international and



intersectional awareness, show real life issues and solutions, and share stories which can increase awareness in local communities and other tourists in destinations. Consequently, LGBTQ+ tourism can be empowering for both locals, by giving a platform to tell their stories, and LGBTQ+ travellers, by giving them the opportunity to learn about their history and share their stories as well. It also provides opportunities for growth and creates positions of power for marginalised communities.

Many organisations also indicate the economic and financial impacts they have on local communities, through partnerships, philanthropic outreach, or by simply supporting the local economy. Several organisations mentions how local businesses were unhappy with LGBTQ+ travellers the first time they came to the destination but their acceptance and perception changed due to the economic profits and job opportunities the LGBTQ+ tourism organisations brought with them.

Another impact of LGBTQ+ tourism is the feeling of freedom, which is related to creating queer and safe spaces. This feeling is apparent in both LGBTQ+ travellers and the employees of LGBTQ+ tourism organisations. After all, for many people from the Global South and from countries where queerness is not accepted, LGBTQ+ tourism is still very important to find their identity, live openly, and create connections with like-minded people. Hence, less-accepting countries are important source markets for destinations where LGBTQ+ people are more accepted but also important destinations to create visibility and acceptance in.

In the context of travel impact, the concept of a ripple effect was often mentioned as well. This effect is applicable to spreading the intersectional message to employees, partners, local communities, and customers. LGBTQ+ tourism is mentioned by organisations to have a "tremendous impact" and that there is "so much power in tourism". Even though the environmental impact of LGBTQ+ tourism was not considered by most participants, there is still the possibility for an indirect environmental impact resulting from the ripple effect created by uplifting and empowering local, rural, and/or indigenous communities. One participant argues that to create a truly intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism sector, all businesses must put in an effort. However, this researcher would argue that a market shift where most businesses become intersectional can ensure a more intersectional market.



6 Discussion

The data analysis confirms that introducing intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism organisations is considered an innovation in the sector. These organisations are often the only ones in their subsector and/or region who have intersectionality as a core value. Their own perception of their innovativeness aligns with Rogers' (2003) definition of innovation which relies on the perception of newness of an idea or practice as being innovative. Consequently, being the first organisation to introduce a new idea or product in a sector or region is not a necessary requirement for being an innovator, as long as an organisation is perceived or perceives themselves as a first mover, they can be considered innovative.

Intersectionality, according to the author, can be classified as an innovative political philosophy as it connects to issues of equality and Human Rights which are inherently political. Since travellers play an integral role in the development of LGBTQ+ tourism innovation and intersectionality creates a new market approach and new relations with customers and products (Pikkemaat et al., 2019), it can be considered a market innovation in LGBTQ+ tourism. Radical market innovations also influence product and service innovations, process innovations, and organisational innovations (Shin & Perdue, 2022). New products and services can include all-inclusive vacations organised for a combination of all sexual and gender minorities, diversification of tour products for new customers and markets, and intersectional city tours focusing on the unique history of underrepresented minorities. Intersectionality also creates opportunities for new processes in LGBTQ+ tourism, for example tours guided by local communities on which the tour focuses or hiring employees from different social backgrounds than usual for a specific role. Organisational innovations are also influenced by intersectionality and include intersectionality training, empowerment of employees and local communities, and changes in typical power relations within companies.

On market level, intersectionality is a radical innovation, however, on organisational level it can be categorised as both radical or incremental dependent on the time frame in which it is introduced and the position it plays in the organisation. All organisations included in this research project can be classified as innovators or first movers when it comes to intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism, since they all have a unique



intersectional approach in their subsector and/or their location. Additionally, since intersectionality is perceived as new in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector, these organisations are inherently innovative, according to Rogers' (2003) definition of innovation. A few other organisations which were contacted by the researcher but were not available for an interview were also specifically mentioned by other organisations as innovators. For example, one participant mentions a US-based DMO which innovates for transgender outreach and has an intersectional approach to LGBTQ+ tourism as they “don't wait for others” and “incorporate diversity into the fabric of the community”. Hence, this actor could potentially act as an opinion leader for DMO's in the LGBTQ+ tourism market.

Based on the typology by Brooker and Joppe (2014), LGBTQ+ tourism organisations can be divided into three categories. Firstly, there are the innovators or first movers who push for radical innovation. These are the organisations who are aware of intersectionality as a framework and consciously introduce it as a core value in their business practices. Examples in this project are Lunfarda Travel and Vacaya who radically innovated the local LGBTQ+ tour sector and the LGTBQ+ cruise and all-in vacation sector, respectively. Secondly, there are the early adopters who introduce liminal intersectional innovations in their business practices without realising these can be labelled ‘intersectional’. Examples are Jamala Madikwe and Proud Portugal, who both include elements of intersectionality in their business practices but indicated they had not heard the term before the interviews. The third organisation type are the majorities who stick to smaller, incremental innovations and improvements. These are not represented in this research project. Examples are the Marriott and the Hilton, who include diversity and intersectional elements in their organisational practices without introducing them as a core value of their business plan.

First movers and early adopters are the first organisations to introduce intersectionality into LGBTQ+ tourism. Currently, there are only a few LGBTQ+ tourism organisations in the industry with intersectionality as a core value and some of them do not do this consciously (yet). One organisation points out that “it takes decades to move the needle”. Hence, the time it will take the sector to introduce intersectionality as a market innovation on a destination and international level is reflected by one organisation's personal time to come to terms with intersectionality and their own identity.



Consequently, this progress of acknowledging and then incorporating intersectionality into the sector is currently in its infancy. Organisations need to go through several cycles of uncertainty reduction before fully embracing the concept. The innovation-decision process in Rogers' (2003) diffusion of innovations theory seems to include several feedback loops rather than being perfectly linear in this situation. Additionally, the rate of adoption (S-curve) of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism seems to be rather slow and the acceleration process has not begun yet.

At the same time, there is a big societal shift on the way, reflected in movements such as Black Lives Matter and Fridays for Future who are "forcing" organisations to think more intersectionally. As long as these movements avoid perpetuating cancel culture and political correctness, they can change perspectives and encourage active learning through conversations. LGBTQ+ tourism can be a similar movement to encourage these conversations, similarly to how the Stonewall Riots originally started the gay liberation movement in the 70s (Keith et al., 2019). These conversations can accelerate the innovation of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism over time.

Organisations innovating for intersectionality address the lack of information and awareness, as well as several other barriers as reasons of the slow implementation of the framework in LGBTQ+ tourism. Even so, there is a business case to intersectionality as it can provide organisations with several advantages to consider the intersectionality of their customers. After all, every person identifies as part of several socio-economic groups and identities (Chan & Howard, 2020).

LGBTQ+ tourism organisations introduce intersectionality in their business practices because it provides them with several relative advantages. Previous research confirms the competitive advantage of being innovative (Crossan & Apaydin, 2010) and the influence of relative advantages on adoption of innovations (Le et al., 2006; Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011). Some of the advantages of intersectionality are the ability to create personalised experience for travellers, provide an inclusive environment which attracts LGBTQ+ customers, and create a safe queer space where everyone can feel comfortable. This is also connected to geopolitical events which impact the LGBTQ+ community in intersectional and different ways, for example the intersectional effects of abortion rights and the overturning of *Roe v. Wade* in the US in



June 2022. LGBTQ+ organisations want to create a space where people can get away from these stressful and upsetting situations, while also creating the opportunity for a dialogue with the community to discuss and learn of the intersectional impacts of these events. According to the literature, these safe, discrimination-free spaces and destinations are specifically important for gender minorities (Monterrubio et al., 2020). Since transgender travellers look for increased planning, gender-affirmation, and safe spaces to be themselves in (Olson & Reddy-Best, 2019), intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism can be especially important for trans and non-binary people.

The compatibility between LGBTQ+ tourism organisations and intersectionality is supported by the values they embody as well as the transition of the LGBTQ+ tourism sector from a focus on gay and lesbian travellers to more gender and sexual diversity. This is illustrated by the change in the name of IGLTA from gay- and lesbian-focused to LGBTQ+-focused (see appendix 1). Another example is how the community reclaimed the word 'queer', which used to be a slur and is now used as an umbrella term for anyone who is not cisgender and heterosexual.

Intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism organisations also focus on sustainable approaches to give back to the local communities through philanthropy, volunteering, and conservation support. This aligns with the partial focus of innovation literature in tourism on environmentally sustainable innovations. However, contrary to the literature, social sustainability topics are also addressed and often interlinked with other topics. One interesting example is when tourists visit local businesses and help out while on a luxury all-inclusive trip, which creates a link to voluntourism. Voluntourism renegotiates power dynamics (Kipp et al., 2021) and intersectionality challenges both power relations and systems of oppression (Atewologun, 2018). According to queer theory, the renegotiating of these power dynamics can redefine the identities of both LGBTQ+ travellers as well as local communities. Consequently, a hybrid version between luxury tourism and voluntourism in intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism establishes an interesting social sustainability innovation which can create positive effects in the form of mutual understanding, representation, and social connections between local communities and LGBTQ+ travellers. Hence, organisations who focus on intersectional issues in LGBTQ+ tourism tend to extend this to support other social identities and other issues, such as environmental and social sustainability. This aligns



with Hagelund (2016) who found that LGBTQ+ communities often also care about other social issues when they travel.

LGBTQ+ tourism organisations who focus on intersectionality include it as a core business value. The organisations also want these values reflected in their customer pool and they want LGBTQ+ communities and organisations to put their money where their mouth is. They aim to match their values with those of the people they want to attract and to provide a safe space where LGBTQ+ travellers can be themselves. Customer demands also influence the adoption of an innovation such as intersectionality (Le et al., 2006; Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011). The inclusion of intersectionality is observable by both customers and other organisations and partners in the LGBTQ+ tourism market. Observability is reflected in a year-round focus on LGBTQ+ tourism, inclusive products and services, enjoyment of minority customers in group tours, and positive feedback from customers and partners. However, one organisation does not visibly market towards the LGBTQ+ community and has little communication on their website about being LGBTQ+-owned. This lack of observability could make it harder for the LGBTQ+ community to find this organisation despite their compatible values.

There is also an economic benefit to the amount of visitors destinations can attract and convince to come back in the future. More LGBTQ+ tourism can create opportunities to increase awareness and visibility of intersectional and diverse travellers. This relates to Coon's (2012) statement about marketplace participation creating an entry point into political discussions about human rights and equality. Consequently, intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism can create positive experience for travellers, who will return to the destination, which can create visibility and awareness and lead to increased political opportunities and equality. Even in communities where LGBTQ+ identities are less accepted, financial and economic impacts, such as job opportunities, can increase social acceptance. Consequently, boycotting destinations without LGBTQ+ rights or where being gay or trans is illegal could be counterproductive. Instead, LGBTQ+ tourism organisation could support local communities in these destinations in their fight for Human Rights and acceptance by creating representation and awareness, as well as through economic and social contributions.



Most organisations approach intersectionality from a grassroots perspective and focus on creating equality, representation, and social acceptance, which aligns with the origin of intersectionality as a black feminist theory (Al-Faham et al., 2019; Atewologun, 2018) as well as the history of LGBTQ+ Pride as a riot and a liberation movement (Coon, 2012; Keith et al., 2019). The aim behind intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism is to create “a better tomorrow” and contribute to a sustainable future. This requires the inclusion of local and indigenous communities as well as minority groups. This is in contrast with the disregards for local solutions and communities in innovation research (Singhal & Svenkerud, 2019). One organisation defines intersectionality in terms of storytelling and representation, which is linked with local LGBTQ+ and intersectional communities. On a more international level, they define it as a "different way of doing tourism" and creating more equity and justice for communities who have born the negative impacts of tourism in the past. This also relates to Coon’s (2012) statement of marketplace participation which was addressed earlier.

To ensure proper integration of local and intersectional perspectives, organisations can include intersectionality into their business model, the destination(s) they focus on, and their customer pool. Especially the inclusion of different perspectives is essential for intersectionality as these offer both learning opportunities to the tourism organisation, other customers, partners, and the destination in general. Consequently, constant adaptation and re-invention of intersectionality is important as every organisation has a unique perspective and situation.

One important difference in perspective comes from the differences between the Global North and the Global South. LGBTQ+ tourism businesses in the Global North are more sheltered from social issues and injustices, due to the privileged position of many cis, white men in top management positions in LGBTQ+ tourism (Mooney, 2016) and since there is a stronger impact of capitalism and the patriarchy in the Global North compared to the Global South (Higgins Desbiolles, 2020). Consequently, some organisations in the Global South go further in including intersectionality by connecting it to social justice and changing the narrative of LGBTQ+ tourism in their local destination like no other organisation in the Global North does. Since capitalism, patriarchy, and neo-colonialism are more criticized and have more social consequences in the Global South, organisations are able to understand social



(in)justices and (in)equalities from a local, intersectional perspective. This is not a critique on organisations in the Global North or a reason to say they lack intersectionality or innovativeness. It simply illustrates the different ways of being intersectional in different locations and coming from different perspectives, which is what intersectionality stands for. It also demonstrates the need for more intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism organisations that represent different perspectives, both in the Global North as the Global South.

LGBTQ+ tourism organisations often have an intrinsic motivation to include intersectionality, which is reflected in their core values. These intrinsic motivations are often rooted in backgrounds of oppression, disappointment, lack of representation, or discomfort in normative society. Therefore, (intrinsic) motivation can be considered a perceived attribute of intersectionality as an innovation. This aligns with research by Bell and Ruhanen (2016) who account this necessity for intrinsic motivation to counterbalance the lack of information, social networks, and dissemination of innovations. While social networks do not seem to be an issue in LGBTQ+ tourism, the lack of information and the dissemination thereof is clear based on the results.

Lack of information is the main reason why the LGBTQ+ tourism market originally focused mainly on gay and lesbian travellers. Although the transition to include other gender and sexual minorities is on its way, lack of information is still an important barrier. This barrier might be the cause of intersectionality not being widely known and understood. This can be partially resolved by investing in communication channels, dissemination of information, and by introducing more change agents and opinion leaders into the sector (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016; Dabphet et al., 2012). Currently, it seems the main international opinion leader and source of information concerning intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism is IGLTA. While they reportedly provide and disseminate information through different communication channels, including mass media channels like travel brochures, websites, and research, as well as conferences and interpersonal communication, it seems many of their members still lack the knowledge of what intersectionality is and how it can be approached, even those who implement the perspective into their business practices.



IGLTA also reportedly promotes inclusive marketing to their members. Since marketing is the main communication channel in LGBTQ+ tourism (Coon, 2012), a shift towards inclusive marketing can significantly contribute to the introduction of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism. Marketing can contribute to the observability of intersectionality and the establishment of the concept and its meaning in the sector, while counteracting misrepresentation, a lack of information, and stereotyping of LGBTQ+ communities. However, mainstream tourism includes mainly stereotypical diversity in their marketing (Rydzik et al., 2021) or solely focuses on LGBTQ+ tourism during Pride Month. On the one hand, some organisations tend to “skip to the end goal” of creating diversity and intersectionality “without addressing the progress” and use certain LGBTQ+ symbols, like the pride flag, without being aware of their historical and social meaning.

The lack of information about intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism is also addressed in literature as this barrier creates challenges for different minorities, such as trans and non-binary travellers, to be included in the sector (Lucena et al., 2021; Monterrubio et al., 2021). Even if information is available, it is very one-sided and often misleading, for example that LGBTQ+ travellers spend more than their cis straight peers (Coon, 2012). However, the reported economic privilege of the LGBTQ+ community is mainly based on the financial situation of white cis gay male travellers (Coon, 2012), while there is a lot more nuance in the social mobility of LGBTQ+ travellers. This could be one reason why, despite trying to attract a diverse and intersectional customer pool, many LGBTQ+ tourism organisation still report that most of their customers are gay men.

These economic barriers also lead to a lack of possibilities for market participation of some minorities in the community which results in tourism organisations not offering products or services to these markets. However, in line with Coon’s (2012) statement about marketplace participation, this hinders opportunities for creating awareness and representation for these minorities. Creating spaces for these communities even though they currently do not represent economic stakeholders can increase their marketplace participation, which can create a ripple effect to address systemic issues and lift economic barriers for these communities. This requires a generational shift, as generational differences are a barrier to LGBTQ+ tourism organisations (Hagelund,



2016). While gay men were the main trailblazers for the LGBTQ+ tourism industry in the past (in contrast to LGBTQ+ rights, where (trans) people of colour were at the front of Human Rights progress (Jagose, 2005)), it is time for younger generations to represent more sexual and gender diversity in the sector in the future.

Intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism is a complex topic due to the multiple barriers which were also mentioned in literature (Hagelund, 2016). Although higher complexity usually negatively impacts innovation adoptions (Le et al., 2006; Smerecnik & Andersen, 2011), the LGBTQ+ tourism organisations in this research project include intersectionality despite its complexity. They report that the barriers and consequent complexity can be moderated through partnerships, collaborations, and support from local communities. Intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism organisations also aim to reduce the divisions within the LGBTQ+ community and overcome this social barrier by creating safe queer spaces for customers, employees, and local communities. After all, queer space provide comfort zones where people can safely interact with others from different backgrounds and broaden their perspective without fear of discrimination, homophobia, or violence (Hagelund, 2016).

Queer spaces function as an escape away from heteronormative society (Lucena et al., 2021). However, in intersectional LGBTQ+ tourism, these safe spaces often also include cisgender, heterosexual allies. According to the definitions by Graham (2022), queer space (as opposed to gay space) aligns better with intersectionality since it celebrates queer existence in heteronormative spaces (as cited in Coon, 2012, pp. 515–516). However, changes which blend together queer and heteronormative spaces can create challenges and organisations should be mindful of heteronormalisation of these safe spaces by including straight travellers (Hagelund, 2016). As reported by some organisations, creating intersectional queer spaces is not always to the liking of all LGBTQ+ travellers, some of whom prefer to maintain the divisions which exist within the community.

At the same time, creating queer spaces which exist fully outside of heteronormative society can also be detrimental to intersectional perspectives, as indicated by queer theory (Jagose, 2005; Usai et al., 2022). One participant mentions living in a “utopian bubble” within the LGBTQ+ community. This could create a barrier to implementing



intersectionality by creating a 'they vs us' mindset where there is no or limited dialogue with organisations or travellers who do not embrace intersectionality. This can be connected to the individual blame bias and the pro-innovation bias (Rogers, 2003). On one hand, these organisations might face too many systemic barriers or a lack of information to adopt an intersectional approach. On the other hand, segregations might lead to blaming corporations who lack behind for not innovating and including intersectionality, while it might be perfectly reasonable for them to focus on other topics or communities. Hence, too much secularisation in the LGBTQ+ tourism industry could also cause barriers to innovation.

Currently, too many divisions in the LGBTQ+ tourism community exist. LGBTQ+ events and trips are often focused on one sub-minority, which results in othering within the LGBTQ+ community. According to queer theory, this is a problematic situation which creates a vicious circle where there is a lack of intersectionality and tolerance within the LGBTQ+ community which leads to more divisions. However, tourism is considered a good medium to break this cycle because it takes people out of their normal routine and brings them together over a similar interest. This creates communication over divisions and can increase intersectionality. Hence, creating a queer intersectional space in LGBTQ+ tourism can increase intersectionality in the overall LGBTQ+ community. One could argue this is the true innovation: not simply including intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism but creating a more intersectional LGBTQ+ community through tourism.



7 Conclusion

Originally, the focus of the LGBTQ+ tourism industry was mainly on gay and lesbian travellers, however in the past years and decades, there has been a shift (Ong et al., 2021). The introduction of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism has resulted in several organisations, including an important opinion leader, IGLTA, to become more diverse and intersectional in their practices. At the same time, a changing focus from negative experiences in LGBTQ+ tourism, such as discrimination and lack of safety, are making place for more positive aspects of LGBTQ+ tourism, such as empowerment, enjoyment, and connections. A shift towards intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ tourism industry could create more positive than negative impacts and thus contribute to social sustainability in the sector. The concept also aligns with the definition of the UNWTO (n.d.) in regard to respecting host communities and fostering “inter-cultural understanding and tolerance” (par. 2, sec. 2).

Consequently, the purpose of this research project to explore the current innovation stage of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism is justified as literature on the topic is severely lacking (Ong et al., 2021). This research project addresses the knowledge gaps in the literature on LGBTQ+ tourism, including a lack of focus on diversity and intersectionality (Lucena et al., 2021; Mooney, 2018; Ong et al., 2021) as well as a lack of focus on business perspectives (Lelo de Larrea et al., 2021; Ong et al., 2021) and innovations (Shin & Perdue, 2022). The research question used to guide this project ‘how do LGBTQ+ tourism businesses account for intersectionality as an innovation in their business practices?’ is successfully answered in the results and discussion sections of this paper.

Firstly, it is clear that intersectionality can be considered a market innovation in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector which influences products, services, processes, and organisational innovations. Aligning with organisational values and practices related to intersectionality, LGBTQ+ tourism organisations can be categorised in three categories: first movers who implement intersectionality as a radical innovation, early adopters who implement intersectionality in a liminal way, sometimes without realising they do, and majorities who introduce incremental innovations based on the perspective of intersectionality outside their core values.



Secondly, it is important to note that the innovation process takes several cycles of uncertainty reduction and that introducing intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector takes time. Even though some movements are forcing tourism businesses to change their perspectives and create conversations with the LGBTQ+ community, it could take a long time to create a business-led intersectional transition in the sector.

Furthermore, organisations who currently implement intersectionality in their core values and business practices do this from an intrinsic motivation and because they see several advantages for their business and the communities they work with. Despite multiple informational, economic, and geopolitical barriers, LGBTQ+ tourism organisations can overcome the complexities that intersectionality brings along. They are able to create safe queer spaces where everyone is welcome and comfortable while creating important dialogues including multiple identities and perspectives. They also reflect their values related to intersectionality, like tolerance and diversity, in their marketing to attract like-minded travellers.

Lastly, it has been shown that intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism can create positive effects on local, national, and international levels. The concept contributes to representation, creating equality and social acceptance, and building a sustainable future. It also goes hand in hand with including local and indigenous communities, inclusive marketing, and ripple effects addressing systemic issues. In the end, innovating for intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism could build bridges within the LGBTQ+ community and create more intersectionality in the community overall.

7.1 Theoretical implications

This project applies Rogers' diffusion of innovations framework in a qualitative case study with an interpretivist approach. The case study creates an in-depth insight into the phenomenon of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism. To the knowledge of the researcher, this framework has not been applied in LGBTQ+ tourism research. Additionally, where it has been applied in tourism research, it has mainly focused on digital and technological innovations (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016; Shin & Perdue, 2022).

During the project it became increasingly clear that Rogers' diffusion of innovations framework is not adapted well enough to the realities of the tourism industry,



especially in the context of social sustainability topics such as intersectionality. Rogers' framework was developed with technological and manufacturing innovations in mind and although it has been adapted to fit better with the realities of service sectors (Hjalager, 2010; Rogers, 2003), it is not yet adapted well enough to the tourism sector. For example, the overlap of innovation attributes in the context of social and political innovations such as intersectionality should be addressed. Additionally, other attributes, such as (intrinsic) motivation, should be explored. Consequently, future research should focus on adapting or creating a new innovation diffusion framework to fit better in the context of the tourism industry, which is complex, multi-disciplinary, and socially oriented.

This project also addresses the gap in the literature on organisational innovation research, especially with regards to social sustainability innovations such as intersectionality (Pikkemaat et al., 2019; Shin & Perdue, 2022). While it is clear that there are connections between environmental and social sustainability in the tourism industry and research on (environmental) sustainability is available, there is a need for more research investigating these connections in a business context. Furthermore, tourism innovations research focusing on the business perspective often consider the accommodation and resort sectors (Horng et al., 2017; Khonje et al., 2020) while overlooking other business types such as tour operators.

7.2 Managerial implications

In order to boost intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector, the issue of information has to be addressed (Bell & Ruhanen, 2016; Dabphet et al., 2012). The lack of information about intersectionality, its benefits, and how to overcome its barriers and complexity are inadequately addressed and disseminated in the sector. IGLTA actively chooses not to define the word intersectionality because it has become a buzzword and is too all-encompassing to properly be defined. However, since the term has started to live its own life and there is clearly a lack of information about its meaning and applicability, IGLTA could act as a change agent if they want to introduce the concept more actively towards its members (Atewologun, 2018). This could include a clear definition or explanation as well as resources and examples on how to implement intersectionality in practice and adapt it to the organisational context.



Conversations with the LGBTQ+ communities as well as local communities in the destinations are important to overcome economic and geopolitical issues and learn from best practices and indigenous knowledge. Through empowering these communities, organisations could increase sustainability. This could create an intrinsic motivation for LGBTQ+ tourism organisations who are already invested in (environmental) sustainability. Additionally, connections between academic and non-academic communities could create more informational resources and communication channels. While there are communication channels in the social system of LGBTQ+ tourism, these are underutilised and underdeveloped. Most marketing focuses on clichés, like muscly white gay men, which do not represent the majority of the LGBTQ+ community. However, diversifying the marketing image should be done in alignment with organisation values to avoid pinkwashing.

It will take time before the concept of intersectionality will be fully introduced in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector. Conversations and active learning play an important role in addressing generational differences, lack of tolerance, and awareness in destinations. While it might “take decades to move the needle”, LGBTQ+ tourism organisations could still strive to create safe spaces for people to share their stories and perspectives. At the same time, organisations can focus on creating equity and justice by changing their way of doing tourism on a systemic level.

7.3 Future Research

Since there is a lack of information in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector on intersectionality, more research could fill some of that uncertainty. However, while future academic research is important, it is also important to build bridges between academic knowledge and non-academic communities. Especially since local and indigenous communities can be more knowledgeable about intersectionality as they experience this daily (Singhal & Svenkerud, 2019). Additionally, access to academic knowledge and education is important for these communities to be able to contribute to academic knowledge. However, currently there seems to be a misalignment between LGBTQ+ research and practice. To ensure a future for intersectionality in the LGBTQ+ tourism sector, building bridges between North and South and between academic and non-



academic knowledge might be more important than creating new knowledge. After all, why invent the wheel if your neighbour already has?

Future research could zoom in on several aspects which have been addressed in this research paper. Firstly, research could investigate why there is a lack of representation of women, people of colour, and transgender people in higher up positions in LGBTQ+ tourism. Ironically, although this research focuses on intersectionality, most interviewees are white gay cisgender men. This was not due to a lack of effort from the researcher but due to a lack of representation in the field, as also pointed out by several participants. Research on how to create more diversity in the team, especially higher up in the company hierarchy, can also create diverse perspectives which could create more opportunities for the company. Future research could go more into this topic and examine the different approaches towards intersectionality in employees and customers.

Secondly, since LGBTQ+ tourism organisations report mainly receiving gay men as customers, even if they market towards a more diverse audience, LGBTQ+ tourism research could focus on the (lack of) representation and intersectionality in LGBTQ+ travellers. Future research can focus on how to include more gender, racial, and sexual diversity in LGBTQ+ tourism by approaching travellers differently. Additionally, this research could look at what kind of trips attract women loving women, non-binary and trans people, people of colour, and other intersectional travellers. Potentially, these travellers prefer other means of travel and accommodation. Future research could investigate which groups in the LGBT tourism sector enjoy what types of travel and which barriers there are for these groups to try out other types of travel.

Furthermore, future research can investigate the social mobilities of different groups in the LGBT community and how to resolve or decrease socioeconomic barriers to tourism for these groups. Social mobility is a topic which receives little attention in the sector, which might be because there is no market for people from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. However, research projects could investigate how to create these markets and cater to these groups in a different, innovative way.

Investigating barriers to LGBTQ+ tourism could explain the time-frame of introducing intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism. More longitudinal and/or quantitative



research with more participants can also be beneficial to investigate the time-aspect of Rogers' diffusion of innovations framework. Additionally, researching intersectionality as an innovation in LGBTQ+ tourism from a different innovation framework could uncover more aspects of the phenomenon which the diffusion of innovations framework was not able to reveal. Other theoretical approaches to this topic, such as the value-based business model approach or behavioural frameworks, could also shed more lights on barriers and complexities of intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism.

Future research could also focus on quantifying the attributes of intersectionality as an innovation in LGBTQ+ tourism. Specifically complexity seems to be an interesting aspect since it is very broad and interacts with many other issues, barriers, and uncertainties. Specific research on the complexity of intersectionality as an innovation could focus on quantifying this attribute, which elements make intersectionality complex, and how tourism businesses can reduce complexity. Furthermore, research on the duality of safety and discrimination could show different perspectives with how to address complexity and uncertainty and subsequently show different ways to approach intersectionality in LGBTQ+ tourism.

Lastly, in current tourism innovation literature there is more research on innovations concerning technological innovations and eco-innovations. These topics could be combined with social issues to create a more holistic sustainability approach to tourism innovations. Future research could focus more on how these interlinkages exist and which issues LGBTQ+ tourism is focusing on more than the mainstream tourism industry and how they can learn from each other.



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Appendix 1: LGBTQ+ Tourism Organisations

IGLTA

<https://www.iglta.org/>

The International LGBTQ+ Travel Association (IGLTA) was founded in 1983 and is the world's leading network of LGBTQ+ welcoming tourism businesses. Originally named the International Gay Travel Association (IGTA) and later the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association, they provide free travel resources and information while continuously working to promote equality and safety within LGBTQ+ tourism worldwide. IGLTA's members include LGBTQ+ friendly accommodations, transport, destinations, service providers, travel agents, tour operators, events and travel media located in over 80 countries.

Queer Travel

<https://www.queer-travel.com/en-gb/about-us>

Queer Travel is an innovative German-based B2B company creating packages and services in the tourism industry. As members of the LGBTQ+ community, their purpose is to provide unforgettable inclusive experiences for their customers. They have a wide network in the LGBTQ+ tourism industry and community as well as many years of international experience in tourism and destination marketing.

Proud Portugal

<https://www.iglta.org/Member-Details/ListingContact/33269>

Proud Services Portugal is an LGBTQ+ Destination Management Company and Tourism & Events Agency started in 2018. Their main goals and business targets are to book tours, accommodation and general tourist services, within Portugal and overseas; promote Portugal as LGBTQ+ destination by excellence; offer private, tailor-made tours for individuals and private parties; represent international Travel Agencies and Tour Operators for their LGBTQ+ customers; organize theme parties and social events exclusively for our community.

Jamala Madikwe

<https://www.iglta.org/Member-Details/ListingContact/30556>

Jamala Madikwe presents themselves as a Five Star luxury safari lodge in rural South-Africa with an inclusive, intersectional brand. Owner-managed and run, Jamala Madikwe, offers an intimate Big 5 Safari experience in Malaria Free Madikwe Game Reserve. Gay owned and run, they offer a non-discriminatory Big 5 Safari experience as well exceptional personal service and attention to detail are the cornerstones of every waking moment. Catering to a maximum of 10 guests, Jamala Madikwe gently embraces the lay of the land with five freestanding villas.



Stockholm LGBT

<http://www.stockholmlgbt.com/>

Stockholm LGBT is a private DMO which represents Stockholm's rainbow family of LGBTQ+ friendly travel businesses. A membership-based network of hotels, restaurants, attractions and other partners who are committed to upholding Stockholm's reputation as one of the most diverse and inclusive cities in the world. They showcase the city of Stockholm as a truly open city and a welcoming holiday destination, not just for the LGBTQ community, but for all. For their member organizations, their goal is to market and promote them to a global community of LGBTQ travellers and to increase their profile and the awareness of their services, to this valuable consumer segment in key target markets.

Out Adventures

<https://www.outadventures.com/gay-travel/our-company/>

OUT Adventures is a Canadian-based small group gay and lesbian tour operator that specializes in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Europe. Their mission is to provide a safe environment for LGBTQ+ travellers. They plan small-group escapes for the LGBTQ+ community since 2009. They also support the queer communities in their destinations, even in less-than-gay-friendly countries. They have become one of the world's leading LGBTQ+ travel brands.

VACAYA

<https://www.myvacaya.com/>

VACAYA is a US-based large-scale adults-only vacation company built for the entire LGBTQ+ community and their straight ally friends. VACAYA offers fun easy vacations with customized itineraries, personalized service, tailored entertainment, welcoming activities, friendly parties, and transformative moments. VACAYA charters the entire ship or resort so to have the freedom to express individuality, make personal connections, celebrate life, rev up, or simply relax together. Their mission is to fulfil the vacation dreams of all adults who believe "love is love" while giving back to the community and immersing their guests in the cultures and places we visit around the world.

Lunfarda Travel

<https://www.lunfardatravel.com/>

Lunfarda Travel is queer, female-owned, intersectional travel agency in Buenos Aires, Argentina. They are tour developers who identify those stories that need to be told and turn them into tours and experiences, working side by side with members of the represented communities to strive for accurate self-representation. In Lunfarda, your guide will always be a member of the community the tour is representing, speaking out of their own flesh and experiences. They believe that sharing the microphone enriches both guests and the local touristic narrative.



Appendix 2: LGBTQ+ Glossary of Terms

This appendix is meant to clarify LGBTQ+-specific terminology for readers who are less familiar. The terms have been defined based on personal experience and knowledge of the author as well as a general understanding within the LGBTQ+ community, combined with definitions from several online resources:

<https://gaycenter.org/about/lgbtq/>

<https://lgbtq.wfu.edu/resources/lgbtq-terminology/>

<https://lgbtq.multicultural.ufl.edu/programs/speakersbureau/lgbtq-terms-definitions/>

https://lgbtqia.fandom.com/wiki/LGBTQIA%2B_Wiki

https://www.lgbtqia.wiki/wiki/LGBTQIA_Wiki

Nonetheless, it is possible that differences of opinion and meaning still exist between groups and persons within the LGBTQ+ community.

Agender

A gender identity* claimed by people who do not identify with any gender*, particularly the gender binary*, people who feel gender neutral, who reject the concept of gender, or feel the concept of gender is personally irrelevant. Agender persons are typically considered under the genderqueer* and transgender* umbrella.

Ally

An ally is an individual who speaks out and stands up for a person or group that is targeted and discriminated against. An ally works to end oppression by supporting and advocating for people who are stigmatized, discriminated against or treated unfairly.

Asexual

A sexual identity label claimed by people who do not experience sexual attraction; they may or may not experience emotional, physical, or romantic attraction. Asexuality differs from celibacy or abstinence in that it is a sexual orientation*, not a behaviour/ choice.

Androgyny

A term used to describe individuals whose outward gender expression* cannot be distinguished as feminine* or masculine*, or combine traits that are considered masculine and feminine. It is sometimes a term related to gender identity*.



Binary

Term to describe an assumed duality. Usually in reference to the socially constructed gender binary of man/woman and sex binary of male/female.

The division of gender* into two distinct and opposite categories (man and woman). The gender binary is recognized as a social construct, as there are many identities in-between and outside of these categories.

Bi(sexual)

A sexual identity label claimed by people who have the capacity to form enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions to those of the same gender* and to those of other genders/sexes*. They can but do not have to have a preference for one gender over another.

Cis(gender)

Someone who identifies with the gender identity*/expression* expectations assigned to them based on their physical sex* at birth.

Femininity

A set of behaviours, presentations and roles which are culturally associated with being a woman and/or possessing female sex characteristics. People of any gender identity* or sexual orientation* can be feminine, as femininity is not designated by biological sex* or gender*.

Gay

The adjective used to describe people whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attractions are to people of the same sex*. Sometimes lesbian* is the preferred term for women. A non-binary* alternative for gay men is 'men loving men' (MLM). The term is also used to refer to the LGBTQ+* community as a whole.

Gay/ Queer space

Places which are considered safe for the LGBTQ+* community and are usually important for the creation of queer* identities. Historically, these have been segregated from heterosexual* society, but they are becoming more mainstream. Gay spaces include gay bars, gay cruises, gay hotels, etc.



Gender

A socially constructed identity centering around notions of “masculinity*,” “femininity*” and “androgyny*,” which includes aspects of gender identity* and expression*.

Gender expression

The external display of one’s gender*, through a combination of dress, demeanour, social behaviour, and other factors, generally measured on scales of masculinity* and femininity*. Also referred to as “gender presentation.”

Gender identity/ orientation

The internal perception of one’s gender*, and how they label themselves, based on how much they align or don’t align with what they understand their options for gender to be. Gendered categories include woman, man, boy, girl, transgender*, genderqueer*, etc. How an individual feels inside and believes themselves to be.

Genderqueer

An identity label sometimes claimed by people whose gender identity* does not fit into the culturally accepted man/woman binary*. May be characterized by the desire to challenge norms of gender roles and expression, to “play” with gender and/or to express a fluid gender identity.

Hetero(sexual)

Originally a medical term to describe a person who experiences sexual attraction* to people on the “opposite” side of the sex* and/or gender* binaries. Term came into existence in the 1890s solely to be used in opposition to the term “homosexual”*.

Heteronormative/ heteronormativity/ heteronormalisation

The outright or underlying assumption that all people are heterosexual*. The societal/cultural, institutional, and individual beliefs and practices that privilege heterosexuals and disparage LGBTQ+* people. The institutional power and authority to support prejudices and enforce discriminatory behaviours in systematic ways in favour of heterosexual and cisgender* people. (eg. marriage inequality, media representation, etc.)



Homo(sexual)

Originally a medical term to describe a person who experiences sexual attraction* to people on the same side of the sex* and/or gender* binaries. Because of its pathological connotation, many LGBTQ+* people today do not identify with it. Alternative terms are gay*, lesbian*, bisexual*, queer*, etc.

Homophobia

Negative attitudes and feelings, ranging from aversion to hatred, toward people who identify as or are perceived to be LGBTQ+*. Can be present in institutions such as religion, the education system and the law, and also internally in individuals that may or may not identify within the LGBTQ+* community.

Lesbian

A term for women whose enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction is to other women. Some lesbians may prefer to identify as gay* or as gay women. A non-binary* alternative is 'women loving women' (WLW)*.

LGBTQ+

An acronym used by people who do not identify as heterosexual* or cisgender*, but with a different sexual orientation* or gender identity*, and who are represented in the LGBTQ+ community. LGBTQ+ stands for Lesbian*, Gay*, Bisexual*, Transgender*, and Queer* or Questioning*. The + signifies the inclusion of many other identities, such as asexual*, polyamorous*, and genderqueer* people.

Masculinity

A set of behaviours, presentations and roles which are culturally associated with being a man and/or possessing male sex characteristics. People of any gender identity* or sexual orientation* can be masculine, as masculinity is not designated by biological sex* or gender*.

Non-binary (gender)

A term referring to individuals whose gender identity* does not exclusively fall into the binary* gender classification of only "man" or "woman." Those who identify as non-binary may identify with either masculinity* or femininity* in some capacity, both, or neither. Although it is a gender identity on its own, it can also be used as an



umbrella term to refer to many gender identities. While non-binary is included in the transgender* umbrella, not all non-binary people identify as transgender.

Polyamory

An identity label sometimes claimed by individuals that recognize their ability to be in multiple loving and honest sexual and/or romantic relationships at the same time. Alternatively, the state of having multiple sexually or romantically committed relationships at the same time, with the consent of all partners involved. Polyamorous relationships can be open or closed. Polyamory can describe a type of relationship as well as an identity.

Pride Flag / Rainbow Flag

The rainbow flag and its variations is one of the most well-known and used symbols for the entire LGBTQ+* community and frequently flown during Pride* events. The flag was originally created by Gilbert Baker in 1978. While the rainbow flag is a general symbol for the whole LGBTQ+ community, every sexuality* and gender identity* has their specific pride flag.

(Gay) Pride Parade

An event promoting self-affirmation, acceptance, equality, and visibility of the LGBTQ+* community. It commemorates the Stonewall riots and involves a series of events, parades, and marches. Pride is celebrated internationally on varying dates and months, typically around June. Celebrations include workshops, parades, parties, concerns, and attracts millions of participants worldwide.

Queer

An umbrella term which embraces a matrix of sexual preferences, orientations, and habits of the not-exclusively- heterosexual-and-monogamous majority; also a sexual orientation* or gender identity* label denoting a non-heterosexual* and/or non-cis-gender* orientation. Also, a historically derogatory word that has been reclaimed by many in the LGBTQ+* community. It is important to note that many LGBTQ+ people continue to view this as a derogatory term. The term is also used to refer to the LGBTQ+ community as a whole (usually by younger people).



Questioning

The process of exploring one's own sexual orientation* or gender identity*, investigating influences that may come from their family, religious upbringing, and internal motivations.

(Biological) Sex

A medical term designating a certain combination of gonads, chromosomes, external gender organs, secondary sex characteristics and hormonal balances. Usually subdivided into “male” and “female”, this category does not recognize the existence of intersex bodies.

Sexual orientation/ sexuality

The type of sexual, romantic, physical, and/or spiritual attraction one feels for others, often labelled based on the gender relationship between the person and the people they are attracted to; often mistakenly referred to as “sexual preference”. Examples of sexuality are gay*, lesbian*, and bisexual*.

Trans(gender)

An umbrella term for people whose gender identity* and/or gender expression* differs from what is typically associated with the sex* they were assigned at birth. People under the transgender umbrella may describe themselves using one or more of a wide variety of terms— including transgender. People who identify with a non-binary gender* are also considered transgender.

Transphobia

Negative attitudes and feelings, ranging from aversion to hatred, toward people who identify as or are perceived to be transgender* or non-binary*. Can be present in institutions such as religion, the education system and the law, and also internally in individuals that may or may not identify as transgender or non-binary.

Trans-Exclusionary Radical Feminist (TERF)

TERFs are transphobes who justify their transphobia* under the guise of feminism. They reject the existence of trans* people and are particularly known for hatred of trans women. They believe that trans women are actually men who are trying to invade women's spaces and men who fetishize womanhood. They do this by focusing



on biology and genitals when defining women, including towards trans men who they perceive as women with internalised misogyny.