



Israel's support of LGBTQ+ is crucial for its reputation – opinion

Description

ISRAEL: This month, Tel Aviv celebrated its traditional Pride Parade, which in pre-COVID years brought 30,000 foreigners from around the world to Israel to take part in what is considered the biggest Pride parade in the Middle East (over 250,000 people in 2019).

Ok, so that's not too hard a feat considering our neighborhood, but hey, we're a tiny country and yet, the Pride parades of Rome, Buenos Aires and Miami are smaller than Tel Aviv's.

A different message about Israel

The Israeli Tourism Ministry is eager to bring back tourists to Israel, match the record numbers of 2019 (almost 5 million tourists, as compared to approximately 2.5 million five years earlier) and hopefully, exceed it. Yes, they're continuing the uber-successful Jerusalem-Tel Aviv City Break campaign, sharing images of our beaches, sun, food, heritage and culture, and in a really cool way to entice young people to visit.

But what we're noticing this year is a welcome departure – if temporary – from that messaging, into something more specific, yet infinitely more effective.

If you happen to be in Times Square, or at a bus stop in London or Amsterdam, you may come across digital and print ads for Tel Aviv's Pride Parade, inviting people to attend. This is marketing to a very specific audience, albeit in very public places, with a very specific call to action: Come to Israel for Pride month this June.

People march during the annual Gay Pride Parade in Haifa, June 18, 2021. (credit: RONI OFER/FLASH90)

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What is so great about this campaign is that it's not just your average tourism ad-spend. There are three things at play here.

The ads were very specifically chosen in three geographic locations, London, Amsterdam and New York, and placed in areas where they have maximum visibility to targeted audiences. We can only assume the Tourism Ministry made these choices based on research they had done to assess the largest concentration of LGBTQ+s who may be interested not only in a bit of Pride, but also a beach vacation.

They didn't go for Miami, Madrid or Sao Paolo because it's less likely people will invest in a ticket to a destination which not only is far away, but also offers something a bit similar to what they can experience at home. Another reason may be that they weren't necessarily expecting people to buy tickets, but they did want to raise awareness in these cities for what Tel Aviv has to offer this specific community.

Celebrating a different Israel

Brand awareness is no less important than conversion to sales (buying tickets to visit and actually coming), because it builds loyalty and interest, so that the next time Israel or Tel Aviv wants to make an offer, there will already be people who are interested.

The ads were focusing on one, singular community and one singular event. This makes the offering timely and urgent, which is good for conversion, and keeps the costs of advertising down (it isn't cheap to advertise in Times Square or take up valuable advertisement real estate offered by cities at bus stops and major traffic areas).

And most importantly, the ads tell a story of Israel that the world doesn't necessarily know, and this is the part we like the most about what the Tourism Ministry did in partnership with Tel Aviv Global and Tourism, the global marketing arm of Tel Aviv Municipality.

Research shows that young people – the very ones that these ads are trying to attract – think mainly of one thing when they think of Israel: religion. Not just Judaism, they also think of Christianity, Islam and all related aspects of religion when they think of Israel: Jesus, Jerusalem, the Holy Land, etc.

Now, if you're a member of the LGBTQ+ community and the first thing that you associate Israel with is religion, clearly you're not going to think that it's the best place to celebrate Pride Week. But that's the thing about Israel, isn't it? It surprises you, in so many ways.

And of course, it turns out Tel Aviv is one of the best cities in the world to celebrate your Pride during that week!

What these ads are doing is much more than encouraging tourism to Israel. What they're really doing is telling a story of Israel that not enough people know about – and not only are they telling it, they're celebrating it.

This is absolutely crucial for Israel's global reputation, and we cannot assume the world already knows about this specific aspect of what Israel can offer, just because we – the Israelis and Jewish Diaspora – know.

By JOANNA LANDAU

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