

THE PINK POUND

BY DAVID POWER

IN these recessionary times, there's one group that will continue to carry on regardless and it seems that they are dodging the relentless misery that has now become known as Ireland. The Pink Pound or the Dorothy Dollar as it is known in America is an idiom used to describe the spending power of the gay economy and now with gay lifestyles being more overtly expressed in monetary terms, marketers have begun to brand this highly lucrative sub-culture with the very fitting buzz phrase 'The Pink Pound.'

Ms. Marie O'Dwyer is a lecturer in Consumer Behaviour at Waterford Institute of Technology and she said, "The whole idea that members of the gay community are successful, have big dual income households with substantial disposable incomes and live in mostly urban areas with the likelihood of no children, means that this is one market segment that is here to stay. This growing sub-culture has an escalating discretionary income that far exceeds their heterosexual counterparts."

The Pink Pound is estimated to be worth a staggering six billion pounds annually across the Irish and UK economies and a whopping 350 billion dollars to the American economy but yet this market is being widely ignored.

"The process of creating marketing strategies specifically to target gay consumers is still considered, in marketing terms to be a recently new consumer development," continued O'Dwyer.

"To date, marketers have failed to adequately target Ireland's 200,000 gay and lesbian consumers and without doubt, this makes them a very attractive market segment, particularly for clothing, tourism, homewares, music and technology goods.

"Gay and lesbian consumers comprise a powerful emergent segment in Ireland that marketers cannot ignore and marketers may target Irish gay consumers through mainstream media, but this is not an approach commonly used here.

"Most marketers targeting this group in Ireland use the increasing number of dedicated gay media e.g. GCN magazine, Gay OK on City Channel and the numerous Irish gay websites and recent research by Out Now GCN, indicates that Ireland's gay market earned over €8.75 billion in 2007, therefore making them a lucrative segment" concluded lecturer Marie O'Dwyer.

The travel sector though, is one that is most certainly following the pink brick road and gay honeymoons are worth an astonishing 600 million pounds alone, so it's no wonder that travel agents and airlines alike have complete disregard to the colour of their money.

To them, this market is far too lucrative to be ignored and this has led to a range of large corporations realising the power of the Pink Pound and they have begun to directly market their products towards the gay community through advertising in the gay press.

As many people have noticed, The Pink Pound is far more synonymous with more luxury goods and services with travel only a micro fraction of the overall phenomenon and without doubt, cars are another hugely popular luxury good taking this market by storm.

Many car brands have tried to 'cash in' on the gay market in the past with some such as Subaru being hugely successful thanks to ten years of a successful advertising campaign to the gay market in the US and along with Volkswagen, they have ruled supreme in the United States.

While on the other hand, car brands have been known to make a complete patronising mess of the whole fiasco and they've been severely criticised for their efforts in attempting to capture a slice of the attractive pink pound. Large organisations have the fear of targeting the gay market believing that it will lead to their brand becoming 'gay exclusive' but in the 21st century not targeting the gay market is simply not an option.

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