African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure **2025, Vol. 14 No. 4 pp. 877-884**
ISSN: 2223-814X

Dancing in Diversity: Towards a Typology of South African LGBT Nightclub Consumers

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Abstract

This study investigates the nuanced motivations, leisure behaviours, and preferences of post-modern LGBT nightclub consumers in South Africa through a quantitative approach. Using cluster analysis as a market segmentation technique, three distinct consumer segments were identified: Social Butterflies, Adrenaline Junkies, and LGBT Nightlife Aficionados. The emergence of these groups challenges the assumption of homogeneity within the LGBT nightclub market and highlights the importance of targeted marketing strategies. The findings demonstrate the limitations of a uniform approach and advocate for tailored campaigns that address the specific motivations, leisure behaviours and preferences of each consumer group. By offering a typology of LGBT nightclub consumers, the study provides practical insights for leisure and entertainment venue operators aiming to attract and retain a new generation of LGBT consumers. These insights have the potential to enhance competitiveness and foster customer loyalty within South Africa's evolving nightlife landscape. In addition to its practical implications, the study contributes to the broader hospitality and leisure literature by illuminating the diversity within the LGBT community. It also calls for further research to explore the complexities of LGBT nightlife across different venues and regions.

Keywords: Consumer; leisure behaviour; LGBT nightclub; market segmentation; target marketing

How to cite this article: Hattingh, C. (2025). Dancing in Diversity: Towards a Typology of South African LGBT Nightclub Consumers. African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure, 14(4):877-884. DOI: https://doi.org/10.46222/ajhtl.19770720.672

Introduction

More than two decades ago, Pritchard et al. (1998) observed a significant blurring of boundaries between Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) and heterosexual ('straight') communities. This shift has resulted in younger LGBT individuals identifying more closely with their heterosexual peers than with older members of the LGBT community. Sullivan (2005) supported this view, suggesting that the distinctiveness of LGBT culture may be undergoing an irreversible transformation. Post-modern LGBT consumers increasingly diverge from traditional patterns of exclusive patronage of LGBT leisure venues, instead favouring mainstream spaces that offer greater inclusivity and acceptance (Hattingh & Bruwer, 2020; Nash, 2013). This evolution is reflected in the social behaviours of post-modern LGBT individuals, who are more inclined to engage with diverse social groups beyond exclusively LGBT circles (Villarreal, 2017). Social formations today are often shaped by shared interests such as profession, music, lifestyle, and recreation, rather than sexual orientation (Visser, 2003). Nash (2013) further notes that the current generation of LGBT individuals has grown up in a markedly different socio-political context, characterised by increased visibility and acceptance of homosexuality in mainstream society. As a result, 'straight' leisure venues such as nightclubs, bars, and restaurants are attracting a mixed clientele, including both LGBT and heterosexual patrons. A notable trend within this landscape is the temporary transformation of mainstream venues to accommodate LGBT consumers through events such as "pop-up parties" (Orbegozo, 2025; Villarreal, 2017). These ephemeral spaces challenge the sustainability of permanent LGBT leisure establishments in cities such as Cape Town (Hattingh & Bruwer, 2020). Consequently, LGBT venues face intensifying competition from conventional and mixed-oriented establishments, contributing to a more complex and competitive leisure environment (Voss, 2015). This competitive pressure is compounded by the convergence of nightlife with broader leisure and entertainment activities (Kubacki et al., 2007), which necessitates continuous innovation and adaptation to remain relevant (Hollands & Chatterton, 2003; Moss et al., 2008). Nevertheless, many nightclub operators continue to rely on outdated business models, assuming that success will follow naturally. This misconception often leads to the failure of such establishments (Kubacki et al., 2007). To navigate this evolving landscape, Moss et al. (2008) advocate for strategic market segmentation to better understand the nuanced needs of primary consumer groups. Despite the growing significance of the LGBT market in South Africa, estimated at R250 billion in 2024 (Bakharia, 2024), there remains a lack of research exploring the leisure behaviours of LGBT nightclub consumers from a social sciences perspective. This gap highlights the need for targeted insights into the leisure preferences of post-modern LGBT consumers. In response, the present study introduces a pioneering quantitative approach to segmenting LGBT nightclub consumers in South Africa. By developing a typology of post-modern LGBT nightclub consumers, this research aims to inform strategic interventions that enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of LGBT leisure venues in an increasingly integrated and dynamic market.

Exploring bars and nightclubs as leisure and entertainment venues

The nighttime economy (NTE) encompasses a wide range of leisure and entertainment activities that occur between 18:00 and 06:00 in urban environments (Cape Town Central City Improvement District [CCID], 2022). Shaw (2010) defines the NTE as

a dynamic sector of urban life, while Zmyslony & Pawlusiński (2020) expand this definition to include music clubs, theatres, cabarets, nightclubs, sex clubs, massage parlours, museums, galleries, shopping, festivals, events, restaurants, cafés, sports arenas, leisure areas, and night markets. Related terms such as "night-time entertainment" (Roberts, 2006), "night-time alcohol and leisure industry" (Shaw, 2014), and "24-hour city" (Charman & Govender, 2020) reflect the evolving conceptualisation of urban nightlife. Although the NTE is multifaceted, this study focuses specifically on bars and nightclubs, which represent a distinct segment within the broader leisure and entertainment landscape. Academic literature on nightclubs remains relatively limited, often situating them within broader discussions of urban nightlife (Serra-Cantallops & Ramón-Cardona, 2017). Much of the existing research emphasises the negative externalities associated with the night-time alcohol and leisure industry, including alcohol and drug abuse, accidents and disasters, health problems (Ramón-Cardona et al., 2021), noise levels (Giritlioğlu & Türkmen, 2014), violence, crime, anti-social behaviours, prostitution, human trafficking, gentrification, and pollution (Zmyslony & Pawlusiński, 2020). Mintel (2002) characterises nightclubs as enduring venues primarily focused on dancing, often requiring admission fees. This definition has since expanded to include youth-oriented super pubs, pub-restaurants, late-night bars with nightclub features, and chameleon bars that adapt their ambiance to suit different clientele (Mintel, 2003). Hollands (2002) differentiates nightclubs from pubs and taverns by the presence of a dedicated dance floor and DJ booth. Miyakubo (2009) offers a typology of nightlife venues, categorising them into mainstream nightlife, residual spaces, and alternative spaces. Mainstream venues dominate urban nightlife, while residual spaces include traditional pubs and taverns. Alternative spaces cater to niche cultural identities, including specific music genres, ethnicities, and sexual orientations.

Nightclubs are often described as ephemeral social spaces that facilitate intense, transient experiences of belonging and enjoyment, commonly referred to as 'ecstasy' (Hollands, 2002). Young adults are particularly drawn to these venues, viewing weekends as opportunities for uninhibited enjoyment and self-expression. Nightlife serves as a vital outlet for entertainment, dancing, relaxation, and psychological well-being (Hollands & Chatterton, 2003; Voss, 2015). Recent research underscores the role of nightlife in promoting social bonding, emotional support, and community-building, especially in post-pandemic contexts (George & Fonceca, 2024; Nofre et al., 2023). Cape Town exemplifies the 24-hour city model, with its bars and nightclubs contributing significantly to its vibrant urban identity (Charman & Govender, 2020). The city's central business district (CBD) hosted 3,302 businesses in 2023, of which 1,305 operated within the leisure and entertainment sector (CCID, 2023). Notably, several of Cape Town's bars and nightclubs have garnered recognition, securing positions among the top 100 globally in recent years (Peyper, 2022). Cape Town's nightlife is concentrated in areas such as Long Street, Bree Street, Kloof Street, Victoria Road in Camps Bay, and Lower Main Road in Observatory, each offering distinct atmospheres and experiences (Nightlife Party Guide, 2025). In addition to mainstream venues, Cape Town boasts a thriving LGBT nightlife scene. Suburban areas such as Zonnebloem, De Waterkant, Sea Point, and Green Point are home to alternative venues catering specifically to the LGBT community (Hattingh & Bruwer, 2020; Hattingh & Spencer, 2017, 2020). As per Travel Gay (2023), Crew Bar in De Waterkant stands out as a premier leisure and entertainment destination for the LGBT community. Renowned for its appealing bartenders and go-go dancers, the establishment has earned a reputation as a favoured spot for late-night revelry. The venue is also known for regularly featuring performances by top drag artists from South Africa and hosting themed events and special occasions with local and international DJs (Cape Town Magazine, 2017).

Motivating factors impacting the behaviour of leisure consumers

Motivation holds significance across various contexts within the field of leisure studies, representing psychological influences that shape individuals' decisions, aligning with Middleton's analysis (1994). As suggested by Slater (2006), motivation serves as a catalyst, propelling individuals to address specific unmet needs. For instance, individuals passionate about entertainment may have unmet needs that find fulfilment through engaging in diverse leisure activities (Kruger & Saayman, 2012), such as visiting a nightclub. While other factors may influence behaviour, motivation stands out as the foremost consideration when individuals make decisions, as emphasised by Dikmen & Bozdalar (2013). The initial phase in the decision-making process involves identifying consumer needs, which significantly influence motivated behaviour (Boekstein, 2012). Consequently, leisure and entertainment venues must grasp the motivating factors driving consumer choices, encompassing the underlying needs that lead visitors to seek their services (Slater, 2006). Moreover, segmenting visitors based on motives facilitates aligning production features and resources with distinct consumer needs (Bansal & Eiselt, 2004). Ultimately, this approach assists in crafting and customising offerings to cater to the specific needs of different consumer segments (Kruger & Saayman, 2012).

Table 1 delineates prevalent motivating factors influencing the decisions of leisure consumers to attend or partake in leisure activities, highlighting market segments from various studies that have segmented leisure visitors or consumers. Notably, it underscores the scarcity of research on LGBT nightclub consumers, particularly within the South African context. Examining the table reveals that key motivating factors propelling individuals to engage in leisure activities often revolve around themes of escape, entertainment, social interaction, and relaxation. However, the significance and prioritisation of these motivating factors appear to vary across studies. As indicated by several research inquiries, the nature of the leisure activity itself (Dikmen & Bozdalar, 2013) and visitor demographics (Kruger & Saayman, 2012) play crucial roles in influencing why individuals opt to participate in specific leisure pursuits. Hattingh (2018) advises against making sweeping generalisations about the motivations behind engaging in a particular leisure activity, as these motivations can significantly differ among individuals participating in other leisure pursuits.

Table 1. Selection of previous research using motivations to segment leisure consumers

Researchers	Type of leisure activity	Motivating factors	Market segments
Ross et al. (2003)	Gay male circuit party	Celebration and having fun, dancing and enjoying music, socialisation, escape, looking and feeling good, gay experience, being wild and uninhibited, partying and recreational drug use, and sex	Social (celebratory) segment and sensation-seeking (to have sex, a wild time, drugs) segment
Crocco et al. (2006)	Gay male nightclub	Finding a partner, flirting, music, and atmosphere	Gays, barbies, and bears
Reingle et al. (2009)	Mainstream student nightclub	Intoxication, socialisation, romance/sex-seeking, and problem relief	High-frequency, non-monogamous, and monogamous nightclubbers
Kruger & Saayman (2012)	Live music performance	Artist affiliation and unique experience, socialisation and event novelty, fun and group affiliation, enjoyment and entertainment, and nostalgia	Avid fans and recreational attendees
Saayman & Saayman (2014)	Live orchestral performance	Escape, socialisation, and event attractiveness	The vintage males, the vintage females, and modern enthusiasts
Kruger & Saayman (2015a)	Live music performance	Group affiliation, artist affiliation and entertainment, social interaction, and unique experience	Music lovers and Beatle maniacs
Kruger & Saayman (2015b)	Circus performance	Entertainment and fun, social status and socialisation, aesthetics and enchantment, act affiliation and uniqueness	Enthusiasts, novices, and observers
Kruger & Saayman (2017)	Opera performance	Group affiliation and fun, unique experience, entertainment, appraisal, and socialisation	Phantom lite and phantom deluxe
Hattingh & Niekerk (2020)	Live stand-up comedy production	Entertainment, unique atmosphere, socialisation, relaxation, and fun	The highbrow socialite, the hero worshipper, the bored and curious, and the culture vulture
Hattingh & Niekerk (2022)	Drag show (production)	Relaxation and fun, socialisation, unique atmosphere, entertainment, supporting drag artists and performances, enjoying the costumes, make-up, sounds, and sights associated with drag shows	The avid drag fan, the comedy enthusiast, the brotherhood tribe, the sisterhood tribe

Research methods

The study undertaken was both empirical and exploratory, employing a quantitative methodology to discern different consumer groups at an LGBT nightclub in Cape Town. The use of quantitative procedures, geared towards categorising data sets into homogeneous behavioural categories (Weaver & Lawton, 2005), is recommended as a means to facilitate segmentation through the application of multivariate analytic methods (Eftichiadou, 2001). Consequently, a survey was selected as the most suitable approach for collecting primary data in this study. The self-administered online survey was executed through SurveyPlanet and structured into two sections. The initial section focused on gathering sociodemographic information from participants, while the second section utilised a 5-point Likert scale to assess the motivations of individuals visiting Crew Bar Nightclub in Cape Town. To ensure the survey's reliability and validity, variables were adapted from previously validated leisure studies, particularly drawing from Hattingh (2018, 2021), and Hattingh & Niekerk (2020, 2022). The survey was conducted in the English language. Kruger & Saayman (2016) cautioned against on-site data collection in dynamic leisure settings where attendees are actively engaged in dancing or experiencing a festive atmosphere, making traditional sampling methods impractical. Consequently, an alternative approach to data collection became essential. The researcher opted for non-probability sampling techniques, utilising convenience and snowball sampling to recruit participants for the survey. Convenience sampling involved distributing the survey hyperlink through Crew Bar's social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram, specifically targeting LGBT nightclub consumers. Additionally, the researcher employed snowball sampling to gather supplementary data, urging participants to share the survey link with others who had also visited Crew Bar. The data collection extended over three months, from June to August 2022, encompassing a total of 341 respondents who had visited Crew Bar at least once. Throughout the data collection phase, rigorous ethical considerations were meticulously observed. The study strictly adhered to informed consent protocols, ensuring that all participants willingly agreed to participate. Participants were given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any adverse consequences, and their anonymity was assured. Furthermore, precautions were taken to safeguard participants from physical harm, and their data received the utmost level of confidentiality.

Findings and discussion

Identification of segmented consumer groups

The research employed version 28 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to encode, capture, and analyse data gathered from 341 completed and usable surveys. To unveil the heterogeneity among visitors to LGBT nightclubs in Cape Town and delineate distinct consumer groups, a post hoc segmentation method was employed. This involved applying hierarchical cluster analysis using Ward's procedure with Euclidean distances to the scores reflecting the motivations for visiting an LGBT nightclub. Hierarchical clustering is an approach where the number of clusters (groups) is not predetermined but instead is inferred from the inherent patterns in the data (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). In this study, consumers were categorised based on their inherent similarities, avoiding the use of predefined clusters. The primary criterion for market segmentation was the visitors' motivations, and no pre-processing of raw data was undertaken, aligning with the cautions raised by Dolnicar (2002) and Hattingh & Spencer (2020). Determination of the number of consumer groups followed a heuristic approach, involving a visual examination of the dendrogram, as recommended by Dolnicar (2002). Several solutions were explored, including two, three, four, and five consumer groups. Ultimately, a three-cluster solution was selected for providing the most distinct and acceptable outcome, featuring common motivations within each cluster but variations across clusters (as presented in Table 2).

Table 2: The three consumer groups (*n* = 341)

Number	Name	Size	% of sample
Consumer Group 1	Adrenaline Junkie	180	53
Consumer Group 2	Social Butterfly	123	36
Consumer Group 3	LGBT Nightlife Aficionado	37	11

Interpretation and profiling of segmented consumer groups

To enhance the robustness and reliability of the cluster analysis results, several statistical analyses were performed. Notably, the three clusters (consumer groups) were cross-tabulated with the 23 motivations to pinpoint the most significant motivating factors for each consumer group. Chi-squared tests were then conducted, revealing significant differences in the importance scores of all motivations *($p<0.05$),* as detailed in Table 3. These outcomes offer evidence that the consumer groups were statistically distinct, affirming the establishment of internal validity. To guarantee the marketing applicability of the three identified consumer groups and establish external validity through external criterion analysis, the sociodemographic and leisure behaviour characteristics of the groups were cross-tabulated. Table 4 presents the results of this analysis. The results of the chi-squared tests indicated that there were no statistically significant differences across the three clusters in terms of group size (p = 0.434); the number of times visiting Crew Bar (return vs first-time visitor) (p = 0.625); regularity of visiting Crew Bar (p = 0.625); gender (p = 0.819); age (p = 0.561); relationship status (p = 0.141); sexual orientation (p = 0.499), and place of origin (p = 0.767). In contrast, the groups were found to be significantly different at the 5% level with respect to occupation (p = 0.011); race (p = 0.069), and education level (p = 0.011). Utilising the descriptive statistics, profiles for the groups were developed by assigning a label to each consumer group based on the most prominent distinguishing motivating factor, sociodemographic, or leisure behavioural characteristics. This labelling process is essential in the formulation of marketing strategies, offering practical, actionable, and easily comprehensible information for each group, as emphasised by Sarigollu and Huang (2005).

Consumer group 1: Adrenaline junkie

Comprising 53% of the sample, this consumer group boasted the highest number of respondents. While sharing some motives with other consumer groups, its distinctiveness was reinforced by unique group characteristics. In contrast to the Social Butterflies and LGBT Nightlife Aficionados, members of this consumer group exhibited unique traits. Notably, respondents were strongly motivated to visit LGBT nightclubs to achieve a euphoric and energised state of being (95%) and for alcohol consumption/drinks promotions (70%). Lea et al. (2013) found a stronger correlation between hazardous alcohol use and club drug use in LGBT nightclubs compared to 'straight' or mixed-oriented nightclubs. Their results indicated that LGBT nightclubs were a more prevalent setting for recreational drug and alcohol abuse. The present discovery appears to align with that of Lea et al. (2013). However, it is essential to emphasise that this need is significant for this particular consumer group and should not be extrapolated to all LGBT nightclub consumers. In comparison to the other two consumer groups, this cluster assigned higher importance to visiting LGBT nightclubs for purposes such as dancing to the best electronic music and DJs (92%), forming new friendships/romances (92%), and with more than two-thirds (68%) expressing the hope to meet a partner for a sexual adventure. These findings provide support for the argument made by Reingle et al. (2009) that bars and nightclubs, in general, serve as a catalyst for finding partners for romance and sex. Hattingh & Spencer (2020) discovered that the significance of travelling for sex is limited to a sub-segment of LGBT travellers. Therefore, a similar conclusion can be drawn about visitors attending LGBT nightclubs – it holds importance for a specific consumer group, the Adrenaline Junkie, but not for all LGBT visitors who attend nightclubs.

Table 3: Comparison of motivations among consumer groups using cross-tabulation and Chi-squared test results

Motive (importance scores)	Adrenaline Junkies % (N = 180)	Social Butterflies % (N = 123)	LGBT Nightlife Aficionado % (N = 37)	Chi-square probability
To explore/learn new things (e.g. broadening my mind)	49	11	92	0.000*
To experience LGBT culture	72	32	95	0.000*
For exploration and evaluation of self (gain insight about self)	42	5	92	0.000*
To enjoy the unique atmosphere	72	37	95	0.000*
For alcohol consumption and drinks promotions	70	30	49	0.000*
To experience a euphoric and energised state of being	95	24	49	0.000*
To support my favourite barman/go-go dancer	25	2	78	0.000*
To listen to/support my favourite DJ	43	5	76	0.000*
To enjoy a safe and secure environment related to my personal safety	87	57	100	0.000*
To relax and have fun	92	74	100	0.000*
To escape from my daily routine and responsibilities	44	32	89	0.000*
Curiosity got the better of me	18	9	68	0.000*
To escape from a disapproving society	61	21	89	0.000*
To support LGBT nightlife	67	37	97	0.000*
To enhance relationships with family/friends	60	24	97	0.000*
To dance to the best electronic music and DJs	92	38	65	0.000*
For a chance to be with people who enjoy clubbing	74	42	95	0.000*
For social interaction with LGBT people	83	51	100	0.000*
An opportunity to meet a partner for a sexual adventure	68	19	27	0.000*
An opportunity to form new friendships/romances with people who have similar interests	92	26	57	0.000*
Because of social status regarding being seen by others	14	2	57	0.000*
To socialise with friends, family, or colleagues	82	55	97	0.000*
To share the experience with someone special	57	24	89	0.000*

***Significance at the 5% level**

Concerning the sociodemographic and leisure behaviour characteristics presented in Table 4, the predominant traits within this consumer group include a majority of respondents being white (61%), students (21%), and holding a certificate/diploma (43%)

as their primary qualification. These results indicate that the Adrenaline Junkie consumer group is predominantly comprised of white students in search of thrilling and energising experiences, along with opportunities for romantic or sexual encounters. This discovery aligns with Ross et al.'s (2003) 'sensation-seeking' category for gay male circuit parties, highlighting shared desires such as seeking sexual encounters, participating in dance, pursuing exhilarating experiences, and experimenting with recreational drugs.

Consumer group 2: Social butterflies

The second-largest cluster, accounting for 36% of the sample, exhibited relatively low importance scores across most motivating factors. However, in comparison to the other consumer groups, this particular cluster stands out, with only four motive importance scores surpassing 50% (refer to Table 3). It seems that this specific consumer group is drawn to the LGBT nightclub primarily for relaxation and enjoyment purposes (73%). This observation aligns with Hattingh & Niekerk's (2022) assertion that relaxation and enjoyment rank among the most significant motivations for visiting LGBT leisure and entertainment establishments. This specific consumer group exhibits a notable inclination toward socialising with friends, family, and colleagues (55%) and seeking social interaction with fellow LGBT individuals (51%). The significance of socialisation emerges as one of the primary motivations for visiting LGBT leisure and entertainment establishments, echoing its importance across various literature studies (refer to Table 1). Additionally, a noteworthy motivating factor compelling this group to frequent LGBT nightclubs is the desire for a secure and safe environment, prioritising their personal well-being, as indicated by 57% of the respondents. The significance of safety as a fundamental motivator of human behaviour has been extensively explored in the literature (Crouch, 2007). However, LGBT individuals encounter heightened vulnerability in unfamiliar public settings, facing risks such as harassment, discrimination, verbal or physical assault, and even criminalisation in countries that do not accept homosexuality (Hughes, 2005). Therefore, this finding offers substantial evidence that the perceived safety of the environment, enabling individuals to express themselves freely, stands out as one of the primary motivations for Social Butterflies to visit LGBT nightclubs.

Table 4: Comparison of socio-demographic and leisure behaviour characteristics among consumer groups using cross-tabulation and Chi-squared test results

	Adrenaline Junkies % (N = 180)	Social Butterflies % (N = 123)	LGBT Nightlife Aficionado % (N = 37)	Chi-square probability
Occupation				0.011*
Student	21	11	13	
Education	7	7	3	
Admin/Sales	12	7	8	
Manager/Executive	9	18	3	
Business professional	11	13	19	
Medical professional	3	1	11	
Technical	3	1	0	
Government employee	4	1	3	
Self-employed	12	28	19	
Unemployed/Other	18	13	21	
Race				0.069*
African	7	1	0	
White	61	74	65	
Mixed Race	23	20	35	
Indian	3	2	0	
Asian	1	0	0	
Confidential/Other	5	3	0	
Education level				0.011*
No formal education	0	1	0	
Primary completed (7 years of schooling)	0	0	3	
Secondary completed (more than 7 years of schooling)	8	12	16	
Certificate/diploma	43	24	24	
Bachelor's degree	27	33	35	
Honours degree	8	16	16	
Master's degree	11	10	3	
Doctorate	1	0	0	
Other	2	4	3	

*Significance at the 5% level

Examining sociodemographic and leisure behaviour characteristics (refer to Table 4), respondents within this consumer group exhibit similarities to Adrenaline Junkies, particularly in terms of their predominant whiteness (74%). However, they diverge from the latter consumer group as a majority are self-employed individuals (28%) holding a bachelor's degree (33%). These findings imply that the primary interest of Social Butterflies lies in meeting their social needs by gathering with friends, family, colleagues, and fellow members of the LGBT community within a secure and welcoming environment. This observation aligns with Ross et al.'s (2003) classification of the 'social (celebratory)' group for gay male circuit parties, as this specific consumer group engages in LGBT leisure activities primarily to fulfil social needs such as connecting with friends and engaging with other members of the LGBT community.

Consumer group 3: LGBT nightlife Aficionado

Constituting 11% of the sample, the LGBT Nightlife Aficionado consumer group emerged as the smallest among the clusters. Significantly, respondents assigned importance to all motivating factors within this group, setting it apart from the other consumer groups. Notably, it stands as the sole group where the importance scores for all 23 motivations were above 50%, as evident in Table 3. Diverging from the Social Butterflies and Adrenaline Junkies, this specific consumer group placed heightened emphasis on particular motivating factors. Notably, they attributed greater significance to experiencing LGBT culture (95%), being with individuals who enjoy clubbing (95%), exploring/learning new things (92%), and engaging in introspection and self-evaluation (92%). The findings reveal that LGBT Nightlife Aficionados demonstrate a readiness to embrace diversity and a keenness to broaden their experiences. These results align with prior research conducted by Hattingh and Niekerk (2022), who identified learning and exploring new things as significant motivating factors for participating in leisure activities within the LGBT community. Given the social stigmatisation, prejudice, and potential lack of acceptance that LGBT individuals often face in their typical social contexts (Monterrubio, 2008), the establishment and validation of an 'LGBT identity' frequently require living and socialising in LGBT-affirming environments (Hughes, 2002). Therefore, concerning attendance at LGBT nightclubs, visitors in this consumer group may be motivated by a need for belonging, where their sense of identity is derived from feeling affiliated with a specific community (Hughes, 2006), as is often the case in LGBT leisure and entertainment venues.

The inclination to seek a reprieve from their daily routine and responsibilities (89%) emerged as an additional motivator for the LGBT Nightlife Aficionado, a finding that aligns with prior research by Hattingh & Niekerk (2022). Their study emphasised the role of recuperation, relaxation, diversion, and escapism as essential factors motivating participation in LGBT leisure and entertainment activities. As Herrera (2003) suggests, some individuals who identify as LGBT may engage in specific leisure experiences as a means of escaping a world that tends to prioritise heteronormativity and frequently subjects them to discrimination and social disapproval, especially in their home environments. The majority (89%) of respondents in this consumer group visited LGBT nightclubs as a means of seeking refuge from a disapproving society. However, it's crucial to distinguish this need for escaping the everyday environment, as mentioned earlier, from the specific desire to escape the challenges and difficulties associated with being LGBT in a predominantly heterosexual society. Additionally, individuals in this consumer group displayed a strong motivation to visit LGBT nightclubs for various other reasons, including supporting LGBT nightlife (97%), enhancing relationships with family/friends (97%), supporting their favourite barman/go-go dancer (78%), and listening to/supporting their favourite DJ (76%). This consumer group consistently frequents LGBT nightclubs to express their support and admiration for their idols, aligning with Hattingh & Niekerk's (2020) consumer segment characterised by the phenomenon of 'hero worship' within the context of comedy performances. This group demonstrates a specific inclination towards supporting LGBT nightclubs and engaging with their preferred bartenders, go-go dancers, or DJs. In terms of sociodemographic and leisure behaviour characteristics, this specific consumer group displayed a significant predominance of white participants, making up almost two-thirds (65%) of the overall sample, as depicted in the data provided in Table 4. Notably, unlike other groups, more than a third of the visitors in this group identified as mixed-race (35%). The majority of individuals were either business professionals (19%) or self-employed (19%). Additionally, a substantial percentage of them held a bachelor's degree (35%). These findings indicate the presence of an inclusive and diverse consumer group, encompassing individuals from white and mixed-race backgrounds. Their motivations include a keen interest in broadening their understanding of LGBT culture, supporting their preferred LGBT nightlife establishment, and engaging with and expressing admiration for their preferred bartenders, go-go dancers, and DJs. Additionally, these individuals seek to cultivate their social networks and interact with others who share their enthusiasm for clubbing. It is evident that LGBT Nightlife Aficionados are strongly influenced by their sexuality, with their leisure activities primarily revolving around the LGBT-related aspects of nightclubbing. What sets this consumer group apart from others is their inclination to visit LGBT nightclubs to express their own identity, foster a sense of community and belonging, escape from disapproving societal norms, and support various facets of LGBT nightlife. Hence, they are designated as LGBT Nightlife Aficionados.

Conclusions, implications, and recommendations

Investigating the needs and preferences of post-modern LGBT nightclub consumers in South Africa from a social sciences perspective offers valuable insights that enrich the broader hospitality and leisure literature. This study contributes meaningfully to existing scholarship, building on the foundational work of Ross et al. (2003), who identified two distinct consumer groups at gay male circuit parties. By affirming and extending their findings, the present research proposes the existence of a third consumer group, thereby advancing the understanding of LGBT leisure behaviours. This paper represents a pioneering effort in applying a quantitative methodology to develop a typology of post-modern LGBT nightclub consumers in South Africa. While no consumer group emerged as entirely homogenous, shared motivational, sociodemographic, and behavioural traits within each group supported their categorisation. The findings, although limited by the single venue context and the use of internet-based respondents, reveal that LGBT nightclub consumers are driven by diverse motivations and cannot be treated as a uniform market segment. Accordingly, LGBT nightclub owners are encouraged to move beyond the assumption that "the spiral of fortune moves itself" (Kubacki et al., 2007:961) and instead recognise the existence of distinct consumer groups with varied leisure needs. Strategic alignment of operations to meet these differentiated needs can enhance competitiveness and market relevance. This approach is particularly pertinent in light of recent studies highlighting the importance of consumer segmentation and targeted marketing in nightlife and entertainment contexts (George & Fonceca, 2024; Mahmoud, 2025). Furthermore, this study is the first to apply this analytical framework within the South African LGBT nightclub context,

demonstrating the effectiveness of clustering techniques in segmenting leisure consumers. The identified consumer groups offer actionable insights for venues such as Crew Bar and similar establishments, enabling them to refine their marketing strategies and better understand the unique opportunities associated with each segment. These findings reinforce the limitations of a one-size-fits-all marketing approach and advocate for tailored campaigns that emphasise the distinct motivational drivers influencing each group's decision-making process. By adopting targeted marketing strategies, LGBT nightclubs can not only improve their competitive positioning but also foster deeper customer loyalty through personalised engagement. This strategic orientation aligns with broader trends in experiential marketing and consumer-centric leisure management, which are increasingly recognised as essential for sustaining relevance in a rapidly evolving nightlife landscape (Nofre et al., 2023).

The data used in this study came from a single LGBT leisure venue in South Africa, limiting the generalisability of findings. Future research should include multiple venues and apply various clustering methods to enhance robustness. Comparative studies could explore whether similar consumer groups exist across LGBT nightlife scenes in South Africa and beyond. Although segmentation helps identify diverse consumer needs, it may overlook the community's complexities. Broader research from management, economics, and marketing perspectives is needed to deepen understanding of LGBT nightlife dynamics and consumer behaviour.

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