Tobago Tourism Agency Limited activities, 2018/2019

Councillor Nadine Stewart-Phillips

Introduction by the Secretary of Tourism, Culture & Transportation

The achievements during the fiscal period 2018/2019 have certainly been pivotal in the advancement and recognition of Destination Tobago's tourism product both regionally and internationally.

In keeping with its three-year projected Road Map for Growth, the Tobago Tourism Agency Limited (TTAL) has set a platform that is poised to receive optimal international tourist recognition and increased visitor arrivals.

The efforts to enhance the island's overall competitive advantage have been continuous, however, I am extremely heartened that our strategies thus far have allowed for the establishment of a distinguished brand marketing strategy that is gaining momentum in the global arena. Our shortlisting for best destination brand in the International Travel and Tourism Awards is highly commendable and is a signal that our strategies are working, and that we are going in the right direction as a destination.

Our growth indicators have shown a favourable boost in regional and international arrivals which serves as an added incentive, even as we press towards the heightened promotion of our four brand cornerstones: Sea and Beaches; Eco-Adventure and Nature; Romance and Weddings; Local Culture, People and Heritage.

As Secretary of Tourism, Culture and Transportation, I take immense pride in the accomplishments of the Tobago Tourism Agency. I also wish to give full assurances to our industry partners that we will continue to provide the requisite mechanisms to aid in the facilitation of an enhanced tourist experience on the island.

Councillor Nadine Stewart-Phillips
Secretary for Tourism, Culture and Transportation
Tobago House of Assembly

Message by the Chair, Tobago Tourism Agency Limited Board

We are very pleased with the progress that we have made over the last two years in the areas of governance, policy, research, marketing, and product development and research. Our staff are motivated and continue to be creative, responsive and committed to fulfilling the mandate of the Agency, and we see them as our most valuable asset.

As a board, we collectively remain steadfast in our vision and dedication to realising the goals of our 3 year road-map and growth strategy (2019-2021) despite the dynamism in our external and internal environments.

The government and the Tobago House of Assembly have signalled their commitment to seeing tourism become a powerful diversification strategy by setting up the Tobago Tourism Agency Limited. This strategic intent can be realised, and is very possible, as we have seen in other destinations. However, there must be a steely political will, a clear understanding of tourism's economic transformative power, adequate and consistent resources, a climate conducive to the ease of doing business, and national buy-in.

Dr. Sherma Roberts
Chairman of the Board of Directors
Tobago Tourism Agency Limited

Tobago beyond

'Tobago Beyond' goes global

2018 saw the Tobago Tourism Agency reveal the rebranding of Tobago with a modern and attractive logo and tag line, Tobago Beyond: **unspoilt, untouched, undiscovered**. This rebranding coincided with several activities:

- Successfully launched the new Destination Imagery and Go to Market Strategy in Tobago, Germany, Scandinavia, USA and Canada, the United Kingdom and Ireland.
- Launched a 2 month cross-border digital and print campaign to support new brand, totaling over 70 million impressions, and print circulation of 3,696,209 in publications such as Sunday Times, The Telegraph, Time Inc., and Travel Weekly.
- Launched #101ReasonsTobago digital campaign to engage local social media influencers to create and share content aligned with Tobago's new brand.

Marketing beyond the ordinary

The Agency created and implemented short-term marketing plans across all source markets consistent with the established core attractors, while leveraging trade partnerships with both local and international stakeholders. Activities include hosting regular press and familiarization trips to Tobago with international media, travel agents and tour operators, as well as market-specific initiatives.

Germany

- Re-established an Overseas Marketing representative in January 2019.
- Launched a dedicated e-learning program for travel agents.
- Re-established a Tour Operator Cooperation with major leisure long-haul tour operators that currently sell Tobago.
- Added and reintroduced six tour operators with specialist approaches to selling Tobago, and held a series of training seminars for new tour operator partners.
- Re-established relations with Thomas Cook to run an integrated advertising campaign in all Thomas Cooks retail agencies.
- Partnered with the 4th largest travel wholesaler in Germany to run advertising campaigns on TV, reaching 39 million households, and in print, with a potential reach of 40 million households.
- Embarked on online promotion activity to drive sales for winter season and earlier.

Scandinavia

- Re-established an Overseas Marketing representative in March 2019.
- Re-established relationships with major wholesalers and tour operators in Sweden.
- Engaged top seller for Tobago in integrated campaign targeting summer early bookings.

USA and Canada

- Hosted Bride Villa to educate Tobago's wedding service providers on international best practices, with focus on the catering to the North American market.
- Embarked on a series of PR activities in tandem with Tobago Beyond launch in Toronto, resulting in over 1.7 million combined social media impressions, with 6 viable media stories in travel trade outlets.

United Kingdom and Ireland

- Trained 675 travel agents to sell Tobago, through an online training program and the CTO Travel Agent Roadshow.
- Embarked on public relations and consumer advertising campaigns which resulted in Tobago being featured in 96 target-market media, including The Telegraph, Yahoo! UK, MSN UK, The Sun, Mail on Sunday and more.
- Ran an integrated and intensive campaign with Travel Weekly, the most subscribed travel trade publication in the UK, to raise trade awareness of the destination and its attributes while improving the ability of agents to sell Tobago.
- Partnered with British Airways to initiate focused integrated campaigns including radio, inflight, digital and print advertisements.
- Re-introduced branded promotional vehicle, the Tobagolator, which simulates Tobago to creatively engage consumers and travel agents across England.

Tobago to the world: trade and consumer events

In addition to the above marketing initiatives, Tobago was represented at consumer and trade shows across the world to market the destination and its offerings, and to create and sustain strategic relationships with travel trade partners in source markets:

Germany
- International Tourismus Borse (ITB), 2019
- Der Touristik "Caribbean Nights" Roadshow, 2019
- Thomas Cook "Get Together" Roadshow, 2019

Scandinavia
- CTO Roadshow, Denmark and Sweden, 2019
- "Meet the World" Roadshows, Denmark, Sweden, Norway & Finland, 2019
- Antor Norway Roadshow, 2019 (upcoming)

Trinidad & Tobago
- L Edwin Wedding & Events – Caribbean Wedding and Event Exposition, 2019
- Tobago Day, 2019
- Trade and Investment Conference, 2019
- CARIFESTA XIV

USA & Canada
- Beneath the Sea Dive Show, USA 2019
- DEMA Show, 2018
- Huron Fringe Birding Festival 2019

United Kingdom
- Birmingham Dive Show, 2018 & 2019
- British Bird Fair, 2018 & 2019
- CTO Travel Agent Roadshow, 2019
- Irish Travel Trade Show, 2019
- National Wedding Show, 2019
- Unite Caribbean 2018 & 2019
- World Travel Market (WTM), 2018

Developing Tobago's tourism product

Product Development initiatives support the Agency's marketing efforts, as we understand the need to ensure that our visitors' on-island experience lives up to – or even surpasses – the portrayal of destination Tobago in our marketing activities.

To date, seven properties have engaged the program and are at varying stages of their respective processes.

Industry standards

Work continues in collaboration with the Trinidad & Tobago Bureau to assist tourism related business in attaining Standards Certification, which is a precursor to the mandatory standards to be implemented in the near term, as proper standards are absolutely necessary for Tobago remain relevant in a highly competitive industry.

Since signing a Service Level Agreement with the Trinidad & Tobago Bureau of Standards to launch the Trinidad & Tobago Tourism Industry Certification (TTTIC) Programme in October 2018, the Agency completed a series of TTTIC Stakeholder Engagement and Sensitization Sessions with over 70 stakeholders in the tour guide, tour operator, taxi and maxi operator, and accommodation sectors. These workshops served to encourage the operators to work towards tourism certification as a means of enhancing service delivery to the marketplace.

The Agency also completed a series of stakeholder working sessions towards the development and publication of National Voluntary Beach Standards with the Trinidad & Tobago Bureau of Standards.

Tourism accommodation upgrade project

The administration of the Tourism Accommodation Upgrade Program continued under the Agency in fiscal 2018/19. This program operates on the basis of a rebate system, where owners/operators of tourist accommodation are eligible to a reimbursement of funds spent for upgrade and refurbishment works.

The objective of the project is to provide an incentive for the upgrade of Tobago's tourism properties to meet and even exceed the Trinidad & Tobago standard requirements for tourist accommodation for hotels and guesthouses, bed and breakfast and self-catering facilities.

Tourism product audit

A three-phased audit of the tourism product of Tobago commenced this year, aimed at identifying and analyzing tourism product offerings on the island to determine strengths, gaps, and opportunities to make the destination more desirable to visitors.

Phase 1 of the Audit focused on the accommodation components of the tourism product offerings in Tobago and included a database review and the collection of data through a Tourism Industry Registry.

Phase 2 of this initiative is ongoing, and includes advisory and assessment site visits to accommodations, sites and attractions, and the development of content specific to the creation of activity guides and suggested itineraries for the new destination website.

Additional product development activities

- Completed comprehensive review of Marine Park Management and Reef Operations challenges, towards improving this key element of the destination's product offering.
- Provide ongoing technical support to various collaborative tourism efforts locally to ensure their success and alignment with the Tobago Beyond brand. Initiatives included the Tobago Youth Tourism Symposium, Division of Tourism, Culture & Transportation's Community Tourism Awareness Programme, and CARIFESTA XIV.
- Ongoing stakeholder engagement towards achieving success in areas such as community tourism development, national recognition of local sites and attractions, island-wide service industry training, packaging development and investment and accommodation improvement workshops.

Message from the CEO, Tobago Tourism Agency Limited

"The strategic activities that the Tobago Tourism Agency Limited embarked on during the fiscal 2018/19 have sought alignment with goals that are clearly articulated in the 3-Year Road Map for Growth, established in concert with our industry stakeholders back in 2017/18.

The above initiatives in part embody the initial critical success factors in laying the groundwork for the transformation of the tourism sector in Tobago. Using December 2018 as our base year, we project a growth of 25 per cent by the end of 2019, 55 per cent by the end of 2020, and 90 per cent over 2018 by 2020.

We are happy to report that to date we have experienced a 14 per cent increase in our international arrivals to Tobago for the first half of 2019.

Arrivals from the United Kingdom, our largest market, are up 7 per cent over 2018. Caribbean arrivals have doubled, and Canadian arrivals are up by more than 1,500 passengers. We are encouraged by the prospects for the German, Scandinavian and USA markets which will attract renewed attention going forward.

The Tobago Tourism Agency Ltd will continue to work closely with the Division of Tourism, Culture and Transportation, our international and local stakeholders, as well as you the public, to realize the full potential of tourism in Tobago."

Mr. Louis E.A. Lewis
Chief Executive Officer
Tobago Tourism Agency Limited

New airlift from Canada

December of 2018 saw the inaugural flight of Sunwing out of the Canadian market with a direct service to the ANR Robinson airport in Tobago for the winter season. A strategic marketing campaign was developed with the airline company and has resulted in an addition of more than 1,500 passengers from Canada to Tobago in four months.

Tobago Tourism Agency Limited

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