EDITORIAL

The Directorate of Sustainable Tourism (DST) of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) is pleased to present its 17th Edition of ‘In The Zone’ focusing on “The Power of Tourism Marketing within the Greater Caribbean”.

Tourists and travel companies will continue to search for new destinations, which is why the correct combination of tourism marketing strategies, innovation, competitiveness and technology will improve the opportunities for the Greater Caribbean to continue to experience increasing tourism indicators and progress towards Multidestination.

In this edition, the DST wishes to showcase some effective tourism marketing strategies successfully implemented by the Ministries, National Tourism Authorities, Regional Organisations and Marketing Experts.

The ACS understands that marketing cannot be addressed in isolation, but must do so within the context of the international agenda, considering the importance of sustainable development. As such, the 29th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism held in June, 2018 highlighted the importance of marketing of the Greater Caribbean such as the First Sustainable Tourism Zone in the World.

We hope that you enjoy this edition and that it enriches your knowledge. We continue to stand together confident that the Greater Caribbean will be positioned among the leaders of Tourism Marketing in the coming years.

Directorate of Sustainable Tourism

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With global international tourist arrivals reaching one billion and growth only expected to increase, yet many destinations and tourism businesses fail to achieve success. Why are so many destinations struggling in a climate that is ripe for tourism? Marketing is a major part of the problem, but it is also an integral part of the solution.

A successful tourism business requires a brand that speaks to its target markets, content that successfully generates potential clients and a level of service that listens to customers’ demands. In order to target the desired audience and strengthen the links with other tourism institutions, the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) acknowledges the importance of these various forms of destination marketing.

Stakeholders in the tourism industry are keeping up with the most fashionable strategies in marketing. The Internet is consistently accepted as a powerful and effective marketing tool in tourism which is widely recognized as a unique communication support different from all other means of traditional mass communication due to its inherent characteristics.

Apart from these aspects, the web stands out as an important means of communication of knowledge and information in today’s society, and enhances the relationship between organizations and their public. Theories in social psychology and marketing provide reasons behind the success of viral marketing through social media in the contemporary market environment.

First, viral marketing is based on the power of word-of-mouth which is commonly recognized as one of the most effective marketing tools as consumers are more inclined to accept information from personal social sources than from commercial sources (Smith et al., 2007). Statistics show that 52% of travellers were so influenced by social media that they changed their original travel plans.

Second, social media that connects billions of consumers around the world enables the ease and accuracy of reproduction of electronic messages by general users actualizing the exponential growth of the tourism product or service marketed (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). 76% of TripAdvisor users agree that travelers who shared photos of their vacation influenced their booking decisions (TripAdvisor, 2015).

Third, contents used for contemporary viral marketing through social media meet consumer’s motivation for sharing. According to Schutz’s (1966) Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation theory about interpersonal behavior, consumers are motivated to share the electronic content because its entertaining effect and personal relevance satisfies one or more of three interpersonal needs: inclusion, affection, and control.
According to Kotler et al., 2010, collaborative marketing is another important trend in the area of Marketing. Collaboration is particularly important in destination marketing efforts due to the fragmented nature of the tourism industry. Relevant studies suggested that collaborative marketing is a feasible solution to various challenges in destination marketing (Wang & Xiang, 2007) and is effective in building consistent brand identity and offering competitive value proposition (Park, Cai & Lehto, 2009).

Advancement of social media technology is moving the collaborative effort toward a more profitable value co-creation pattern (Cabiddu, Lui & Piccoli, 2013). Value co-creation between tourists and organizations has become a hot topic in contemporary tourism research (Rihova et al., 2015). Therefore it is reasonable to predict that collaboration with consumers and other organizations will gradually become one of the mainstream marketing strategies in the tourism sector in the coming decade.

The Association of Caribbean States (ACS) understands that marketing cannot be addressed in isolation, but must do so within the context of the broader international sustainable development agenda. The 29th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism held in June, 2018 highlighted the importance of marketing and creating synergies with tourism partners in sustainability.

Developments have been made to create synergies between various institutions these include, the Regional Network of Artisans in Tourism of the Greater Caribbean and the Inter-American and Caribbean Network of Small Hotels (INCAPH) to promote collaboration marketing and strengthen the Tourism industry. This collaboration is based on the importance of both Networks joining efforts to identify solutions to common challenges and in this way, promote the competitiveness and sustainability of the tourism industry of the Greater Caribbean.

The Directorate of Sustainable Tourism (DST) has developed training courses to provide participants with knowledge, skills, tools, best practices and a forum for discussion about current innovations in Tourism. This will be carried out through the thematic area of the Strengthening Capacity-Building in the Tourism Sector. As a result of TVET e-surveys conducted in 2015, priority areas were identified by the participating countries including; Belize, Colombia, Dominica, El Salvador, Guadeloupe, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This study validated that the countries were in agreement to prioritize training in customer service, use of technology, foreign languages and sustainability related to the implementation of technical vocational education and training in the formulation of their national strategies and actions. In essence, the ACS seeks to carry out initiatives that aim to incorporate a component dedicated to innovation and the application of technology in the training and education of people working in the tourism sector.

The communications landscape is evolving and social media has assumed a prominent place in the marketing and public relations equation with currently over 330 million users on Twitter and over 2.19 billion on Facebook (Statista, 2018). Not engaging in social media could result in missed opportunities; therefore, efforts have been made to encourage tourism partners to cultivate their social media presence on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to target their audience.

The DST is currently spearheading a social media campaign, based on storytelling, to take advantage of the opportunities available online by promoting the work of the Regional Network of Artisans. Through this platform, various craftswomen from the region of the Greater Caribbean have been sharing their fascinating stories about their interactions as well as collaborations with one another on the ACS Facebook and Instagram pages (acs.aec).

Finally, with the correct combination of tourism marketing strategies, tools, and technology, travel businesses would continue to find potential client as well as to enhance opportunities for the Greater Caribbean to gain their share of tourism market.
The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has uncompromisingly assumed the commitment and challenge of strengthening tourism on the world stage which is suitable to demonstrate the characteristics that make us a Multidestination and a Megadiverse country, focusing on exalting our historical and cultural traditions.

In this regard, in 2015, the Country Brand of “Venezuela” was created to highlight the aforementioned touristic potential and to export the destination worldwide at renowned international fairs and forums.

Tourism at the global level must inexorably be linked to sustainability, resilience and inclusion, with The Directorate of Sustainable Tourism of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) being the meeting point and the driving force of joint markets mechanisms in the Greater Caribbean region.

The "Multidestination and Megadiverse Tourism" is a project proposal to consider among all the Member States and Associate Members, generating a Caribbean Route of travel that celebrates the recognition of Caribbean benefits and idiosyncrasies, weaving together a tourism linked to the Sustainable Development of our countries and the planet.
We recognize the effort and the role of the ACS within tourism development at an international level, with a vision of sustainability that promotes the protection of natural and cultural heritage, taking into account the establishment of the First Sustainable Tourism Zone in the World.

We reiterate the irrevocable commitment of Venezuela to the ACS to promote cooperation and consolidation of sustainable tourism as a tool for the development of the Caribbean basin, while making this important organization available to successful cooperation programs developed by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela such as PETROCARIBE, with the aim of promoting the transmission of knowledge, best practices and financial resource mobilization which allows this important sector of the regional economy to consolidate.
Colombia is going through the best time of its history and has innumerable attributes that make the country a tourism reference in the Great Caribbean. The magic of the Colombian Caribbean not only offers dream landscapes but unforgettable experiences. Our efforts are to focus on enhancing and communicating these qualities through our marketing, which highlights the richness and identity of what Colombia is today.
Internationally, our campaign "LAND OF SABROSURA" stands out the music as the best expression of cultural diversity. It develops promotional videos with world-class artists as an invitation to come and discover the unmatched energy and liveliness of its people. At the national level, our campaign "ES EL MOMENTO DE COLOMBIA... SEGURO TE VA A ENCANTAR" seeks to promote tourism through the creation, dissemination and strengthening of tourist routes framed in the strategy called Tourist Corridors. This campaign obtains excellent results such as the increase of tourists and the decrease of seasonality.

For more information visit:
http://www.colombia.travel
https://www.recorrecolombia.com
Like the Phoenix, El Salvador, located at the heart of Central America, managed to activate the post crisis economic gear through tourism. Despite the devastation of the 2008 crisis and the post war, the ground to bet on the economic and social development was fertile. It only needed a good seed: Tourism.

In 2009, with the cross on his back, José Napoleon Duarte Durán, is named Minister of Tourism in El Salvador. Since then, there’s been word of a before and after in Salvadoran Tourism. Now, he’s about to accomplish his 10th year in that position.

With a successful written tourism strategy, denominated “From the inside out with active reciprocity”, there was a marketing element missing able to motivate a dispirited nation for later expose it to the world.

That’s how MITUR launches their strategy Pueblos Vivos, under a sensitivity campaign focused on placing under the tourism value, our identity, culture, traditions, gastronomy, practicing gender equity, values and principles.
The campaign had an immediate positive impact. It transmitted joy, the same one that characterizes the Salvadoran towns. And also, it put value on the community work, a simple yet grand value.

It managed to immediately connect a whole nation. It encouraged a healthy competition between municipalities. Everyone wanted to show the best of their towns. This has allowed that during these 10 years, the innovation of the local development.

Encouraging the municipalities with heart and injecting enthusiasm, the tourism offer started to grow, local transformations excelled and that allowed an important qualitative jump at an international level.

Once the internal offer was created, the international tourists managed to connect with the destination in infrastructure, tourism offer, quality of gastronomy, and better destinations.

After 10 years after launching Pueblos Vivos, its campaigns still has a positive impact at a national level, and its international repercussion has been such that El Salvador has doubled its exchange revenue from $553 million (2009) to $1,300 million (2017).

El Salvador is still in the saga to conquer new markets. Located at the heart of Central America, this beautiful country has demonstrated that the advertising campaigns can positively persuade a nation and its consumers.
St. Kitts’ tourism marketing strategy is one of managed, sustainable growth. We have systematically built our air service from key Origin/Destination and feeder gateways as identified by our utilization of geographic, demographic and psychographic targeting to reach our target visitor – an affluent, experiential traveler whose profile aligns with our exit survey data and who will spend the most money in our economy, thereby driving GDP and overall economic growth.
St. Kitts won a coveted “Highly Commended” award in the Destination category of the Routes Americas 2018 Marketing Awards, demonstrating the efficacy of our airlift marketing strategy. In terms of the cruise sector, St. Kitts maintains excellent relationships with key cruise line executives to ensure the island is included on numerous ship itineraries. St. Kitts welcomed one million cruise passengers for the first time in its history this year, reaching the key arrivals number that gives the island marquee port status.
The Grenada Tourism Authority (GTA) has introduced its colourful and interactive ‘Tourism and Me’ booklet into all primary schools across the tri-island nation. It is aimed at educating 8 to 12 year olds about the important role tourism plays in their lives with topics such as: What is Tourism, The Pure Grenada Brand, Sustainable Tourism and Careers in the industry.

The booklet, illustrated by Grenadian Stacey Byer included symbols and characters synonymous with Grenada’s culture and tourism product. The main character is called ‘Nutasha’, a representation of Grenada’s black gold - The Nutmeg.

A special feature of the, ‘Tourism and Me’ Booklet is the Ambassadors pledge and pin. This is a commitment by the students to become ambassadors for their beloved country by keeping their environment clean and playing their part in creating memorable experiences for visitors and their fellow citizens.

This book is part of a wider tourism awareness campaign to create consciousness about the importance of tourism and its benefits to the economy. Visit www.puregrenada.com/tacampaign for additional details.
The tourism sector is widely recognized as a vital contributor to economic development, environmental protection, and an overall increased standard of living. Well-designed, managed and marketed tourism has the potential to greatly contribute, both directly and indirectly, to a country’s economy and the preservation of its cultural heritage. For Guyana, this is becoming increasingly apparent. With the imminent adoption of the national Green State Development Strategy, tourism is seen as an emerging industry with great promise. Externally, with an increasing number of individuals seeking authentic cultural, nature, and adventure experiences, Guyana is fast becoming a destination of choice for this particular niche.

To realize the potential and maximize the benefits of the sector, the Guyana Tourism Authority is dedicated to becoming one of most successful destinations in the region by integrating sustainable tourism best practice into all of its marketing, capacity building, product development, and regulatory activities. Examples include scaling up community-owned and led tourism, conservation tourism, and SAVE travel while encouraging visitors to take responsibility for leaving a positive impact during their visit.
Marketing efforts such as the development of a new destination website, enticing videos that focus on its distinctive product offering, and the appointment of market representatives in key source markets creates the basis for Guyana’s aggressive tourism marketing Initiatives in 2018 and onwards. With this in mind, Guyana is seeking to engage both the trade and consumer markets in the region who are interested in experiential travel. For more information, visit www.guyana-tourism.com or email info@guyana-tourism.com

About the Guyana Tourism Authority

The Guyana Tourism Authority (GTA), operating under the Ministry of Business, is a semi-autonomous governmental organization responsible for developing and promoting sustainable tourism in Guyana. Its mission is to develop and promote sustainable tourism in Guyana through collaboration with sister agencies and the tourism private sector in order to maximize local socio-economic and conservation outcomes and improve the visitors’ experience.
With 1,041,139 registered visitors in 2017, Martinique continues its efforts to structure its tourism offer and is committed to the development of sustainable tourism.

In the framework of its policy to enhance the attraction of the destination, the Martinique Authority has taken the decision to promote the potential of its natural heritage and is thus implementing a protection and promotion strategy that involves the population. This is achieved in partnership with the Martinique Tourism Committee, a satellite organization of the Martinique Territorial Authority responsible for the promotion of the destination.

Thus, in April 2017, the Martinique Tourism Committee participated to the Valora Village event, Village of Sustainable Development, Circular and Social Economy and Natural Risks Disasters. 32,000 visitors attended this exhibition held in Martinique.
The Martinique Tourism Committee was able to showcase its involvement towards sustainable tourism with a booth located in the Biodiversity section, exposing the richness of the natural sites of Martinique, notably through the presentation of a flyer dedicated to nature tourism.

An eco-friendly lodging, the Bambou Hotel displayed through its sustainable management strategy and its “Green Key” quality label.

As a reminder, the island is part of one the 35 world biodiversity hotspots and has obtained from the French UNESCO World Heritage Properties Association, a “declaration of universal value” for the volcanic and forest areas of Mount Pelée and the Pitons in the village of Carbet.

It is in that logic that the Martinique Authority is committed to ensuring that environmental innovation is a sustainable and key element of its tourism development for the future generations.
It is a campaign based on positioning Mexico as a central destination point, offering visitors vibrant and multifaceted experiences. "A world of its own" highlights the immensity and diversity of Mexico’s touristic offer, underscoring the colourful, magical and even surrealistic aspects of Mexico, which have inspired explorers, artists and philosophers for hundreds of years. This marketing strategy contributed to the fact that the country was positioned as the 8th most visited in the world in 2017, after having held the 15th position in 2012, notably exceeding the average growth of the tourism industry worldwide.
Saint Lucia produced the best social media marketing effort in the Caribbean in 2018 with its “Let Her Inspire You” campaign. The destination won the award in the “Up the Social Ladder” category at the Caribbean Tourism Organisation’s travel media awards gala dinner on June 7, 2018 in New York City, as part of Caribbean Week.

The aggressive SLTA social media marketing blitz included 200 unique images and ten campaign videos, a sweepstakes and visits by high profile social media influencers to push brand Saint Lucia and increase the social media following on Facebook and Instagram.
The SLTA also rebranded its social media accounts from @SaintLuciaNow to @TravelSaintLucia to urge consumers to make Saint Lucia their next vacation destination.

The five-month “Let Her Inspire You” social media campaign generated 11 million impressions, 20,000 sweepstakes entries and a buzz for the island. It also spiked the destination’s Facebook following by 33% and Instagram by 21%.
One of the key strategies developed by the Central America Tourism Agency (CATA) is the strengthening of the multi-destination offer, whose results have been important tools for dissemination and commercialization. Among these tools we can highlight the first catalog of multi-destination offers, as well as an innovative web platform that includes an App to guide travelers on their journey.
On the other hand, by conducting regional workshops we have optimized the capacity and promotion skills, supply structuring, and digital marketing management for regional players. At the same time, the "Best Prospect" market studies have strengthened our strategy as a region, as well as that of the countries and their business sector. Digital campaigns have also been carried out, as well as press and diffusion trips with European influencers that have filled the social networks and European media, informing and projecting Central America’s incredible attractions and offers.
Authenticity as a concept has many meanings: genuine, undisputed, real, pure. The real root of the word, however, has become somewhat inauthentic and has lost its meaning. If we step away from the current application of authenticity, we can move towards a more applicable and accurate word: truth. By being empathetic and telling the truth about a place, thing, or people, you can attract others who accept and have an emotional connection with that truth. Truth and empathy are powerful, human tools that can help create more insightful and more resonant messaging. You can not only attract new visitors, but, instill pride in locals.

With the goal of truth in mind, we the Minneapolis based ad agency, Olson and I, began working with the Belize Tourism Board. Although the country relied on tourism for about 20% of their GDP, they held only 5% of the overall travel category and found themselves in the shadow of other well-known destinations. While Belize has great sun, diving, and sand, it also has a uniqueness and a warmth that other destinations may not have.

The story that was being told about Belize wasn’t the right one, and the country found itself stuck in a sea of sameness within the tourism marketplace. I wanted to help tell the truth about Belize and its people, and speak to the type of people Belize attracts (or doesn’t attract). So, after reviews of data and on the ground experience, we took an approach that would share the true culture of Belize and empower its people.
Showing Belize’s True Colours
There were two major tenets to our approach for helping Belize embrace its differences and be boldly and uniquely different:

1. Everything produced in communications must strive to instill pride in all Belizeans, with truth.
2. If we succeed at #1, we will surely attract the right travellers: the people attracted to the unadulterated truth of Belize.

I noticed that ads for various Caribbean destinations often showed beautiful white people cavorting on a beach, while the locals are portrayed only as servants. By creating content that featured the true experience of locals as locals saw them, we fostered the feeling that it’s important to be yourself, and we helped instill pride in Belizeans.

Evolution, not Revolution
As an outsider when I first came to Belize, it was hard for me to understand that people of Belize would often apologize for lacking the fast food that tourists might be used to, or for having unpaved roads. These were the very things that made me love Belize. My mission was to do more than attract new travellers – it was to ignite the pride of the people of Belize in what they have. I wanted Belizeans to embrace the rough roads and local fast foods instead of apologizing for or being embarrassed by them. I wanted to invite travellers to experience the adventure and uniqueness that Belize has to offer and for people to realize that although the road was bad, what lay at the end was extraordinary and singular.

Real Results
There has been a 65% lift in consideration, and overnight visitors rose 18% in year one, with arrivals now at the highest point since 2000. Belize is now one of the fastest growing destinations in the Caribbean and overnight arrivals have increased 52% over the last five years. Last year saw a record increase of 18%.

Another great result is the massive momentum gained, and the proof that telling the unadulterated truth really works. The true heroes of the communication approach and overall project are the Belizeans themselves, who had the guts to be different and proud of themselves and their unique country, culture and heritage. It is this combination that led to these amazing stats and results. To me, the greatest accomplishment was that Belizeans stopped apologizing and embraced their true authenticity.
29th Meeting of the Special Committee on Sustainable Tourism (SCST-29)

The DST of the ACS held its SCST-29 Meeting on June 14th, 2018. The Special Committee meeting was hosted at the ACS Secretariat in Port of Spain, the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

The topics discussed in this meeting included: the implementation of initiatives on Community-Based Tourism focusing on MSMEs in Tourism, innovation in strengthening Capacity Building in the Tourism Sector, fostering the implementation of the Indicators of the STZC, Multidestination Tourism and Air Connectivity and synergies with tourism partners in sustainability.

GTA Launches ‘Tourism and Me’ Children’s Booklet

The Grenada Tourism Authority (GTA) has taken an important step in its quest to develop a wider Tourism Awareness Campaign for Grenada and to ensure that tourism develops into a sustainable sector locally.

The Authority launched its ‘Tourism and Me’ booklet to educate children between the ages of 8 to 12 about important tourism sector topics. For access to the animated version of the book, please visit: http://www.puregrenada.com/tacampaign/

The ACS Celebrates its 24th Anniversary

July 24, 2018 marks the 24th anniversary of the establishment of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS).

The Convention establishing the ACS was signed on 24th July, 1994 in Cartagena de Indias, Colombia, with the aim of promoting consultation, cooperation and concerted action among all the countries of the Caribbean.

STZC Preliminary Sustainability Profile

The DST is committed to rendering its continued support to the ACS Member States and Associate Member States in achieving full assessment of their STZC destinations. As such a profile form was created to provide assistance in collecting information on challenges and accomplishments, as well as direct actions with regards to the implementation of indicators based on discussions carried out within the 29th Sustainable Tourism Special Committee Meeting.

ASSOCIATION OF CARIBBEAN STATES (ACS)

Established on 24th July 1994, the ACS is an inter-governmental organization that seeks to enhance cooperation among the countries in the region, an endeavour aimed at building upon geographic proximity and deeply entrenched social, economic and historical linkages.

The Strategic Focal Areas are:

- Sustainable Tourism
- Trade Development and External Economic Relations
- Disaster Risk Reduction
- Transport
- Caribbean Sea
- Education and Culture

WHAT’S NEW?

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GENERAL INFORMATION