

MINISTRY OF TOURISM

Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality and Tourism Institute

THE FUTURE FOR YOUTH IN TOURISM

FEATURE ADDRESS

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TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

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Venue: Campus of Trinidad and Tobago Hospitality & Tourism Institute

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Introductory Remarks

I am excited to be here. I am thrilled to be with young people as they move into a new phase of their lives or are considering their movement into a new phase of their lives.

It is an exciting time and I am happy to be able to share it with you.

The theme of this event is ***The Future for Youth in Tourism*** and it is my special privilege and honour to share with you on this subject in the hope that I can shed some light that would allow you to find a place in the industry.

This is particularly important now when our economy is facing so many challenges with declining energy prices.

Overview of the Global Tourism Industry

Despite the recent global economic challenges, the long-term outlook for tourism remains promising, with tourism arrivals expected to grow to 1.6 billion by 2020.

In response to these global economic challenges, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), a specialized agency of the United Nations, has been placing more stress on the potential for tourism to be a primary vehicle for job creation and economic transformation.

Tourism is an important industry for developing countries. Emerging economies are forecast to be engines of growth, increasing both international and domestic travel. In addition, revenues generated from tourism can help to offset declining revenues from other domestic sectors.

For instance, in Belize, foreign exchange earnings generated by tourism cushioned dropping export prices of bananas and sugar cane in 2004 and a per capita GDP of the country was rated above the average for the rest of Latin America and Central America.

Similarly in Trinidad and Tobago Tourism can offset income ordinarily derived from oil and gas.

Tourism is a labour-intensive industry supporting a wide variety of jobs in many different sectors. It is a fast entry vehicle into the workforce, both in urban and rural communities, directly, or through its strong multiplier effect on related services, manufacturing, or agriculture.

The industry is expected to take back its leading, dynamic role in driving global growth, creating jobs and alleviating poverty.

According to WTTC (2009), the industry is expected to grow by 4 percent per annum over the next ten years, supporting 275 million jobs (8.4 percent of all jobs) and 9.5 percent of global GDP.

This means that we can remain confident in Travel & Tourism's long-term growth potential, and in its increasing importance as one of the world's highest priority industries and employers. Tourism has to be sustainable though, if we are to derive long term benefits. And sustainable development has particular requirements.

Sustainable Tourism Development

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation defined Sustainable Tourism as:

"Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities"

Sustainable Tourism should:

- 1) Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.

- 2) Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their built and living cultural heritage and traditional values, and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.

3) Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities, and contributing to poverty alleviation.

By making sustainability a focus, we can:

- Increase tourist arrivals by promoting sustainability credentials to ‘green-savvy’ consumers who make purchase decisions based on minimising their own footprint
- Reduce operating costs by undertaking initiatives that reduce waste, water and energy consumption
- Develop a competitive advantage by establishing and promoting sustainable business practices as a point of difference
- Attract and retain valuable staff by adopting policies that meet with employee values and concerns

- Encourage investors interested in companies with long-term sustainability plans that minimise operating risks in the future
- Increase long-term profitability by putting plans in place now that will create savings in the future such as minimising transport costs that will continue to rise as fuel becomes more expensive.

These advantages or benefits enhance both tourism products and the destination and so we embrace the concept and promote sustainable tourism as an ideal.

Tourism and its Potential to employ Young People Every year, 120 million young people enter the workforce with enormous potential to lead productive and engaged lives and help drive real economic growth around the globe.

Yet today, more than 75 million of them face significant barriers to finding decent work, locking them into a cycle of displacement and frustration.

High levels of youth unemployment are driven by many factors, including lack of resources and inadequate training opportunities.

The result: long term workforce challenges that can only lead to societal upset, economic instability and lost generations. Today's industries need to hire young people to grow and compete in the marketplace, and young people desperately need sustainable employment. The size, scale, and rapid growth of the travel and tourism sector requires impactful and scalable solutions to include youth employment.

There are few industries like the tourism industry, where resources, expertise, and career pathways are so relevant to addressing the challenges facing young people today.

There is an enormous opportunity to invest in young people and prepare them for careers in the tourism industry.

As other industries struggle to recover from the global economic downturn, hospitality and tourism have proven to be resilient.

The travel and tourism industry as a whole (of which the hospitality industry is a part) remains one of the world's most important drivers of economic growth, accounting for nearly 9 percent of global GDP.

It is also the world's largest employer. More than 255 million people around the globe currently work in the sector, and by 2022, travel and tourism will employ 328 million people—creating 73 million new jobs.

The projected growth of the hospitality industry is good news not only for hotels and restaurants but also for the array of businesses in the hospitality supply chain.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that every new job created in the hospitality industry supports 1.5 jobs along the supply chain, with a proportionate economic boost to local communities.

Economic development means jobs, and jobs bring much more than a pay check: they bring dignity to individuals, tax revenue to governments, new consumers to businesses, and invested citizens to communities.

Thus, the industry outlook brings hope not only to hospitality sector businesses, but also to the young people who choose to work in the sector. The industry is particularly dependent on its ability to hire young men and women ages 15–24, who make up the largest share of employees in the industry.

Industry employers know, cultivating, hiring, and retaining young talent with the necessary skills can be a sizable challenge. Unless we reach out and nurture and employ youth, the negative consequences of persistent youth unemployment will reverberate through the society.

The tourism industry must seize this opportunity to train and employ youth to a degree that has not yet been achieved

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and Oxford Economics shows that Travel & Tourism employs a higher proportion of young people than is represented in the workforce as a whole.

The challenge is to ensure that this large and highly energetic section of our society is engaged in productive activities that will not only improve their own well-being, but also contribute to the enhancement of the quality of life of all.

Tourism and Employment

The local impacts of the tourism industry are diverse and are often unique to the tourism sector. Tourist activities, as traditionally defined by the tourism industry, fundamentally involve the transportation and hosting of the tourism consumer in a local community, i.e., “tourist destination,” where the tourist product is consumed.

No other industry structures itself in such a way that the consumer is brought to the product, rather than the product being delivered to the consumer in his or her own community. This structural difference produces unique social impacts upon the local tourist community.

The primary product of tourism is not something produced by the industry. The primary product is often the heritage, wealth, and expected legacy of the community that serves as the tourist destination.

Like our Las Cuevas Beach or even Maracas where our legendary bake and shark is served, and where several hotels and guest accommodations have emerged in support of the destination.

That entire community has opportunities from the beach site and attraction.

The business activity of the tourism industry is to promote the appealing aspects of the community, transport non-residents into the community, manage the hospitality for and guide the activities of these visitors, and provide them with goods and services to purchase during their stay.

The hospitality industry is a diverse one, including a wide range of services related to food, accommodation, entertainment, and recreation.

The Ministry of Tourism is aimed at making Trinidad and Tobago one of the top destinations in the world by 2020. Through the tourism sector, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago is committed to creating new jobs and to increasing tourism's contribution to the economy.

The tourism sector is widely regarded as a key driver of economic growth, job creation, poverty alleviation and community upliftment.

It is important that government, private sector, NGO's and youth organizations combine efforts to empower youth with the overall aim of contributing to increased national economic growth and poverty reduction through tourism.

The tourism and hospitality sector are so diverse that it cross pollinates into multiple other sectors of the economy therefore creating growth and rejuvenating potential across all sectors can have with direct and indirect impacts. Creativity, talent and skills sets are abundant within our destination and within our young people.

Young entrepreneurs can develop future tourism products, attractions and activities that could enhance our destination. It is the young people who must be innovative and come up with new tourism products.

As industry, we are all able to contribute to the empowerment of our youth which simultaneously empowers our destination.

The tourism industry has tremendous potential to create jobs, it is also important to acknowledge that appropriate skills and experience are necessary to facilitate employment growth as well as international competitiveness.

The Future for Youth in Tourism

This Government prioritizes tourism development, recognizing its key role in driving the economic growth of the country. The Government equally prioritizes youth development noting the importance of increasing the participation rate of youth in national economic activities.

Tourism affects the livelihood of most people in Trinidad and Tobago in one way or another. The benefits range from the economic activities of farmers, fishermen, cooks, shopkeepers, bartenders and tour guides to the activities of hotels, banks, and resorts as well as carnival bands, entertainers, and immigration.

Simply, tourism literally impacts every job directly or indirectly, creating an enormous value chain

For specialist events, sports, and weddings the value chain is even greater.

It is clear that the tourism industry is far-reaching and is indeed everyone's business.

The tourism dollar can deeply permeate our local economy. Because tourism is a labour-intensive industry, and because most of the participants are micro to small business operators, the effect is felt quickly and directly through local spending.

For those communities that do have the potential to become a successful tourism destination, and are willing to commit to its ongoing development, the benefits are more than just economic. This represents one of the many ways that young people can become involved.

The development of tourism sites in communities has potential to bring communities together and it has potential to provide employment in the sector.

The site has to be maintained and the tourist has to be transported there and may want a bite of the local cuisine. All these avenues have potential to provide income and allow young people to make an important and sizeable contribution to our economy.

In Trinidad and Tobago, the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was TTD5,385.3mn (3.2% of total GDP) in 2015, and is forecast to rise by 1.1% in 2016, and to rise by 2.2% pa, from 2016-2026, to TTD6,736.1mn (3.3% of total GDP) in 2026.

In 2015, the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to employment, including jobs indirectly was 11.3% of total employment (72,500 jobs). This is expected to fall by 0.7% in 2016 to 72,000 jobs and rise by 0.7% pa to 77,000 jobs in 2026 (11.3% of total).

This includes employment by hotels, travel agents, airlines and other passenger transportation services (excluding commuter services).

Travel & Tourism investment in 2015 was TTD2, 619.7mn, or 11.0% of total investment. It should rise by 2.2% in 2016, and rise by 2.2% pa over the next ten years to TTD3, 326.8mn in 2026 (11.2% of total).

The outlook for Travel & Tourism in 2016 remains robust, despite economic fragilities and other sources of volatility in the wider market.

The lowest oil prices in more than a decade will continue to boost demand through lower transport costs, whilst household finances and disposable income will benefit from reduced energy costs.

For Trinidad and Tobago, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has identified the following sectors as areas on which development should be focused:

- Business and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions) tourism
- Cruise tourism

- Yachting and leisure boat tourism
- Adventure and ecotourism
- Carnival

Add to this that Trinidad and Tobago is a diverse, multicultural country where just about everything is celebrated. It represents opportunity. There is opportunity for employment, for you to become creative and contribute to the economy.

Motivation to those Graduating

To those of you who are graduating today or for whom this is your concluding event, I say, here at TTHTI, I am sure they have fertilized your mind and opened your eyes to an array of new opportunities. Whatever your purpose was, you now have a mission.

You are charged to make your community and your country better by generating prosperity, by showing the example that everybody in Trinidad and Tobago can create wealth and help sustain society, no matter what.

You can be like a homing pigeon that carries and delivers a message to your circle of influence. You do not have to wait for somebody to create a job for you; you can create a profitable business and employ other people.

Is it easy? Tell me what important thing has ever been easy in life. To make it, you need to desire it passionately. You need to display resourcefulness, persevere, show creativity, overcome obstacles, and stand firm and calm in the face of challenges.

Your faith should be strong enough to sustain you through. Remember, failure is failure only if you give up.

Just yesterday morning, I read a thought by former professional basketball player Michael Jordan: “I have failed over and over and over again in my life, and that’s why I succeed”.

TTHTI has helped to equip you with the tools you need to succeed. These tools will be like fertilizer left in a bag if you do not readily use them.

When you use them, the sky will be the limit and the hope of creating prosperity without ceiling will be stronger than ever.

No matter what your present circumstances are, you can make it.

Reject all excuses your mind or society may present to you.

The story of Harold Charles of Turks and Caicos Island comes to my mind. He began as a cleaner in an airline company, with a big dream and a victor attitude. In 1994, with a partner, he created Sky King from almost nothing. In 2008, he sold the company to Air Turks and Caicos for \$25 million.

Can you do the same thing? Yes you can

Now is your time to take the great adventure of success and prosperity. Now is your time to engage in forging a better tomorrow for yourselves, your relatives and your country. The future of any society can only be guaranteed and assured by its youth.

The energy and resourcefulness of the youth serves as new fuel for the development of society. It will also serve for the development of our sector.

I am aware that this afternoon the session will allow you access to information on the available careers and job opportunities that exist in the tourism industry.

You should have a clear understanding of the choices that you have. What you can be assured of is this is an exciting time for tourism. It is a government priority and it is set to grow. Take advantage of the opportunities set before you.

I have been honoured to share a few thoughts with you. Thank you for being so kind as to give me your attention.

I trust that this exercise will be entirely meaningful for you.

I thank you.