

# Dominican Tourism in the Caribbean and Global Context

A special presentation on the Occasion of the Inauguration  
of the Universidad del Este, UCE.

Catedra Magistral de Turismo 'Frank Rainieri'



By Frank Comito, CEO and Director General  
Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association

**Wednesday, March 20, 2019**



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## “Dominican Tourism in the Caribbean and Global Context”

Buenas tardes damas y caballeros.

Deseo expresar mi agradecimiento al Señor Rector José Hazim Torres y a la Universidad Central del Este, UCE por invitarme a compartir algunos pensamientos con ustedes hoy.

I am humbled to be given this opportunity to be your guest speaker on the occasion of the inauguration of the Catedra Magistral de Turismo ‘Frank Rainieri’. On behalf of the Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association and our President Patricia Affonso Dass, we thank you for this opportunity. We wish to congratulate the University and Mr. Rainieri on the establishment of this chair.

Mr. Rainieri is an inspiration to many of us in the tourism industry not only in the Caribbean but throughout the world. His words have been exceeded only by his actions and today I would like us to reflect upon some of those actions as lessons and examples which help to take our tourism industry, here in the Dominican Republic and indeed throughout the Caribbean, to another level.

### Sustainability, Infrastructure, Courage

Three words come to mind when I think of Mr. Rainieri’s achievements: Sustainability, Infrastructure and Courage. I will share with you why as we go through my presentation.



SUSTAINABILITY



INFRASTRUCTURE



COURAGE

I’ve been asked to speak to the topic “Dominican Tourism in the Caribbean and Global Context”. In doing so, there is much that we can learn from our past to guide us into the future.



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This morning I would like to examine those things that we can learn from our successes....and, equally important, what can we learn from our failures?

As the DR and Caribbean are now more than 50 years into this era of modern tourism, we know unequivocally that tourism transforms societies. And by extension, for societies to transform, people must be the drivers. We know that tourism transforms not only businesses, but also individual lives, communities and countries.

## **“Promotion of Sustainable Tourism, including Ecotourism, for Poverty Eradication and Environmental Protection”**

Overwhelmingly tourism has been for the good. Tourism’s transformative power has been recognized over the past seven years through a number of resolutions and reports from the United Nations and the UN World Tourism Organization, starting in 2012 with the unanimous adoption by the UN of a resolution entitled “Promotion of sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, for poverty eradication and environment protection”.

Through this resolution, UN member states recognized tourism as a socio-economic-environmental development tool highlighting its “positive impact on income generation, job creation and education, and thus on the fight against poverty and hunger”.



This was critical to the ongoing evolution of thinking and embracing of tourism as a key pillar of social and economic development. Many of us in this room can recall a time when tourism was viewed differently, far below in status and stature from other major sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, healthcare, legal and financial services. Its true economic impact was not understood by many and to work in tourism was considered by many to be subservient.

Today, we know that to be far from the truth. Over fifty years of examples and data clearly substantiates this.

## **“Tourism is Everyone’s Business”**

But let us not fool ourselves. Despite the tremendous progress which tourism has advanced, we must be mindful of the environmental, social, economic, and infrastructure challenges it has and will present in order that we are better able to plan and manage its future. These are prevalent here in the Dominican Republic, as they are throughout the Caribbean and the world.

In our industry we are fond of saying that “tourism is everyone’s business” and data clearly substantiates that. Consequentially, in more than any other industry, it is within our grasp through tourism to face those challenges head on and indeed provide bold leadership locally, regionally and globally to continue to look at how we can maximize the opportunities which our industry presents, not only for our individual business interests but also towards the broader interests of our industry, governments and societies.



While I may sound altruistic to some of you, I strongly believe that many of today's big picture issues locally and globally -- like climate change, soaring national debts, safety and security, prejudices of many kinds, economic opportunity and upward mobility, infrastructure development, waste management, and environmental degradation -- touch both the challenges and solutions which tourism stakeholders face and can address.

I might be daring enough to say that we MUST address them as industry stakeholders in our own way, as it is a matter of business survival into the very near and real future.

Am I suggesting this is a burden of responsibility which hoteliers alone should address? Certainly not. If you believe, as I do, that 'tourism is everyone's business' then each and every one of us are tourism stakeholders -- from all areas of government, the broader private sector, education and training institutions, industry organizations like Asonahores and CHTA, Chambers of Commerce, nonprofit and community organizations..... Tourism is everyone's business.

## Economic Sustainability is Tied Directly to the Infrastructure in its Broadest Sense

It is not by chance that Mr. Rainieri throughout his life has taken a holistic approach to tourism. He has known that his company's economic sustainability is tied directly to the infrastructure in its broadest sense:

First, the physical infrastructure: utilities -- electricity, water and sewage and communications; the air, ground and marine transportation infrastructure ...and the physical tourism plants.

Then, environmental infrastructure: water and waste management, the protection and enhancement of the natural flora and fauna, dunes, reefs, beaches and sea life.

Last, the social infrastructure -- education, housing, employment, healthcare, and the overall quality of life.



ENVIRONMENTAL  
INFRASTRUCTURE



PHYSICAL  
INFRASTRUCTURE



HUMAN  
INFRASTRUCTURE

He and others have invested at great risk for the long-haul, knowing many years ago that the return on that investment would take decades.



Over the past 50 plus years we've substantiated tourism's role in shaping people's lives, creating incredible economic and entrepreneurial opportunities, and building communities and countries.

We must note that the incredible progress which has been made by the DR and the Caribbean has not occurred just by chance. Where successes have occurred, there has been leadership and commitments by both the public and private sectors. Conversely, where progress has been slow in some areas of the Caribbean and the world, likewise we have seen a lack of leadership and commitments by the public and/or private sectors.

Without naming names, we can think of destinations around the world which were shining stars at one point in time and today have lost their luster and appeal. I say that, to say that we must not be complacent or lose touch with those fundamental traits of courage, leadership, innovative thinking and willingness to take risks in order to continue to succeed.

The Dominican Republic indeed is a global tourism success story when one looks at how far it has come since the 1940s when President Trujillo established concrete steps to promote tourism, the Malecon de Santo Domingo was inaugurated, and the first luxury hotels were opened, including the Hotel Jaragua which remains open today.

As you know, tremendous progress was made since the 1970s, in particular during the past 25 years from the 1990s. In 1930, 230 foreign tourists arrived in the DR. By 1990 it jumped to 1.3 million arrivals. Ten years later, in the year 2000: 2.9 million, increasing to 3.7 million by 2010. In 2018, 6.5 million arrived. So what accounts for this incredible growth by the DR?

## Vision...Innovation...Courage

First and foremost, it was seeded by innovative, visionary and courageous leadership...which understands tourism and the word sustainability in its broadest context. Here in the Dominican Republic in the late 1960s and 1970s, when birth was being given to the era of modern tourism, you saw the emergence of public policies by the political directorate and President Balaguer -- including legislation which created the National Tourism Bureau, later the Ministry of Tourism, law 153 which put in place investment incentives, and INFRATUR, the financial institution to support the development of infrastructure.

As well, there was bold leadership by the private sector, seeing incredible opportunity in what was then a remote area of your country, Ted Kheel and Frank Rainieri as one of your countrymen told me -- 'dreamed what others could not imagine'. I'm also told by others that some people questioned the sanity of Frank and Ted. It was Steve Jobs, cofounder of Apple, who once said 'The people who are crazy enough to change the world are the ones who do'.

## "Dream what others could not imagine"

Dreams and visions are not always fully clear and don't become reality by themselves. It was Frank Rainieri who said, "Developing a vision is a skill that

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*"He dreamed what others could not imagine..."*

Alberto Abreau re Frank Rainieri

*"The people who are crazy enough to change the world are the ones who do."*

Steve Jobs, Cofounder, Apple

*"Developing a vision is a skill that improves with constant practice. It allows you to dream, to see things that are far away, that might seem out of reach, things that you can strive for and fight hard to achieve."*

Frank Rainieri, Cofounder, Group Punta Cana

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improves with constant practice. Like a muscle, it needs regular exercise to develop. It allows you to dream, to see things that are far away, that might seem out of reach, things you can strive for and fight hard to achieve.”

The vision is the motivation and from there the work begins.

## Tourism: Development Driver

We’ve mentioned briefly tourism’s importance as a driver of economic development and let’s take a look at the data behind this – locally, regionally and internationally.

It is essential that industry stakeholders, all of us, continue to have an understanding of tourism’s broader impact – mostly positive, but some negative. This should drive public policy decisions, agendas for associations and Boards/Ministries of Tourism, focus by institutions, and socio-economic development support commitments by industry.

While industry – the private sector – fully understands tourism’s importance and value to economies, there is ample opportunity for more private sector tourism stakeholders to better direct their own destiny. This, unfortunately is far too often not the case in too many places. Armed with data and leading by example, we, private sector stakeholders place ourselves in a much better position to exert influence in constructive ways to inform other stakeholders and shape our destiny.

## A Challenge to Private Sector Tourism Stakeholders

I challenge more of our private sector colleagues to:

***#1 Connect your bottom-line to the social, environmental, political and economic environment around you.***

***#2 Become more involved, more proactive in supporting and working to grow and develop our industry and by extension, your business.***

Through their support and activism, businesses are investing in their future. Being involved in local associations, CHTA, education and training institutions like USE and other initiatives can help to grow and develop tourism to your individual business’ advantage. These commitments have contributed to the success of the DR, other destinations and the region, and our industry’s future is tied to an even greater willingness by tourism stakeholders to collaborate even more so.

## The Pervasive Impact of Tourism

The data clearly tells us that tourism increasingly is a growth and nation-building driver in the DR, the Caribbean and globally. Here we see key indicators





In 27 years the DR's per capita income has grown five-fold. Hundreds of thousands of Dominican jobs have been created – all of this parallels with the corresponding growth in tourism arrivals and hotel room growth.

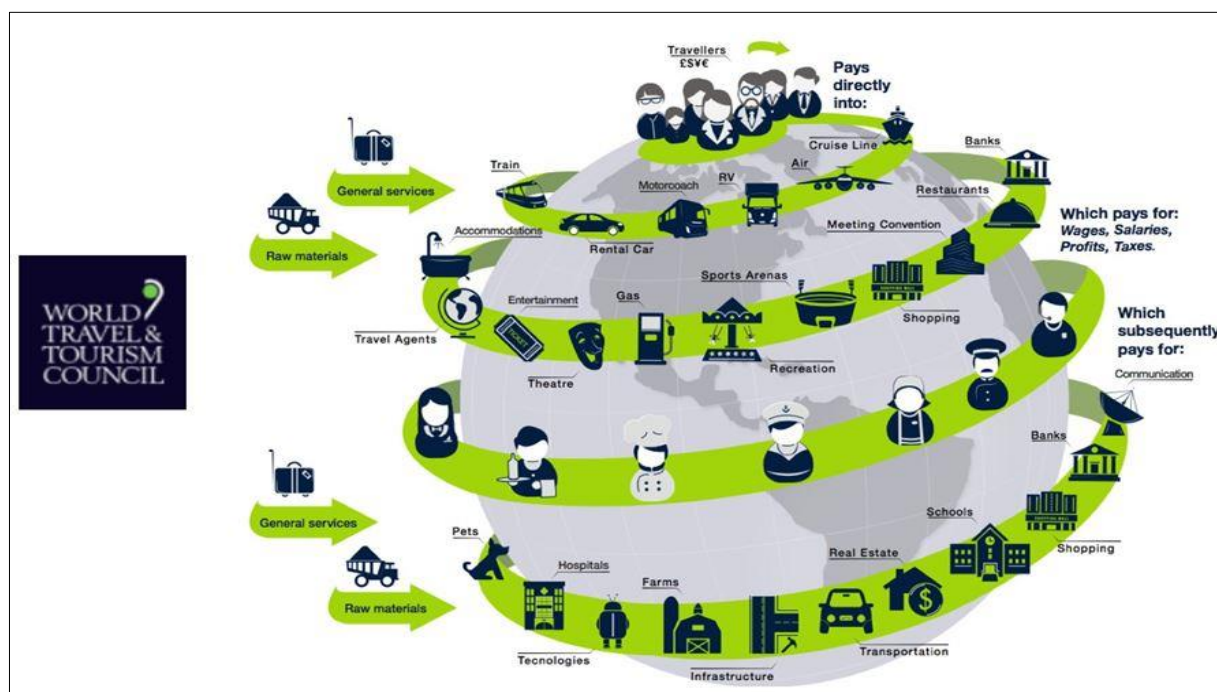
Dominican Republic KPIs				
Indicator	1990	2000	2010	2017
GDP per Capita*	\$3,587	\$6,654	\$11,387	16997
Unemployment*	9.20%	6.30%	5.00%	5.10%
Tourism Arrivals**	1.3M	2.9M	3.7M	6.1M
# Hotel Rooms				71,000
Total Tourism Exports***				\$7.4B

Source: \*International Monetary Fund \*\*Caribbean Tourism Organization \*\*\*Banco Popular/ Asonahores Report

## Indirect and Induced Impact of Direct Tourism Expenditures

We know from recent Banco Popular - Asonahores research that the direct, indirect and induced value of tourism to the DR economy is just over 22% of the country's economic performance – as the tourism dollar circulates and touches most other sectors of the economy, with the greatest impact on: services, transport, construction, real estate, manufacturing and agriculture.

Here you will see a graphic produced by the World Travel and Tourism Council which shows the flow of the tourism dollar as it circulates – helping to fuel and support most aspects of an economy and government services.

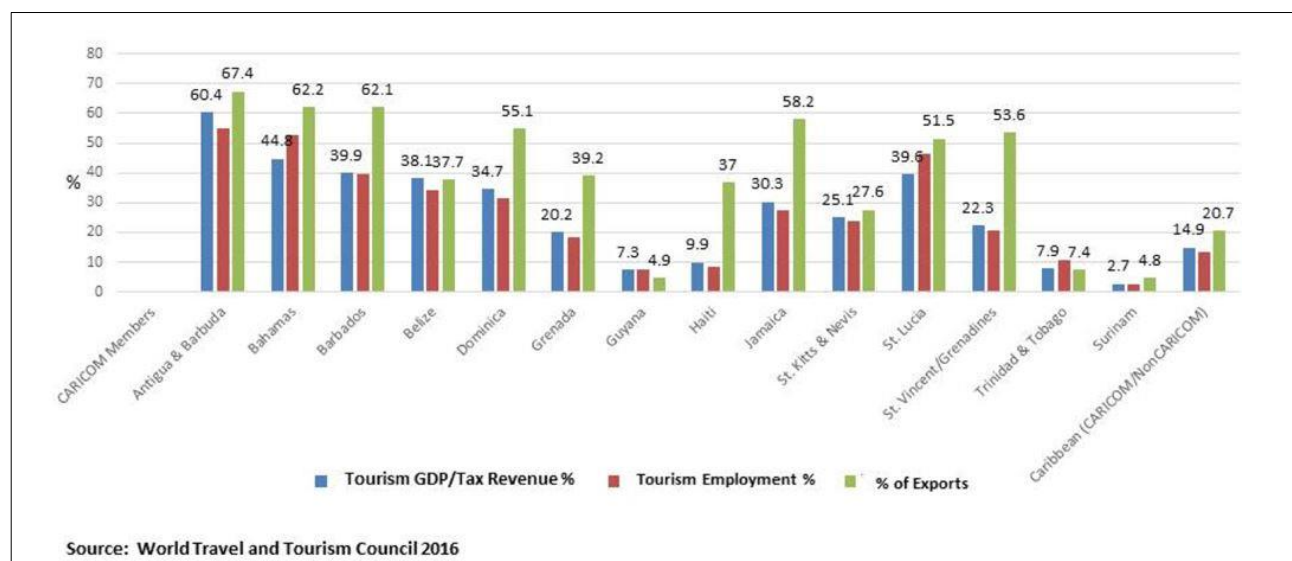


By extension, we can reasonably assume that a similar percentage of tax revenue is generated, representing over 1/5<sup>th</sup> of annual revenue and allowing government to provide essential services, support human and physical infrastructure development, and the public good.

We know that tourism is responsible for an estimated one million jobs today in the Dominican Republic, contributing to the lowest levels of unemployment in the Caribbean. We know that the impact on employment translates into a higher wage bill (US \$ 4.8 billion) which, together with the income of business owners implies a greater demand for goods and services, generating approximately 12.4% of total household consumption.

We know that the DR's essential foreign reserves through tourism export revenue account for an estimated 50% of the net international reserves. It falls upon us in the private sector to continually remind policymakers and the general public of the importance and contribution which our industry brings to our countries. Data must be a driver.

## Tourism: Region's Greatest Driver of Employment, Economic Activity, Foreign Exchange and Tax Revenue



For much of the rest of the Caribbean, tourism clearly is the greatest driver of employment, economic activity, foreign exchange and tax revenue.

Here you'll see that tourism's direct contribution to GDP, tax revenue, employment and export earnings in many of the other jurisdictions in the region far exceeds that of the DR, as their economies are not as diversified from tourism as is yours.

We see the impact on GDP with an average multiplier of 1.6%. I've noted from the Banco Popular-Asonahores report that the multiplier for the DR is much higher than that for the region – standing at 2.7%.

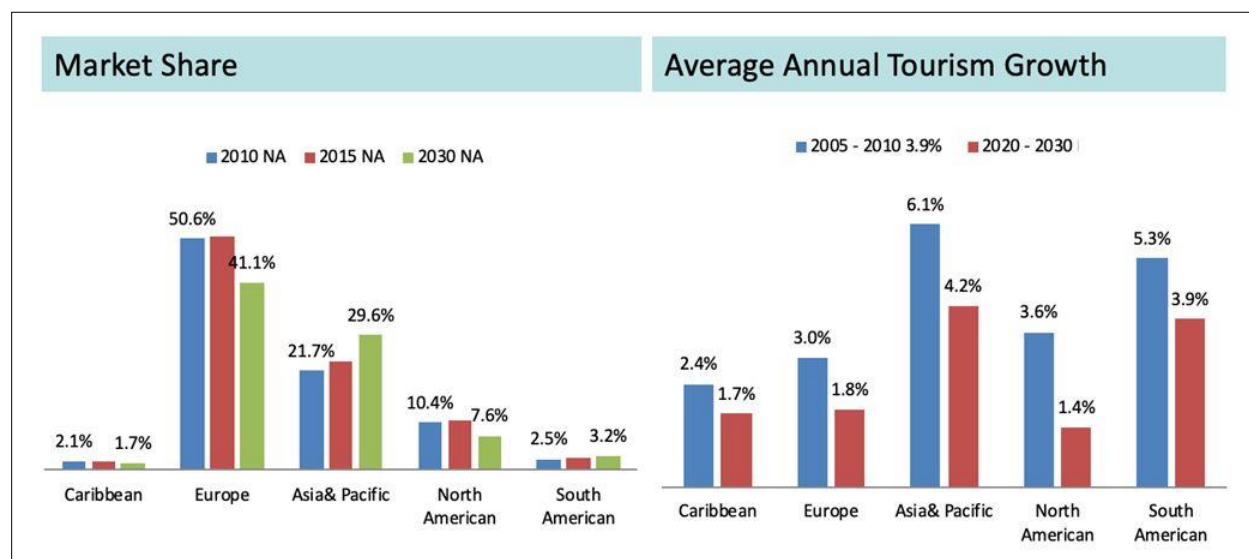




This is good, as it shows your progress in creating internal linkages with other areas of the economy, thus retaining greater tourism export earnings and their contribution to foreign reserves – something which all jurisdictions in the region should strive to do.

We also know from trend lines and projections, that global travel competition is only growing and that the Caribbean's trend line of global market share is on an overall decline. This is one of our challenges looking ahead and there are a number of things which we must act upon now to address – at the company level, the destination level, and in some instances as a region.

## Caribbean Losing Global Market Share; Growth Rate Slows



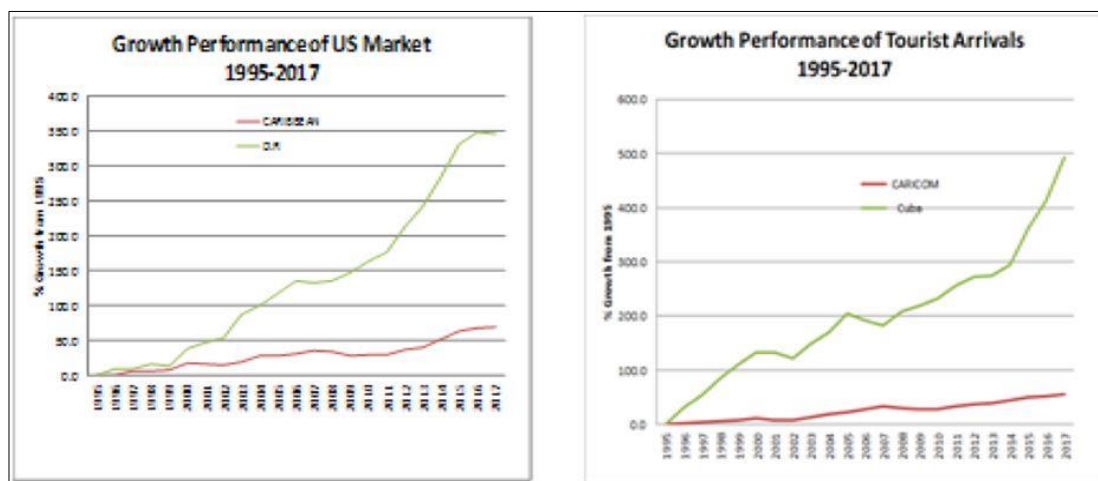
According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization's forecast, between 2020 and 2030, the projected annual growth rate for the Caribbean is expected to slow, and be outpaced by the emerging markets of Asia and the Pacific and South America. Having just returned from nearly three weeks in Asia as a tourist, I can personally attest to the quality and value they offer and the strength and potential of their product – particularly on the experiential side, far outpacing what they were able to offer just ten years ago. Our region must adapt and be prepared for an unprecedented level of global competition. And when we look at the annual growth rate within the Caribbean itself, we see great disparity.

## Caribbean Tourist Arrivals Grow Disproportionately

On the graph below, you will see that despite the region continuing to experience growth in visitor arrivals, that growth is disproportional. When one takes the Dominican Republic, on the left, and Cuba, on the right, out of the equation, the region's growth rate diminishes significantly – looking at the green lines for the DR and Cuba, and the rest of the Caribbean's rate following the red line. While it's been good for the DR and Cuba, the degree of disparity and the continuation raises questions.



What can the region, including the DR, learn from this, regarding tourism policies and destination and investor ROI? Is it reasonable to assume that a trend line like this can continue without downside consequences for the overall region? Long-term, is the degree of disparity good for the DR? I would say that much of the rest of the Caribbean has things to learn from the DR, but also would assert that it is in the DR's interest to help ensure that as the tide rises, all ships rise, and that all of us in the region are in this sea together.



## Looking Beyond to Global Performance and Trend

Just last week the World Travel and Tourism Council released its initial findings regarding the industry's 2018 performance and forecasting to 2030.

The global Travel & Tourism sector grew at 3.9 percent to contribute a record \$8.8 trillion and 319 million jobs to the world economy in 2018, representing 10.4 percent of all



global economic activity. This was the eighth consecutive year that our sector outpaced growth in the wider global economy and we recorded the second-highest growth of any major sector in the world, growing faster than healthcare at 3.1 percent, information technology at 1.7 percent and financial services at 1.7 percent and only behind manufacturing, which grew by 4 percent.



Nearly 80 percent was spent on leisure travel vs. business travel. The sector is also responsible for one in five of all new jobs created in the world over the last five years.

Looking ahead, according to the WTTC, the travel and tourism sector is forecast to contribute 100 million new jobs globally over the next ten years, accounting for 421 million jobs by 2029. A half million of those new jobs are expected to be created in the Caribbean.

WTTC's CEO Gloria Guevara gives all of us wise counsel when she says that....

***"Last year's results prove the power of tourism as a tool for governments to generate prosperity while creating jobs which particularly support women, youth and other, often marginalized groups of society."***

It provides further proof for us, as tourism stakeholders - our business leaders, private sector organizations, governments and education stakeholders like UCE - as to why we should continually invest our time, talent and resources to ensure initiatives, programs and policies which ensure our future viability.

So, with the strength of the foundation which has been laid for tourism locally, regionally and globally, knowing the incredible potential which lies ahead, and also knowing that there are tremendous challenges which tourism faces now and into the near future, how do we as Governments, institutions, and businesses protect and enhance our investments while also ensuring that we maximize the benefits which tourism can bring?

## What have we learned?

### Challenges we face: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly

What have over 50 years of tourism taught us? What are our challenges as we enter a new era of maturation? What are some of the things we must pay attention to so that this incredible gift of tourism and this beautiful Caribbean that we've both earned and have been blessed with is respected and nurtured so that it continues to give returns to us and the world? First, let's take an honest look at 50 years of the good, the bad, and the ugly through a tourism prism.

#### The Good:

- Economic Development and Growth
- Investments in Infrastructure, Accommodations and New Products
- Expanded and More Affordable Airlift
- Education and Training Investments Supporting Mass Development of Our People
- Enlightened and Broader Awareness of Different People, Languages and Cultures
- Improved Standards in Quality of Services and Products
- Diversification of Our Products
- New and Expanded Locally-Owned Businesses Tied to Tourism
- Opportunity to Showcase to Masses the Qualities of Our Country, People, Culture and History



## The Bad and The Ugly:

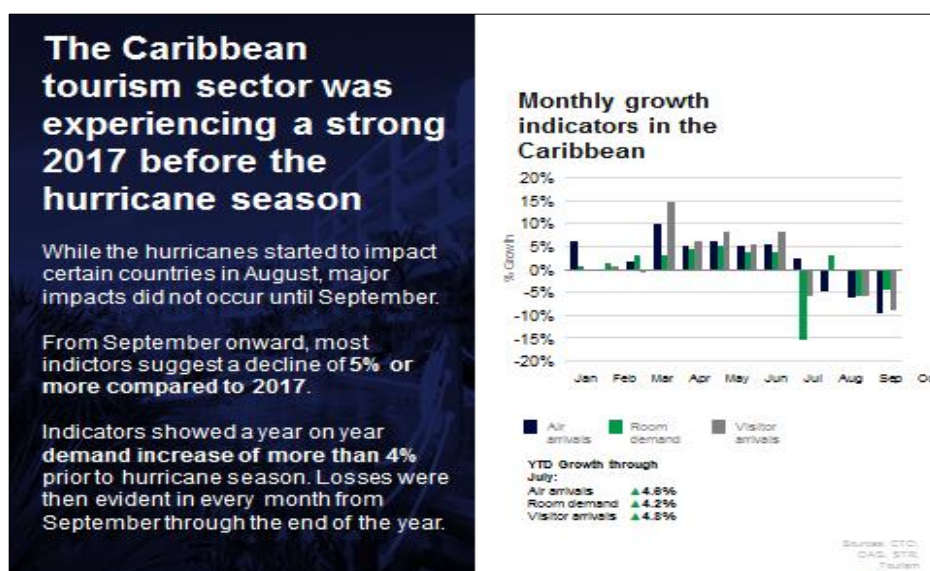
- A Growing Strain on Our Infrastructure
- Traffic and Congestion
- Environmental Degradation
- Overbuilding in Some Areas
- Crime and Safety Problems
- Acquiescence of Leadership
- Inconsistent Service Quality
- Language and Cultural Barriers Limiting Broader Market Appeal
- Poor Management and Regulation of Some Tourism Services
- Weak Public-Private Partnerships
- Insensitivity to Price Elasticity with Growing Taxes and Fees on the Tourism Sector

Concurrently, our industry has faced external challenges which have impacted our performance, and potential. We have experience in managing and adapting to these, but we must become better adept and collaborative – as a matter of survival.

## These External Challenges Have Included:

- Global Competition
- Hurricanes, Droughts and Natural Disasters
- Health Threats
- Terrorism and Travel Safety Concerns
- International Travel Restrictions
- High Energy and Oil Costs
- Global Economics and Recessions
- Consumer's Lack of Understanding about the Caribbean Geography

While these have been external challenges, and consequentially it is more difficult to manage and mitigate their threat to our industry, nevertheless, we know that there are things which we can do to minimize their threat level. Likewise, they underscore that in the minds of the traveling public, the Caribbean is often viewed as one place. This branded perception is both a benefit and a challenge.



By example, let's look at what happened to visitor arrivals to the entire region immediately following the back-to-back 2017 hurricanes. While less than 25 percent of the region was directly impacted, the consumer's perception of the Caribbean was that the entire region was impacted.

As the traveling public could not discern the difference between Bermuda and Barbuda or Dominica and the Dominican Republic, cancellations increased and advanced bookings declined for everyone by 5 percent or more.

Our organization and others responded collaboratively to dispel this perception, but not before there was considerable damage to all of us. Lessons learned: our brand Caribbean is an unrecognized and unsupported strength which can be capitalized upon at all times and even moreso in times of crisis.

As we've seen, it's not just weather occurrences which can negatively impact our businesses. Look recently at Zika and sargassum, and criminal activity in some areas which have had a negative contagion effect on the entire Caribbean. Many other factors can cause a temporary or long-term negative impact upon destinations. Boom times are not guaranteed forever. If we are not prepared and adaptable, and willing to work better together as all stakeholders, particularly in today's highly competitive and changing world, there are consequences. How many of you remember when these destinations were in their heyday?

## Popular Destinations Which Lost Mass Appeal

<i>Destination</i>	<i>Primary Reason for Downturn</i>
<b>The Catskills, New York</b>	<i>Failure to adapt to new customer</i>
<b>Atlantic City, New Jersey</b>	<i>Marketing changed, then banked everything on gambling</i>
<b>Acapulco, Mexico</b>	<i>Crime and fear of crime, contaminated beach</i>
<b>Beirut, Lebanon</b>	<i>Crime, terrorism, political and social instability</i>
<b>Haiti</b>	<i>Natural disasters, political instability, social unrest, environmental blight</i>
<b>Tehran, Iran</b>	<i>Political instability</i>
<b>The Philippines</b>	<i>Perception of crime</i>
<b>Egypt</b>	<i>Political unrest, visitor harassment</i>

We must constantly read the tea leaves and reinvent ourselves. We've all witnessed how some destinations have adapted and renewed, and they did it together – willing and cooperative leaders from Government, the private sectors and other stakeholders.





## Popular Bounce Back Destinations Which Adapted and Reinvented Themselves

Las Vegas, Nevada	San Juan, Puerto Rico
New York City	Havana, Cuba
Miami Beach, Florida	Bermuda
Cartagena, Colombia	Magaluf, Majorca

## The World Is Changing Rapidly

What do the tea leaves tell us today?

- ***Organizations, destinations and stakeholders must position themselves to succeed.***
- ***Sustaining growth will require continuous innovation and reinvention.***
- ***Leaders will need to foster a nimble outlook to respond to new customer demands and expectations.***

## Five Interlinked Megatrends Shaping the Future

A study just released this year by the World Travel and Tourism Council and Bloomberg Travel is well worth a review by those who wish to survive and thrive into the future. The report provides a data-driven examination of five interlinked megatrends shaping the future. They speak to each of these trends in a way which forces you to wrap your head around them and to think of your role, and that of other stakeholders to adapt and change.

- **Reality, enhanced** – *Recognizing that today's experience-driven world is fueled by a desire for personal enrichment, self-direction and community.*
- **Life, restructured** – *Realizing that the gig and sharing economies are redefining relationships, disrupting industries and creating new expectations for work and life.*
- **Data, revolutionized** – *Knowing that data, through the Internet of Things and machine learning, has become a driving force of the economy- enabling unprecedented personalization and connectivity.*
- **Power, redistributed** – *Understanding that power and demographic shifts from West to East and nations to cities are redefining centers of influence and reshaping global markets, while individuals increasingly mobilize and demand accountability.*
- **Consumption, reimagined** - *As a response to escalating environment risks, consumer awareness has translated into more ethical and resource-efficient lifestyles and which are driving the decision-making of younger generations.*



## WTTC / Bloomberg Travel Report

The WTTC and Bloomberg Travel report states that together, these five megatrends capture what will matter most to travel and tourism amid the tectonic shifts unfolding around us. Exploration of each megatrend is focused around four pivotal areas: People, Society, Business and Technology.

The report contends that ***“Today’s fast-paced and interconnected environment makes it more challenging than ever before to anticipate the transformations ahead. The interplay of factors and drivers at the local, national, regional and global level are complex, requiring investments in analysis, planning and execution to successfully navigate.”***

Further, paraphrasing, the report challenges us to work together...examining the shifting personal ideals, societal evolution, business innovations and technological advances across the five megatrends, towards an enhanced understanding of our ever-changing ecosystem. In turn, they hope that our analysis will support the sector in preparing for the opportunities and potential risks ahead whilst building the competencies that will enable us to compete and grow in this new world.

In doing so the report advises that we must:

1. **Recognize that Tomorrow’s Traveler is Different to Today’s** - Through a customer-centric approach build on and respond to the values, needs and desires of travelers, notably personal enrichment and community to autonomy and personalization
2. **Maximize your DNA – your Uniqueness.** Understand as businesses, destinations and regions what makes you unique and deliver an authentic experience enhanced by technology.
3. **Embrace Change or Get Left Behind**, by capitalizing on trends, business models and technologies which are defining enterprises and business model transformations in this new era.
4. **Enhance Impact through Tech** - to further enable and heighten the impact of both public and private sector strategies through innovation, efficiency and customization.

## Observations and Closing Comments

The WTTC/Bloomberg Travel report provides exceptional and visionary guidance to tourism stakeholders. These points, as well as those advanced at a more on-the-ground practical level in the Asonahores/Banco Popular Report offer a number of excellent prescriptions to help propel the Dominican Republic into the future.

As I move to conclude my remarks, I’d like to comment (*in italics*) briefly on some of the recommendations in the Asonahores/Banco Popular report.

1. **Openness to business and conventions; to boost business tourism.** *Embracing this presents the DR with tremendous growth opportunity. The MICE business represents over 25 percent of arrivals in some countries. It requires specialized skills and training, marketing, facilities, and support regulations to succeed.*



2. **Invest in the marketing strategies of the Dominican Republic, to promote the diversity of options offered to tourists.** *Much of the travel industry and the world is unaware of the diverse offerings available to tourists in the DR. Capitalizing upon this is more a matter of marketing, not offering. It's there in abundance in history, food, natural attractions and cultural offerings. Joining in regional Caribbean-branded marketing efforts can enhance both the DR's and the region's competitive positioning.*
3. **Implement measures that encourage tourist spending, to increase the income of the sector.** *Destinations which are making strides here have looked to technology and engaging more Small and Medium-Sized Tourism Enterprise (SMTE) opportunities for the visitor to connect and spend.*
4. **Invest in public services, access to energy sources and infrastructures (roads, water and sewage distribution and processing systems, airports, hotels, establishments, among others), taking into account the global objective of sustainable tourism, giving importance to the care of the environment.** *Continuing to look at public-private sector approaches to provide these offerings – presents opportunity for them to be advanced without over-burdening the limited resources of Government. The DR has made strides in this area and should continue. Might not a PPP approach also be considered for the marketing and promotion of the destination? This is something increasingly being embraced by destinations around the world.*
5. **Strengthen security plans that allow the country to protect the integrity of both tourists and residents.** *This is absolutely essential. Successful approaches are taken holistically – addressing both the causes and consequences of anti-social behaviors. The private sector should be at the table and have a clear role to play with stakeholders.*
6. **Reforms or social policies aimed at improving the quality of life of employees in the sector.** *These are the face and voice of your business, the industry and the country. A growing number of hotels are engaged in providing lifestyle and life skills training to employees in this regard.*
7. **Improve the training and education of the workforce to bring knowledge and innovation to the companies and tourist destinations.** *Building upon successful partnerships with institutions like UCE is essential. Happy, well-trained, recognized and motivated employees are fundamental to your success.*
8. **Cooperation between the Ministries of Transport and Tourism, so that the tourists stay is not limited by transportation restrictions.** *This cross-ministerial, departmental and agency approach to addressing problems and creating opportunities is essential. The private sector, through organizations like Asonahores likewise should have a collaborating seat at the table if it does not. The same collaborative approach is important on matters like health, safety, security and tourism promotion and development.*

There is so much more which we could discuss when looking at the far-reaching topic at hand today. I've not sufficiently touched upon how the DR and the region can collaborate on other matters, including the marketing of the brand Caribbean. There are opportunities for much greater collaboration on matters which are common challenges to all of us throughout the region, like climate change, disaster readiness and response, safety and security. If only by better sharing best practices – there is much which the DR can learn from the Caribbean and much which the Caribbean can learn from the Dominican Republic.

I hope we can leave that for further discussion and action.



As I come to a close, I trust that I've added some further insight into the topic - *"Dominican Tourism in the Caribbean and Global Context"*. I return to where I started. It is not by chance I believe that today we are seeing another step toward stakeholder engagement and collaboration – as one of your tourism industry's leaders, Mr. Frank Rainieri, embraces and is embraced by one of your education leaders - President Jose Hazim Torres and the Universidad Central del Este, UCE.

As you look to the future, education and industry can help drive your transformation to a new level. This will take broad stakeholder leadership, and a new level of commitment and collaboration, locally and I would hope regionally. It will take stakeholder courage as exemplified by Mr. Rainieri during the past 50 years – driven by a commitment by many of you to address sustainability and infrastructure at all levels in its broadest sense - the environmental, physical and human infrastructure essential to embracing a future with new challenges and opportunities.

Muchas gracias por invitarme ser parte de esta reunión tan especial.

## ***"Dominican Tourism in the Caribbean and Global Context"***

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By Frank Comito

CEO and Director General

Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association

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**Thank you**



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