



MINISTRY OF TOURISM, INDUSTRY
& COMMERCE

'MOVING GUYANA'S TOURISM FORWARD'

June 6, 2007

*Guyana International Conference Centre
Liliendaal, E.C.D*

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

The Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Commerce in collaboration with the Guyana Tourism Authority convened the tourism conference *'Moving Guyana's Tourism Forward'* on June 6th 2007 at the Guyana International Convention Centre.

The **principal objective** of the conference was to bring stakeholders in the industry together to update on the present state of the industry, to network and share information, and to discuss key issues and recommend actions.

Following presentations from Brian James, Chairman of the Board of the Guyana Tourism Authority; Honourable Manniram Prashad, Minister of Tourism, Industry and Commerce; and His Excellency Bharrat Jagdeo, President of Guyana, three working group sessions were convened to discuss Marketing and Awareness, Product Development and Key Challenges of the Sector.

A number of actions were suggested by participants following discussion of key issues and updates on ongoing activities. It is envisaged that the recommended actions will shape the development of Annual Work Plans of the Guyana Tourism Authority as well as guide the policy direction of the Ministry.

	Issues	Suggested Actions
VISION	Strategic Vision for the Sector	The 5 Year Tourism Development Plan 2006-2010 had examined the key areas of the tourism sector and should be used as a guide for the sector's development
AWARENESS AND MARKETING	Need for a Comprehensive Marketing Strategy and Plan	Government needs to allocate more funds to the marketing of Guyana. The Marketing Plan being developed by the Guyana Tourism Authority should look to develop strategies for marketing the product according the niche markets There should be continued attendance at trade fairs to capture the market consistently.
	No Image vs. Bad Image Damage Control	Need to have continuous positive programme / positive news in the Diaspora, Europe and Caribbean. In light of recent events, Guyana should have a Public Relations Division either attached to the Guyana Tourism Authority or the Ministry of Tourism to handle advisories on the country by putting out our advisory in advance of others being issued on Guyana. It should be prompt and act as damage control in the event of any negative press being dispelled about Guyana and staff in the Industry should have specific training on response.
	Promoting tourism to the diaspora effectively International representation & assistance from Foreign Offices	Televised adverts in the Diaspora, Europe, Caribbean Target Markets Develop infomercial on Guyana (GTA/ Private Sector) Other than that which has been shown on the BWIA In Flight Magazine. Consulates and High Commissions need to show greater commitment to supporting the marketing of the product.
	Defining Guyana's tourism product and the need to develop a brand	Guyana's tourism is defined as a 'sustainable, nature based product' with elements of birding, yachting, sports, culture and heritage. A specific brand must be selected and use continuously. <i>Guyana Naturally</i> All products coming out and being advertised out of Guyana and/or which has been recognized as a reputable tourism entity should bear the seal of the Guyana Tourism Authority, automatically identifying the product and company.
	Need for a local Awareness Programme	There should be better, more organized promotion of the Domestic Tourism Product Packages should be created to directly target the local tourists utilizing a percentage of the returns from the Departure Tax and or the Lotto Fund for such initiatives.

		<p>GTA should work towards accessing funds from varying donor agencies to assist operators to reduce the costing associated with providing tier-pricing tours.</p> <p>Institution of Tour clubs with a similar mandate as that of the Environmental Clubs</p>
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	<p><i>Establishing and managing natural and cultural sites</i> (UNESCO World Heritage Sites; Historic Georgetown Development Programme)</p>	<p>To strongly lobby Government to seek the listing of areas which may be considered for World Heritage Sites</p> <p>One central body should be established for listing of all sites & management and monitoring.</p> <p>A portion of the departure tax should be allocated to the National Trust to enhance their programme and allow them to undertake their mandate.</p>
	<p><i>Visa Processing and Costs of Visas</i></p>	<p>Need for Hassle free processing and reduced cost for processing of visas</p>
	<p><i>High transportation Cost -Air, Land and River and Limited Options</i></p>	<p>Need to expand the road and river network in the country.</p> <p>Need to improve Infrastructure – airstrips, landing area, roads, navigable river. Costs will improve with more traffic into Guyana and to destinations</p>
	<p><i>Absence of Standards and Regulations</i></p>	<p>Draft Standards & Regulations for accommodation establishments, lodges & resorts, tour operating & tour guiding needs to be completed</p> <p>Education programmes for tourism operators on the understanding and requirement of standards and regulations should be implemented</p>
	<p><i>Research and Statistics</i></p>	<p>Need to put systems in place to better collect and analyse data on visitor arrivals and other stats related to the industry</p>
	<p><i>Safety and security at destinations.</i></p>	<p>More needs to be done to address the crime situation and increase conviction rate.</p> <p>Measures should be put in place by the GTA to ensure that safety & security are met in all tourism establishments taking into consideration the nature and type of operations e.g resorts, protected areas, tour operations, hotels.</p> <p>All operations need to have basic safety precautions and equipment for visitors such as medical equipment, signage, safety gears, first aid, emergency response etc.</p>
	<p><i>Access to financing for product development</i></p>	<p>Strengthen institutional support for investment.</p> <p>Reduce bureaucracy.</p>

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	<p>Limited trained and skilled personnel</p> <p>Challenge of retaining human resources</p>	<p>Training of staff in the Industry should be on-going. Police, Immigration and Custom Officers at Border Points need to be trained. There is also need for brochures to educate people, such as taxi drivers, visitors, etc. upon entering the country.</p> <p>There is need for focus on the Portuguese and Spanish Languages.</p> <p>Offer better remuneration to retain skilled personnel.</p> <p>Involve University students at an early stage within the working environment through internships.</p> <p>Proper screening of students and potential employees before they are accepted into hospitality schools or the industry.</p>
	<p>Integrity of the tourism product</p>	<p>Proper monitoring of tourism product and enforcement, land use planning, and community involvement in monitoring and safeguarding natural and cultural sites.</p>
	<p>High Cost and Unreliability of Electricity</p>	<p>Items such as Solar Batteries, Solar Panels, Water Heaters, etc. the Tax should be zero-rated.</p>
	<p>Difficulties in obtaining duty-free concession</p>	<p>Granting of duty-free concessions should a transparent and structured procedure.</p> <p>There needs to be a review of the policies on concessions, tax breaks, benefits for the industry and to improve access</p> <p>Need for better awareness on accessing concessions for the industry</p> <p>Guyana Tourism Authority should take a hands-on approach in providing assistance to the private sector.</p>
	<p>VAT</p> <p>Due to the high cost after the implementation of 16% VAT, the market has become non-competitive. The result being high cost of package and transportation</p>	<p>There is need for the VAT to be lowered or exempted. Also other taxes including Corporate Tax can be lowered to offset the damage VAT has affected the Industry with.</p> <p>Provision of a subsidy for Operators</p>

ADMINISTRATION	GTA	
	Personnel and Expertise	Need to appoint an Executive Director with international experience. Government should finance employment of this individual or seek donor funding.
	Limited Budget	The Budget allocation of \$65M for the tourism industry is not adequate and more money should be allocated to the Industry. Funding from Main Big Lime and GuyEXPO should be directed to developing the industry by supporting development and marketing of the product locally
	Poor Location of the GTA Office in relation to being able to reach visitors	GTA office is out of reach of the every day person, needs to be centrally located or have an office in a central location