

Remarks

by

Mr. Basil Smith
Director of Tourism, Jamaica Tourist Board

speaking on

DESTINATION JAMAICA

at the

First Annual Tourism Outlook Seminar

February 20, 2008
Kingston Hilton

Good morning everyone. (Name the dignitaries and VIPs.)

I'm delighted to welcome you to our first Tourism Outlook Seminar. Let me begin by underscoring how important your presence is today. Your participation in this very first seminar will be key to its success, and will lay the foundation for an event that I hope will become a starred entry in your calendars every year from now on.

My topic is DESTINATION JAMAICA; over the next 15 minutes or so I'd like to share with you my thoughts regarding:

- our status today as a flourishing tourist destination with tremendous potential for continuing growth; and
- my vision for marketing Jamaica to achieve maximum fulfillment of all that great potential.

Jamaica's stopover visitor arrivals have maintained an upward trajectory in tandem with the impressive growth in room inventory. Significantly, we have been able to hold the high ground we achieved in 2006 and have actually increased our stopover arrival figures despite the impact of the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative on arrivals out of the U.S. Growth from other markets compensated for the decline from the U.S.

Our growing popularity is an indisputable fact.

But so much more can be done ... and must be done ... if we are going to realize the tremendous potential that Jamaica has, and grow our market share in an increasingly competitive market.

Brand Jamaica is particularly strong in tourism and has proved to be exceptionally resilient, but we do face serious and unique challenges, just as we are also faced with valuable opportunities.

In this time of continuous change, it really has become critical to approach the business of hospitality marketing with a clear vision of where you want to go and the best way to get there.

We're all aware of the extraordinary strength of the travel market and its continued growth. However, the market never stands still. To market a product wisely, we must **know and understand** the marketplace completely. And we must be mindful of the factors that can effect change, from fads and trends to economic swings and fluctuating fuel costs to changing weather patterns, natural disasters and the ongoing fear factor.

So let's take a look now at some specific areas of focus where our marketing initiatives can help make Jamaica the preferred destination for special-interest travel.

Today's traveler is hungry for an engaging experience that will add excitement to the trip and make it unforgettable. While our wonderful climate and glorious beaches will always be a lure, visitors now want much more than simple relaxation. Today, each moment must be a peak experience -- and one the visitor can talk about long after the vacation is over. After all, bragging rights are part of the fun!

Of course, it's imperative to develop a good eye for trends with durability and longevity. And dining is definitely at the forefront! Watch any TV travel segment now, and the host will invariably sit down at a local restaurant on camera, and may also take the viewer shopping at a local food or farmers market.

There's a growing passion for food, and it's time for us to capitalize on Jamaica's extraordinary diversity in its culinary offerings ... from the upbeat fun of our roadside jerk stands to the several events we have developed around our culinary traditions, to fine dining experiences under the supervision of a private chef, elegantly served at water's edge. The Jamaican dining experience runs the gamut, from the authentic local food to exquisite epicurean grandeur. Jamaica's astonishingly diverse product for this rapidly growing culinary travel market has been attracting a lot of editorial interest recently, and the JTB marketing initiatives this year capitalize even more on this growing interest.

Jamaica is the centre of the Caribbean music world, and our music festivals are attracting progressively more travelers from all continents. This is a major growth market, embracing all nationalities and all age groups. There is no Caribbean destination that can compete with Jamaica's music offerings, and the opportunity to capture a larger share of this market is tremendous. Bear in mind that, while reggae is the most obvious and well-known facet of our musical heritage, there are several other facets that are sufficiently well developed to be of greater benefit and relevance to tourism.

Golf has become a major attraction for many types of traveler, and in particular attracts high-yield visitors, often with a preference for luxury accommodations, fine dining and après-golf spa treatments. So it's a market that benefits many sectors of our hospitality industry.

Baby Boomers, many of them now retired and with the luxury of time on their hands, travel the globe to play. Gen-X travelers spend lavishly on their favorite pastimes, and golf is a hot favorite. The Millennials, now entering the work force and beginning career courses that will generate substantial salaries with room for lots of discretionary spending, are already lining up their irons.

Women players now represent a very significant percentage of the market, traveling in executive groups or for girlfriend getaways or mother-daughter trips. And of course, golf always plays a key role in incentive travel planning.

Jamaica has a spectacular range of courses, with challenging greens, breathtaking scenery and luxuriant golf clubs. We've hosted many international tournaments, including: Jamaica Invitational Pro-Am *Annie's Revenge*; the Celebrity Players Tour; the Jamaica Classic; Shell's *Wonderful World of Golf*; the Mazda Champions; the Jamaica Classic; and the Johnnie Walker World Cup of Golf. It's time now to build our tournament portfolio further and develop even stronger positioning for our spectacular courses and our superior facilities.

Jamaica is ideally located to attract water sports lovers. Our coastline is diverse, with microclimates that create perfect conditions for scuba, sailing, surfing, fishing and more. It's a message that we must broadcast to the world in order to capture increased market share.

Spas are of special interest to us as a market to tap, and this is supported by the growing market for health and wellness travel. Spa travel is currently the fastest-growing segment of the hospitality industry, cited in 2006 by ISPA as the deciding factor behind one third of all leisure travel.

Among Jamaica's advantages in attracting market share are the natural spa environment, indigenous herbal products, mineral springs, a skilled workforce, indigenous healing traditions and strong brand recognition.

The opportunity here is enormous.

Faith-based travel is another growth market that we plan to tap in this year's marketing campaign. The JTB is extremely active in pursuing this market, with a database of approximately 500 faith-based meeting planners from the U.S. and Canada.

Jamaica has been a member of the Religious Conference Management Association (RCMA) for over 17 years. This 3,402-member organization is the premier association in the U.S. for planners of religious conferences, responsible for 17,000 meetings annually, totaling 14.7 million attendees. Of these, 15,047 were held outside the U.S. in 2007.

Our people are undoubtedly our greatest asset, and certainly the Jamaican welcome is a driving force in building repeat visits. But let's not ignore our weaknesses and the challenge of correcting them. There is great benefit to our tourism industry in educating Jamaicans about its economic value for all residents, not merely for business owners. More involvement is needed to bring Jamaicans into the activities of the industry. And building a better understanding of service is crucial.

Ten years ago, the Internet was a source of information that travelers were beginning to use for exploring destinations. Now it's a major driving force in the decision process, and a key vehicle for bookings.

Jamaica's visibility on the Internet is crucial. We need a greater presence, with instant linkage to our tourism product when consumers are surfing the Web. In 2008, we will:

- Continue to influence prospects via key search words;
- Enhance our presence on key travel and niche sites while testing new sites and categories;

And explore new opportunities, sponsorship and technology to increase impact and presence. In fact, we are determined – within this year – to become recognized as the destination, certainly the Caribbean destination, that makes the most effective use of the World Wide Web in its marketing activity.

One resource that is now available to you is TIPS, which stands for the Tourism Information Publishing Site located at <http://www.jtbonline.org>. It is the first in a suite of web-based information products produced by the Jamaica Tourist Board to help communicate frequently requested, and new, information, tools and photography. I invite you all, and particularly the members of the media, to refer to this site frequently as content is constantly being updated.

To build BRAND JAMAICA, the JTB is working strategically to establish stronger footholds in additional markets by promoting our enormous range of assets. By casting our net wider, and with highly targeted marketing initiatives, we will create an enhanced brand awareness that will not only attract new visitors to our shores but will keep them returning repeatedly to Jamaica, which is the reason we make the assertion, "Once You Go, You Know."

Thank you for your attention and interest.

And now it's my pleasure to introduce to you Jamaica's Chief Tourism Salesman, the Honorable Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism.