

**TOURISM: A NEW GLOBAL LANGUAGE  
FOR GROWTH**

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### UNLOCKING NATURAL RESOURCES

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century has, thus far, become defined more by what we have been losing than what we have been gaining. As the world's rainforests, glaciers, icebergs, endangered animal and plant species, time, oil reserves, investment revenues and hope have proven less and less than we ever dreamt possible, the fear and fight for natural resources intensifies. Energy is being lost, tangibly and intangibly.

And yet there is one source of energy which each and every individual in the world has at their disposal, in abundance. This form of energy has the power to ignite simple ideas into sophisticated innovations, passing thoughts into powerful actions. From this source can come growth, development, legacy, unity, purpose.

This source of energy? WORDS

Within the Travel & Tourism (T&T) industry, an industry which has gained massive awareness, appreciation and participation across the globe over the past decade, our words have become a vital source of energy for the sector's success. The words we use to lead the tourism sector – how we articulate our vision, our purpose, our goals, our unique identity, our challenges, our challengers, and our future – are little bundles of energy.

This word-based energy which has the ability to:

- ignite a passion for the industry,
- inspire our actions,
- align our thinking and

- create strong, united, equitable, admired and competitive destinations for the benefit of both the people coming to the destination as visitors, and the people of the destination as proud residents.

### ALIGNING VISION, ALIGNING DEFINITION

The T&T sector acts as a critical driver of the economy of nations, especially those defined as 'emerging' economies. In recent years the T&T sector has moved away from initial consideration as a peripheral 'soft economy' on the outer fringe of economic impact and is increasingly seen as a 'hard economy' at the heart of GDP-based nation building.

Much of this is due to the fact that the sector has started to overtly describe itself, and be described by other sectors, with words from the dictionaries and discussions of economists: *trade, investment, receipts, revenues, % GDP, % Capex, yield, ROI, employment, equity.*

Still, new words and shared language do not necessarily mean shared understanding. Take the words *growth and development* as an example.

Every individual working within the T&T industry seeks to achieve growth and development for their part of the Tourism experience chain. Whether working within the public sector or as a private entity, in a budding SM(M)E or in an established corporation, focus and measurement of success is within the context of growth and development of the tourism sector.

Seems straightforward, right? Wrong.

For those in government, *growth and development* refers to advancement of the sector through sustainable growth in visitor arrivals, GDP, job creation and equitable transformation. All of these contribute to meaningful destination competitiveness. Brand strength is also a critical part of *growth and development*.

For those in emerging small tourism businesses – the SM(M)Es which form the fabric of the industry - *growth and development* refers to the creation of new opportunities for employment, for wealth creation, for ownership, for long-awaited and hard-fought for empowerment through tourism.

For big business, *growth and development* refers to growth in margins, market opportunity, profitability and brand equity.

These are but a few segment-based comparisons.

Approaches to climate change and environmental sustainability also factor into the macro-definition of *growth and development*.

As do product development, the elimination of the highs and lows of seasonality, skills development and service excellence of our tourism experience delivery.

And of course there is the *growth and development* of subsectors within our T&T industry – cultural tourism, cruise tourism, medical tourism, etc.

Three simple words – *growth and development* – suddenly unlock an array of meaning, and therefore an array of understanding, and misunderstanding.

### **SPEAKING THE SAME LANGUAGE**

So many words within the T&T vocabulary have sadly lost their value of meaning due to, *inter alia*:

- Burden of political subtext
- Marketing overuse
- Association with specific leaders / times

- Boredom of usage
- Default usage

As a result, the sentiment and significance of what needs to be said is either defused or disappears all together. With it goes clarity, conviction and communication. The energy becomes stale, sterile and even sometimes cynical.

This is not, however, a fate which must be accepted. Redefinition and reinvigoration of meaning is always possible. The renewable energy of words simply needs to be unlocked.

### FEELING THE SAME IMPACT

The opportunity exists for each and every individual in the T&T sector - public sector and private sector alike - leaders, followers and observers, to bring meaning back into communication through careful usage of words:

- Turning NOUNS into VERBS
- Finding NEW EXPRESSIONS of old themes
- EDITING out the sources of anything but inspiration

As an example, the following wordplay demonstrates how 'official' language can be adjusted to get both the substance and the spirit across.

#### Official T&T Terminology



#### Alternative Expression

Tourism Industry

Tourism Economy

Tourist / Traveller	Guest
Transformation	Shared Opportunity
Mandate	Commitment
Growth	Advancement, Upliftment
Barriers	Challenges
Strategy	Critical Choices
Goals	Priorities
Empowerment	Enablement
Tolerance	Acceptance
Responsibility	Duty, Pride
Advertising	Communication
Spend, Cost	Investment

Simple adjustments with potentially significant impact.

The Tourism industry is the backbone of many nations dependent on the Tourism economy for economic growth, social unity and global competitiveness. Therefore, when members of the Tourism community speak to one another, sharing goals, aspirations and challenges, it is critical to ensure that the language used is bringing the industry closer together through shared understanding, vision and definitions.

**- ENDS -**