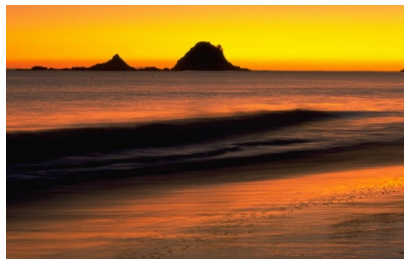


NEW MARKETING STRATEGY OF THE CARIBBEAN ISLANDS



Caribbean islands are world known tourism destination. The islands, separated by diverse languages and cultures, have witnessed a decline in tourism industry growth. The tourism is literally vital to this region as it drives most of local economies. According to the Caribbean Trade Organization's (CTO) data, the local tourism industry grew at an average annual rate of less than 3.5 percent over the past 10 years, compared with 4.5 percent around the world.

Caribbean officials want to stop this negative development and they came up with possible solutions. They have decided to market the Caribbean tourism as a single brand. "Whether we like it or not, we're all intrinsically tied," said Allen Chastanet the chairman of CTO. He also adds: "If you can create more awareness of the Caribbean, then all the destinations in the region will benefit." The CTO wants to replace the government tourism ministers with marketing professionals. Mr. Chastanet, who is also St. Lucia's minister of tourism and civil aviation, argues: "It's very difficult for a minister not to represent his country."

The problems with Caribbean tourism became more severe as the number of visitors from the US has dropped. The reason of which, was that the US began requiring travelers to carry passports on trips to the Caribbean, Mexico and Canada. Other problems are caused by rising prices of fuel and the fall-off in the strength of the US dollar. Allen Chastanet said that intra regional travel in the Caribbean market was down by more than 30 percent.

All these reasons convinced the Caribbean officials to promote their tourism together. The campaign has already started in the New York City and Toronto where billboards for individual Caribbean islands were recently replaced with ads for the whole region.

Date: 2007-11-20

Article link:

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