

2016

REMARKS

**Delivered by Mr Richard Duncan
Chairman
Tourism Development Company Limited
of Trinidad and Tobago
June 14th 2016 @10:00am
Anne Mitchell Gift Auditorium, Scarborough
Library Facility
Launch: "The Charter"
Maximizing our Visitor's Experiences (STEP)**

- **The Honourable Shamfa Cudjoe, Minister of Tourism**
- **Assemblyman Tracy Davidson-Celestine, Deputy Chief Secretary and Secretary, Division of Tourism and Transportation, THA**
- **Ms. Cherryl-Ann Solomon, Administrator, Division of Tourism and Transportation, THA**
- **Mrs. Fredericka Brooks- Adams- Director of Tourism, Division of Tourism and Transportation**
- **Mr. Orville Dillion, President, TRANSMAX**
- **Officials of the THA, Ministry of Tourism and TDC**
- **Tourism Transportation Providers and Operators**
- **Members of the media**
- **Ladies and gentlemen**

Good morning.

A quote often attributed to Maya Angelou states, ***"...people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but the people will never forget how you made them feel."***

Understanding this quote can be beneficial to many of our personal and professional relationships but I find it quite apt for operations within the tourism industry. You, on the frontline of the tourism industry as transportation providers, are crucial to the overall impact that we have on our visitors. Tobago's unspoilt beaches, incredible bird watching opportunities, rich history and amazing opportunities for adventure boil down to nothing if you are not conscious of your role in maximising the visitor's experience.

Have you ever been complimented by clients for your impressive service? Perhaps they said that you really made them enjoy their trip? Or maybe they asked for your contact details so they could reach out to you when they returned to the island or to give to a friend or family member who would visit after they leave? That's the power of maximising the customer experience. Excellent references and repeat business for the destination, excellent references and repeat business for you.



We are all aware of the downturn in global energy prices – our country does not have the cushioning comfort of oil dollars to prop up our economy. As a result, the spotlight is now on the tourism sector – can we fill the income gap created by the downturn? Can tourism be a viable contributor to our national economy? Can destination Trinidad and Tobago pull significant market share in this USD 1.4 trillion-dollar industry? I say, absolutely! In fact, the Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CTO) has reported that Trinidad and Tobago is one of the destinations that saw the greatest growth in tourism in 2015, so the potential is certainly there. Nevertheless, we cannot afford to relax and enjoy these accolades.

The fact is tourism is a highly competitive industry. Within our own Caribbean region, there are more than twenty alternative destinations that travellers can choose to spend their precious vacation dollars – many of these island destinations are veterans in the tourism business. We are the relative newcomers. Further, for many of them, tourism is the main source of revenue for their

economy. They cannot afford to fail. And it is with this “must win” mind-set that these regional tourist destinations manage their tourism products. We cannot offer visitors half-hearted experiences and expect them to return or recommend us to those in their sphere of influence – certainly not when they have other excellent alternatives. Customer service can make or break a visitor experience. Service hiccups may happen from time to time, but we have find ways to transform these hiccups and challenges into victories for our visitors and for us. Failure to do so in the age of viral social media, where bad news travels much faster than good, can be detrimental, as a visit to any destination page on TripAdvisor will show.

The Tourism Development Company, as the implementation arm of the Ministry of Tourism is responsible for the marketing and development of the destination. We have recognised the importance of ensuring that our tourism operators are equipped with the right knowledge and information to ensure a high standard



of operation and the best possible visitor experiences. It was with this objective in mind that the Small Tourism Enterprises Project (STEP) at the TDC developed and designed the Maximising the Customer Experience project to address the challenges and issues of service delivery among tourism transport providers. It is out of these two-day workshops, which ran during the period August 2015 – May 2016, that the Customer Charter was developed. Through the workshops, one hundred and twenty (120) tourism transport providers belonging to various taxi associations collaborated to draft the Charter, developing a customer service vision for the ultimate visitor experience and gaining feedback from customers to measure and improve service delivery.

As a public declaration of your commitment to excellent service delivery to our visitors, the Charter will be displayed at the main ports of entry, at local taxi stands and transportation hubs and inside the vehicles of the transportation providers. You will be held accountable. I challenge you to exceed the standards outlined in



the Charter. Always go the extra mile to over deliver, to impress, to exceed the expectations of your clients.

In closing, I congratulate the Small Tourism Enterprises Project (STEP) team and the Tourism Development Company at large for their innovation in the design and execution of the Maximising the Customer Experience workshop that led to the development of the Charter.

I also commend our transportation providers for recognising the need to maximise the customer experience and for committing to this workshop and the development of the charter. It is heartening to see your genuine passion for excellence in your occupation. I trust that the charter will not fade into the background after a few weeks, but that it will remain a part of your consciousness and that in your everyday decision-making you would consider its tenets before acting. As I quoted when I began, "people will remember how you made them feel." Let's endeavour to help our visitors feel



like they matter, and not just their money. Let's help them feel like we are genuinely interested in their experience as visitors and do our best to leave them satisfied and eager to return to beautiful Tobago.

Thank you.