



10 Things You Need to Know About the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Caribbean Tourism

1



The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the need for and increased the urgency around collaborations that are stronger and more clearly defined; whether across sectors (travel, health, and security) and Caribbean countries, or between stakeholders in the sector.

2



Medium, small, and micro-enterprises (MSMEs) account for the majority of the tourism industry, but are not well represented or included in decision-making in the sector. High-level decision makers are more likely to prioritize the needs of foreign and larger formalized entities than of MSMEs.

3



Business development support agencies are often disconnected from the needs and limitations of their primary target group of MSMEs. Consequently, while resources for MSMEs do exist, they are often not accessible.

4



Regional development agencies are sometimes unaware of what is happening “on the ground” in local tourism sectors. For example, there are regional calls for the industry to increase local patronage, yet in Jamaica, hoteliers report purchasing food supplies from local producers.

5



Sector operators are attempting to be innovative and move towards sustainable energy sources, tourism product diversification, and realistic capacity-building strategies. Investors and funders, however, may not always perceive these strategies as valuable or profitable.

6



Despite being a poor investment, governments in the region continue to bid for hosting cruise ships. Cruise ship passengers spend considerably less than stay over passengers at ports, while cruise ships inflict high-cost environmental damage.

7



MSME operators and other small businesses and service providers often do not buy into sector formalisation due to taxation concerns, limited capacity for meeting requirements, and navigating bureaucratic procedures, as well as a perception of little to no benefit to them.

8



Tourism stakeholders consider increased regional branding and improved marketing capacity would better capitalise on Caribbean culture as intellectual property.

9



All stakeholders considered stronger data collection, transparency, and management as key to sector growth. Despite the call for more data, however, existing data is often neglected by policymakers and others whom the data was meant to inform.

10



The pandemic has highlighted the need for stronger social safety nets for tourism workers, particularly for those in the informal sector. Jamaica's recently introduced Tourism Pension Plan may be a useful blueprint for future crises.

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