

Tourism Development and Economic Diversification: A Small Island Challenge

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Abstract—The tourism industry is the major source of income to the small islands of the Caribbean except for the two-island state of Trinidad and Tobago which is an oil and natural gas economy. The problem is that oil and gas production are in decline accompanied by rising production costs making the products uncompetitive. The country has adopted a diversification strategy which targets knowledge-intensive industries and tourism as a major service industry. Trinidad has an established business and conference tourism industry while Tobago is viewed as the traditional tourism island based on its natural assets of beaches, clear waters, marine reefs, and rain forests. The expressed objective is that Tobago will develop a sustainable tourism industry which will contribute significantly to the economic diversification thrust of the country. This paper presents original analyses of the economic performance of the tourism industry the results of which raise questions about the sustainability of the industry, particularly in Tobago. The overall conclusion is that serious rethinking and new planning approaches must be undertaken if the tourism industry in Tobago is to play an acceptable part in the economic development of the country.

Keywords—Caribbean Tourism; Economic Diversification; Island Tourism; Sustainable Tourism; Tourism Planning.

Abbreviations—Gross Domestic Product (GDP); Tobago House of Assembly (THA); Tourism Development Company (TDC); Tourism Satellite Accounts (TSA); Trinidad and Tobago (TT); World Trade Organization (WTO); World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC).

I. INTRODUCTION

TRINIDAD and TOBAGO (TT) is a country comprising two small islands, at the end of the Caribbean island chain, with Trinidad as the main island of 4,828 square kilometers (1,800 square miles) with a population of 1.3 million people, and Tobago significantly smaller at 300 square kilometers (160 square miles) in area with a population of 55,000 people. The economy of Trinidad is based on the exploitation of crude oil and natural gas, while Tobago is tourism oriented. The economy of the country has been dominated by the petroleum sector especially since the mid 1970s when the actions of the Middle-East oil producers initiated a dramatic rise in the price of crude oil. The dependency on the petroleum sector persisted over the past 35 years with the sector accounting for an average of 42 percent of the GDP of the country over the period 2007 to 2011. Agriculture's contribution averaged less than 1 percent, manufacturing less than 10 percent, while services made up the difference with 48 percent as indicated by the Government of the Republic of TT [16].

The major development issue identified in recent economic reports is the critical need to diversify the economy of TT by reducing the dependence on the petroleum sector for the income and foreign exchange needed to support local business development [20]. Development planning conducted in the 1980s, created a vision which highlighted the following features: a national economy no longer dominated by petroleum and replaced by a diversified base of products and exports; an agricultural and agro-industrial system comprising small, medium, and large farms; a healthy tourist industry; a mixed economy with new and creative forms of organization including local, regional, and international partnerships; and a much improved spatial distribution of population combined with better spatial location of economic activity. This vision of the economy of TT has not materialized, and the country remains largely natural-resource based depending on the production of oil and natural gas as primary products for export, and as the main sources of foreign exchange.

The decline in oil and gas production attracted attention to the services sector and, according to the WTO Secretariat

[23], the services sector in Trinidad and Tobago has maintained a significant share of GDP and employment with an estimated 45.9 percent share of GDP and some 84.1 percent of employment being accounted for by the sector in 2010. The government, in a response to the WTO, confirmed that it aimed to advance the process of the country's economic transformation through building a competitive economy that is technology-driven, innovative, knowledge-based, and globally connected. In this context, the basis for this will be the acquisition, exploitation, creation and strategic deployment of knowledge and skills in the services sector, so as to ensure the provision of services of higher value. The areas specifically targeted include energy services, financial services, tourism services, creative industry services, and ICT services [24].

The general consensus in the diversification debate is that TT must create a diversified and knowledge-intensive economy which focuses on the contribution of indigenous knowledge, and heightened emphasis on research and development. The framework proposed is the establishment of a national innovation system and a national services industry strategy to guide the diversification initiative with tourism intended to play a major role in the diversification thrust [17]. In this context, Trinidad is considered the site for business tourism which Ramgulum et al., [22] suggested required a partnership with government and "industry stakeholders to effectively manage the business tourism market". Tobago, on the other hand, is expected to lead the leisure vacation element of the visitor market. The value added by this article is the analyses that focus on the performance of the tourism sector, particularly in Tobago, which were not previously explored and provide insight into future development action. The challenge encountered is the severe data limitations because the tourism performance statistics are usually in aggregated form for both islands. The argument is also advanced that the economic diversification of the country will require a major effort on the part of the THA, as the local authority in Tobago, to strengthen its tourism economy by concentrating on revitalizing the unique sites and attractions on the island.

II. METHODS

The research approach for this paper followed the standard technique of reviewing the relevant published articles and technical reports on the subject of tourism as they related specifically to sustainability in small islands. Further, raw statistical data were collected from databases contained in the technical publications of multilateral organizations such as the WTTC. These data were extracted in order to provide a broader frame of reference and context to the research assignment by undertaking quantitative analyses of the impact of tourism on critical economic indicators such as: actual inflows of visitors; tourist expenditure; capital investment in the tourism industry; employment created by the sector; and the contribution to GDP of the country. Thus, the economic data were processed to gauge the contribution

of the tourism industry to TT compared with comparator Caribbean islands which are more tourism-dependent and therefore similar to the case of Tobago. As indicated by Carlsen [2], tourism research traditionally has employed "a reductionist approach to monitor certain flow variables" with the typical variables as "visitor numbers and expenditure", or relationships between variables like "tourist expenditure, employment, visitor numbers, and social impacts" [2]. While this approach is limited, according to Carlsen [2], evidence from the literature demonstrates that many tourism studies focus on visitor flows [10]. Visitor inflows and economic indicators remain a major area of attention in the Caribbean and TT; therefore, these issues will be analyzed as inputs into future research work.

III. TOURISM PLANNING AND SUSTAINABILITY

The only significant publications which address tourism in TT include: a master plan which was published almost 20 years ago [1]; a strategic tourism development plan [5], Tourism Technical Secretariat (TTS); and a more recent national tourism policy statement [11], Ministry of Tourism (MT). The ARA report was the most significant study of tourism development undertaken in TT, and was prepared in the context of a tourism product that comprised a diverse mix of: resort tourism; ecotourism; specialty segments such as diving; cruise tourism; yachting; events and festivals; and entertainment and culture. The TTS emphasized sustainable tourism to be achieved by: focusing on high value added tourism; ensuring environmental sensitivity; establishing ongoing asset management; recognizing the need for authenticity; developing an effective institutional structure; conducting proactive marketing; sustaining investment in human resource development; and achieving agreement of both the private and public sector [5]. A key indicator of the state of tourism in TT and internationally is the travel and tourism competitiveness index of the World Economic Forum. Applying this index, Blanke & Chiesa [15] ranked TT in position 84 of 125 countries in 2009 with an improved position of 79 in 2011, which placed TT in position 16 overall in the Americas.

The most recent efforts to address tourism policy of TT are contained in reports by MT [11] and the MPE [17]. The MT [11] proposed the development of an overarching national policy framework for sustainable development of TT and a viable tourism sector based on: strong public/private sector partnerships; inclusion and support of the national community; emphasis on the rich plurality and cultural diversity of the people; and strategic application of modern information communication technology platforms to ensure efficiency and cost-effectiveness. The MT [11] and the MPE [17] acknowledged that the tourism sector could contribute to: the creation of employment; alleviation of poverty; earning of foreign exchange; and the creation of inter-industry linkages with agriculture, construction,

manufacturing, sports and other service industries. The MPE [17] expressed confidence in the development of a responsible, sustainable and competitive tourism industry as a means of social and economic transformation of TT.

Planning for the development of Tobago as a major tourism destination must heed the observations of Brown & Cave [9] who pointed out that warm water destinations, as in the Tobago case, rely on “staged cultural authenticity, resort enclave hedonism, and utopic visions of paradise”. Further, Brown & Cave [9] indicated that islands are subject to internal factors of “ethnic diversity fractured political systems, economic and environmental vulnerability, ecological fragility, and investment risk”. Remedying these issues at the island level, will require strong governmental support, effective marketing strategies, appropriate destination policies, and sustainable planning processes. This strategy is supported by Foris [25] who argued for state intervention in the development of tourism and pointed to a shift in public sector policy initiatives which is “informed by a new regionalism policy framework, anticipates a devolved tourism planning mandate that fosters longer-term strategic and collaborative planning of the sector in order to enhance the contribution of tourism to sustainable community wellbeing” [25].

Modern tourism development approaches consider that the most important element is to ensure sustainability of the product because a diversified economy can be built only on a sustainable industry. Sustainable tourism was the subject of a study by Lu & Nepal [8] who suggested that tourism “should be managed to enhance resilience to disturbance rather than achieving stability”. Lu & Nepal [8] conducted a content analysis of the Journal of Sustainable Tourism for the 15 year period 1993-2007, and found that only six percent of tourism studies were done on the Latin American region, where TT is located, leaving a large gap in the knowledge of the field. Further, the types of tourism studied covered mainly: general tourism subjects (46%); nature-based and ecotourism (36%); and cultural/heritage, alternative, and urban tourism (18%) [8]. The top five subject areas studied were: tourism impact; sustainability assessment; general development; visitor behavior and attitude; and planning, which confirm the importance of sustainability and planning considerations in the development of a tourism industry [8].

The research on small island tourism is limited and the dearth of research is particularly acute in the Caribbean which Brown & Cave [9] highlighted as prone to exogenous shocks and “tourism-based economies of the Caribbean experience discontinuous investment, delayed marketing and construction”. A critical observation for Tobago is that the observed research trends point to shifts: from “niche to mass tourism”; from public sector attractions such as parks and protected areas to private sector urban tourist sites; and to a focus on collaboration and cultural sustainability [8]. This latter trend supports a new emphasis on collaborative arrangements, stakeholder analysis and consultation, and holistic interpretations which demand an integrated perspective as argued by Lu & Nepal [8]. The concept of

community-based tourism is linked to sustainable tourism which Shikida et al., [14] asserted was the solution to “problems such as overuse and leakage” of funds. However, few practical solution-oriented models have been developed because past models focused on tourist flows, not on community and extra-community interrelationships [14]. Based on a case study of a wetland trust in Japan, Shikida et al., [14] argued that local communities were forced to adopt more self-sustaining development policies when a shift towards decentralization was introduced. In this context, Nizic et al., [13] studied the sustainability of small island tourism on the island of Krk in Croatia, and concluded that sustainable development is based on respecting sustainability in the realms of ecology, socio-cultural practice, and economic activity. These considerations are vital to the planning and development of tourism in Tobago which is a small community.

The concept of tourism sustainability was challenged by Moscardo [7] who argued that tourism development was not sustainable in its own right because it is often considered in isolation. The resulting planning models treat communities and regions as tourism resources, and local residents and stakeholders are disempowered in the development and management process. In the Tobago context of being a part of a small island developing state, Harrison et al., [4] who studied the challenges faced by tourism development in the Caribbean islands, identified critical concerns as: exclusive nature of tourism facilities; undue influence of foreign investors; disconnect between policy and practice; narrow definition of tourism; lack of integrated tourism planning; need for resource management because of small size; lack of a common vision; and lack of visible intellectual leadership [4]. Harrison et al., [4] concluded that there was a need for education and research and particularly developing case studies of best practice in responsible tourism policy, planning, and development. This argument is supported by Fernando & Long [19] who suggested that modern tourism is experience-oriented based on competitiveness rather than scenic attributes of a destination, with tourism clustering a greatly under-researched area.

IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLANNING FOR TOBAGO

At the strategic policy level, the early planning exercises conducted for Tobago reflected a high degree of consistency in that the focus of development was overwhelmingly on tourism and tourism-related development activities. Fisheries and agriculture development were viewed as linked to tourism with hotels and restaurants comprising the markets for the output of these sectors. Despite the various planning proposals, the development of tourism followed the path of resort-based facilities focused on the traditional virtues of sun, sand, and sea. Dive tourism contributed to product diversification but remains a niche market which does not significantly impact the economic growth of the island. The

actual development outcomes occurred on the organic growth principle rather than as a result of any specific planning strategy. This is reflected in the continued concentration of tourist facilities in the south west region with slow development in other regions.

The most recent development planning exercise for Tobago covered the period 2006-2010 and was incorporated in a comprehensive economic development plan (CEDP) which was prepared against a background of Tobago perceiving its status within the state of Trinidad and Tobago as one of dependency [6]. The CEDP was intended to create a framework which could act as a platform for employment creation and generation of income thereby diversifying the Tobago economy. The distinct component of the CEDP compared with previous efforts, was the focus on natural gas based development possibilities derived from the hydrocarbon resources in the waters around Tobago. The gas-based economic strategy was demonstrated by the infrastructural construction of an industrial estate and business park which would incorporate supplies of natural gas from the marine environment as a source of clean energy for electricity generation, home use, air conditioning, and vehicular transportation, and the construction of a pipeline from one of the gas fields to a point on land.

The CEDP contemplated the expansion of the tourism base through a mix of products such as: sports tourism; wellness and health tourism; and research tourism focused on marine and forestry conservation. The plan adopted the tag line of Tobago as “clean, green, safe, and serene” and identified the economic drivers as: governmental initiatives and activities including the Central Government and the THA; tourism which needs to be sustainable through pursuit of relevant niches like cultural tourism; agriculture and fisheries which requires protection against alienation of good quality agricultural land, re-establishment of a farm input/output structure, and stronger linkages between tourism and agriculture; and transportation by investment in safe, cheap, clean, and readily available public transport to curb the tendency to private ownership and resulting traffic congestion [6]. The CEDP relied on natural gas as the major transformational driver in the economic development of Tobago based on the existence of the fields close to the shoreline of Tobago. While the plan dismissed the option of developing gas-based heavy industry because of inconsistency with the green image, it espoused the concept of ‘fiscal equity’ in which Tobago derives an increased share of gas revenues. The strategies pursued in the plan are gas-assisted development through the generation of electricity from gas landed in Tobago, and for fuelling transport vehicles the demand for which increased through visitor demand. The ultimate objective is to eliminate liquid fuels with all transport vehicles incorporating compressed natural gas.

The current evidence points to a gap in the overall tourism strategy which is a lack of recognition of the critical role of visitor sites and attractions in the development of any tourism industry as documented by Swarbrooke [3]. It is argued here that the main focus of tourism development

activities in Tobago should be the development of the respective sites and attractions on the island, and instituting professional management approaches to attract quality visitors. In order to achieve this objective, requires: facilities improvement including a program of upgrade and restoration of the major sites and attractions in the categories of natural, cultural, and contemporary attractions; the creation of interpretation centers as focal points for visitors; incorporating a mix of attractions such as local food and beverages, local craft based on natural materials, locally designed clothing and accessories, short musical and drama productions and outlets for sale of products based on the particular site experience such as videos; and identifying clusters of sites based on geographic area, by type of attraction, by customer life style and by demography an example of which is North East Tobago as a parks and protected areas cluster with the Main Ridge Forest Reserve and ‘Little Tobago Island’ protected area.

V. PERFORMANCE OF THE TOURISM SECTOR

5.1. Main Data Sources

Published studies and reports on tourism in TT are very sparse and generally linked Tobago with Trinidad so that independent statistics on the performance of the tourism sector in Tobago are not generally available as separate from the national statistics. In order to assess the performance of the tourism sector in Tobago, the research for this paper relied on the analysis of raw data obtained from Kairi Consultants Limited [21], the WTTTC [27], and the TDC [18]. The only recent official study of Tobago’s tourism sector focused on a quantitative analysis and model of the sector which utilized data generated by the TSA published by the WTTTC and interviews with stakeholders [21]. The study concentrated on the accommodation component of the tourism resort sub-sector, but recognized that attractions were among the other sub-sectors of transport, travel organization, and destination organization. The study lamented the lack of data which probably led to the focus on hotels and guest houses for data collection.

While the TSA provides valuable information on the industry, its focus is on a framework to measure the total economic and employment impact of consumer expenditure, capital investment, government revenue and expenditure, foreign trade, and business expenditure from tourism. The model developed by Kairi Consultants Limited [21] for Tobago was based on the perspective of the island’s economic and political structure, its society, and its environmental system, and sought to measure the potential growth rate of tourism. Kairi Consultants Limited [21] concluded that data deficiency and quality were serious limiting factors on the predictive capacity of the model. In fact, Kairi Consultants Limited [21] stated that “it is clear the TSA for Tobago is characterized by huge gaps in the data, because of the very limited information on establishments in Tobago and the fact that the island has not been considered as

a distinct identity in data collection on the national economy". A notable deficiency in the Kairi Consultants Limited [21] study was the absence of consideration and analysis of the sites and attractions sector of the tourism product. Kairi Consultants Limited [21] did not study the sites and attractions sector because of the lack of data on cultural products, sports and recreation, and attributes of visitor sites. However, the study identified the specific tourism assets as: marine reefs; rain-forests and other natural phenomena; cultural artifacts and monuments; music and art; and a variety of festivals. Kairi Consultants Limited [21] concluded that standards needed to be maintained in these areas if the niche market suggested by these products is to be exploited. The study reinforced the need to fill the yawning gap in the tourism development strategy, which is the institution of an innovative development and management system for visitor sites and attractions.

The conclusion from the research is that the neglect of sites and attractions may partly explain the decline in current tourism earnings apart from the impact of the global economic downturn reflected in the analyses below. In order to assess the performance of tourism in Tobago, the following analyses will be conducted: visitor inflows; tourism impact accounts; and comparative analyses with other Caribbean islands. It is important to note that the declines observed are largely a consequence of the international downturn which started in 2008 and is still impacting Caribbean island economies negatively.

5.2. Visitor Inflows to Tobago

The available visitor inflow data were collected for the five year period 2006 to 2010 from survey data by Kairi Consultants Limited [21], and the Tourism Development Company of Trinidad and Tobago (TDC) [18]. Visitor inflows to Tobago declined steadily over the five year period analyzed with a drop from 83,460 in 2006 to 24,038 in 2010 or the equivalent of 70 percent. The results for Trinidad over the same period remained stable with minor fluctuations. In fact, the number of visitors to Tobago, as a percentage of inflows to Trinidad, declined from 22 percent in 2006 to 6.6 percent in 2010 (Table 1).

Table 1: Visitor Inflows

Destination	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Tobago	83,460	63,000	37,781	31,452	24,038
Trinidad	377,591	386,452	399,498	379,567	363,521
Trinidad & Tobago	461,051	449,452	437,279	418,864	387,559
Tobago(%: Trinidad)	22	16	9.5	8.3	6.6

Source: TDC [18], www.tdc.co.tt

The profile of visitor inflows into Tobago reflects that the overwhelming majority of tourists visit for vacation as compared with visiting friends and relatives and business purposes. The decline in the numbers over the five year period was consistent with the overall decline in total annual inflows (Table 2).

Table 2: Visitors by Purpose

Purpose	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
VFR	7,235	4,348	4,840	3,589	3,209
Vacation	61,785	49,720	27,231	21,241	18,439
Business	3,329	2,183	1,015	1,584	694
Wedding	3,289	1,986	532	556	545
Study	135	160	63	99	50
Other	7,687	4,603	4,100	1,331	1,121
Total	83,460	63,000	37,781	28,400	24,038

Source: TDC [18], www.tdc.co.tt

Interestingly, the major source market for Tobago is Europe, with the UK accounting for 78 percent, and Germany 12 percent of total inflows over the five year period for which data were available. The USA and Canada make up the rest of the market, but this is unlikely to be the complete picture because there are inflows from other European countries, based on the direct flights from European airlines, such as Virgin, which do not serve the Trinidad market. The data, nevertheless, are indicative of the trend (Table 3).

Table 3: Visitor Inflows to Tobago by Main Markets

Year	USA	Canada	UK	Germany	Total
2006	1,970	435	31,492	5,029	38,926
2007	1,400	310	35,742	3,805	41,257
2008	1,873	283	22,730	3,117	28,003
2009	1,387	250	16,133	3,025	20,795
2010	952	173	14,215	2,839	18,179

Source: Adapted from Kairi Consultants Limited [21]

5.3. Economic Contribution of Travel and Tourism

The key tourism economic indicators in most countries include: visitor expenditure; capital investment; employment created; and GDP. Visitor expenditure measures the actual money spent by tourists in purchasing goods and services at the destination and is critical to the foreign earnings of a receiving country. Data that showed Tobago separately were available only for the three year period 2003 to 2005 along with a projection by WTTC for 2015. Visitor expenditure in Tobago increased minimally from US\$30 million (mn) in 2003 to US\$ 41 mn. In 2005 with an optimistic projection to US\$87 in 2015. Capital investment in tourism infrastructure and facilities in Tobago also grew marginally from US\$32 in 2003 to US\$ 37 mn. In 2005 with a projection to 2015 of US\$70 mn. Employment generated by tourism activities increased from 11,000 in 2003 to 15,000 in 2005 which was a significant 40% increase in a low population island. The GDP comprises the value of all goods and services generated within a country, and, in tourism-based economies, the tourism industry is the major contributor to GDP and employment. In Tobago, the GDP increased from US\$95 mn. In 2003 to US\$120 million in 2005 with an optimistic projection of US\$239 in 2015. The increase of 26 percent over the three year period 2003 to 2005 was very significant. The comparative statistics for Trinidad, while absolutely larger, reflect a similar low level of increases in the key indicators (Table 4).

Table 4: Tourism Economic Statistics: Trinidad and Tobago (US\$mn)

Economic Indicator	2003	2004	2005	2015
Trinidad				
Visitor expenditure	439	455	522	1,122
Capital investment	233	253	284	480
Total employment ('000)	86	91	96	131
GDP	1,491	1,499	1,902	3,583
Tobago				
Visitor expenditure	30	36	41	87
Capital investment	32	34	37	70
Total employment ('000)	11	15	15	18
GDP	95	110	120	239

Source: WTTC [27]

5.4. Comparative Economic Analysis: Caribbean Island Economies

In order to position TT in a comparative Caribbean context vis-à-vis the economic contributions to GDP, employment, capital investment, and visitor expenditure; data were extracted from the WTTC data base on the Caribbean. The data were used to construct comparative statistics on the impact of tourism on the economies of TT, Grenada, and St. Lucia, Bahamas, Bermuda, and the overall statistic for the Americas. The comparative islands were selected because of their similar size to Tobago and with tourism as their main industry. As indicated by Foris [25], “tourism is the major source of income for countries such as Bermuda, Greece, Italy, Spain, Switzerland and most Caribbean countries”. The aggregate figures for TT were used to highlight the disparity in the economic impact of the tourism industry among comparator Caribbean islands. The comparative data revealed that tourism had a much greater impact on the comparative economies of the select Caribbean islands with acknowledged strong tourism industries. The economic contributions of tourism to GDP, employment, capital investment, and visitor expenditure as a percentage share of overall economic contributions were highly significant. However, apart from Bermuda, the percentage contributions to the comparator islands exceed the Americas average which includes the more developed countries of North America and South America. The conclusion is that the comparator islands are considerably more dependent on tourism than TT, but this masks the impact on Tobago alone which is likely to mimic the results for the other Caribbean islands because of the size similarities and the undiversified structure of their respective economies.

Table 5: Tourism Economic Contributions: Comparative Country Analysis (% Share, 2013)

Tourism Contribution	TT	Grenada	St. Lucia	Bahamas	Bermuda	Americas
GDP direct	3.1	5.8	13.2	20.4	4.9	2.9
GDP total	8.2	20.3	38.8	46.0	14.8	8.5
Employment direct	4.4	5.4	18.6	28.5	9.9	3.6
Employment total	4.5	18.8	42.1	54.5	19.5	9.3
Capital investment	10.7	13.4	15.5	18.1	2.8	4.9
Visitor exports: Total exports	4.8	44.7	61.3	63.7	16.4	6.8

Source: World Travel & Tourism Council, 2014 [27]

VI. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Tourism as an economic development tool has not been attractive to policy makers in TT, while in Tobago the policy action has been spasmodic revealing research deficiencies. This paper represented an addition to the research on tourism in the island of Tobago for which very few studies were undertaken and where the data limitations are severe because, such as exists, are lumped with the national figures for TT. The analyses undertaken confirm that Tobago has a major challenge in restructuring its tourism industry to contribute to the diversification thrust of TT. Its first challenge is to recapture its market position as obtained before the global recession of 2008 and this requires a new focus on the development of the sites and attractions which exist in the area of historical and heritage tourism on the island. Tobago also needs to highlight its eco-tourism resources based on its unique resources of rain forests; marine reefs; and cultural festivals which appeal to the modern traveler. The argument advanced in this paper is that Tobago tourism development is integrally linked to the achievement of the economic diversification of the country of TT. Action in this area requires great effort because, as indicated by Herbert & Christian [26], “the tourism industry in the Caribbean is at a cross-road” and.... “the socio-economic advantages and benefits of tourism to the region are largely dependent upon” greater involvement of local stakeholders in the industry. However, tourism development in Tobago must be brought up to the level of comparator islands in the Caribbean before strategic improvements can be pursued.

Future research is required to document the tourism assets of Tobago that can constitute a comparative advantage, and to guide the preparation of an action plan for the development and management of tourism in a mini island. According to Moyle et al., [12], most of the research on island tourism is based on studies of the Pacific and Greek islands which addressed issues such as: “economic development”; “community perceptions of impacts”; “environmental resource management”; and “industry and government partnerships”. This confirms the need for research on mini islands such as Tobago which has been neglected because of its location at the end of the Caribbean island chain. In this regard, Moscardo [7] suggested that the approach to tourism development should be reconceptualized to treat tourism as a development tool, especially building community capacity which is highly applicable to the case of Tobago.

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