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**Tourism Industry Conference Turnout**

**Belize City, Belize – August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015** – The Belize Tourism Board held the Tourism Industry Conference at Fido’s Courtyard on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2015. The day began with welcome address by Chairman of the Board, Dr. Carla Barnett; followed by remarks from the Hon. Manuel Heredia Jr.

The year in review video was played for stakeholders to view tourism accomplishments of 2014. It included statistics comparing growth over 2013, successful impressions obtained through marketing initiatives and accolade of events throughout the industry.

The day proceeded into two sessions of local and international panelists to discuss Service Excellence and Digital Marketing.

a) Service Excellence: A Silent Seller

- ❖ Dr. Emil Lee- President of Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association
- ❖ Mrs. Jacqueline Johnson- President of Global Bridal Group
- ❖ Mr. Carlos Cuellar Chair of Tourism & Business Studies, Stann Creek Ecumenical College

All panellist shared a common denominator in each presentation which was the importance of Service Excellence to drive profits. It is necessary for business to allocate appropriate resources to quality of service; whereby the objective is to create an experience for guests. The experience is translated into positive reviews; which at the end of the day is of utmost importance as 75% of travellers check trip advisor for booking. All of which could not be possible without empowering and training staff.

b) Digital Marketing- focused on branding, social media, and online mediums of marketing

- ❖ Ms. Tanya Mc Nab from Mc Nab Design
- ❖ Mr. David Fiedler- Olson International
- ❖ Ms. Allison Smith Media and Marketing Manager for Norwegian Cruise Line

The second round of panelist all agreed that marketing has exploded with the availability of internet whereby an excessive amount of digital marketing mediums now exist. Social media dominated as data has shown that people spend approximately eight hours a day utilizing various mediums such as Facebook, Pinterest, or Instagram. As travellers become more educated, 74% of Leisure and Travel utilize the internet for planning, and it is during this process that the businesses must convince the consumer. To maximize the benefits of digital marketing it is important to ensure content is fresh, truthful, and current.

Overall both set of panelist's share that tactics have changed and now it's time to change human behavior. It requires change from internal to ensure this behavioral change happens successfully.

The day finalized with the year forward presented by Director of Tourism Mrs. Karen Bevans in collaboration of Brittany Barnes and David Fiedler from Olson International and Noriko Gamero Marketing Manager of Belize Tourism Board. In accordance to everything panelists alluded; Belize Tourism Board has begun change from within by implementing training of managerial staff, setting executive and measurable deliverables, and other related training. Brittany and David also mentioned, are strategies of marketing internationally and locally utilizing many of the digital marketing tools and more. Internationally, North American market will have new regional videos running on International TV for the first time ever January 2016. Locally Ms. Gamero, encouraged Belizeans to travel their country and become aware of the icons that represent each region. Mrs. Bevans continued that further strategic efforts are made to increase overnight and cruise tourism in Belize; whether it be negotiations, infrastructure or training. The goal is to be proactive and work with stakeholders to build this industry as a team.

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#### ***About the Belize Tourism Board***

The Belize Tourism Board (BTB) is a statutory body within the Belize Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation, and it is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Civil Aviation. The BTB works in conjunction with members of the private sector - including the Belize Hotel Association, Belize Tourism Industry Association and Belize National Tour Operators Association – and is dedicated to building tourism in the most economically and environmentally sustainable manner. As a part of its responsibilities, the BTB promotes Belize as a premier tourism destination to both in-country and international consumers. Among its outreach to the international travel market, the BTB markets the country's unique attractions to travellers, members of the travel trade industry and media outlets in key markets.

The BTB is also dedicated to developing and implementing tourism programs that will help strengthen and grow the Belizean tourism industry; promote good destination stewardship; and instil high quality standards for accommodations and travel experiences. For more information on the BTB and its services, visit [www.travelbelize.org](http://www.travelbelize.org).

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