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# Sustainable tourism and networks: a critical examination of two Caribbean destinations - Jamaica and Trinidad & Tobago.

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## Introduction

Tourism plays a significant role in Caribbean economies especially with the loss of preferential markets for agricultural products. It is a major employment and income generator, foreign exchange earner and is seen as an industry that can drive economic growth and development (Bryan 2007).

The type of tourism the Caribbean currently engages in is mass tourism which is responsible for the majority of the tourist receipts garnered by the Caribbean and is dependent on the 3s: sun, sea and sand (Jayawardena 2007). However, the Caribbean is in danger of destroying the resource base on which it depends. To mitigate this sustainable tourism is the way forward (Bryan 2007).

Tourism has always been a networked industry and a network approach is needed because an organization cannot pursue sustainable tourism development in isolation (Scott et al 2008). In this vein, this research sought to examine the effect of networks on sustainable tourism development.

## Method

Two studies were conducted one in Trinidad and the other in Montego Bay which is considered the tourism capital of Jamaica.

### Jamaica

The following organizations were interviewed:

- Jamaica Tourist Board
- Accommodation - Sandals Royal Caribbean Resort and Private Island, Holiday Inn SunSpree Resort, Royal Decameron Montego Beach and Doctors Cave Beach Hotel.
- Recreational Services – Chukka Caribbean Adventures
- Restaurant – The Native
- Three hotels, two food and beverage companies and one transportation company wanted to remain anonymous so they are represented by numbers.

## Method (cont'd)

### Trinidad

The following organizations were interviewed:

- Ministry of Tourism
- Tourism Development Company
- Hilton Trinidad & Conference Centre
- Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites
- Alicia's Palace

The questionnaire, administered by the researcher, had 72 questions subdivided into 11 sections which reflected the components of the tourism sector. The questionnaire had a mix of open and close ended questions. At the beginning of each section the respondent was asked to identify key actors in the sector, this snowballing method proved invaluable.

The data were analysed by the UCINET 6 and NetDraw software. The following tests were done: density, centrality (degree, closeness and betweenness).

## Results

### Density

#### Jamaica

The density of ties was calculated using the univariate statistics routine where it showed that 63% of all possible ties were present.

Univariate analysis on the rows and columns showed that the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA) scored the highest 100% in both categories, which means that the JHTA acts as a communicator and facilitator in the network.

#### Trinidad

The univariate statistics showed that 57% of all possible ties were present.

Analysis of the rows and columns showed the Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants and Tourism Association (THRTA) scored the highest with 100%. In the column wise analysis, the Tourism Development Company (TDC) also scored 100%.

## Results (cont'd)

### Degree Centrality

#### Jamaica

The Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association had the greatest out-degree score, as a result, it is regarded as the most influential. The JHTA also had the highest in-degree score indicating that organizations share information with them.

#### Trinidad

Like Jamaica, Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants and Tourism Association had the highest out and in-degree scores.

### Closeness Centrality

#### Jamaica

The test showed that the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association is the closest or most central actor.

#### Trinidad

Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants and Tourism Association is the most central actor.

As the most central actor, both the JHTA and the THRTA are in an excellent position to monitor the information flow in the network. Also, the actors have the best visibility into what is happening in the network.

### Betweenness Centrality

#### Jamaica

By this measure, the JHTA is the most powerful and has great influence over what flows in the network.

#### Trinidad

The same can be said for the THRTA.

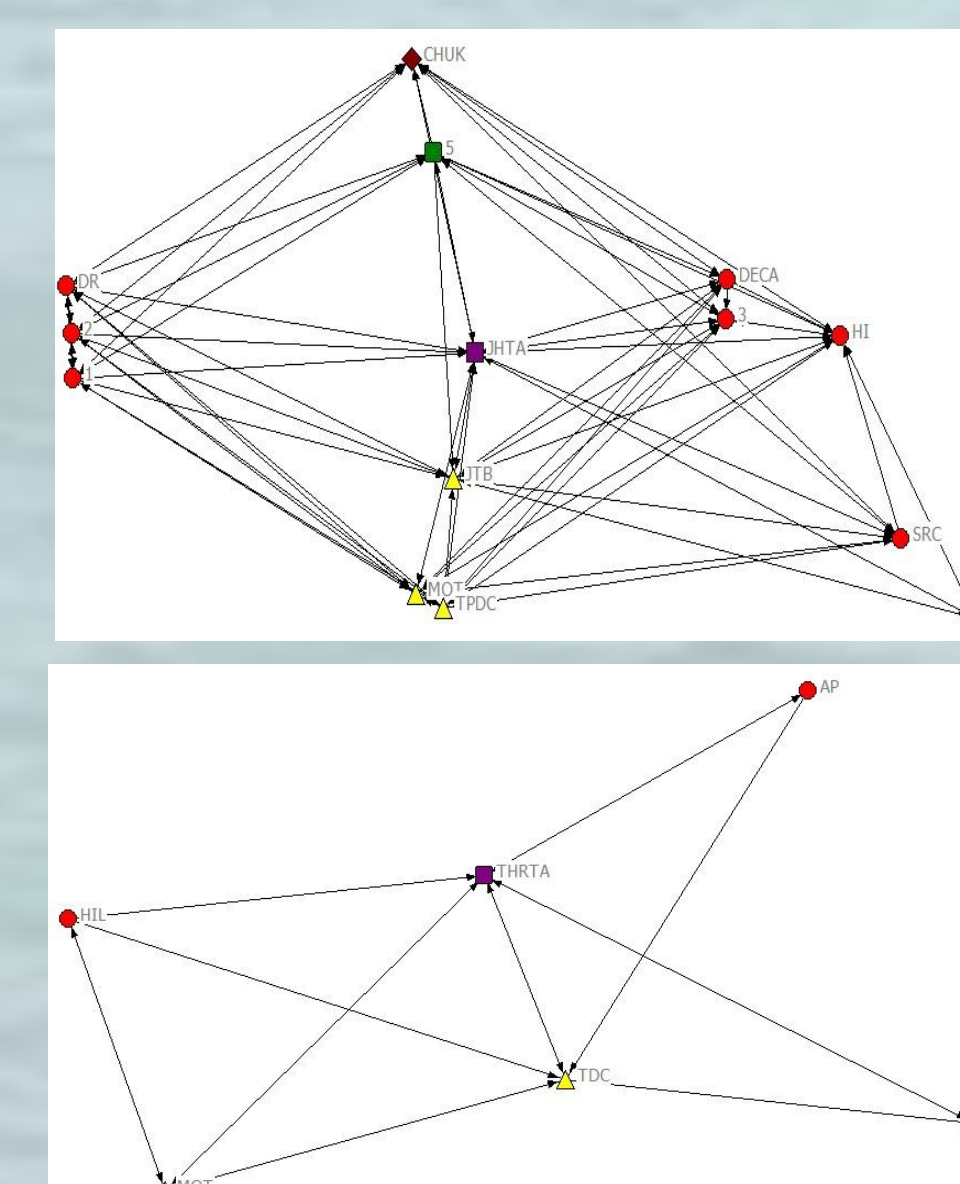


Figure 1 – Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association network map

Key  
Hotels, Government,  
Tourism Association

Figure 2 – Trinidad Hotels, Restaurants and Tourism Association network map

## Conclusion

The research found that networks have a positive effect on sustainable tourism. The most powerful in the network was the tourism association in both destinations. The tourism association is the intermediary between government and its members.

Respondents said that tourism associations facilitated sustainable tourism by distributing correspondence on the issues, hosting forums in which members could express their concerns, advising its members on best practices, greening and certification standards.

However, a more concerted effort is needed to move the tourism industry onto a path of sustainability and the two destinations will need the full backing of the tourism network to bring this to fruition.

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