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## Remaining Relevant in a Discerning Market

How to remain relevant to today's discerning travelers - [Association of Travel Marketing Executives](#) presents the upscale destination of Bermuda's strategy.

The distinguished Dr. the Honorable Ewart Brown, JP, MP Minister of Tourism and Transportation, Bermuda presented Bermuda's strategies and insights for marketers of upscale destinations. First, Dr. Brown took the group on a look back at the glory years of the 70's and 80's when Bermuda lured the rich and famous with a touch of English customs and elegance, and when "You had to belong" to holiday in Bermuda. The times moved on and Bermuda did not court the new and growing cruise ship industry. Bermuda felt they had it all, but the cruise ship industry started to bypass Bermuda and the downfall of tourism started. Suffering from the loss of the cruise ship industry and the lack of a new marketing strategy, the 'exclusivity of Bermuda' turned into 'exclude Bermuda.'

Compounding the problem, many hotels never refurbished and by the early 90's they were very dated, and there were no new hotel development projects on the horizon, and there were no direct airline routes to Bermuda, thus Bermuda had gone from Boom to Bust.

So how did Bermuda turn-it-around? They courted the airlines and finally 'landed' Jet Blue who started twice-daily service to Bermuda from New York with fares as low as \$129 a flight. The result was a 27% increase in traffic from New York, and an 8% increase overall. Bermuda eliminated seasonality and repositioned the mindset of both the traveler and the businesses on Bermuda by opening up the full year with events and specials. They created a golf and spa season, as well as a beach and sizzle season, which resulted in 525,000 travelers on an annual basis, which is the maximum for the island.

They also created niche markets for incentives, golf clubs, and running clubs, to mention a few. They pursued these markets aggressively with extensive and focused follow-up. Bermuda was the honeymoon destination of choice in the 70's and 80's, and to regain this positioning they went after the honeymoon market in the same manner.

Bermuda also dropped the country club exclusivity positioning that had been their moniker in the 70's and 80's, but they kept the private island feel. They learned that no longer could you fully monetize the position of a tourist by where they sit on the plane.

The new attitude of Bermuda has drawn international hotel companies to support new hotel projects resulting in over US \$1.6 billion in development in the 5\* luxury market segment.

Bermuda knows that their recovery is a work-in-progress, they have not forgotten the two decades of decline they suffered. In an effort to remove the 'boring' tagline that was associated with travel to Bermuda, the Government submitted Request-for-Proposals to the younger Bermudians to put pop and sizzle back into the island. As Dr. Brown stated, "No one sells Bermuda like Bermudians." The result of the involvement of the locals was a successful Music Festival held each October that is sold out, and over 100,000 coming in from the cruise lines with access to product that caters to a wider spectrum of visitors.

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