



## **RESEARCH EDGE**

### **THE PINK FLAMINGO CRUISE LINE SERVICE**

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## EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Over the past twenty years, worldwide demand for cruise tourism has posted some of the biggest gains within the tourism sector. Cruise tourism has become the fastest growing sector of travel in recent years. According to the Association of Caribbean States (ACS, 2016), the dynamic growth in the cruise industry has been both a benefit as well as a complex business venture for many destinations in the Caribbean. It is not surprising therefore that cruise tourism is considered the largest and fastest growing sector of tourism. Telfer and Sharpley (2016) also commented on this exponential growth and noted that, without a shadow of a doubt, this form of tourism has become a global phenomenon.

It is envisaged that an additional cruise port is necessary to the third largest island in The Bahamas, Inagua. Proposing a cruise port on this island comes with its unique set of challenges, especially as Inagua is best known as one of the largest sanctuaries for water birds, is home to dozens of other exotic birds and rare wildlife, has a plethora of wetlands and over 743 square km of national parks. In fact, it is known as an ecotourist's dream haven.

Despite the fact that Inagua qualifies as one of the strongest economies in The Bahamas, the study explored how best another successful pillar of the tourism economy could complement the existing economy. Based on the fact that cruise tourism has been constantly increasing the economic growth of many regions around the world, specifically the Caribbean, it seemed natural to propose a sector of the industry that could readily hold its own and create an immediate economic boost to the overall economy of Inagua. The injection of a cruise port to/on Inagua would require strategic planning among all key stakeholders and buy-in from the 1000 residents.

Hence, the main objectives of the study were to:

- a. propose a cruise port that would complement the existing economy of Inagua;
- b. encourage entrepreneurial opportunities for Inaguans;
- c. encourage persons originally from Inagua to move back home; and
- d. promote cultural collaboration and diversity in the tourism sector.

A qualitative study approach was adopted using a series of interviews from key stakeholders on the island. A survey questionnaire was also carried out at the cruise passenger ships docked in the port of Nassau. Perceptions on introducing a local cruise line service to Inagua were explored. Of the thirty cruise ship passengers

interviewed, all of them indicated that they would travel to Inagua on a cruise ship. These results bore out initial assumptions that having a cruise port on the island of Inagua would be good for the economy overall. With regard to the other questions asked of cruise passengers, they noted that while on island they would be willing to patronize facilities that were directly linked to the cruise port and they would engage in various tours available on the island. A suggestion on what visitors wanted to see and engage in while on the island was collected in this process as well.

Stakeholders who participated in the interviews were more concerned with the viability of a cruise port on the island given that: (1) the population on the island was small; (2) most of the population already worked in the salt industry; and (3) existing routes for a cruise line were not already in place and the infrastructure was non-existent.

One of the key indicators from this paper was the rollout of the actual design of the port village sed for Inagua. Along with that, a number of opportunities for native Inaguans who would eventual participate as entrepreneurs are highlighted. Some of these opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- Chance to own a piece of the tourism sector;
- Opportunities to showcase more of Inagua through different tours and cultural activities;
- Strengthening the economy of Inagua;
- Providing more diversity in the southernmost islands of The Bahamas; and
- Overall job creation for all Bahamians.

The implications for the development of the cruise sector for Inagua are multi-fold. Inagua is projected to become the newest cruise destination in The Bahamas and by extension, the Caribbean. A robust cruise port will create diversity to the tourism product, particularly in that region of the country, and will increase or add to the revenue generating potential of Inagua. The government of The Bahamas is expected to embrace this idea after careful strategic planning.

**Keywords:** *Cruise tourism, Cruise port, Inagua's economy, Global Phenomenon.*

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Ms. Oshima Cartwright has been studying at the University of The Bahamas since fall 2012. She has completed a Certificate in Hospitality and Tourism Skills and an Associate of Applied Science in Hospitality Operations for which she received the Outstanding Academic Achievement for Culinary Arts & Tourism Studies in fall 2016. Ms. Cartwright is currently completing a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management.

Ms. Cartwright began her hospitality career at Comfort Suites, Paradise Island in April 2015. She started out as a Restaurant Hostess and worked her way into middle management as the Food and Beverage Supervisor. She has been the recipient of several awards such as Employee of the Quarter, Most Excellent Employee, Above and Beyond Employee. Summer 2017, Ms. Cartwright joined Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Tourism in attending a “Seminar on Tourism Management for The Bahamas” sponsored by the Ministry of Commerce and organized by Zhangzhou College of Science and Technology from August 3rd-21st in Zhangzhou, Fujian, The People’s Republic of China.