

## Barbados Looking For International Hotel Brands

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A Caribbean-American brand specialist is assessing the Barbados government's reported drive to attract more international hotel brands to the island.

Caroline Racine, Director of Caribbean Franchise Development of Choice Hotels International, welcomed the new government's realization that branding will raise the profile of the destination. She will explain why this week at a New York meeting on the promotion of new Caribbean brand marketing efforts.

"That's an area where we as a tourism destination are a little weak right now - it is a big problem, especially for the United States market," Barbados' Tourism Minister Richard Sealy said, adding that Americans respond well to brand names.

Supporting the new Tourism Minister, Haitian-American Caroline Racine said she was excited to engage the new Barbados administration and the private sector about the viability of Choice's brands, whose Caribbean hotels on average enjoy high yearly occupancy and a strong average daily rate.

"We are thrilled about what we are hearing in Barbados and believe there is an exceptional opportunity to extend our mid-scale brands to local operators who need a hand-up," said Racine, whose company's operational systems and marketing campaigns have helped boost Caribbean arrivals and revenues.

She added that brands offered at varied accommodation levels make the product more palatable to consumers.

Adding his support to a comprehensive branding approach at Counterpart International's Caribbean Media Exchange on Sustainable Tourism (CMEx) last December in St. Lucia, Senator Allen Chastanet, St. Lucia's Minister of Tourism and Chairman of Caribbean Tourism Organization, said "branding helps to compartmentalize things and put them in such a way that the average consumer can understand who you are, what you are, and what you're promising to deliver."

"Branding is the equivalent of selling milk," explained the Senator, "you can sell milk on the side of the road in a bucket. How many people will buy it? But if people have refrigerators in their homes, they would prefer to buy milk in a carton. If you want to stay on the side of the road and continue to sell it in a bucket and believe that you will change people's attitudes so that they will buy your milk, good luck. If you achieve that, you're an amazing sales-person."

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