**Puerto Rico’s Destination Image Continues to Show Significant Growth***While 68.6% of workers in Puerto Rico would consider working in the travel & tourism industry*

**San Juan, Puerto Rico, October 20, 2021**- The Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) of the Island, Discover Puerto Rico, held its monthly Industry Update as a hybrid meeting, sharing updated results from the tourism industry, showing that Puerto Rico is the leader throughout the country in the return of visitors and travel spending; and showing data that there is a significant growth in the destination’s image. While Erin Francis-Cummings, President & CEO of Destination Analysts, shared findings from a recent study exploring employment and career opportunities in travel, tourism & hospitality in the United States and Puerto Rico.

The U.S. Travel Association recovery tracker showed Puerto Rico as a leader in the travel and tourism sector. While Tourism Economics estimates Puerto Rico’s visitor spending was 23% higher than 2019, when the rest of the country was still down an average of 11%. Also, Aerostar data reports that more than 330K passengers came into the San Juan airport in September, surpassing 2019 for the number of arrivals, and indicating that arriving passengers this year are more likely to be visitors rather than returning residents.

“We are thrilled to see that for first nine months of the year, we’ve surpassed previous calendar year revenue highs. In 2019, the total revenue for the calendar year was $954 million. With the visitor spending through September, we’ve already exceeded that record, which means when the October data comes in, we will surpass $1 billion in revenues for the first time,” expressed Alisha Valentine, Director of Research and Analytics for Discover Puerto Rico.

The tourism research firm SMARI conducted initial research in the fiscal year 2017-18 to determine what consumers look for in Puerto Rico’s brand and has monitored the brand health of the Island since then. Colorful, Authentic, Beautiful, Lively and Vibrant were identified as the five attributes of the brand image that would motivate potential visitors. In the primary markets where Discover Puerto Rico has made the most significant investment over the past three years, there has been year-over-year growth in Puerto Rico’s image on these key attributes.

**“**SMARI conducts this kind of research for destinations across the globe and has established benchmarks based off hundreds of studies. They have found that only 25% of destinations garner ratings of 3.75 or higher on a 5-point scale. But only 10% garner ratings of 4.0 or higher. After targeted investment focused on communicating Puerto Rico as all of those attributes, we’ve moved from “good” to “excellent,” putting us in the top 10% of destinations,” explained Valentine.

The image improvements and targeted investments are driving record demand to the Island, but across Puerto Rico and the U.S., the return of the travel industry has seen a pinch point of attracting employees. Destination Analysts partnered with the U.S. Travel Association to conduct a study that examines existing perceptions of employment and career opportunities in travel, tourism & hospitality and benchmarks travel, tourism & hospitality as a career brand, from both the short and long-term perspectives, for mainland and Puerto Rico.

Erin Francis-Cummings, President & CEO of Destination Analysts, shared that 52.2% of Puerto Ricans workers have experienced pandemic-caused employment changes, while 30.3% experienced a salary/wage reduction. “Some of the most important things that Puerto Rican workers look for when looking for employment is that it is stimulating and challenging, while helping their path to promotion, professional development/training, and having a bonus or incentive program. In fact, lack of career growth opportunities is the #1 deterrent from a job opportunity. Many workers say that they are much likelier to look at travel, tourism & hospitality industries as a path to achieving career goals. It is exciting to see that 68.6% of workers in Puerto Rico would consider working in the travel & tourism industry,” she mentioned.

During the DMO’s Industry Update, the Marketing and Sales Departments also shared their efforts with the focus of continuing growing the image of Puerto Rico and driving the recovery of the tourism sector of the Island to a record-year. For more details you can view the full presentation of the Industry Update in the [Industry Portal](https://www.discoverpuertorico.com/industry/presentations/webinar-october-industry-update-october-20-2021/2021-10-20).

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