Development of the National E-commerce Strategy 2025-2030

The Trinidad and Tobago Experience

Overview of Presentation

- E-Commerce Strategy Development
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Findings of T&T's e-Trade Readiness Assessment
- T&T's National E-Commerce Strategy: Vision & Mission
- Strategic Goals and Expected Outcomes
- Lessons learnt
- Challenges
- Way Forward for T&T

Background

- Trinidad and Tobago's (T&T) first National E-commerce Strategy covered the period 2017-2021.

- In 2022, the Ministry of Trade, Investment and Tourism (MTTI) engaged UNCTAD to support the development of a new National E-commerce Strategy.

- Development of the Strategy undertaken in two parts:
  i. Conduct of an eTrade Readiness Assessment; and
  ii. Drafting of the Strategy (based on the results of the eT Ready).

- T&T's National E-Commerce Strategy 2025-2030 completed in January 2025.

E-Commerce Strategy Development

- The first CARICOM country to develop a comprehensive E-commerce Strategy.



Stakeholder Engagement

Online Surveys

(600 responses)

Allowed for widespread reach nationally.

Face-to-face Multistakeholder Consultations and Validation sessions

(over 200 stakeholders)

Allowed for immediate feedback and open contributions, facilitated think-tanks and networking amongst e-commerce stakeholders.

Bilateral Meetings

These meetings were organized when additional information was required from a specific stakeholder.

Virtual Sessions

Utilized in instances of time and budget constraints.

Findings of eTrade Readiness Assessment (eT Ready)

Policy Area	Main Findings
E-commerce assessment and policy formulation	• Key digital initiatives exist – TTBizLink, GovPayTT and Developer's Hub • Lack of e-commerce data to assess sector's impact and growth • E-commerce penetration is fairly low, with consumers preferring international marketplaces.
ICT infrastructure and services	• ICT infrastructure is relatively advanced, with high mobile penetration and widespread Internet access, particularly in urban areas • Digital divide, broadband affordability issues and cybersecurity risks in underserved regions.
Trade logistics and trade facilitation	• Overall transport system is adequate, however improvements are needed in integration and efficiency, particularly in public transport.
Legal and regulatory frameworks	• Key laws exist such as ETA and Data Protection, but some are outdated or partially enforced. • Reforms needed – update laws, adopt international model laws and improve enforcement and public awareness.
Payment solutions	• T&T is well positioned to achieve a cashless ecosystem; despite this cash remains dominant. • Key barriers reported by MSMEs were the cost of opening and maintaining business bank accounts. • Initiatives to strengthen financial literacy needed.
E-commerce skills development	• Population has high literacy levels, leading to a high potential for digital literacy. • Lack of intermediate and advanced digital skills has contributed to a digital divide, particularly between rural and urban areas. • Targeted interventions at all levels of education as well as in the workplace needed.
Access to financing	• T&T has made significant strides in promoting start-ups, creating financing opportunities for MSMEs and promoting the country as a fintech hub. • Reforms needed - simplifying loan application processes, improving access to business bank accounts, implementing a collateral registry system, capacity building and enhancing financial literacy

Considerations when developing a National Strategy

- **Country-Specific Context**

Tailor the Strategy to reflect the unique economic and cultural landscape.

- **Engagement with International Donor Organizations**

Involve donor agencies early to avoid duplication of efforts and to align the Strategy with ongoing initiatives. This also facilitates access to funding for implementation.

- **Clear Areas of Focus**

Each country must identify priority areas to be addressed for a seamless e-commerce experience.

T&T's National E-commerce Strategy: Vision

Widespread adoption of e-commerce that:

- Enables businesses in Trinidad and Tobago to extend their access to domestic and foreign markets and improve the efficiency of their sales and purchasing processes; and

- Enables all consumers and the Government to access a more diverse range of merchants and products with confidence.

T&T's National E-commerce Strategy: Mission

- To create and maintain an enabling environment that facilitates and promotes the use of e-commerce in Trinidad and Tobago for domestic and international markets.

Strategic Goals

- ***Strategic goal 1 – Fostering and maintaining a legal and regulatory framework for e-commerce***

  ***Expected outcome*:** The legal and regulatory framework for e-commerce is regularly reviewed and updated to meet current and future needs, ensuring public trust through necessary safeguards and clear communication.

- ***Strategic goal 2 – Developing e-commerce awareness and skills for a competitive digital economy***

  ***Expected outcome*:** All stakeholders have awareness and skills in e-commerce to benefit from the use of e-commerce privately, in business, and in the public sector.

Strategic Goals

- ***Strategic goal 3 – Enabling business growth and competitiveness through e-commerce***

  ***Expected outcome*:** Businesses have the necessary resources and access to business services to successfully use e-commerce.

- ***Strategic goal 4 – Streamlining trade and logistics to support efficient and scalable e-commerce operations***

  ***Expected outcome*:** Trinidad and Tobago's trade and logistics systems facilitate domestic and cross-border e-commerce in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Lessons Learnt

- **Political will**
  - Buy-in and support from the Minister at the outset.

- **Dedicated Project Team with frequent communication**
  - Dedicated Project team at the lead Ministry;
  - Dedicated team at UNCTAD, including international and local consultant;
  - Weekly team meetings (virtually); and
  - National E-commerce Committee comprising key Ministries and Agencies to provide strategic input and direction throughout the Project.

- **Continuous Private Sector Engagement**
  - The private sector was engaged from the beginning with continuous updates throughout the process.

Lessons Learnt

- **Structure of the Consultation Process**
  - Local consultant used to disseminate surveys and drive responses;
  - Stakeholder-led panels provided insights and encouraged project buy-in through active participation; and
  - Stakeholder groups were pre-selected for face-to-face sessions by the Project team, to maximize collaboration and generate think-tanks.

- **Use of tools and Templates**
  - Google Forms for registration and maintaining of stakeholder database;
  - SurveyMonkey for online surveys – public sector, private sector and consumers; and
  - Feedback templates for stakeholder comments - to simplify and streamline compilation of comments.

Challenges

- Budget and time constraints
  - Virtual Consultations
- Timely stakeholder feedback
  - use of templates;
  - local consultant assisted with collecting responses; and
  - formal correspondence sent to Heads of Organizations.

Way Forward for T&T

- Prioritization of Projects:
  - e-commerce awareness;
  - delivery of targeted capacity building based on needs assessment;
  - e-commerce data collection;
  - an online e-commerce knowledge centre; and
  - public-private sector support programmes, including mentoring for start-ups and MSMEs
- Convening of the National E-Commerce Committee
- Commencement of Implementation
- Securing of donor funding where available
- Monitoring and Evaluation – UNCTAD's eTrade Reform Tracker

THANK YOU