

ASUTIL reveals 2015 conference highlights

José Luis Donagaray, ASUTIL Secretary General, has said that attendees to the ASUTIL 2015 conference will be treated to insights from a huge Brazilian consumer study along with an address from Eugenio Andrades, WDFG CEO, in June.



The study, conducted by m1nd-set, was informed by more than 2,000 interviews undertaken in Brazil. M1nd-set's Peter Mohn will present the findings from the study, which covers consumer activity at airports, borders, ferries, but also downtown operations.

This year, the annual conference will take place in Panamá between 3-5 June at the Westin Playa Bonita hotel. Donagaray says that Copa Airlines is offering a 15% discount on flights for those travelling within the Americas to the conference.

Other conference highlights revealed at this morning's ASUTIL press conference at the IAADFS show in Orlando include an address from WDFG's CEO Eugenio Andrades along with Donagaray's customary update on the region's economic performance. He said he would be talking about what is happening at the borders, particularly in Rio Branco and Melancia.

Carlos Melconian from M&S Consultores will speak once again this year and *TRBusiness* understands that delegates will hear from tobacco companies – with cumulative operations spread across six continents – on the state of the category, worldwide.



L to R: ASUTIL President, Enrique Urioste and Secretary General, José Luis Donagaray.

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This will not be limited to discussions about new regulations, but will also look at how the category can continue to operate (profitably) in new challenging conditions. The Moodie Report's Martin Moodie will close the conference with a presentation on the metamorphosis of the channel in the Americas.

Donagaray says the travel retail industry in the Americas is 'up a little bit on last year'; he estimates around 10%. He says he expects a flat year on the borders.

When asked how many visitors he was expecting for ASUTIL 2015, he told *TRBusiness* that he was expecting close to 360. "We had around 330 last year so I expect up to 360 this year."

Once again he told *TRBusiness* that it is not easy to find suitable venues, which can accommodate the growing number of attendees. "You need huge hotels to host this conference. It's difficult to change venues every year, but this we will not change. It is good for people to see the various local operations from place to place."

He also said he would not consider expanding the exhibition space or the number of stands taken by local suppliers at the conference [he says there are currently nine stands confirmed]. He explained that this was not the focus of the event, and that it was not his intention to compete with the IAADFS or Cannes etc.

Donagaray says that the organisation is hoping to confirm the staging of ASUTIL 2016 with the Hilton in Buenos Aires shortly, but if it cannot, next year's conference could be in Chile. He says that ASUTIL hopes to return to Brazil in 2017.