

# **DECONSTRUCTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN BERMUDA THROUGH POSTCOLONIAL THEORY**

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## **Abstract**

This research paper is about sustainable tourism, visual media, and colonialism in post-colonial Bermuda. Most research and literature on these issues has been particularly concerned with the experience of former colonies, and sovereign nationalism in a post-colonial context. Limited studies have concentrated on developments regarding the post-colonial realities of non-sovereign societies through tourism discourse. This paper examines encoded meaning in tourism, that which visually reproduces the ‘orient’ of colonial ideologies in Bermuda (Said 1978). The paper examines the way Bermuda is represented in travel websites and advertised media. Using visual methodologies, this research concludes that many characteristics of promotional media contain strategic messages of colonialism and participates in the degradation of cultural identity. The paper suggests how tourism discourse operates within a reimagined space for colonial desires but also that many imperial narratives continue to shape the way Bermuda’s material heritage and identity are under-represented.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Visual Media, Advertising, Cultural Identity, Colonialism, Community, Decolonization

## Foreword

This paper addresses an issue that has been a part of my life since birth. Tourism has become a multi-billion-dollar enterprise that continues to advance due to globalization, yet there is much work to be done to remove oppressive practices which imposition cultural and national identity for host nations. In a shrinking world fixated on global capital, it has become easier for international travel. Due to the increased demand for travel, it is even more important than ever to find development strategies that remove paradise discourse which have immobilizing effects on local communities. As a native of Bermuda, tourism has played an influential part on my life. I am a product of an environment that is shaped by the western (white) gaze, which submerges local realities at the expense for relaxation and leisure. In the Master in Environmental Studies (MES) program, the interdisciplinary nature of the Faculty of Environmental Studies allowed me to formulate this research interest further. During my studies in the program, I was able to recognize the importance of critically reviewing sustainable tourism development practices. The learning objectives to support this research are components of communication and representations, culture and identity, and environmental conservation. My hope with these research topics is to provide key indicators for developing strategic messaging in visual media that promotes anti-racist and anti-colonial representations found in tourism. This work is the beginning of my plans to establish sustainable tourism practices that combine visual media and community-based planning, one for which visibly promotes national culture and identity. The MES program has given me the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in achieving such objectives.

## Acknowledgments

This research is dedicated to my birthplace of Bermuda. With all its charm and beauty lies a country that raised me to be the person I am today, and my work represents a testimony filled with appreciation. Even though I have chosen to live abroad for many years, my legacy will endure through my children, which secures a future for Bermudian traditions and values.

I would like to thank first and foremost my mother for her unconditional love, support and guidance from the beginning. Your courage and determination to raise us to be our best can never be repaid. My wife Tasha who has stood by side with love and support and more importantly encouragement when I needed it! Thank you to my children Brianna, Brayden and Bryson for keeping me motivated. You all inspire me, and I hope to inspire you to do and become whatever your heart's desire! Much love to my sisters Dorinda and Sharmaine for always being great supporters and role models in my life.

Thank you to my supervisor and advisor Liette Gilbert for her continuous support and feedback throughout the research process, she made this journey easier to navigate. I also thank Honor Ford Smith for her constant support and encouragement throughout my studies and her help steering me in the right direction.

I also acknowledge all Treaty peoples, including settlers, migrants from past generations who arrived here involuntarily as a consequence of the transatlantic slave trade movement. This research pays tribute to my ancestors of African and Caribbean descent.



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## Introduction

*Just five hours away by plane from California, Hawai‘i is a thousand light years away in fantasy. Mostly a state of mind, Hawai‘i is the image of escape from the rawness and violence of daily American life. Hawai‘i — the word, the vision, the sound in the mind—is the fragrance and feel of soft kindness. Above all, Hawai‘i is "she," the Western image of the Native "female" in her magical allure. And if luck prevails, some of "her" will rub off on you, the visitor (Trask 2000: para 2).*

*Tourism depends on the circulation of desired image of the Caribbean as untouched yet within reach; the resort, the ultimate fragmentation of the environment, allows for the untouched to be curated and fortified (Titley 2000: 82)*

Haunani Kay Trask (1999) critiques the cultural imposition caused from tourism in which colonialism objectifies the people of Hawaii. Trask (1999) compares tourism to prostitution when presenting Hawaii as the “*she*” who is desired as an escape from westernized reality. Essentially, tourism dehumanizes culture to the point of cultural prostitution and degrades the value of the people for capital exchange. According to Gavan Titley’s (2000) statement above, the process behind this exploitation relies heavily on the *desired image*, one which is intact and ready for consumption. The testimonials of Trask (1999) and Titley (2000) bridge what, fundamentally, appear to be the social consequences of colonialism. While for Europe, the age of discovery and exploration advanced modernity, the colonized African and Native indigenous people suffered biological devastation of land, plants, animals and particularly culture. This research serves to further engage declarations from Trask (1999) and Titley (2000), in which to ensure the preservation and awareness of cultural consciousness.

When critiquing contemporary tourism, many parallels and characteristics constitute it as an updated version of colonialism. In this distinction are the implicit developments of economic, political and cultural semantics that reinforce western modernity. This study examines these institutionalized and discursive meanings, well observed in the visual context that form dominate representations, particularly with the global effects of tourism discourse.

The transatlantic slave trade and African diaspora established much of the material world. Paul Gilroy's (1993) *Black Atlantic* describes a modern world which has been shaped from oppression. Gilroy's (1993) claim challenges the founding principles behind Western societies and encourages further dialogue for rethinking representation. Gilroy (1993) argues that African slavery wasn't simply a footnote in history but rather a central premise in the conception of the modern world. This discourse identifies how slavery, not only shaped black identity, it confirms how western civilizations attained wealth from racialized thinking and racial capitalism. Gilroy's (1993) theory is critical for navigating the importance of this study in a postcolonial context. The transatlantic slave trade produced the movement of ships, people and ideas that represent the first act of globalization and entrepreneurship. More importantly are the continued legacies found within these modern and postmodern enterprises. For instance, contemporary tourism inherits not only the transport of people, it reproduces imperial ideologies of 'otherness'. This reproduction results not only from our holidays, but the way destinations are represented through travel reviews, media, documentaries and brochures (Mowforth and Munt 1998).

This essay specifically examines Bermuda's tourism economy as the case study to demonstrate the extent to which 'paradise discourse' embodies colonial legacy. I focus on Bermuda due to the country's long-standing tourism industry dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tourism is an essential part of the island's national identity and culture due to it being one of the largest contributors to the economy, next to offshore business.

Bermuda is often thought to be geographically Caribbean; however, it is located exactly 914 miles north from the nearest Caribbean island Bahamas. In fact, locating the island on a map uncovers how isolated Bermuda is from the European, Caribbean and North American coastlines. Regardless of the island's geographic location, Bermuda became a pivotal landscape in the trans-Atlantic trade system. By the mid-seventeenth century, the island was a key distributor for shipping and commerce for the British empire. While much of the British empire has been disassembled, there is still a strong colonial narrative that continues to oppress local communities. This historical landscape promotes messages that neglect to represent transatlantic diaspora and emancipation. Bermuda occupies these imperial complexities that now operate mainly through the island's 'tax exempt' landscape. This paper, however, investigates the cultural production of Bermuda's tourism economy to demonstrate the extent to which it obstructs local realities and reinforces dominant colonial representations of paradise.

## ***Research Methodology***

In attempting to develop and integrate the theoretical and methodological perspectives that support the framework for this research, I conducted visual methodology to deconstruct conventional tourism representations, reviewing the Bermuda's 2019 National Tourism Plan, official websites and advertised media as primary sources, as well as magazines, journals, and postcolonial literature as secondary sources. In addition, it was inevitable to draw from visual research collected from personal reflections to form parallels between online media and the environment. Visual methods integrated elements of cultural experiences alongside an awareness of cultivated colonial landscapes that are promoted in 'picturesque' forms of consumption of Bermuda.

In order to draw connections between Bermuda tourism and media performances, my theoretical approach is the concept of representation as a form of communicative cultural practice. Scholars with theoretical research in postcolonial and cultural studies such as Edward Said (1978) and Stuart Hall (2006) engage in racialized representations in society. For instance, Stuart Hall's (1973, 1980) groundbreaking encoding/decoding theory of televisual communication developed in the 1970s and 1980s still provides a communicative framework that produces connections between hegemony and other mediations of history, such as websites and social media (Morley 1992). The hegemonic control of representation is one of the principal concerns of Hall (2006) and cultural studies. For Hall (2006), representation is the connection to the meaning of language that shapes culture. Edward Said (1978) examines how colonizers established cultural dominance of their colonies, in which inferior concepts are measured through western modernity. Said (1978) and Hall (1973, 1980, 2006) engage in what they considered a process of 'Othering', dynamics that are also clearly present in the tourism industry influenced by oppressive representations of travel culture.

In tourism, there is a language of mass consumption, in which tours, resorts, cruise ships, and excursions are positioned as commodities. Most travelers buy into mass tourism experiences through packaged 'genuine' forms of travel or "languages". Using postcolonial and cultural theories exposes the socio-economic and cultural oppressive language represented in tourism, particularly activities, that are presented as attractions for visitors.

## ***Research Framework***

This paper emphasizes sustainable tourism as a concept that is commonly recognized in eco-friendly tourism strategies and is therefore regarded as a key component for local development. Researching models that facilitate sustainable tourism is a necessary development strategy for global planning, awareness, and accountability, especially cultural degradation and conservation efforts for host nations. While Bermuda employs responsible travel-oriented initiatives, there is little empirical evidence to suggest such efforts are successful in facilitating anti-colonial representations and visual content that promotes national culture. The goal of this research is to explore sustainable tourism practices associated with visual communication strategies that misrepresent Bermudian culture. Through examining the Government of Bermuda's 2019 National Tourism Plan in discussion with postcolonial literature, my research engages how and why strategic anti-colonial messaging in visual communication and marketing supports the national identity of Bermudian people.

The primary objective for this research is to examine postcolonial literature as a framework to identify colonial legacies still accessible in Bermuda tourism planning and marketing, specifically on media brochures and websites. This paper addresses three main components to investigate and critique sustainable tourism in Bermuda. First, it provides an analyses of communication models to determine how tourism functions as a cultural practice that produces visual semantics. Secondly, it provides a descriptive examination of the imagery and text within several websites, social media, and advertisements, aiming specifically at identifying their spatialized colonial agenda. Finally, it examines the influence of visual media and how it neglects the voices and experiences of local Bermudian people.

This paper is structured with critical examination of Bermuda and sustainable tourism in reference to Stuart Hall's (1980) communication model. I utilize the Bermuda's 2019 National Tourism Plan to propagate the current planning surrounding the industry, as well the elements that define sustainable development to shape the research question. In addition, I identify the significance of Bermuda's complex heritage that formulates the island's under-represented identity. This first section also highlights various implications of tourism and the power relationships that have shaped 'paradise' discourse.

The second section of this research confronts how Bermuda is depicted in the travel media, specially Bermuda Tourism websites and social media platforms. This section evaluates why and

how hegemonic tourism media is presented, the overall impacts on cultural identity and infrastructure that supports models of the paradise discourse.

Lastly, the third section uses postcolonial literature as a means to analyse the overall impact on current oppressive forms of representations found in Bermuda tourism. I evaluate how certain images promote strategic messages for Bermuda, and why it is important to encourage anti-colonial and decolonial alternatives, which promotes national culture. As such, I also assess the capability of such messaging frameworks as practical development solutions, and thus, supporting material classifications of sustainable tourism planning.

## **1. Encoding/Decoding Tourism**

Bermuda tourism embodies the legacy of a forgotten community bonded from an inheritance of oppression. The island is packaged and sold through an imperial heritage that under-represents local communities. Tourism brochures portray Bermuda and its beauty as a colonial pastime. The identity of the island lies between this notion of being a surviving British colony and a former British colony (Saltus-Blackwood 2000). The challenge for Bermuda is that its tourism product primarily promotes colonial British heritage. As a result, the island produces a historical mosaic landscape that manufactures tropical imagery of forts, civic sites, and old English churches from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Bermuda's material past, however, identifies with a history of transatlantic slave trade, African enslavement, Native Americans and emancipation, but evidence of their existence fails to materialize within the current tourism product for the island. This study looks at representation and how tourism discourse in Bermuda perpetuates these colonial narratives.

Stuart Hall (1997) describes representation as a social constructed performance. In its most simple expression, representation refers to identifying someone or something through a particular set of ideas and beliefs. However, Hall (1997) deepens this notion of representation by emphasizing the implications from interpreted meaning. Hall (1997) examines representation as a process where meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture through the use of language, signs and images which stand for or represent objects. In tourism, there is a predominant language of mass consumption, in which tours, resorts, cruise ships, and excursions are positioned as commodities to be acquired temporarily. Most people buy into mass tourism experiences through advertised travel destinations. Hall's (1997) theory is useful for revealing socio-economic and culturally oppressive semantics that support these commodified practices. Hall's (2003) method

to “encode” applies to tourism as a communication practice that carries specific meaning, particularly in the form of visual representations.

There are theories that describe how language represents the world, however, the reflective, intentional and constructionist languages are considered the most significant in cultural studies research. In a reflective approach to representation, language operates like a two-way mirror which replicates the true meaning of an object, person, idea or event as it exists in the world. Basically, the reflective theory suggests that language works by simply reflecting or imitating a fixed “certainty” that is already present in reality (Hall, 1997). The intentional approach argues the opposite and proposes that the author of a particular subject forces meaning through the use of language. Essentially, the author depends on a shared and agreed language with the audience (culture). However, the intended meanings ultimately follow a set of rules and arrangements in order to be understood by the desired audience (Hall 1997). Finally, the constructionist approach recognizes language as something that is not fixed with meaning (Hall 1997). Instead, meaning is not something that innately exists as an object or person, rather it is constructed using ‘*systems of representation*’ (concepts and signs). The constructionist method considers essential elements missed by both the reflective and intentional theories. Understanding language as a fixed property or recognizable event abandons the reality of an ideological process. In other words, meaning is not constructed on its own account, it requires a model of exchange, acceptance and approval from a dominant source.

When considering sustainable tourism in a constructivist lens, it becomes obvious that the production and reproduction of a particular travel culture is shaped through a set of beliefs and ideas which intrude on culture. According to Hall (1997: 25):

Constructivists do not deny the existence of the material world. However, it is not the material world which conveys meaning it is the language system or whatever system we are using to represent our concepts. It is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistic and other representational systems to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others.

As Hall (1997) suggests, the meaning is always produced within a certain language; it is the practice of representation, constructed through what Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) refers to as ‘*signs*’. Each sign are elements of meaning that are separated into two parts, the signifier and the signified. The signifier is the material part of the sign or concept, while the



signified refers to the social meanings attached to that signifier or language. For example, a mistletoe is an evergreen plant presented at Christmas holiday events (the sign's signifier) and a symbol of a lover kiss for one's sweetheart (what is signified). According to Saussure (1916), the world itself does not communicate meaning. Instead, meaning develops on systems of representation using concepts of language. The study on representation focuses on narratives that are rarely considered in tourism criticism, the signs and most importantly the language that forms from them.

Stuart Hall (1997) takes Saussure's (1916) research further with questions related to power and control in language. Saussure (1916) suggests that language operates in a methodical way. For cultural theorists like Hall (1997), the idea that language could be studied with specific rules associated to each culture doesn't consider the holistic analysis for histories, traditions, values testimonies, imagery, and cultural discourses which work across a diversity of texts and areas of knowledge. Stuart Hall (1997) is particularly influential for building an understanding of hegemonic culture. In doing so, he emphasizes the multiple meanings within media and how audiences actively engage with what they consume in the media. His theory of encoding and decoding recognizes the active role of the audience within a complex stage of communication practices. Hall's (1997) encoding-decoding theory is organized as a four-stage process: production, circulation, use (consumption) and reproduction. These four steps acknowledge how messages are produced and received through a variety of dominant meanings. When utilising this four-stage theory for analysing communication practices, a method to interpret hegemonic meanings within cultural performances become evident. Hall's (1997) encoding-decoding model of communication offers a theoretically critical approach to how oppressive ideology cuts into how tourism is produced, distributed, consumed and expected.

According to Stuart Hall's (1997) encoding-decoding model, both the producer and the audience have certain positions when communication occurs. The producers are the content creators who shape media based on specific ideas or ideologies recognised as the encoders. The audience or the decoders are the recipients of the media that is produced. When a message is being encoded, it may be transmitted using either oral or material forms in which to assist the receiver's comprehension of the message. Once the message is in the control of the receiver, it is decoded and translated. The receiver is then given the opportunity to construct or deconstruct the message. A message doesn't always guarantee or yield the expected outcome the producer wants. The result is what Hall (1997) refers to as the dominated, negotiated and oppositional methods in which messages are received.

When considering tourism as the producer of leisure travel and travellers (tourists) as the desired audience, a model for measuring tourism communication materialises. The framework provides a critique of tourism discourse and alternative visual strategies used to market host nations now packaged as destinations. For instance, using the dominated decoded response, as suggested by Hall (1997), the audience (i.e., a tourist) accepts the messages provided by the producer (stakeholder) without dispute. For example, Bermuda's tourism advertisements constantly depict imagery with crystal-clear pink sandy beaches to showcase the island as "beautiful" with the slogan 'Bermudaful'. As a viewer of these images, the intended response is dominated because the producer (stakeholder) made it their aim to construct beautiful content where the outcome of the audience (tourist) will be a desire to visit such beauty as intended by the producer (stakeholder). Contemporary tourism in Bermuda and the Caribbean are presented with dominant messaging to engage a specific response from potential travellers.



*Figure 1. Warwick Long Bay*

The next type of decoded response is the negotiated. This type of response moderately believes the messages from the producer (stakeholder) and generally accepts their meaning. The audience (tourist) sometimes alters the message to represent their own experiences. For example, much of Bermuda's culture and arts brand is presented with performances of Gombey dancers. The Gombey tradition dates from the 1800s and represents a vibrant blend of African, Native

American, Caribbean and British cultures. A featured Gombey dance performance presents a familiar cultural symbol of the local Bermudian people that originated from slavery. Most performances are offered (as entertainment) to visitors during various events while vacationing and hope to incite visitor response towards appreciation for the island's treasured history. For instance, a tourist from Toronto observes that "the Gombey dancer had a flavour of the Mardi Gras Indians performances in New Orleans" (cited in The Royal Gazette Newspaper 2019). The intention is for the audience (tourist) to express a reaction of respect and admiration for native tradition, however because the dance routine is packaged as entertainment, it appears to have a negotiated response.

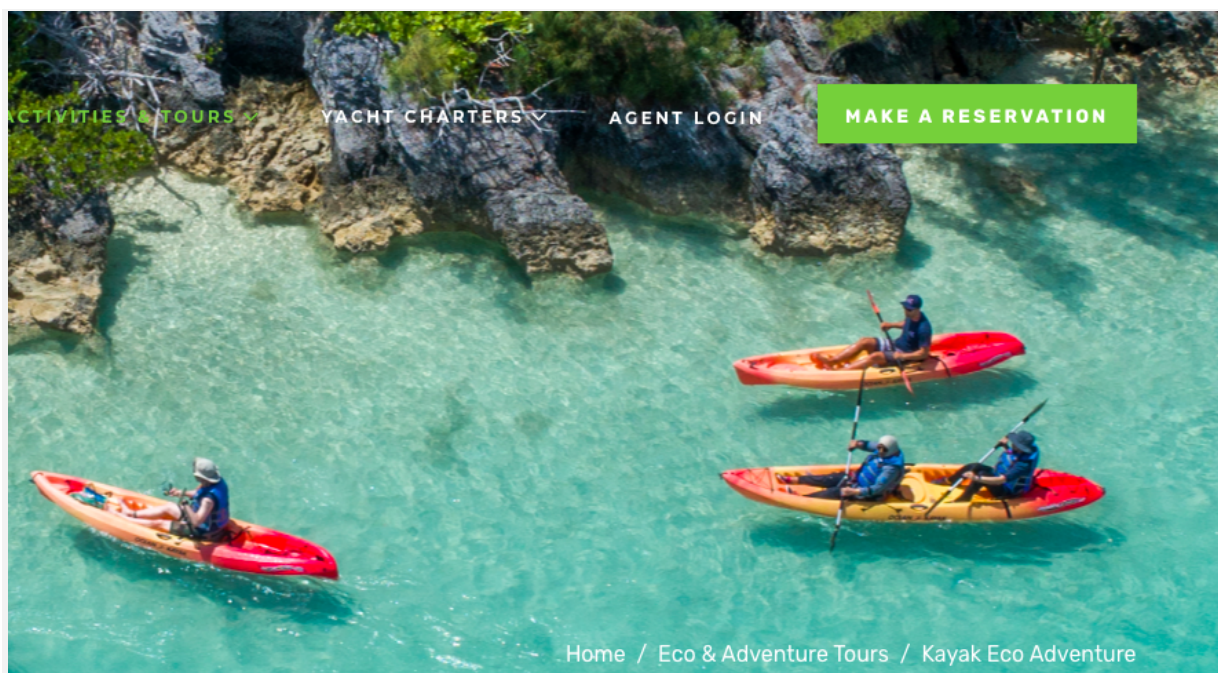


*Figure 2. Bermuda Gombey*

The third type of decoding is the oppositional response. This response completely contrasts and disagrees with the producer's (stakeholder) message because of the audience's (tourist) social opinion and ideology. Many destinations demonstrate sustainable development, one which advocates for conservation areas, cultural preservation, economic stability and healthy ecosystems. As a result, responsible travel has become an improvement initiative that is very much associated with today's travel culture. For example, from March through May, Bermuda encourages eco-tours and experiences from hiking in Bermuda's pristine jungles to experiencing sustainably sourced cuisine. The intention is to promote messages to tourists to participate in eco-friendly solutions for the environment and the overall island. However, the fact that sustainable tourism is



presented to the audience (tourists) as an alternative option rather than a necessary substitute for the future, these efforts are still met with indifference and/or rejection. In fact, the audience (tourists) continue to ignore the importance of conservation when accommodating stereotypical vacation experiences. Some of these conventional tourism activities are flat out offensive to the environment and the local communities due to their harmful consequences. For instance, jet ski, swimming with dolphins, wasteful practices of cruise ships, and all-inclusive resorts are examples of activities that have a negative impact on local ecosystems and residents. In any case, there are producers (stakeholder) working to reverse these harmful effects in the industry, but mass tourism practices remain strongly opposed.



*Figure 3. Kayak Eco Adventure*

Stuart Hall's (1997) encoding-decoding model is of great importance to today's media because we, as viewers, must critically analyze media. How we communicate, whether it is something seen, spoken or heard must be carefully examined along with the producer of the message. In our representation and interpretation of the world, we may encounter what appear to be harmless institutional beliefs, which are in favor of our own personal values, but if we do not effectively decode these messages, there may be risk of being negatively influenced. For instance, tourism operates from the illusion of hospitality; however, transgressions of cultural servitude and environmental pollution live beneath the surface. For example, tourism requires investments into infrastructure that maximizes adverse effects on ecosystems such as cruise ships, recreational

resorts and swimming with dolphins. The consumption of such activities provides pleasure and entertainment for guests but negatively lead to higher levels of marine pollution and cultural degradation in the environment. Hall's (1997) model of how we, as the audience, receive messages is important when attempting to uncover these concealed implications. More importantly, Hall's (1997) theory finds understanding of how the distribution and exchange of tourism language cannot be measured separately from its originally produced meaning. Therefore, tourism development planning must now consider representations that support inclusive cultural meanings that promote anti-colonial and oppressive travel experiences. Hall's (1980: 509) interpretation of the television communicative practice mentions this process further as he explains:

The institutional structures of broadcasting, with their practices and networks of production, their organized relations and technical infrastructures, are required to produce a programme production, here, constructs the message. In one sense, the circuit begins here. Of course, the production process is not without its 'discursive' aspect: it, too, is framed throughout by meanings and ideas: knowledge-in-use concerning the routines of production, historically defined technical skills, professional ideologies, institutional knowledge, definitions and assumptions, assumptions about the audience and so on frame the constitution of the programme through this production structure.

Stuart Hall (1997) made a major contribution to the study of representation. Combining theory and methods from a wide variety of academic disciplines which focuses in particular on the dynamics of hegemony, social power, and audiences' association with what they consume in the media. The method to deconstruct the language in tourism media begins with the interpretation of visual and textual meanings. As Hall (2003: 123) describes, "the meanings packaged between sender and receiver are already intersecting with deep semantic codes of a culture and take on additional more active ideological dimensions." This distinction between Hall's (2003) theory and tourism discourse is one of the underlying arguments in my studies – that the root causes behind misrepresented local communities such as Bermuda stems from the way Bermudians are portrayed and marketed for international tourism. The perception of local communities that are submissive to the needs of tourism provides no representative view of Bermudian culture. Hall's (2003) theory is important because it develops a framework around ethics when delivering various media platforms that oppose cultural dominant beliefs and ideologies. It is vital to decode the current dominant language in tourism, especially when local communities are subjected to

oppressive implications. Exposing the control of representation is one of major concerns to deconstruct the intersection between Bermuda tourism and institutionalised narratives.

## **2. Bermuda's Past and Ongoing Colonial Stamps**

As a citizen of Bermuda, I am deeply connected to the culture and therefore better able to position myself in this study. The historical landscape of Bermuda does not present itself like other former colonial nations. Colonialism for Bermuda meant cultivating and transforming an uninhabited island with European settlers and slaves. The society developed with no native resistance; therefore, its postcolonial dialogue varies from the Bahamas and Jamaica, whose chronicles begin with indigenous Caribbean people. Bermuda, on the other hand, provides an opportunity to explore the implications of colonialism in a postcolonial context from its imperial fold. The island represents a stable colonial legacy that constitutes structural inequalities that inhabit the island's socio-political configuration.

Bermuda as a British Overseas Territory raises questions about contemporary formations of representations in quasi-colonial political societies. For Bermuda, these representations surface when further examining sustainable development and planning strategies for the island's dominant tourism and business economic sectors. Tourism marketing and geopolitics, however, dictates how Bermuda positions its heritage for North American consumption (Fortenberry 2016). As a result, the island's 2016 National Tourism plan and web-marketing strategies promote traditional British heritage sites using paradise discourse. Thus, Bermuda's imperial existence provides an interesting opportunity to examine how tourism becomes politically encrypted within cultural practices that operate to under-represent local communities.

### ***Bermuda: From Colonialization to Liberation***

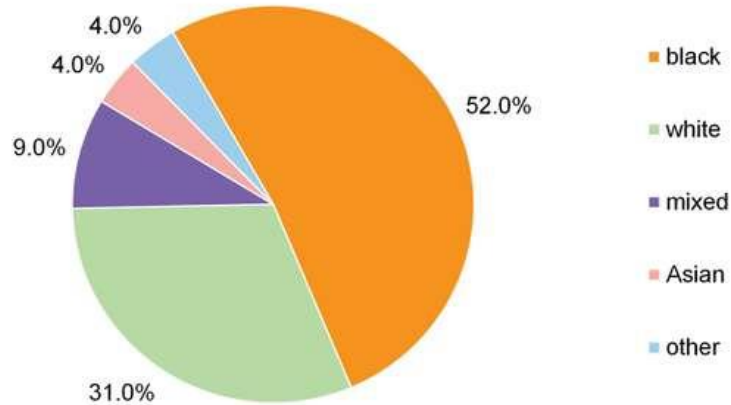
Bermuda represented an advantage for the first English settlers and colonists. The prospects from the Caribbean and the Americas promised gold, glory, spices, and expansion. Unlike its sister colonies, Bermuda did not yield gold or spices. Its potential meant the opportunity to cultivate sub-tropical crops and stock animals. Most importantly, the new colony had no indigenous population; Bermuda was uninhabited when discovered in 1505 by Spanish explorer Juan de Bermúdez. Bermuda was afforded the conditions to flourish under King James 1 of England – with the expansion of the colony of Jamestown, Virginia in 1607. According to Butland and Litt (1980: 36), “[i]n 1618, relief supplies of beef, stock, maize, potatoes, and dried fish were sent from Bermuda to Virginia, enabling the latter colony survival.” African slaves were introduced as laborers, and they eventually represented a large percentage of the population.

Bermuda was the first English colony to implement African slavery as recorded in 1617 (Slavery Timeline 2019). Initially, African slaves arrived to cultivate tobacco, sugar cane, and indigo to establish Bermuda as a plantation economy. However, Bermuda shifted to a maritime economy due to the island’s failure to produce quality tobacco in sub-tropical temperatures. Shipbuilding, maritime commerce, privateering, and the chattel of people developed Bermuda’s economy. Many slaves provided the labor for maritime work such as fisherman, pilots, dockworkers, whale-hunters, and sailors. Black slaves played a large part in maritime activities for several reasons. For one, slave workers lead shipowners to higher profits because of free labor (Jones 2004). The maritime boom in Bermuda generated extraordinary profit and like its sister colonies, developed from the labor and displacement of people.

The legacy of people and communities on the island derived from the transatlantic diaspora. Although Bermuda is not considered part of the Caribbean, the connection to the region stems from its multiracial community. According to the study by George J. Rushe and Pauline Heaton (2016), approximately three-fifths of Bermuda’s population is of full and mixed African ancestry, including immigrants from the West Indies or their descendants, Cape Verdeans, and descendants of slaves brought from other parts of Central America or Africa before Britain outlawed the slave trade in 1807.

As of 2016, Whites (people of European ancestry) constitute another one-third of the population and include those of British and American descent as well as descendants of Portuguese laborers from Madeira and the Azores who have immigrated to Bermuda since the mid-nineteenth century.

**Bermuda ethnic composition (2016)**



*Figure. 4 Bermuda ethnic composition (2016)*

Cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1997) articulates the colonial process in the Caribbean as the ‘purest’ representation of diaspora. As Hall (1995) states, “[t]he histories of the migration forced or free, of peoples who now compose the populations of these societies, whose cultural traces are everywhere intermingled with one another, there is always the stamp of historical violence and rupture.” Hall’s (1995) passage depicts the diasporic trail or stamp that operates beneath the surface of Bermuda, North America, Caribbean, and the colonial legacy. Although distinctive, people in these regions are cultural road maps to a common path of oppression.

### ***Economy in Bermuda***

The challenge for Bermuda (and throughout the Caribbean) is the concept of independence. Fundamentally, this means navigating within economic and political frameworks presented since colonialism. A perfect example, of course, is Jamaica and the International Fund Monetary Bank (IMF) and the World Bank. The island's economy has been shaped by centuries of violence, corruption, and slavery. The sugar plantations, which kept Britain’s ‘metropolitan’ industry flourishing derived at the expense of African slaves. Like many so-called developing nations, Jamaica never recovered from slavery (Wigglesworth 2013). The former slaves remained poor and the economy is dependent on foreign investment and raw materials while having high imports for food and other materials. The country was forced to sign a loan agreement with the IMF due to its



inability to provide sustainable economic alternatives after becoming independent. The agreement caused Jamaica to become further in debt and more importantly dependent upon foreign exports that are heavily sanctioned by the IMF. The economic reality of Jamaica is shared with many developing nations who find themselves still in bondage after independence. As Wigglesworth (2013, para 16) writes, "[s]ince the independence wave of the 1960s and 1970s, public spending on social programs, education, and jobs have steadily increased. But growth has largely remained sluggish, dependent on niche sectors such as banana and sugar exports to Europe, financial services and tourism."

Despite becoming independent, the illusion of autonomy haunts colonized people. In the case of Bermuda, its wealthy economy carries a misconception that fails to distinguish a fully self-sufficient government. Bermuda's reliance on foreign capital from international business and tourism sectors accounts for much of its wealth. During the writing of this research, Bermuda ranks sixth on the list of richest countries in the world per capita. Bermuda is one of the global elites in terms of offshore banking and reinsurance, however, it operates as a 'dual society'. Indeed, this duality is shared throughout the Caribbean and evident among marginalized communities. Therefore, when confronting Bermuda from a postcolonial context, it is important to understand how the sociology of the people improved very little since colonialism. Furthermore, emancipation only served to conjure up an illusion of freedom, in which to subjugate descendants from the old World into a post-colonial existence. Similar to Caribbean nations, the shadow of a plantation economy silently performs beneath the surface of Bermuda.

### ***Colonial Liberation***

The colonial legacy represents the consciousness of colonized people. In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon (1961: 233) writes, "[t]otal liberation involves every facet of the personality." According to Fanon (1961), decolonization involved the healing of the psychological burden caused to colonized people. Fanon (1961) considers how real freedom starts and ends with mental sovereignty. Quito Swan (2009), author of *Black Power in Bermuda*, supports Fanon as he argues that the fundamental theme affecting African diaspora is "invisibility." Swan (2009) explains how the marginalization within African descended populations often becomes visible only when racialized tensions develop into disasters that pressure global interest and the media. While Fanon (1961) describes colonialization as a process of self-healing, Swan (1961) acknowledges the importance of being seen outside of socially constructed frameworks. Both concepts are necessary

when analyzing radical or liberal movements for colonized societies because similar patterns of demonstration emerge in these nations. For instance, civil unrest in the Americas and Bermuda during the 1960s illustrate these parallels. The civil rights movement aimed to reconstruct a nation plagued with legalized discrimination laws. Black Power movements in Bermuda were mainly inspired by talks for political independence (Swan 2009). In both cases, people of African descent struggled against political and racial implications from an oppressive lineage. Terrorism attacks against white elitists signaled anti-colonial protest in the form of assassinations for Bermudian government officials, while Jim Crow bylaws condoned discrimination, segregation, and murder of black people in the United States. Both struggles fought against class-based systems, which intended to maintain white privilege and authority.

Postcolonial theories aimed to deconstruct how these colonial oppressed institutions operate within racialized and systemic agendas. “The maintenance of the strongly entrenched system, whereby all power remained in the island’s white minority, was made possible by carefully devised frameworks” (Butland and Litt 1980: 141). Bermuda, which is yet to referendum for political independence, exemplifies this postcolonial dilemma. Nevertheless, the island is presented to the external world on billboards for dream vacations or as a potential tax haven for international businesses. The island’s colonial struggles sit dormant and almost forgotten.

Bermuda continues to serve as a gateway for British imperialism and the development of the Western metropolis. The Bermuda flag, with powdered wig-wearing judges, and British names of parishes, such as Paget and Devonshire, are clear reminders of its colonial birth (Swan 2009). Since 1968, the British government has established that the island is self-governed (Bermuda Constitution 1968). This means that the British Government holds control over all external affairs, while Bermuda administers local laws and legislations. However, the colonial structure continues to shape local traditions and cultures. For starters, English is the official language and the island’s conservative reputation may be a result of its vast Christian influence. These characteristics acknowledge British values that transformed much of the western world. Certainly, colonialism intended to convert the natives to speak English and pray to a European God. Despite the presence of other denominations such as Catholicism, a large portion of Bermudians are of the Anglican faith. Anglican beliefs have long been religious practices developed by the Church of England. Today racialized tension now operates beneath the surface and maybe proof of symbolic legislative alterations. The characteristics of Bermuda’s national culture is historically shaped from many aspects such as religion, ethnicity, and a broken English dialect. However, the politics of racial identity of any nation determines the deeper implications of that society. Positioned from this

perspective, racial relations in Bermuda are isolated beneath the servitude of tourism marketing and international businesses.

Today, societies that suffer from the effects of colonialism do so under similar constraints of oppression. Therefore, the process of decolonisation must reject this modernity of Western philosophy. Postcolonial theorists work not only deconstruct imperial views, but their works also highlights the extent of Western development for European societies as the birth of a subculture. This culture was denied access to political and economic advancements from a society built from its conception. According to some scholars, colonial traditions of Western superiority endure over time and undermine contemporary attempts to build more inclusive multicultural societies (Smith 2015) Therefore, if these socioeconomic and political frameworks continue without slavery, what has changed systemically for colonized people of these subcultures? This question is rhetorical, and only works to reinforce my notion of postcolonial and colonialism as ambiguous concepts.

While analyzing non-sovereign nations like Bermuda, it is important to appreciate the culture of the people. The socioeconomic and political structure of Bermuda is determined by colonial measures, in which local Bermudians embody the performance of servitude. This performance engages with Western modernity through the cultivation of oppressed slaves and non-European people. Like the Caribbean, Western modernity isolates Bermuda as an ‘Outsider’, therefore, encapsulating colonial frameworks within the very fabric of the culture. This is because traditional construction of ethnic identity and culture (European, Chinese, Indian, African) is inviolably tied to the historicity of race that evolved from the Old World (Roberts 2012). Thus, colonized people bear the effects of dominant racist views, beliefs, and religion which has produced a diluted sense of national culture. The people of Bermuda symbolize this colonial legacy; however, it appears beneath the island’s beauty and mythical character, which serves to suppress its liberation.

### ***Personal Reflection on Civil Unrest***

This researcher’s personal educational experience as a Bermudian youth consisted of teachings of European history along with Black experiences learned from the whispers of elderly tales and backyard gatherings. Stories of Black resistance and anti-colonial protest against discrimination and racism failed to reach my historical awareness. Thus, removing the chronicled struggle of Bermuda’s fight for the “visibility” of its marginalized community. An example of an obstructed historical account was the account of the murders of Bermuda Governor, Sir Richard Sharples, his

aid Captain Hugh Sayers, British Police Commissioners and two Portuguese shopkeepers in 1973. Although the murders of these public officials were well known, the outcome from these crimes is briefly mentioned in Bermuda's history map. At the time, members of the island's Black Beret Cadre organization were linked to the assassinations.

The Beret Cadre formed in 1969 and developed into Bermuda's most passionate Black Power Association (Swan 2009). To mobilize the majority Black population in support against the elitist white minority (also known as the Forty Thieves) was the objective of the organization. The Beret Cadre developed as a resistance to the "Forty Thieves", who have maintained control and power from a legacy of racketeering, privateering, and slavery. The British Foreign and Commonwealth Officials (FCO), who supported the elitist class on the island, targeted the Beret Cadre as threatening terrorist groups. At one point, the FCO attempted to systematically persecute and exile members of Berets on the island. Even Bermuda's mainstream media demonized them as violent hoodlums and misguided youth bent on destroying the island (Swan 2009). Therefore, the assassination of white men during a time of political activism from Black movements caused the Berets to become instant suspects. Eventually, these assumptions led FCO officials to convict and execute two Beret associates, Erskine Buck Burrows and Larry Tacklyn on December 2, 1977. As such, despite the convictions, public protest persisted as the trial ignited further racial implications. Young Bermudian demonstrators, who believed the executed to be the product of a much deeper oppressive system, soon found themselves in conflicts with police. The riots caused a week-long state of emergency, in which British troops arrived to support the local regiment. The matter truly shifted Bermuda's political climate which sent shock-waves that reached the British Parliament. The aftermath of these assassinations and riots produced concerns of future revolt if the needs of Black Bermudians remained uncertain.

Despite political and racial challenges, Bermuda maintains status as a dependent of Britain. The riots happened over 40 years ago and resulted only in legislative pressure for the government. As stated by Swan (2009: 3), "[t]his includes token constitutional amendments and surface social changes such as the renaming of schools, increased hiring of Blacks in areas of employment generally reserved for Whites, and the creation of new holidays, such as Bermuda Day." Today, Bermuda's Former Interim Governor Tim Kinnear expressed how the Bermuda government needed to consider its colonial relationship with Britain as a benefit or burden and to seek independence as a means to eliminate Black Militancy (Swan 2009). Kinnear believed that independence would bring a sense of resourcefulness to Black Bermudians who were conditioned from the interest of colonialism. Under this notion, Kinnear's sentiment acknowledged Bermuda's

reliance on Britain as the incentive behind racial segregation on the island. Nevertheless, the Governor's remarks were opposed by the ruling political party at that time, the United Bermuda Party (UBP). The UBP was the party of the "Forty Thieves", who again comprised the minority White upper-class on the island. The UBP was "concerned about internal security" due to the uprising as part of Bermuda's colonial relations to Britain involved matters of security and internal defenses (Swan 2009: 3). The support for independence not only impacted the policing on the island, it potentially threatened colonial infrastructures that maintain social order. This political autonomy would also interrupt the UBP, who held power and interest of a white majority party in the Bermuda House of Assembly for 30 years.

### **3. Strategic Messaging in Bermuda Tourism**

This study focuses on visual and textual analysis when considering sustainable planning that represents the needs of Bermuda and national identity. The textual analysis focused on analyzing the text found in Bermuda's 2019 National Tourism Plan, while visual analysis examined the graphical components of the tourism websites, social media and advertisements. My ultimate aim would be to build online communities that establish local input. The need for digital media that engages online communities and actively partners with hosts avoids harmful misrepresentations and mistreatment of the environment. The reality for most visitors encountering these images has much relevance on product placement. However, what remains visibly invisible is Bermuda's material heritage, which is inherently responsible for the island's infrastructure and diversity. In this context, it is important to understand the need to advertise culture instead as a feature of the desired destination

The tourism sector represents services and products that offer travel opportunities to various products and destinations. The industry produces leisure and business mobility for traveling migrants. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), the travel & tourism sector accounted for 10.3% of gross domestic product and 330 million jobs, or 1 in 10 jobs globally in 2019. The travel and tourism sectors have experienced 3.5% growth in 2019, outperforming the global economy growth of 2.5% for the ninth consecutive year. The WTTC (2019) indicates one of four new jobs in the sector over the past five years, making travel and tourism the best partner for governments to generate employment. These indicators do more than highlight tourism's global impact, it represents the direct link to economic growth and

employment. While it is clear that tourism generates growth and boosts economic activities such as infrastructure and foreign exchange for both developed and underdeveloped nations, the so-called hospitality sector is characterized by long hours and low pay. As Trask (2000: para 26) argues, “tourism is considered a low-paying service industry that, no matter the huge amount of tourists, always generates low-income jobs.” Yet, tourism has become an underlining tool for global development for countries’ position in the global market. Consequently, government planning and policy for improving or establishing a brand and image drives tourism marketing. This chapter examines how Bermuda communicates and reproduces its own global identity for tourism marketing and planning.

As reflected in the island’s 2019 seven-year National Tourism Plan, the acronym ‘AGILITY’ was created to cover a series of initiatives. The abbreviation AGILITY stands for Awareness and Relevance, “Greener” Infrastructure, Local Involvement, Innovation, Teams and groups and Year-round (Bermuda Tourism Authority 2019). The new strategic plan for the island presents ‘ideal’ solutions for tourism growth, amplified from messages for local development. However, there is still no practical strategy which ensures meaningful marketing and promotion for these frameworks. For instance, the Plan indicates no communication practices for how to introduce such indicators to both public and private sectors. The Plan emphasizes ‘Local Involvement’ but does not indicate or negotiate how each strategy considers community development. Instead, each indicator serves to target areas for growth or improvement. A more practical Plan must not simply list ‘Local involvement’ but could rather generate and use community data in connection to each target area. Introducing information or reports gathered from surveys, interviews, and community groups could create transparency for such initiatives.

Additionally, the Plan fails to address technology as a key indicator and strategic pillar for national tourism development. We live in a world driven by media technology. Every business entrepreneur and organization on the planet uses media technology to promote and showcase their value. In this case, tourists visit online platforms to not only plan but decide their vacation destinations. Furthermore, rather than enhancing visitor experiences and generating digital footprints as outlined, technological innovation may operate instead to establish the island’s “unique identity”. For instance, including a technology pillar dedicated to visitor data and geo-location could assist with new tourism models that improve sustainability and accessibility. Instead, the AGILITY strategies appear to be identifying global branding patterns that further promotes the island’s wealthy golf courses and pink sandy beaches (Miller and Henthorne 2006).

Figure 1 examines the current AGILITY proposal and how it constructs selective marketing strategies for global recognition at the expense of national identity. Each category presents recognizable markers for areas of focus and improvement. The year-round portion of this agenda, for instance, addresses challenges to maintain visitors during the off season from September to May.



Figure 5: National Tourism Plan (2019)

Other than frequent visitors, the AGILITY redevelopment strategy widely addresses ideas for improving cruises, developing events businesses and targeting the yachting sector to name a few. Six key “success indicators” for 2025 that are built into the AGILITY plan. These modes include a tourism contribution of \$1.2 billion for the island’s gross domestic product, and goals to reach 30 percent increase for visitors air arrivals, 56 percent of leisure arrivals to come during the low season in Bermuda, more than 8 percent of visitors to be African-American, more than 83 percent of travelers to want to recommend Bermuda to family and friends and more than 70 percent of residents support for tourism development (Bermuda Tourism Authority 2019). The new National Tourism Plan (2019) for Bermuda was revealed the country’s roadmap to success for a balanced and growing tourism industry. To commend the plan, the Minister of Economic Development and Tourism Jamahl Simmons states:

“Our government believes Bermuda’s greatest asset is its people. That belief underpinned the inclusive approach of the Bermuda Tourism Authority and the Government – embracing the knowledge, wisdom and experience of the country in the creation of a plan that will shape the next phase of Bermuda’s tourism revitalization” (cited in Bermuda Tourism Activity 2019).

The AGILITY strategy identifies Bermudian people as a fundamental asset albeit vague and instrumental – what “growing through people” really means is not clear but seems to indicate an uneven reciprocal relation where local “employment scene is shaped by and depends upon tourists” (Trask 2000: para 27). Patterns of inequality and social control remain prevalent on internet marketing websites. The current web marketing environment online in relation to Bermuda’s AGILITY plan reinforces ‘paradise’ models and the material realities of capitalism. More importantly, the impact of this ‘paradise’ discourse has on the economic, social and cultural life of Bermudian people are not mentioned. These key indicators are currently absent from Bermuda’s national tourism strategy, and therefore prompt considerable impact for further sustainable development.

### ***Bermuda Tourism: Key Issues***

Tourism has always been actively involved in the formation of interactive content that focus on user driven experiences. Global tourism in Bermuda, like in Caribbean destinations, means effective web-based marketing when capitalizing on tourism growth. The internet has now become the most influential tool for visitors’ engagement. When determining planning for AGILITY strategies for sustainable tourism, online marketing platforms become key indicators for both influencing potential tourists and measuring sustainable growth. Hence, documenting the impact of digital media platforms, specifically websites and social media, offer a way to evaluate the AGILITY model projected by Bermuda Tourism Association (BTA). The purpose is to form collaboration between sustainable tourism theory and digital media, in association with community-centered initiatives. Respectively, formulating these advances in relation with AGILITY planning model ensures responsible marketing and promotion for anti-colonial and anti-oppressive forms of representations of Bermuda.

According to the Bermuda Tourism Authority’s (2018) vision statement, a balanced tourism sector ensures seasonality, balanced price-value, controlled visitor volume and more importantly, benefits for residents. These objectives illustrate the “Call to Action” regarding conservation efforts but fail to penetrate into the promotional commentary found on tourism websites. The official messages on Bermuda tourism websites, magazines, brochures and social media further reassert the specific images of servitude, which are maintained and extended culturally since many Bermudians arrange their lives to fit tourism expectations.



This section is based on research collected from official Bermuda Tourism websites and media advertisements, in addition to the 2019 National Tourism Plan planning stages for future development. The types of promotional materials used in this section include various sources (as listed in Figure 6).

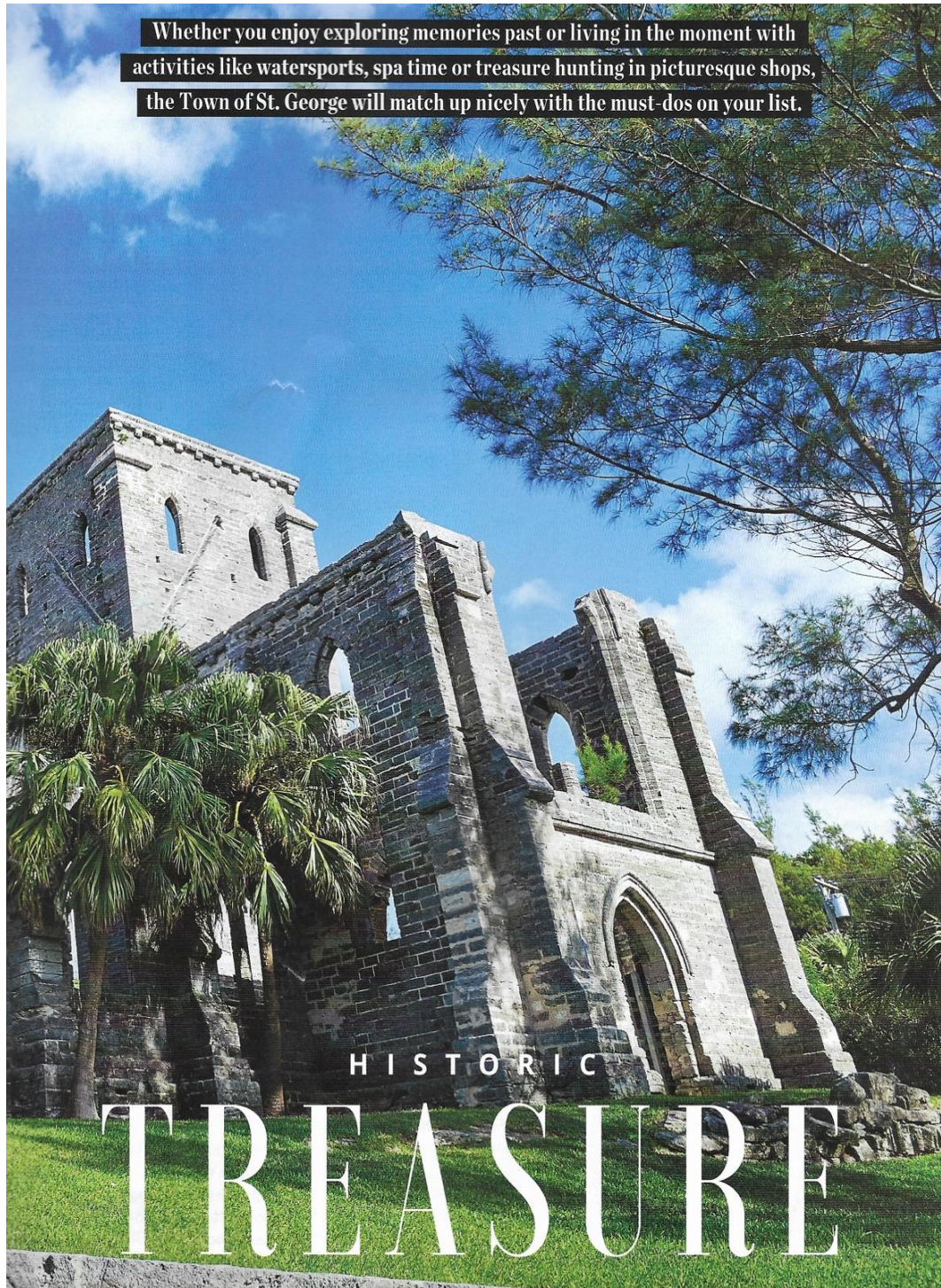
Sources	Description	References
Bermuda's Official Travel Resource	Official Tourism Website	<a href="http://www.gotobermuda.com">www.gotobermuda.com</a>
Visit Bermuda	Official site of Bermuda's Hotel Association	<a href="http://www.visitbermudanow.com">www.visitbermudanow.com</a>
Bermuda	Bermuda Tourism Instagram Account	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/bermuda/">https://www.instagram.com/bermuda/</a>
Maps of Bermuda 2019/20	Travel Map Guide	Map Guide
Visit Bermuda 2019/20	Travel Magazine Guide	Travel Magazine

Figure 6. Resource Table

Uncovering the control of representation in Bermuda's advertised media is key for decolonizing tourism legacy. The influence of colonialism on the island becomes even more problematic, for although the colonial period has ended, the oppression and discrimination that were produced from its philosophy, are still influential on tourists' and the local peoples' perceptions of one another (Fortenberry 2016). This reality presents probable cause to examine the Bermuda National Tourism Plan and its visual endorsement of "aspirational" travel experiences to the island.

Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism* shaped a field of study that criticized the colonial methods that reduced its subjects as inferior. Said's (1978) research paved the way for other critical theorist like Krista Thompson's (2007) whose *An Eye for the Tropics* further deconstructs contemporary forms of the orientalist process. Thompson (2007) describes how these paradigms of inferiority are now operating to further the tourism product with the topicalization of the Caribbean, in which picture postcards of content natives and beautiful scenes position a message of otherness. Thompson (2007) examines images as a method to control and support the "tourist gaze" through methods of developing "picturesque" landscapes (Urry 2002). The idea refers to the development of distributed content such as photographs to characterise tropical landscapes. As Thompson (2007) explains, in the late nineteenth century, tourism was financed by British colonial

administrators, who began to market Jamaica and the Bahamas as picturesque “tropical” paradises. They hired photographers and artists to create carefully crafted representations, which then circulated internationally through postcards and illustrated guides (Thompson, 2007).



*Figure 7. Travel Magazine*



Thompson (2007) describes ‘picturesque’ as the exploitation of a certain scenery in order to tame and control racialized communities. The ‘picturesque’ environment offers the illusion of balance and equality, “a correctly picturesque landscape was a natural environment that appeared organized” (Thompson 2007: 35). According to Thompson, the main concern is how these ‘picturesque’ images translate to audiences and reinforce the ‘embodiment’ of performance.

Bermuda tourism marketing supports Thompson’s (2007) theory, paradise fantasy-packages are delivered at the expense of oppressing culture, history and heritage. For example, Figure 8 presents the landing pages for two of Bermuda’s tourism websites. The headings read, “Bermudaful”, however the images suggest an outward beauty from a particular lens.



Figure 8. Destination Imagery

The main problem with these “Bermudaful” captions is the embodiment of destination imagery. Research suggests that those destinations with strong, positive images are more likely to be

considered and chosen in the travel decision process (Goodrich 1978, Woodside and Lysonski 1989). Hence, the destination image is a method created by tourism marketing agents which attempt to balance what is projected and distributed in order to cater to visitors' fantasy. Bermuda tourism supports this approach both in marketing and development strategies in which to position selling points for the island. An official message of the National Tourism Plan 2019-2025 for "Greener" initiatives included in the AGILITY plan recognizes that "paying attention to our environment is not only good for Bermuda in general, it is good for business. Eco-tourism is a fast-growing trend and our clean ocean beaches, and healthy reef provide important draws for visitors" (Bermuda Tourism Association 2019). It is, however, not enough to promote a healthy ecosystem; there are also active measures in place that further the island's manufactured "paradise" model. The statement outlines how visually motivated tourism becomes on the ideals of beauty and tranquility.

When analyzed further, many islands operate within constructed destination image models. Derek Walcott (1992) argues that islands sell themselves from the "seasonal erosion" of their identity and pitch repetitive images that cannot be distinguished between each island. As Walcott (1992) suggests, destination image marketing for Bermuda presents a tourist product, one that fails to be promoted from its own distinct culture. Instead, the island reproduces dominant colonial and neocolonial perceptions that have existed since its discovery. The island's attraction for visitors thrives from the genesis of oppression and inequality. In this actuality, there are forms of "otherness", in which dual patterns of identity exist only from imaginative spatialities of colonial desires. Bermuda tourism embodies colonial legacy and primarily identifies with white European heritage as a consequence. The results of which produce traditional preservations of historic British visual exhibitions of old churches, forts, and civic sites. This one-dimensional lens hinders a holistic understanding of Bermuda's culture, one that includes emancipation and slavery. More importantly, it depicts local Bermudian people as subjects of a history that immobilizes their unique and full potential. Essentially, Bermuda tourism conveys colonial relationships from plantation legacies, in which the disenfranchised remain elusive in nature. The manifestations of these relations continue to exist between tourists and those (i.e. Bermudians) serving their vacation needs.



*Figure 9. Fort St. Catherine's*

The challenge Bermuda faces is an inability to deconstruct colonial messaging that produces cultural misconstructions. Much of these challenges arrive due to the island's political position. As Brent Fortenberry (2016: 611) asserts: "It [Bermuda] remains a product of enduring imperial formations of the early modern period; a British Oversea Territory, yet geopolitics and tourism market forces dictate that Bermuda orients its heritage narratives towards predominately North American audiences." Within this context, the island finds itself in a precarious situation as its socioeconomic status depends on North America culture. Similar to much of the world, globalization influences Bermuda's cultural connection to North American markets (or at least it did prior to COVID-19 pandemic).

The Bermudian dollar currency is on par with the US Dollar which plays part into why Bermuda's target audience predominantly derives from the eastern United States. According to the 2019 National Tourism Plan (2019), the main focus cities are New York, Boston, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, and Toronto. Consequently, Bermuda's tourism product encapsulates its British heritage for North America consumption, and thus maintains an allure as the "romantic, relaxing getaway removed from the hustle of American cities" (Rosemarry 2004: 166). Due to the apparent attentiveness to attract North American tourism markets, many heritage sites on the island cater to British and North American pastimes. For example, St. Peter's Church in the town of St. Georges is said to be the oldest Anglican church outside of the British Isles while the Carter's House explores early British settlement. These sites highlight Bermuda's heritage investors following the economic reality that potential customers desire museum tours with North American connections (Fortenberry 2016). However, although important to Bermuda history, these museum sites are not the main issue (nor the main revenue) for the country and its tourism image. Instead the charm of Bermuda as a getaway withdraws from the context of the country's material past and

misrepresented community. The perspective of Bermuda's African and Caribbean Indigenous generations whose contributions to the development of the island share very little in the visible heritage sites and tours. Without inclusive depictions of Bermuda's heritage, the tourism sector will continue to disenfranchise local input.



*Fig. 10 St. Peter's Church*

Bermuda's colonial narrative depends on the ability to maintain control of cultural polarities in marketing and media. For instance, today's travellers have the means to choose from a larger variety of destinations. To attract visitors, marketing efforts focus on influencing consumer behaviour rather than establishing communal connections. This makes sense for tourism marketing purposes as the destination is the product and the visitor are the consumers. However, this method obstructs community involvement which leads to further estrangement. For example, Atila and Fisun Yuksel (2006) examine the importance of safety for tourists while shopping in host destinations. Their study discusses the need for destinations to convert into safe and attractive environments to develop shopping as a tourism resource (Atila and Fisun Yuksel 2006). Although their research investigates visitor safety, it discloses regulated planning efforts for marketing standards, in which the tourism product is separate from the community. It also confirms how destination marketing develops 'attractive' narratives that are geared for consumer demands. What is alarming, however, is the correlation between attraction and visitor safety, in which visitor shopping is more of a concern than an unsafe community and automatically criminalizes local communities. Rather than stakeholders bridging efforts to build safer communities, the primary concern is in developing 'attractive' locations that appear harmless.

### *Social and Cultural Impacts*

The Bermuda National Tourism Plan encourages the support of residents, however, the means for measuring community and visitor relationships are conditional. The opportunity for local input appears appropriate only at the expense of visitor engagement. In contrast, research on conservation efforts for tourism highlight just how important genuine community-based and small-scale efforts are for future tourism developments. There appears to be gaps between community-based planning and how such initiatives are executed, promoted and implemented. These inconsistencies first become visible in the island's tourism planning strategies. Figure 11 displays the official communication from the National Tourism Plan for visitor and local engagement. However, the message promotes local participation only as an “appealing career” that is “vital to the economy” (National Tourism Plan 2019).



*Figure 11. National tourism Plan*

Figure 11 demonstrates how locals remain subjected to positions of service and servitude for the tourism economy. While the strategy recognizes the crucial role played by local employment in the tourism sector, and even encourages people to further participate in the sector, it does not speak of the exploitative conditions or the subservient expectations. Melanie K. Smith (2003: 49)

analyzes this further when she writes, “local people are stationary in both a physical and material sense, and they are often condemned to a life of serving mobile, free spending Western tourist.” This supports a significant part of my research as it relates to the perception of culture on the island and the under-representation of local communities who are “immobilized” as a result of “ethical consumption for those who live in a world made and re-made by the post slavery Atlantic” (Maurer 2003: 306).

Outward messages of Bermuda’s culture present preconceived notions of local community participation. Bermudian engagement operates at the expense of paradise discourse, in which locals are pre-arranged for the purpose of furthering a tourism product. While tourism provides employment and economic growth, there is evidence that planning fails to proportionately target local input. The Bermuda Tourism Authority understands the importance of culture; however, development strategies suggest visitor priority with community support.

Outside of service/hospitality employment, Bermudians represent constructions of “otherness”, in which locals are viewed as available subjects. The practise of ‘othering’ involves embodying this ‘other’ as a reflection where “other cultures and environments are everything that our cultures and environments are not” (Manforth and Munt 2009: 59). Bermuda’s national tourism strategy promotes tourists’ centric approaches, in which the community performs as obedient outsiders. As stated in the AGILITY planning brochure, “to succeed in a more competitive and fast-moving world, we need to think like a visitor.” In this declaration, there appears to be a consensus, one which advocates for a chosen brand of traveler.

The plea for resident participation in hospitality targets employment rates and political agendas. In contrast, the report fails to indicate viable reasons as to why Bermudians are choosing careers outside of tourism. In a review presented by the Travel and Climate Organization, Larsson and Kamb (2019) list the potential positive and negative impacts from a social perspective. Figure 12 below is an example selection of the most prominent considerations when examining local community factors.



### **Social/cultural impact**

- **Development opportunities and jobs for local businesses**
- **Tax revenue that can be used for development of local communities**
  - different according to the country's tax system
- **Increased use of public services e.g. water or medical treatment**
  - brings increased costs for local authorities and longer waiting times for locals
- **Increased demand for and maintenance of public utilities**
  - beaches, local transport etc.
- **Greater business, pleasure and recreation offer**
  - brings increased opportunities to meet and socialise
- **Cultural exchange**
  - tourists often want to meet locals as part of the tourist experience
- **Overcrowding**
  - on streets, in squares, car parks, traffic, shops, restaurants etc.
- **Higher noise levels**
  - tourists often socialise late into the night which can be experienced as disturbing/refreshing
- **Pride and image**
  - tourists choosing your hometown can make you feel proud of your area
- **Increased alcohol and drug use, crime, prostitution**
- **Littering**
- **Exploitation of attractive landscapes**
  - building and tourist activities in scenic areas
- **Increased prices for accommodation, goods and services**
- **Reduced number of local residents**
  - changes the structure of society and with that local traditions in the long run
- **Social and moral values are changed**
- **Relationships between locals are changed**
  - conflicts between those who are for or against tourism development
- **Urbanisation**
  - changes the area's character and inhabitants' quality of life

Figure 12: Social/Cultural Impacts of Tourism (Source: Travel and Climate 2018) table ([www.travelandclimate.org](http://www.travelandclimate.org))

Of course, the list above depends on the environment, however, it provides examples of additional social and cultural impacts to consider for Bermuda. As stated by the Travel and Climate Organization (2018, para 3), “often the focus is on tourism as a tool for socio-economic development (money and jobs), but a majority of local residents more often come into direct contact with the impacts listed in the table above. The impacts are more obvious in less rural communities and in destinations where the distances (cultural, economic, powerful, etc.) between tourists and local residents are greater.”

Exercising this process to consider social and cultural impacts for Bermuda exposes undetected factors, for instance, relationships between destination marketing and colonial themes, including transatlantic slavery, British colonial authority, and the heritage of white minority rule (Saltus-Blackwood 2000). Tourism is a product of colonialism and thus, an analysis of its systemic properties must be measured. Highlighting this legacy uncovers Bermuda's political discourse and

those social implications that exist in silence. Larry Burchall (1991: 79), a political commentator for the island speaks to these social realities for Bermudians:

Because we are a small island society, we have developed a code of manners which enable us to live – despite all the myriad of frictions that actually exist – in quite good peace and harmony... There are a number of mutual confidences which must be routinely kept by a very large number of people whose paths cross in many different settings... we do demonstrate... an inclination to say one thing in public and do or say something very different in private (cited in Saltus-Blackwood 2000: 1).

With Bermuda, a concentrated version of colonial agenda remains prevalent, one that distinguishes it from its Caribbean sister islands. The island encapsulates the notion of colonialism as an ambiguous process that relies on the ability to elude political dialogue. However, once these configurations are established, both local and international stakeholders are better equipped to recognise tourism's social and cultural impact on the island. To illustrate the description of Bermuda tourism as promoting "utopian culture", business consultant Jessie Lyn Stoner (2018, para 3) observes that, "culture drives the organization, and if it is not aligned with the business strategies, it will thwart your organization's effectiveness." In this realization, tourism becomes a cooperation that relies on cultural performances.

### *Advertising: Negotiating Bermudian Identity*

According to Stuart Hall (1997), race performs like a language. The meanings and relationships that explain race are never something fixed. Hall (1997) explains how the signifiers for race depend on cultural experience, events, and history. The importance of Hall's (1997) claim exposes race as a process of associating physical characteristics, like hair or skin color, as representations of deeper social dialogue regarding difference. Hall (1997) pursues the idea of race as something more than a one-dimensional component of human behavior. Hall's (1997) concept for identifying the components for racialized meaning serves as an analogy to explain how advertising operates in society. In fact, society develops meanings that are constructed based on cultural traditions, customs, ideologies and myths. Within these meanings are socially accepted accounts of culture which may present universal parameters for public interpretations. The method of advertising arrives when there is a need to promote and broadcast a story about an indented cultural meaning. Similar to Hall's (1997) views on race, advertising is the process of associating physical characteristics of the environment as a means to engage deeper social dialogue. However, instead

of adopting culturally biased signifiers, advertising simply reframes them into publication. Alternatively, if race according to Hall's theory (1997) reflects the performances of cultural disparity, then advertising positions them into capitalist frameworks. Therefore, advertising operates in conjunction with racialized forms of cultural stereotypes. In tourism, these stereotypes objectify people and the ecosystem, yet these representations are what drive marketing and promotion of tourism destinations. Caribbean chef and author Chris De La Rosa (2016) explain:

“We’ve all seen the alcoholic beverage commercials on the beach... bus built in the 50’s, brightly painted and overflowing with people, farm produce and livestock, as it makes its way (*late*) to town. Or movies (*like the series on Netflix set in Belize*) where corruption, drugs and a general overly laid-back lifestyle is the norm. As a son of the Caribbean it’s very frustrating to say the least, as I know this sort of stereotype is inaccurate and very hurtful” (cited in Living The “Irie” Life 2016, para. 1).

Advertising is important for any business looking to generate loyal customers. In the travel industry, the goal is to incite the customer’s (traveller) emotions to escape from reality. Therefore, the only tangible way to accomplish a tourism ‘product’ is from the performance and embodiment of escapism. As a well-known concept, escapism presents the ability of diverting one’s mental capacity away from unpleasant or boring aspects of life. The concept centers on the assumption that distraction from real-life circumstances are desires felt by many people, and that entertainment media serve the purpose of diversion very successfully (Kilmmt 2008). Contemporary tourism produces a reflection of escapism in its purest form. For instance, unlike alternative media entertainment, such as television and recently with social media, tourism produces escape for active participants. The problem, of course, is that tourists’ participation is based on unrealistic periphery -- one which is perpetuated repeatedly through billboards and social media imagery depicting ‘playgrounds’ rather than nations with principal values and traditions.

Tourism remains one of the most practical businesses in today’s economy and for most developing nations (again at least this was the case prior to the coronavirus pandemic). However, being practical doesn’t always translate into sustainable solutions for the environment. Tourism businesses, such as attractions (recreational parks, heritage museums), accommodation (resorts), transportation (airlines, cruise ships), and associated services (travel agencies, tour operators, events) provide travellers with industry hospitality standards. As the tourism sector becomes more competitive with consumer demands for these standards, stakeholders and investors opt-in for planning market campaigns that ensure valued services. The problem arises when the value for customer leisure within an attempt to sustain profit is promoted at the expense of destination. As

a result, advertisements depict a destination as ‘service provider’, in which to solicit for loyal customer satisfaction. The need to promote the destination serves to only address customer demands and expectations, mainly focused on escape. For example, figure 15 presents two Advertisement campaigns that shifts Bermuda into this dual paradigm. “Maple Leaf to Coral Reef” and “Lobbying to Lounging” bears no purpose for establishing the island's natural and cultural value. Rather, these advertisements produce messaging to encourage customer association with escape to another world, geared for self-gratification.



Figure 15. Bermuda Advertisement campaign

### ***Sustainable Tourism***

Although not presented in the “paradise” imagery, tourism is a highly polluting industry (through development, transportation, waste, etc.). A growing interest in sustainability which has motivated tourism benefactors towards eco-friendly and responsible travel initiatives. Without clear models for sustainable development, strategic planning aimed to promote anti-colonial representations will continue to support ‘paradise’ narratives for conservation. Bermuda sponsors several organizations committed to the preservation of its ecosystems. In fact, Bermuda passed conservation legislation as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century to protect certain birds and turtles on the island.

“The *Bermuda National Trust* was established in 1970 and, along with the *Bermuda Audubon Society*, is dedicated to preserving the natural attractions on the island” (Smithsonian Magazine 2007).



*Figure 13. Spittal Pond Nature Reserve*

Nature reserves provide vacationers the opportunity to view some of Bermuda’s protected landscapes, where underground caves, mangroves, marshes, forests, floral gardens and birds thrive. There are several sites worth visiting while on the island including Cooper’s Island, Paget Marsh, Seymour’s Pond, Spittal Pond Nature Reserve, and Blue Hole Park to name a few. These parks are open for exploration and sightseeing mostly, therefore travelers wanting to back-pack or camp will be restricted from such activities. Bermuda has no eco-friendly resorts or space for visitors looking to support alternatives to mass tourism. Instead, the island promotes eco-friendly activities for prospective travellers seeking alternative choices (see Figure 14).

Haunani-Kay Trask (1999) argues how tourism transforms culture. According to Trask (1999), tourists arrive in Hawaii to escape into a state of mind, one which illuminates a vision of paradise so bright that it conceals the erosion of the native land. Trask (1999) compares this process to a prostitute who is complicit within her own commodification. While eco-friendly alternatives in Bermuda appear as respectable alternatives, Trask (1999) reminds consumers of



trans-formative properties found in tourism. Embracing Eco-tourism as an economic alternative still requires a critical analysis of potential oppressive frameworks. Currently, responsible travel options are marketed commercially, which contradicts their position of being ‘sustainable’. If nature is to be promoted, it must do so without invested interest that serves to take from its allure. Therefore, when addressing sustainable strategies for Bermuda, it is vital to approach them from community-based practices. Sustainable alternatives with a grassroots approach must be produced and marketed at its source, the community (Trask 1999).

## Springtime Eco Adventures in Bermuda

Spring in Bermuda is the best season for eco-adventurers. From March through May, eco-tours and experiences abound – from hiking in Bermuda’s pristine jungles to experiencing sustainably sourced cuisine. To make your planning easier, we’ve separated the island’s top eco-experiences into three categories: On Land, On the Water and Under the Water. Choose the eco-adventure that best suits your style – or try them all!

TOPICS // [THINGS TO DO](#) / [NATURE & NATURAL WONDERS](#) / [SIGHTSEEING & TOURS](#)



*Figure 14. Eco Tourism Branding*

Figure 14 showcases an attempt to target nature lovers, as the page suggests, “spring in Bermuda is the best season for eco-adventurers” (Bermuda Tourism 2020). Luciano Minerbi (1996) describes these forms of advertising for Hawaiian culture as “ecotourism improvement projects” that arrived since the 1990s, in which to simply diversify Hawaii’s tourism product further (Smith 2003). My research, like Minerbi’s observation, intends to provide clear provisions for sustainable tourism that consider cultural implications of commodifying natural landscapes in his manner.

Using various literature that outlines the ambiguity of sustainable development is essential, specifically if resistance against exploitative practices are to be effective for Bermuda tourism. In formulating the basis of my research, the meaning of sustainable development becomes a relevant discussion. The word sustainable represents concepts for accountability in global development planning, especially during times of environmental awareness regarding international crises. To be sustainable implies the need to sustain some aspect or component in support of growth. Consequently, the definition works well in terms of the development process, however, it leaves much room for interpretation. Tourism and sustainable development suggest catering to the needs of the tourists' experiences. For contemporary tourism, the preservation of future development serves to protect visitors' demands, which supports responsible travel accommodation and excursion, with respect to the environment. Clearly, applying the word sustainable to describe and measure tourism impacts on local communities recognizes advocacy for conservation -- the rhetoric that forms eco-friendly, responsible travel, and 'authentic' experiences. However, without a balance between the kind of tourism activities and compassion for the native resources, tourism projects can not only be environmentally harmful but also economically self-defeating (Jayawardena 2005). Therefore, the need for genuine community-based and small-scale initiatives that involve local input and feedback are fundamental when prioritising visitor needs. Determining the needs of Bermudian people serves to gain holistic approaches for sustainable goals. In theory, the concept behind sustainable tourism functions to foster positive visitor impacts on economic, environmental, and community development, which works to measure realistic markers for local development. While sustainable tourism development is concerned with matters like over tourism, environmental harm, poverty or cultural degradation and exploitation, there is still an underlying premise that represents product placement. More importantly is the understanding of 'development' as a distinct process, within which local Bermudian conditions are addressed independently from foreign investment or influence.

The word 'development' becomes controversial when operated under the premise of sustainable travel and thus problematic for future socioeconomic planning. In such, appropriate projections of developments must first reframe it as a means for developing the underdeveloped. A critical approach identifies the co-dependency relationship of western philosophy and economic expansion that defines development (Smith 2003). This is because thinking critically serves to deconstruct patterns of governance that are connected to cultural hegemony. Through critical theory, I have found fundamental principles that support small community-based initiatives and active measures that consider sustainable planning in Bermuda.

Efforts to establish sustainable and eco-friendly tourism strategies for destinations is met with great optimism but also great caution. The support for effective economic, social and environmental planning for host destinations has now become an integral part of tourism development. More importantly, stakeholders and investors are finding increasing pressure to include indigenous people, local communities, and visitors in respect to sustainable solutions. Some resorts have sort to improve operations for energy conservation, freshwater management, waste reduction, and improved social and cultural relations (Sustaining Tourism, 2019). While these results are promising, they still present and perform within imaginative spatiality of colonial desires.

## **Conclusion**

Raymond Williams (1961) argues that there is an establishment of a magic system in the society where fantasy overshadows reality. The system has trained everyone to compete with others by the means of their status within a capitalist structure. In fact, the most unrealistic concepts have become associated with the sale of any product. The operation of advertisements protects these unrealistic properties of a commodified product through data as opposed to experience.

In Bermuda's competitive tourism market, running an effective campaign must involve removing 'paradise' slogans and imagery. A marketing process that engages local support and research provides opportunity for campaigns that showcase the island's identity outside of its market value. Advertising Bermuda, or any tourist destination is important for economic growth and stability for many countries. However, if marketing strategies serve campaigns based on global capital interest, Bermuda's identity will remain forever in the hands of colonial desires.

By introducing Bermuda as a case study, it provided further analyses of a British heritage site and colonial legacy, which informs national identity through a desired tourism product. I do not argue for the implications of sustainable tourism as it relates to these colonial parameters in tourism. The expectations for sustainable development to serve conservation efforts proves subjective both in terms of its global definition and association with host nations. My argument instead is concerned with the lack of planning that involves visual media and communications. While it is necessary to reassess and regulate limitations of a particular destination, strategies that promote anti-colonial and oppressive tourism frameworks are key. The tourism sector remains



highly dependent on destination imagery and marketing, therefore eco-friendly alternatives must correspond with promotional media.

“It is that tourism brings along a series of objectifications that have surely been inherited from colonial times. The objectification of nature, with the images of virgin beaches ready to be explored by tourists is disturbingly similar to the hype Christopher Columbus caused when he “discovered” America with his expeditions. “It’s paradise” say the travel brochures, when really that seashore you’re taking a picture of has just been commodified to meet the requirements of beautiful. Simply part of a colonial heritage: wealthy, powerful countries dispossess local people, exploit their resources -- in this case beautiful virgin beaches and “quaint” villages -- and relocate the wealth back to the centres of power” (Abarboza, 2014: 3).

A cultural imposition forms institutionalized barriers for local residents who become under-represented in debt to these objectifications. This is expressed by Mimi Sheller (2003), in *Consuming The Caribbean*, as “the binding mobilities of consumption” of material and cultural commodities. Sheller (2003: 5) argues how the Caribbean is generally represented as a product for consumption and “as an effect, a fantasy, a set of practices, and a context that defies separation in to the real versus the imagined,” which helps to maintain its colonial position as a place of conquest. Melanie K. Smith (2003: 49) analyzes this further when she argues that, “local people are stationary in both a physical and material sense, and they are often condemned to a life of serving mobile, free spending Western tourist.” This view provides a significant basis for my argument as it relates to the perceptions of island culture, specifically in Bermuda. This research focused on representation of local communities who are “immobilized” as a result of “ethical consumption for those who live in a world made and re-made by the post slavery Atlantic” (Maurer 2004: 306).

It is important to deconstruct European dominance and oppressive forms of colonialism as it provides the ability to reclaim nationalism (Fanon, 1961). The impact of colonization is deeper than racial and political views. The mission of the colonizer is to eliminate culture and therefore as a result destroy one’s ability to connect naturally to the world (Fanon, 1961). Tourism like colonialism operates to assimilate culture at the expense of global capital and influence. Haunani-Kay Trask (2000: para 28) summarizes the workings of colonialism and tourism quite well when she writes:

“Of course, many Hawaiians do not see tourism as part of their colonization. Thus, tourism is viewed as providing jobs, not as a form of cultural prostitution. Even those who have some glimmer of critical consciousness don’t generally agree that the tourist industry prostitutes Hawaiian culture. This is a measure of the depth of our mental oppression: we can’t understand our own cultural ghettoization because we are living it. As colonized people, we are colonized to the extent that we are unaware of our oppression. When awareness begins, the so too does de-colonization.”

The central question Fanon examines is the responsibility of “colonized intellectuals” like himself, and their role in rebuilding social consciousness (Fanon 1961). The overthrow of colonialism must begin with the community and national identity, one which communicates forgotten material legacies. This is a necessary benchmark for decolonializing tourism and thus serves as an invaluable source when promoting Bermuda.

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