

## FROM COLONIALISM TO TRANSNATIONALISM: THE NEO-COLONIAL STRUCTURE OF CARIBBEAN TOURISM

By Wendy Sealy  
University of Chichester

**Abstract:** Sustainable tourism development in the Caribbean is inhibited by several challenges such as diseconomies of scale and scope and other structural and resource constraints. These challenges are further exacerbated by the heavy prominence of transnational conglomerates who own and operate most of the large hotels, airlines, cruise ships, travel agencies and tour operators that market and control tourism on the islands. Foreign domination of the foregoing sectors has contributed to substantial leakage of foreign exchange revenues, social polarization, social exclusion and environmental degradation. While most Caribbean islands achieved constitutional independence from Europe, this did not necessarily involve a restructuring of economic relationships or a shattering of colonial ideologies. Today, the legacy of slavery and the plantation society underpins much of the regions' contemporary culture, values and economic relationships despite the attainment of political independence. This paper aims to trace the nature and antecedents of foreign domination and control of Caribbean tourism and explores possible solutions to combat transnational intervention and economic dependency on them.

**Keywords:** Neo-colonialism, all-inclusive resorts, tourism dependency, tourism impacts, tour operators, transnational hotels, island tourism

### Introduction

The Caribbean archipelago of islands is nestled between North and South America. Tourism is one of the principal economic activities on the islands and an essential source of job opportunities, livelihood, and inclusive growth. Mass tourism has become a significant source of revenue for many Caribbean states. In Barbados, tourism makes a 25% contribution to the gross national income, in Antigua 27% and in the Bahamas and St. Lucia 28% (Caribbean Development Bank, 2017). In the Caribbean, tourism directly supports over 800,000 jobs and generates over US\$35.5 billion in revenue (Caribbean Tourism Organization, 2017). However, tourism has not been a panacea for the Caribbean's social or economic ills. As a matter of fact, several scholars liken tourism to the plantation economies of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Beckles, 1990; Britton, 1982; Kondo, 2008). In the Caribbean, tourism has often been referred to as the 'new plantocracy' (Beckles, 1990), 'plantation tourism' (Weaver, 1988) or 'apartheid tourism' (Elliott & Neitotti, 2008) due to its structural similarities to the plantation economies of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Beckles, 1990; Brohman, 1996; Lewis, 2002; Pattulo, 2006; Strachan, 2002; Weaver, 1988). These similarities include the dominant role of expatriate capital, management and control; profit repatriation, the seasonality of employment, the need for a large component of unskilled local labor and the reliance on a narrow range of monolithic tourist markets. What is also evident is the industry's tendency to respond to external, rather than local needs. The core-periphery structure of the plantation system has remained essentially intact well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, resulting in a tourism industry, which perpetuates underdevelopment.

## **Historical Background**

The Caribbean has a history of European colonization, domination and subjugation. This mass exploitation has its roots in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century mono-crop agricultural production for European markets. By 1750 Caribbean sugar surpassed grain as the most valuable commodity in European trade and by the 18th and 19th centuries, Caribbean plantations produced 80 to 90% of all sugar consumed in Western Europe (Beckles, 1990). During the sugar revolution, and after the obliteration of the indigenous Amerindians, the social stratification system of most Caribbean islands comprised a minority planter class consisting of wealthy European plantation owners and a majority black labor class comprising, African slave labor and subsequently indentured servants from Asia. By the time of emancipation in 1833, Caribbean societies remained socially and economically the same with sugar remaining the dominant mono-crop export.

Although several Caribbean islands achieved constitutional independence in the 1960s, this did not necessarily involve a restructuring of economic relationships or a shattering of colonial ideologies. During the post war period (1950-1978), the islands underwent an economic transformation. By the 1960s, proponents of capitalists and neo-liberalist ideologies influenced a more outward-oriented approach to economic development with less emphasis on staple crops and more emphasis on foreign direct investment. Multilateral lending agencies such as the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations Development Agency promoted tourism as a viable economic and social development tool for third world countries. Access to IMF structural adjustment funding became conditional on the implementation of policies designed to reduce state intervention in economic affairs and the adoption of more outward market-oriented economic growth and free trade (Edmonds, 2015). These policies influenced a shift away from agriculture and indigenous industries to policies, which emphasised the expansion of once hitherto ignored economic sectors such as international tourism. It can be argued that such policies have not served the Caribbean well and have, in fact, hindered sustainable development and exacerbated economic problems. The consequences of these policies are that many Caribbean islands remain unprogressive. For instance, although within the last three decades Cuba and the Dominican Republic received the 'lion's share' of tourists' arrivals in the Caribbean with 3,903,958 and 5,969,377 arrivals respectively in 2017 they remain two of the poorest countries in the region (Caribbean Tourism Organization, 2018). Today, tourism represents to the Caribbean region what sugar was a century ago: a monocrop controlled by foreigners and a few local elites. In the islands, international tourism has reinforced foreign domination, has led to a loss of cultural integrity and control over local resources; and, has reinforced economic dependency.

## **Transnational Hotels – Nature and Impacts**

In the Caribbean, transnational conglomerates own and control most of the large hotels, restaurants, transportation links and tour operators. Transnationalism reinforces the asymmetrical distribution of power and economic resources between former colonies of the Caribbean (periphery) and their European (core) colonisers through tourism. The transnational system has also influenced the gravitation towards certain types of tourism development, particularly mass, institutionalised, standardised, packaged tourism. Foreign domination of the hotel and distribution sectors of tourism has contributed to substantial leakage of foreign exchange revenues and contributed to social polarisation and social exclusion in the islands.

A considerable amount of hotel investment in the Caribbean has been undertaken by large-scale hotel chains based in North America or Western Europe. International hotel chains such as Marriott, Sheraton, Starwood, Sandals, Best Western, Holiday Inn, Hilton, Renaissance, Radisson, Ritz Carlton, Four Seasons and several others have stakes in Caribbean tourism. Many of these establishments have as many as 1000 rooms or more. The problem with international investment is that the transnational companies retain the bulk of tourists' expenditure. It is suggested that 37% to 90% of tourism expenditure generated in the Caribbean accrues to the foreign countries where the transnationals are based (Pattulo, 2006). These are known as economic leakages (Cabezas, 2008; Pattulo, 2006). Excessive foreign ownership and control ensures that profits, salary repatriations, payments for imported goods and services exacerbates foreign exchange leakages. Payments made to resorts by tour operators and conference organisers are often made to the resorts' bank accounts located outside the region. The generous tax incentives offered by Caribbean governments to induce investment all contribute to substantial foreign exchange leakages. These normally include the duty-free importation of construction materials and equipment, and the luxury consumable imports required to cater to the sophisticated tastes of international tourists. Historically, the region has never produced sufficient crops for self-sufficiency and this tradition has spilled over into the tourism industry where a significant amount of food and consumables are imported. It is estimated that only 16% of fruit and 20% of fish consumed in Caribbean hotels are sourced locally (Caribbean Development Bank, 2017). It is difficult to bring local suppliers into the tourism supply chain, since the goods required by tourists may not be produced locally, and, when they are, they may be of poor quality, not available in sufficient quantity or may be rejected by hotel developers and tourists as inferior. In a Caribbean resort, you are more likely to be served English 'minced pies' at Christmas than a slice of Caribbean 'black cake' (a traditional Caribbean Christmas treat).

While transnational resorts contribute to mass local employment, the majority of jobs are labour intensive, lowly paid (usually at minimum wage) and require an unskilled, local, labour force. In Cuba, Haiti, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, St Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago and several other islands, the annual minimum wage is under US\$5000.00. Consequently, there is a wide disparity in wealth between the average tourists visiting most Caribbean islands and the majority of the local population. The gross national income, per capita, of the USA and Canada is three times that of Barbados, and more than ten times that of Jamaica. The average tourist is therefore able to spend more money on a weeks' vacation than the minimum wage earner in the Caribbean can earn in a year (Toppin-Allahar, 2015). These wealth disparities can create tensions and resentment between visitors and host communities. Moreover, to make matters worse, on several islands, governments have suppressed the minimum wage levels to maintain 'competitiveness' and to please foreign investors. By maintaining low wages, the economic benefits of any enhanced tourist inflow and increase in visitor expenditure does not reach most of the workers in the tourist trade but is instead retained by the international conglomerates as profits. By keeping national wages low efforts to increase visitation or attract upmarket clients is nullified because any surplus profit is extracted and retained by the transnational enterprises (Williams, 2012; Wong, 2015).

### **All-Inclusive Hotels**

A major source of foreign exchange leakage is the all-inclusive hotel. On several islands, all-inclusive hotels dominate the industry. In Jamaica, all-inclusive resorts make up 53 % of the island's hotel rooms. Additionally, all-inclusive resorts accounted for 79.4 % of the larger hotels with 100 rooms or more. In St Lucia, all-inclusive resorts make up 51 % of all hotel

rooms (McElroy & Albuquerque, 1998) and in the Dominican Republic 95 % of all resorts are all-inclusive (Cabezas, 2008). An all-inclusive resort will ordinarily offer all the attributes of a pre-paid holiday, which would include accommodation, meals, and recreational activities and gratuities for a single price (Turner and Troiano, 1987). These services are usually offered within the confines of the resorts, with several owning and operating their own boutiques, gifts shops, watersports operations, tour buses and mini-marts. Because tourists are encouraged to stay within the confines of their resort, all-inclusive resorts affect the average per capita spending of visitors (Pattulo, 2006).

Seventy-five to eighty percent of the vacation expenses of all-inclusive package tours are allocated to tour operators, airlines, hotels and other global corporations headquartered in a foreign country (Kondo, 2008) with very little, if any, of the expenditure reaching the destination. While all-inclusive resorts satisfy transnational hotels and mass integrated tour operators' preference for standardisation and commoditisation of the destination product, their predominance has done little for the communities in which they operate. All-inclusive clients tend to be mainly psychocentric to mid-centric with little or no travel experience. As they typically have very little exploration/adventure needs they are quite content staying within the confines of the resort (Carey & Gountas, 1997). Because all-inclusive visitors are discouraged from venturing outside the resorts to spend money in locally owned enterprises, this decreases the opportunities for local restaurants, taxi drivers, craftsmen, vendors and even farmers to earn a living from tourism as the money becomes exclusively concentrated within the hands of the foreign conglomerates that control the industry (Williams, 2012). This is referred to as 'Zero Dollar Tourism' where the destination experiences an increase in arrivals but a decrease in expenditure (King, Dwyer & Prideaux, 2006). In the Dominican Republic, the earnings per tourist have decreased per-room spending from a high of US\$318 in 1982 to the current low of US\$154 (Cabezas, 2008). In Barbados, where there has been a sudden growth of these all-inclusive tourism enclaves, this Barbadian hotel owner expressed concern that:

*"A number of the resorts (non-all-inclusive) and restaurants are closing and turning into condominiums because the all-inclusive product has killed the restaurant trade, and it is killing the smaller, independently run hotels. All-inclusive don't provide any business to Barbados, except for the resort the people stay in. They don't provide any business to the restaurants, taxis, shops, supermarkets, gas stations, because people go to the resorts and stay there. It's not good for Barbados; it's not good for tourism" (Sealy, 2018).*

The all-inclusive resort is, thus, another consequence of the colonial legacy, which encourages mass tourism tied to the colonial tradition of high-volume, low value-added, mono exports (Mycoo, 2006). The result is mass visitation but a lower multiplier impact within the host community.

## **Social Exclusion, Polarisation, Marginalisation**

### **Labour Policies**

As was the case during the colonial era, the common practice of international hotels is to hire foreigners in top and middle management positions even when a qualified and skilled labour force is available in the host country (Manning, 2016). In the Dominican Republic, Dominican natives seldom work in positions of management or as chefs in the resorts. Cabezas (2008) notes how tourism in the Dominican Republic has deskilled and devalued Dominican workers. They claim that people are relegated, at best, to positions of servitude in low-paid jobs. These

exclusionary practices marginalise the local population, not just the working class, but also nationally trained executives and mid-level managers who may find it necessary to migrate to find meaningful and well-paid employment. As a result, several islands lose highly qualified workers in what is known as the 'brain drain'. When locals do benefit from tourism, it is usually the local elites, who benefit from high paying jobs or middle management positions. In rare cases, the best jobs often go to residents with the lightest skin color (Goodwin, 2008).

In countries such as Barbados where the majority of locals are black, and most tourists are white, the dynamics of race relations can be complex. Williams (2012) cites a scenario in which an unhappy guest went to the front desk to complain. The hotel manager, a black man, just happened to be at the desk when the visitor approached, loudly demanding to see the manager. The manager said, "Yes, that's me." The visitor refused to believe that a black man could be the manager of a luxury hotel and when he repeated that he was the manager, the visitor left in a huff. In a similar vein, the writer of this paper was turned down for a high-profile sales manager job when she worked for a large international American chain in Barbados. The preferred candidate was a white American, because according to what I was told 'she would relate well to the clients' who were mainly white Americans. When the company failed to obtain a work permit for the Florida native, she was mysteriously and suddenly married off to a local man to get around the work permit issues. In contrast, for roles involving cleaning, serving, bowing and stooping, the black natives are the preferred choice (Wong, 2015). The growth of the tourism industry in the Caribbean has re-created pre-colonial racial tensions based on race and skin color. In many cases tourism hiring practices has reinforced the colonial notion of black inferiority and white supremacy in the islands.

### **Exclusion from Beaches and Land**

On many of the islands, foreign owners and operators of tourism facilities have acquired exclusive rights over extensive tracts of land and shoreline. In Jamaica, all but nineteen of the island's 488 miles of coastline had been privatised by 1992 (Goodwin, 2008). In Barbados, over the past three decades, access to certain tracks of land including beaches have been the topic of much social discourse on the island. In Barbados, all beaches are held in perpetuity for public use. However, there have been several disputes between developers and residents regarding access to some of the island's most popular beaches prompting a local calypsonian, The Mighty Gabby, to pen a song with the following chorus as a form of protest:

Jack don't want me to bathe on my beach,  
Jack tell them to keep me out of reach  
Jack tell them I will never make the grade,  
Strengthen security, build barricade.  
That can't happen here in this country,  
I want Jack to know that the beach belong to we!  
That can't happen here over my dead body,  
Tell Jack that I say that the beach belong to we!  
The beach is mine, I could bathe anytime,  
Despite what he say, I can bathe anyway

In Barbados and Cuba, residents are systematically excluded from using facilities or entering the more exclusive golf courses and luxury resorts on the islands (Cabezas, 2008). Only recently, Barbadians staged a protest in response to a dispute between owners of the Crane Beach Resort and beach vendors over access to the resort's beach. In Barbados, membership

fees at a certain golf course are purposely fixed so high that even wealthy local elites cannot afford membership (Sealy, 2009). In Cuba, where tourism is spatially concentrated tourists have access to lush facilities, numerous products and fine food, while residents struggle in their daily existence in shanty towns. Attractions such as Varadero Beach, which was once accessible to native Cubans, is now available only to foreign tourists (Elliott & Neirotti, 2008).

Because of tourism, many Caribbean nationals are systematically excluded from land that served agricultural purposes and from shorelines that were formerly used for fishing and recreation. As this Barbados resident states:

*“All I can see these golf courses doing is creating more and more areas in this island that are off-limits to locals. Areas where I used to play as a child have now been developed and fenced in for only those who can afford it” (Sealy, 2009).*

### **Cruise Ships**

Of the more than 70 cruise ships that travel through the Caribbean, none are Caribbean-owned. Caribbean communities derive even fewer economic benefits from cruises than resort style tourism. According to one study, cruise tourists contribute as little as 12% of all tourist expenditure to the Caribbean (Goodwin, 2008). The daily spending per person for cruise passengers is 55% lower than the spending per person for long-stay tourists. Furthermore, the little spending by cruise tourists occurs in duty-free shops, which are owned by foreign companies that sell imported goods. These activities contribute little to the Caribbean economy.

A Caribbean Development Bank (2017) report also reminds us that some cruise passengers may choose to stay on the cruise ship and do not spend any money in the country of arrival but are still counted in the arrival statistics. Ship construction materials and furniture are mostly imported, and the food and beverages consumed on board are frequently purchased overseas in the homeports of the ships. Only a fraction of the staff is Caribbean. Although some cruise passengers take island tours while in port to shop for trinkets and other souvenirs, the economic benefits accrued by these small operators are miniscule in comparison to those extracted by trans-national cruise ship owners. Consequently, the overall market for cruise tourism in the Caribbean translates into even lower earnings for the region, since its participation in the profits is restricted to port fees and a few hours of shopping in duty free ports.

### **Tour Operators**

Tour operators are a hidden, but significant, source of foreign exchange leakage. Over the past 30 years mergers, acquisitions and strategic alliances have propelled British tour operators into large oligopolistic ‘power houses’, allowing them to control airlift capacity, price, product and consumer buying behaviour (Bastakis, Buhalis & Butler, 2004; Buhalis, 2000; Gartner and Bachri, 1994; Stuart, Pearce & Weaver, 2005). Tour operators control large chunks of traffic into the various islands. For instance, Virgin Atlantic Holidays and British Airways Holidays alone control as much as 50% of all traffic out of the UK to the island of Barbados. Some of the smaller and medium sized hotels are dependent on tour operators for as much as 90% of all their business (Sealy, 2014). This oligopolistic power allows the tour operators to exert pressure on accommodation providers for rooms to be contracted at the lowest possible rates. The rates offered to tour operators by hotels are significantly lower than the rates published by hotels to the public and can represent discounts of 20 to 60% off the published rack rates.

Tour operators compete against other operators that feature and sell the same undifferentiated products to the same market segments (Inkson and Minnaert, 2012). Inkson and Minnaert (2012) note that the elasticity of demand of tourism products means that the ability to compete is dependent on the tour operator's ability to beat their competitors on price. As tour operators are increasingly forced to lower their prices to maintain their market share the hotel becomes the first port of call for lower accommodation rates. Consequently, tour operators must employ a variety of skills, tricks and techniques to drive accommodation rates down. When demand and occupancies are low tour operators might complain to hotels that their property "is not selling" with the intention of compelling hoteliers to grant further discounted net rates. Tour operators withhold early bookings by taking advantage of the latest release option in their contracts to increase their bargaining power. When the hotel offers the cheaper rates, the tour operator would then release the previously held bookings to the hotel. This creates in the mind of the unsuspecting hotelier the illusion that it is the additional discounts that precipitated the newly reported bookings, but the tour operator would have been holding the bookings for some time without reporting them to create the illusion of poor demand. Further to this, it is reported that customers do not always benefit from the last-minute discounts that are offered by hotels to tour operators to stimulate bookings during slow periods. Hoteliers complained that these discounts would still be deducted from the operator's final payment to the hotel thereby increasing the tour operators' profit margins (Sealy, 2014; 2018).

Tour operators frequently use the practice of 'switch selling' or 'directional selling' in order to achieve their strategic goals. They sometimes mislead customers by repulsing them from using certain properties by citing unfounded issues or problems or by telling them that the hotel is full or 'unavailable' so that the customer would book a competing property or ones owned by the tour operator (Buhalis, 2000). Mystery shoppers investigating British tour operators on behalf of a Barbados boutique hotel reported that they were frequently told that Barbados was "unromantic", had "too many children" or had "too much traffic" to persuade them to travel to St. Lucia (Sealy, 2014). Tour operators can manipulate the competition among the various hotels and destinations within the same competitive set as they control the airlift capacity and price (Papatheodorou, 2006). They can drive hotel occupancies up in one destination by 'switch selling' to drive occupancies down in another destination to increase their bargaining power for lower rates. These dynamics put hotels who depend on tour operator channels in a very vulnerable position. In Barbados, hoteliers noted that they would frequently receive calls from customers claiming that, the tour operator said that their hotel was 'unavailable' when in fact several rooms were available for sale. Customers would then ask to book direct with the hotel but hotels risk punitive penalties from the tour operators if they took direct bookings (Sealy, 2014). Hoteliers noted, however, that because the tour operators control about 70% of the airlift and airline seats coming into the island, the customer frequently had no choice but to book with the tour operator.

Tour operators would often misquote travel statistics, employ intimidation tactics or play hotels against each other at the destination to compel them to give further rate reductions. Claiming that a hotel of a higher category at the destination has quoted a lower rate is a frequently used tactic to create the illusion of fake competition between hotels at the destination to drive rates down (also see Buhalis, 2000). Barbados hoteliers reported that during periods of low demand tour operators would ask for as much as a further 50% off the already existing contracted room rates (Sealy, 2018). Furthermore, to drive rates down even further tour operators may negotiate for 'run-of-the-house' rooms, which gives the hotelier the flexibility to assign rooms of a lower classification to tour operator clients so that the premium rooms can be reserved for sale to premium customers at premium prices. However, tour operator clients would 99.9 % of the

time complain about the ‘run of the house’ room, or about other hotel services or facilities to make a case for an upgrade to a higher category room without paying the surcharge.

Tour operators would often misrepresent the star rating of a hotel by overstating its star classification. When guests arrive, if the services and facilities are not to their expectation, this may lead to complaints and compensation being paid by the hotel. Ordinarily, a hotel of a higher classification would attract a higher price thereby increasing tour operator profits. However, when you sell a 4-star hotel, as a 5-star the expectation of service and facilities are very high. In Barbados, a large west coast hotel refunded millions of pounds over time to customers who were disappointed when they arrived because they were misled or not properly informed about the hotel by the tour operator. Furthermore, tour operators may also withhold payment until the last minute sometimes leaving hotels with serious overdrafts and scrambling for cash to pay local suppliers and staff. The visitor pays the tour operator in advance for their holidays but, the large tour operators require 30 to 45 days credit facility, but many do not pay on time. Buhalis (2000) notes that these delayed payments allow the tour operators to earn as much as 25% of their revenue from interest on hotels’ money as it sits in their banks in the metropole. Frequently, the failure of tour operators to pay on time has resulted in hotels applying for additional overdraft facilities to meet financial and operational obligations and in turn paying interest on these loans or overdrafts.

It is important to note that these experiences are not unique to the Caribbean. As a matter of fact, they are congruent to the experiences of hoteliers in peripheral destinations in other regions of the world (Andriotis, 2003; Bastakis, Buhalis & Butler, 2004; Buhalis, 2000; Gartner and Bachri, 1994; Karamustafa, 2000; Stuart, Pearce & Weaver, 2005; Tan & Dwyer, 2014; Tveteraas, & Lien, 2014). The constant reduction in net rates will lead to the inability of the smaller hotels to maintain their physical facilities and service standards. The deterioration of the tourism product also leads to a poor destination and product image and to a reluctance by customers to pay a premium price. The further deterioration of the tangible product showers the tour operator with additional power to negotiate for even cheaper rates, which consequently leads to a further drop in prices. Buhalis (2000) warns that the concentration of bargaining power in European tour operators will inevitably reduce the profit margins of small, medium sized tourism businesses and their ability to reap decent returns on their investment.

## **Recommendations**

The neo-colonial system appropriates local resources in peripheral places and concentrates it into the hands of foreign organizations in metropolitan countries for profit. When a country’s natural resources are packaged and sold by foreign enterprises a substantial portion of the profits and value-added is captured by the metropole and therefore does not accrue to the destination country. These leakages result in the local population bearing the economic and social costs of tourism while retaining relatively little of the economic benefits. The role of governmental policy is critical in making the destination and its local tourism businesses more competitive. Government should encourage and facilitate policies to strengthen the competitive position of the local tourism business sector. Several governmental actions could help to develop a more sustainable tourism industry. These include:

- Strengthening inter-sectoral linkages, particularly with the agro-industries, to reduce foreign exchange leakages. This could include the development of market associations that make it easier for hotels and restaurants to source local produce and goods. The Sandals Programme in Jamaica is an agro-tourism initiative, which has grown from 10 farmers

supplying two hotels in 1994, to 80 farmers in 2004. Due to this initiative, farmers' sales increased in three years from US\$60,000 to US\$3.3 million.

- Developing strategies to convert cruise arrivals into long-stay visitors of the future.
- Encouraging local entrepreneurship by providing small-scale businesses with education, training and access to grants and loans.
- Enhancing the marketing and research skills of local hotel personnel so that they are not overly dependent on tour operators and can stand on their own against the international corporate giants.
- Building market research capabilities through the utilisation of accurate, relevant and timely data as the basis for evidence-based decision-making, planning, investment and marketing.
- Developing an indigenous craft industry that would encourage all-inclusive and cruise ship tourists to venture outside the resorts/ships for Caribbean made, distinct and unique handicrafts. (In the Caribbean, most souvenirs are generic and imported from Asia).
- Designing and delivering community events that would create unique experiences to entice visitors to leave their resorts. The Barbados Oistins Fish Fry is a weekly event where fishermen, fish sellers, farmers, local chefs and craft people sell vegetables, fish, beverages and prepare meals and sell handicrafts to thousands of tourists and locals. The event is self-sustainable.
- Controlling the amount and type of accommodation to prevent over supply. Limit all-inclusive resorts: hotel development should resonate with the ethos, values and needs of the destination.
- Using the sharing economy channels such as Airbnb to encourage more home stays and alternative accommodation choices for visitors. Tourists using sharing economy accommodations spend more on groceries and dining outside their accommodation than tourists in other types of accommodation (Caribbean Development Bank, 2017).
- Tightening immigration policies to prevent foreign personnel from monopolising high paid managerial positions where qualified locals are available. Impose fines on policy violations.
- Diversifying the tourism offerings away from the sea, sun and sand concept. Promotional efforts must be directed towards offering specialised and special interest products. Niche markets have more focused and targeted media outlets and offer opportunities for strategic alliances with a cadre of more specialised tour operators and their networks.

Tour operators have a strong influence on the nature of the information communicated to clients before and during the holiday, which influences the consumption patterns and expectations of the visitor. Tour operators typically classify hotels and resorts to meet their own brand specification; but this often presents a distorted, induced image of the destination and resort area. Consequently, tourists often lack information and awareness about the cultural, environmental and economic impacts of their touristic activity. Goodwin (2008) suggest that Caribbean destinations should change the consumption patterns of tourists through the application of information-based policy instruments. This could be done through social media; press visits or movie and film tourism with appropriate storylines. Consumer behavior can be influenced by an education campaign to entice visitors to venture outside their resorts to experience the true realities of the destination and its people. It should inform foreign tourists on how the economic, environmental and cultural impacts of their travel behavior is felt by the destination.

## Closing Remarks

The Caribbean's dependency on other countries has its roots in colonial society. On the surface, independence in the Caribbean was nothing more than a 'constitutional independence' with all the features of a neo-colonial society emerging. (Britton, 1982; Wall & Mathieson, 2006; Weaver, 1988; William, 2012; Wong, 2012). Caribbean societies resemble today a subtler organisation of the colonial system through neo-colonial structures and a hegemony of European culture and western ideologies. Today, as in the past, the political economy of the Caribbean is socially, politically and economically structured in a way that facilitates the interests of the metropolitan centers as it did during the colonial era.

These problems and challenges are not totally fortuitous but have been exacerbated by Caribbean governments' weakness in implementing policy decisions and their incessant failure for creating an enabling environment for indigenous tourism development and investment to flourish. Wilson (1996) notes that very often in the Caribbean, the scramble for foreign exchange and the need to please foreign investors has precipitated tourism development determined by the short-term fancy of government rather than a coordinated and strategic approach that takes into account the needs and interests of all stakeholders. This situation is compounded by weak regulations, poor planning guidelines, inadequate legislation and corruption. As V. S Naipaul (1969) wrote several years ago:

*'Every poor country accepts tourism as an unavoidable degradation. None has gone so far as some of the West Indian islands, which, in the name of tourism are selling themselves into a new slavery (Naipaul 1969, p. 210).'*

Unfortunately, several Caribbean countries continue to experience the most abusive forms of exploitation as a manifestation of this neo-colonial system. Also, evident are the social tensions generated by the development of institutionalised mass tourism in relatively poor societies with a history of racism and gross inequality. This paper highlights the reality that power differentials still exist within the tourism supply chain. It has brought about the sobering realisation that peripheral and insular communities continue to fight for social justice as they bear the social and economic cost of tourism.

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**Corresponding Author:** Dr Wendy Sealy, University of Chichester, Bognor Regis Campus, England, UK. Email: [W.Sealy@chi.ac.uk](mailto:W.Sealy@chi.ac.uk)