

Tourism as ethnic relations in Barbados

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A B S T R A C T / R É S U M É

The topic of the complex relationship between the driving power of tourism and the cultural creation of identity is a rather virgin field. The main goal of this research is to clarify the impact of tourism on certain members of the host culture and the creation of ethnicity. Today, tourism touches nearly everyone in Barbados. Bajans that are not employed in tourism experience the effects of tourism in an indirect way. The changing environment, economy, infrastructure and social climate and the transnationalism that is created by tourism influence the daily life, habits, traditional life pattern and culture of Bajans. Therefore we can state that tourism is a factor of social and cultural change. Tourists themselves form an ethnic category in Barbados and as a consequence ethnic confrontations and interactions between the tourists and (certain members of) the Barbadian host culture are created.

Le but de cette recherche est de déterminer l'impact qu'a le tourisme sur la culture du pays hôte et sur la création d'ethnies. De nos jours, le tourisme touche presque tout le monde à la Barbade. Les Barbadiens qui travaillent dans le secteur touristique subissent indirectement les effets du tourisme. L'environnement, l'économie, les infrastructures et le climat social changent; et il y a en outre le transnationalisme que le tourisme engendre. Tout ça influence la vie quotidienne des Barbadiens, ainsi que leurs habitudes, leur coutumes, leur modèle de vie traditionnel et leur culture en général. C'est la raison pour laquelle nous pouvons dire que le tourisme est un facteur de changement social et culturel. Les touristes eux-mêmes forment une catégorie ethnique à la Barbade et par conséquent des confrontations et interactions ethniques entre les touristes et (certains membres de) la culture du pays hôte sont créés.

A R T I C L E I N F O

Keywords

Tourism, ethnicity, culture, transnationalism

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Introduction

Despite the general recognition that international tourism causes social and cultural change, research on the topic of the complex relationship between the driving power of tourism and the cultural creation of identity, such as nationality and ethnicity, remains a rather virginal field.

In this aspect, researchers as Macleod (2004), Vanlangendonck (2002) and Smith (1977) are guiding examples and form the basis of this research. The main goal of this research is to clarify the impact of tourism on certain members of the host culture and the creation of ethnicity. To do so, the research model of Vanlangendonck (2004; 2006) is applied, wherein the ethnic relations within tourism are studied in four interrelated fields.

Cultural level

1. Integration of Tourism in the host culture
2. Tourism as a factor of social and cultural change with special attention to socioeconomics issues
3. Confrontations between “Western” tourists and the “host culture”
4. Integration between “Western tourist” and the “host culture”

Individual level

In this research, the ethnographic research tradition is applied (see American Anthropological Association, 2004). The complexity of the social interaction is studied as presented in daily life; “the focus is on the meanings the participants themselves attribute to these interactions” (Marshall and Rossman, 1999: 2).

The role of the researcher as primary instrument to the data collection makes it necessary to identify personal values, assumptions and prejudice at the very start of the research. The clarification of my personal backgrounds, interests and motivations is therefore a necessity. My perceptions of tourism and the local population are formed through personal experiences. My interest in Barbadian tourism and culture started in my early youth, as a tourist. For over 15 years I have visited the island in many occasions and stayed in hotels, apartments and vacation villas, by which I experienced tourism life in Barbados in its diverse forms.

After 10 years, the main goal of my visits to Barbados changed from holiday to visiting my family. In this way, contacts with the local population became of much deeper value and I learned tourism influences the daily life of the Bajans.

Thirdly, during an internship, I had the opportunity to experience tourism in Barbados from the other side, not as a tourist but from the point of view of a tourism employee.

I believe strongly that this understanding of the context improves my awareness, knowledge and sensitivity to the interactions and confrontations between tourists and the Bajans.

Tourism as a driving force in the economy

Tourism has an enormous effect on Barbados and its inhabitants. By the development of tourism and employment generated therewith, the Bajan’s standard of life increased

strongly in the past 50 years. The income per capita augmented from €149 in 1946 to €4758 in 1995 (Ali, 1996:94). In 2005, the average income per inhabitant came to €5828.

In 2003, more than seventy percent of the foreign exchange was generated through tourism. Tourism is responsible for 40% of the GNP and the gross expenses of tourists in 2003 was estimated €592,456,000; an increase of 15,3 percent compared to 2002 (Barbados Ministry of Tourism, 2004).

As a labour intensive economy, tourism generates employment. Many Bajans that work as maids, waiters, gardeners, security agents and cooks are lured away from agriculture because of the higher wages and better employment terms in tourism. To guarantee the highest possible local employment, companies are obliged to search for candidates with the Barbadian nationality. Recruitment abroad is only allowed when no suitable local candidate is found, after informing the population in the two national newspapers. Through arbitration a local candidate can still apply for the job. Often, however, the required qualifications are selected in a way that a Bajan simply cannot meet these demands, for instance by requesting five years experience in a similar function abroad.

“It is evident that historical balances in all the islands of the Caribbean have seen the retention of economic power in the hands of few, largely white families” (Ali, 1996: 95). About five local white families have a large economic power in Barbados. For several generations, they own stores, warehouses, real estate and land and they understood the enormous possibilities of tourism at the break of the mass tourism era. These families gave an important input to the tourism industry through their investments in shopping malls, duty free shops, and the construction of the marina and apartment complexes. Even though the economic power is in the hands of few, they create employment for many Bajans, which leads to a new middle class.

Several tourism investments, such as the tennis and recreation village “Sugar Hill” (initial investment of €18.2 million), the golf resort Royal Westmoreland (initial investment of €31.7 million) and the prestigious Sandy Lane Hotel (initial investment €475.83 million) (Owen, 2001) were initiatives of foreign investors. The local population is aware that events and political decisions that are made thousands of kilometres away, in North-America and Europe, have strong effects for on Barbadian tourism and as a consequence on the island’s economy. This dependence on an external economy sometimes leads to feelings of economic uncertainty.

Tourism now touches nearly everyone on the island. Many people are employed as maids and security officers, waiters and bar tenders, receptionists and gardeners. Others are self-employed food vendors, beach vendors, beach boys or they rent jet skis. Others sell locally grown agricultural products to hotels and restaurants. Bajans that are not employed in tourism experience the effects of tourism in an indirect way, through the changes in the environment, infrastructure and social climate in Barbados.

The typology of tourism

In Barbados we find two different types of tourism: stay over tourism and cruise tourism. Cruise tourists, however are considered day tourists in the eyes of the Barbadian government. Cruise ships moor to the island for a day and leave the harbour at night, towards the next destination. This is the reason why arrival numbers of the Ministry of Tourism do not contain cruise passengers. They form a different category. The total of stay over tourists and cruise ship arrivals is called total visitor arrivals.

In 1968 115,000 arrivals of international tourists were counted. This total was doubled in 1972 and tourism surpassed the sugar industry as most important factor for the generation of foreign exchange. Fifteen years later, in 1989, the number of tourists that stayed in Barbados doubled. As from 1990, there was a relapse in the number of tourist arrivals because of the recession in tourism generating countries. However, in 1998, Barbados welcomed more than half a million stay over tourists and the total visitor arrivals reached the cape of 1 million tourists. In 2003, Barbados counted 1 090 330 visitor arrivals, of which 531 000 were stay over tourists.

These record numbers were made possible by the increasing airlift out of the most important markets and an overall increase of the worldwide traveller's trust. The industry has recovered from the effects of 9/11, SARS and the war in Iraq (Ministry of Tourism, 2004). In 2005; 574,541 stay over tourists arrived in Barbados. The UK has been the most important tourism market in Barbados for 20 years. In 2003, 38.1% of tourist were British. The USA, Caricom, Canada and the European continent were responsible for 24.3%, 18.2% and 5.6% respectively. In 2003, the total number of available rooms in Barbados totalled 6,210 units. The Barbados Tourism Invest estimates a number of 9,500 rooms available for tourist by 2010.

Tourists are often families who visit Barbados to enjoy the natural resources of sun, sea and sand. Often, these are recurrent visitors and the average stay comes to 6.8 nights.

The hotels, apartments and pensions are, with few exceptions, spread over the two tourist belts. Two strips of land along the coast that stretches out at the north and south of Bridgetown. Tourism is developed only in the west, southwest and south coast of Barbados.

The most important assets of Barbados are still related to the natural setting, explaining the location where the tourism industry is highly concentrated. For the last two reasons, the Atlantic coast is also less appreciated by the majority of tourists. With its steep cliffs, scarceness of beaches strong current and turbulent waves, the island's northern coast is not suitable for a sun, sea and sand holiday. A few initiatives to develop tourism in other areas, such as a resort on North Point in the North of the island in 1960 and Villa Nova (2003) in the inland, both resulted in a bankruptcy.

In the past, the southern coast of Barbados was known for budget tourism. Efforts have been made by the government to reduce the big differences between the southern and western coast. At present quality management is the main goal in both tourist belts. The renovation of St. Lawrence Gap and Dover is an example of this revaluation.

The Bajans live behind the tourist belt. They work in restaurants, bars and hotels and they go out in the tourist region. They sell their goods, hang around or maybe avoid the tourist streets if possible. The integration of tourism in their society has an impact on the culture and social life of the inhabitants of "the Gap" and Dover".

Tourism as factor of social and cultural change

Every year, more tourists visit the growing number of hotels, apartments and pensions along the coast. The tourism high season starts in December until the end of May, with peaks around the Christmas and New Year period and the Easter holidays. During the rainy season, from June until November, room rates drop until 50% of the peak rates. Unless for "Crop Over" time, were rooms rates equal those of the Christmas period and hardly any available room can be found on the island.

The BTA tries to stimulate tourism on well-defined places, between the town of Oistins on the southern coast and Speightstown on the western coast, with special attention for the further renovation and expansion of St. Lawrence Gap, Carlisle Bay (near Bridgetown) and Speightstown. Activities in the inland remain limited to Jeep safaris,

Sunday island hikes and sightseeing tours with taxis or rented cars, or visits to places of interest such as Harrison's Cave, Sunbury Plantation House or Grenade Forest and Signal Station. Most tourists choose a sun, sea and sand holiday and prefer to stay in their own tourist zone.

Quality becomes more and more important and therefore the continuous improvement and diversification of the tourism product becomes necessary. Old buildings as for instance The Old Town Hall in "The City" (Bridgetown) are restored as a tourist attraction. Plantation houses that have lost their function for years are transformed into hotels and sugar cane fields are converted into golf courses. The most recent example is Apes Hill Club, with a local investor, to be built on a 1.08 square kilometre former sugar plantation. This project now offers its residential lots for sale to mainly wealthy foreigners and will be completed with a golf course, a spa and a polo field. The project developers now want to integrate an entire village "Waterhall Tenantry" in this Project. The inhabitants are now approached to leave the land; they often have called home for several generations, in exchange of money and a new place to live so that Apes Hill Club can be expanded.

Agriculture makes place for construction. The real estate market is transformed from local and informal to a commercialised worldwide business, promoted through the biggest international companies such as Sotheby's, Christies and Knight Frank.

Besides the tourist accommodation, a large number of restaurants emerged diverse price ranges. A brochure analysis yielded that 87 percent of the restaurants is situated in the tourist zone, on the western and southern coast.

The excellent Barbadian road infrastructure, compared with other Caribbean islands, has to deal with congestion in recent years. Traffic jams on the highways during the rush hour and continuous amount of traffic in the city centres were on the one hand caused by tourism transport. Because of the improved standard of life, on the other hand, the number of Barbadians that own a car has augmented strongly. Working Bajans make ever less use of public transportation.

Keeping in mind the growing number of tourists and the government's future perspective in the hosting of big events, a good transportation network is a necessity. During the fieldwork several busy arteries underwent a broadening and improvement, unfortunately with even larger; however temporary, traffic jams as a consequence.

In St. Lawrence Gap and Dover, a whole range of adjustments were processed since 2001. The road through the tourist entertainment centre was improved and equipped with new streetlights and the overhead cables were buried. An important remark here is that only the main street benefited from this rejuvenation project and the roads that give to this street, where the Bajans live, were ignored. Furthermore an extra parking lot was foreseen next to the Dover Public Beach access and the sanitary facilities to the vendor kiosks were built. St. Lawrence Bay has been made visually more attractive and a police office will be built wherefore in meantime a transportable unit is erected.

The area of St Lawrence Gap and Dover disposes of more than 1000 tourist rooms that take up the entire coast line as well as the opposite site of the road. For the local population, in 50 years time, a lot has changed. The sea, at the time an important way to earn an income is now only accessible for them via one public entrance. To catch a glimpse of the sea is impossible because of the three storey high tourist accommodation. Most properties along the coast are priced outside the reach of the locals.

It is clear that when tourists would stay away, most of the companies in The Gap and Dover would not survive.

Migrants in Barbados

"The assumption that people will live their lives in one place, according to one set of national and cultural norms, in countries with impermeable national borders, no longer holds. Rather, in the 21st Century, more and more people will belong to two or more societies at the same time. This is what many researchers refer to as transnational migration" (Levitt, 2004). Besides tourists, who mostly return to their home base after a couple of weeks, we can find others in Barbados who have made it their permanent home because of tourism.

Tourism generates migration streams in a direct and indirect way. This transnationalism must be seen as a process in the host community that is connected with social and economical change, globalisation and international migration. In spite of the protection of the local employment market, top functions in hotels and other tourism enterprises are often reserved for foreigners, mainly British, Irish or North-American managers that take charge of a company for a few years. Also, sports instructors, the staff of spa and wellness facilities and other specialists are recruited abroad because of their experience or exceptional talents. The success of Barbados on international level

attracted international investors, which resulted in the interest of multinational organisations that followed their customers. As a consequence, a number of expatriates and foreign managers came to live on the island.

Some tourists decide to live on Barbados. They start their own restaurant or bar or continue their job in the service sector. Their knowledge of tourism and the tourist industry and their access to capital makes them more successful in their enterprises than Barbadians. Other, mostly female tourists engage in a relationship with a Bajan and settle on the island after a lot of travelling back and forth. Relations between a Barbadian woman and a male tourist do exist however scarce.

Apart from the large number of tourists, we can find a large number of new inhabitants in Barbados. Some stay for a short period, others for the rest of their lives. This makes the estimation of the number of migrants in Barbados a difficult task, but out of interviews with policymakers, their number can be estimated on 20,000. The role of these migrants in processes of social and cultural change may not be underestimated.

Migrants that have worked abroad for several years with better opportunities in mind re-migrate to Barbados with new ideas and financial means and now see their future in Barbadian tourism. They return with knowledge of the culture of tourism generating countries and influence their community in a special way through their experiences as a migrant.

In conclusion, a specific group of tourists may not be ignored: the long stay tourists from mainly Canada, the US and the UK. They have been coming to Barbados for many years whereby a 25th visit to the island is no exception. During the winter, these tourists come to Barbados to enjoy the nice weather, mainly in their own vacation villa. They live in one of the residential neighbourhoods and differentiate themselves from the "real tourists". The feeling they live here part time overrules their holiday-feeling. They are self-called Bajans.

Changes in the traditional life pattern

Before the 1970s, labour was mainly concentrated in agriculture and fishery. Today the land and the sea have received a different meaning in society and the Bajans have to share it with others. In this way the role of the land and the sea as a primary income source has been moved to the background.

Furthermore the traditional pattern of "working on the land" during the day and "to rest at night" is transformed. Now, Bajans work in shifts, even far beyond the tourism industry. Because of the changing working hours, other companies such as for instance supermarkets have adapted to their customers. Most of them are opened more than 12 hours daily, without a weekly closing day.

Working in shifts also influenced family life. Families traditionally do not eat together in Barbados, except for Sundays; the food is left on the stove and everyone eats when he or she feels like it. Today even the elaborate Sunday Food becomes a hard-to-plan event due to shift work and work on Sunday. Many people feel that they have no more time for each other and women regret they can no longer attend the Sunday church service.

Employment opportunities have created new roles in Barbados. Old primary industries such as work on plantations and in fishery are superseded in popularity by the service sector and agriculture is seen as inferior due to the island's history of slavery. The opportunities have expanded beyond the traditional choice between "the land and the sea" and the pressure to step in family members' footsteps no longer exists. Before, the son of a fisherman became a fisherman. Today, this son often finds a job in tourism.

The most important impact of tourism relates to growing employment opportunities for women. They find work in tourism as maids and vendors. Others are more inventive and become "hair braiders" and "massage therapists" on the beach. Highly educated young women find opportunities in a wide range of jobs and careers. This leads to a gap between the standard of life and experiences between older and younger women on the one hand and high and less educated women on the other hand.

In 40 percent of all households in Barbados, a woman is traditionally the head of family. These families consist of women with children from different fathers and most of them were never married. Men do not fulfil a patriarchal role in the family. In general the extended family lives together, often a combination of several relatives that spans three generations.

Most women are financially supported by a man at a certain point in their lives. However, these sums are mostly modest and unreliable. Even though life is hard sometimes, neighbours and friends are always prepared to help and share the produces of their gardens or cooked food. Women take care of domestic as well as caring tasks in

the household. Single women are proud they can take care of their family without the help of a man. However, when these single women go to work, many of the domestic and caring tasks are taken over by other women in the extended family. This does not imply that the traditional matrifocal system has changed because of tourism.

Also at the level of composition of the family, there is a difference between educated and less educated women. For the modern young woman, living together with her partner is a norm and she will start her family later. There is a remarkable difference in the number of children within the family. Today, women want fewer children than in the past. Most women acknowledge they can achieve a better living standard with fewer mouths to be fed. The growing employment opportunities for woman also explain this trend.

A consequence of the improved living standard is that less people choose for a traditional chattel house. Now, most people own or have the possibility to purchase the land they live on, the need to have a transportable house has decreased.

Confrontations between “Western tourists” and the host culture

Tourists as an ethnic Group

Tourists form an ethnic category in Barbados from the point of view of the Bajans as well as the tourists' one. The meeting of the “Western tourists” and the “host culture” can be defined as an ethnic confrontation between two groups that meet each other.

To understand the basic principle of tourism as ethnic relations, Vanlangendonck (2002:70) uses the broad concept of ethnicity as explained by Leman (1998:149): “With ethnicity, we mean (1) a “subjective, symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate from other groups” (Brass, 1991:19), (2) on the basis of “a feeling of continuity with the past, a feeling that is maintained with an essential part of one's self-definition” (De Vos, 1975:17), (3) providing “reservoirs for renewing humane values. Ethnic memory is thus future, not past oriented” (Fisher, 1986:176), (4) whereby “it is not “the cultural stuff that it encloses” that fundamentally decides what is involved in the we-consciousness but “the ethnic boundary that defines the group” (Barth, 1969:15). Ethnic frontiers are social frontiers.”

Yearly, many different nationalities visit Barbados. These West-European, North- American, Canadian, and Caricom citizens represent themselves as a specific group on the

island, namely the tourists. There is a unity among them whereby several mutual characteristics are shared through touristhood in the host culture. Sticking together with other tourists can be seen as a safety net. It creates a feeling of security in an unfamiliar environment. The tourist feels safe in specific tourism territories, among other tourists. These territories are time-bound as the beach during the day, the bar at sundown, the restaurant in the evening and the disco at night.

For Bajans, all tourists look alike in behaviour and appearance. When asked what a tourist looks like, “Caucasian”, shorts and t-shirts, bikini's camera's and sun hats are often-heard descriptions. Tourists are also recognised by specific behaviour such as taking pictures of the sunset, the beach and the chattel houses, they sit in the sun while Bajans prefer the shade, they walk drunk across the street after happy hour, they stroll along St. Lawrence street and have a look down the streets where Bajans live but do not access them.

The “we-feeling” is strengthened by several actions such as the rites de passage of arrival and departure, not understanding the Bajan dialect and the shared irritation over the “annoying” beach vendors.

Apart from the tourist police, there are private firms that specialise in the security of hotels and near beaches, to solve problems from or with tourists. There is an information hotline especially for tourists and tourist information is spread via several free brochures to encourage their participation in a wide range of activities and attractions. News from the home countries comes to Barbadian shores via several newspapers and magazines from the US, Canada and the UK.

Tourists share English as a common language towards the host community and they share tourist information among each other about “must sees” and what is a waste of time, where the food is good and how much a taxi ride to Bridgetown costs when you “don't want to be ripped off” by the driver. This information is shared spontaneously among tourists. However, it becomes less coincidental in the bar at sunset, when tourists are looking for each others company and share their experiences and where the “regulars” (frequent visitors) do most of the talking. The notice boards with recommendations in the entrance halls of several apartment blocks are another example of the growing solidarity among tourists.

On the other hand a nationality in the touristhood can be noticed. Tourists hang flags on their terraces and go to the German owned bar to see other Germans.

They wear “I am Canadian” T-shirts or a shirt of an American university. This nationality in the touristhood is also noticed by the Bajans and leads to an enforced stereotyping of “the Germans”, “the Canadians” and “the British”.

The commoditisation of culture

More and more Bajans see tourism as a lucrative business form. People that come on holiday to Barbados yearly and stay in the same hotel or apartment may become friends of the host; however they stay as tourists from the local's point of view. Outsiders that notice such a friendship between a tourist and a Bajan think that the Bajan only befriends the tourist for economic reasons and this Barbadian often has to deal with jealous reactions within his community.

Services need to be paid and many Bajans, also those that work outside the tourism sector are very original in inventing services. Some Bajans admit there are two prices, one for Bajans and one for tourists. This commercial attitude is important to understand the actions and reactions on the ever expanding tourism industry.

Cultural products and expressions are used for tourism entertainment (Cohen, 1988). The “commoditisation of culture” causes that the usual value of an ethnic phenomenon transforms in an exchange value. Ethnicity and authenticity are not appreciated by themselves, but as a monetary value. Cultural aspects need to be separated from their social and environmental context to become consumable.

MacCannell (1999) states that there are things that are meant for tourist eyes and other things that are not to be seen by tourists in a tourism destination. What happens “on the stage” and “behind the stage” can be explained by the efforts of tourism stakeholders to create a comfortable social and physical environment for tourists to spend their leisure time in.

Today many cultural traditions are coloured by tourism in Barbados. The forgotten tradition of “Crop Over” has been revived by tourism. Today, this is a hugely commercial event lasting three weeks. The only original component that is conserved from the tradition is the parade with the decorated wagons. The entire event has been profoundly commercialised with banners of sponsors which bears no resemblance whatsoever from the traditional celebration.

The tourists do not seem to mind this “staged authenticity”. For them it is part of the Barbadian culture, a tradition, which is partly correct, even though the initiative to

reinstate the tradition was taken by the tourism industry. Now “Crop over” is a popular national holiday period, that even lures emigrated Bajans back home.

Another example of making certain aspects of Bajan culture consumable is taking the chattel houses out of their environmental significance and cultural context by introducing a “chattel village”, basically a village of souvenir shops. This is an example of how “behind the stage” authentic aspects are brought “on the stage” for commercial purposes.

In articles and reader's letters columns in the national newspapers, questions are raised about the relevance of tourism investments. This concern is also very much alive within the general Bajan population. Many voices have asked openly why so much money is spent on tourism projects while the “poor people” in the community are left alone with no support whatsoever from the authorities. One can argue that tourism contribute to the economic development and thus benefiting the community. However some investments are done without taking into account the balance between cost and benefit. The root cause for the criticism on the part of the general public is due to the fact that the industry is in the hands of a small and select group of influential families. They have the Financial means to make large investments. In addition they also have the power to influence the government. Their word is law and the government “eats out of their hand”.

Nirvana summarises this feeling clearly when she reads an article about the public beach restriction in the newspaper: “Barbados has just become ours and now we are giving it to the tourists”. It is a feeling of colonisation by tourism that is caused by the asymmetric relationship that tourism raises from the economic point of view. Delivering a service is for many Bajans associated with servitude. Furthermore, there is an inequality between the several ethnic groups in Barbados, i.e. the minority (5%) of Euro-Caribbean descent that has the economic power and the Afro-Caribbean group that represents 90 percent of the inhabitants and has much less economic influence. The investments of the white minority have created many employment opportunities which resulted in the improved living standard for all Bajans. However, the real economic power remains where it has been for centuries. Given the Caribbean history of slavery and African roots in Barbadian education and media since independence, the current situation has lead to confrontations between “Bajans” and tourists, a relationship they see as a confrontation between black and white.

Tourism and racism

The term race has been questioned since the second half of the 20th century and in the beginning of the 1990s there has been a breakthrough in the field of anthropology to deal with it. In anthropology there is a big disapproval for theories that put down uniform innate characteristics to groups of people. Vanlangendonck (2004:37) states: "Race is a relative notion and possesses no scientific status unless in the cultivation of plants. When "race" is used to define a group of people, this equals a group that is isolated long enough to develop morphological and physiological characteristics that differentiate the members of the group from other representatives of the biological species human (*homo sapiens sapiens*). People are then differentiated based on form and weight of the body, pigmentation of the skin, hair colour and texture, compounding of blood, etc." This view joins the current practice of eliminating the term "race" out of the scientific vocabulary because of the limited statistic validity (Vanlangendonck, 2004). This is succinctly put in Morgenthau's article (1995: 62): "The bottom line, to most scientists working in these fields, is that race is a mere "social construction" – a gamy mixture of prejudice, superstition and myth".

The fact that most tourists are white and most Bajans black, influences many interactions between tourists and locals. Racism and expectations thereof, based on the colonial history of the island and personal experiences of many Bajans as immigrants in the UK, the USA and Canada, can hinder contacts between the local community and tourists. The problem of public access to beaches goes back to the end of the 1980s, when hotel owners were allowed to let their properties border the beach. The local inhabitants were hereby restricted in their beach access. The Barbadian calypsonian "Mighty Gabby" wrote a protest song concerning this restriction for the Bajans:

*"Tourism vital, I can't deny
But it ain't more than I an' I
My navel string buried right here
But the tourists' one could be anywhere."*

Out of this protest of the local inhabitants, the movement "Windows to the Sea" developed. They campaign for the maintenance of the scarce places on the west and south coast where still a glimpse of the sea can be caught. Furthermore, they try to encourage the government to create public beaches with facilities for the locals. Today, this problem still exists. vvvNow, the entire west coast and a large part of the south coast are built with hotels and apartment blocks.

The local inhabitants can no longer access these beaches even though they see it as their birth right. The tourists do not have this birth right and yet have very easy access to these beaches.

A new protest was raised when a foreign west coast villa owner closed his private road for motorised traffic and only allowed pedestrians to trespass. Approximately 30 people protested against this matter because it affects the local inhabitants lost. They understand the needs of foreign investments but not at the disadvantage the local inhabitants (Burke, 2006).

Security agents are hired to keep the locals away from beaches that are right next to hotels. These beaches are reserved for hotel guests, even if private beaches are forbidden by law and everyone has the right to use every beach on the island.

The top managers in the tourism industry are invariably white. From the middle management down, everyone is black. Many hotels try to discourage Bajans to use their facilities by creating an all inclusive formula or by posting a security guard next to the entrance.

Sometimes these black-white relations are openly abused by beach vendors: "You don't want to buy from me because I'm black" and beach boys "Hi, I shouted at you earlier, but when you didn't answer, I thought it was maybe because you didn't like us black boys" or "You don't talk to black people?"

Misunderstandings, discontentment and impoliteness from a tourist toward a Bajan are often labelled as racism. Bajans greet each other on the street. When a tourist does not share this habit, this is seen as a lack of respect and often as a racist attitude. From this ethnographic finding one can deduce that a feeling of inferiority plays in such a way that they feel uncomfortable or even accepted in tourist territories.

Bajans, who have long term contact with tourists during their stay on the island, can have a financial advantage in the form of a substantial tip or a gift upon departure. This illustrates the role that relations with tourists can have in creating jealousy among the local inhabitants.

Many Bajans do not believe a white tourist can be friends with a Bajan. According to them there is always an economic motivation present in friendship between

the white tourist and Bajans. The confrontations between the Euro-Caribbean and Afro-Caribbean group within the Barbadian culture lie at the basis of this belief. "White people are very private. Their people used to own our people as slaves in the past. They never socialise with black Bajans and that is why some people are like this. They (black Bajans) can't see why a white girl can be friend with a white girl and they make up all kinds of silly stories... I used to work with a lot of different nationalities in the past, so I know it is not like that."

White people have always controlled the Barbadian economy and until 1966, they also controlled politics. After independence, all important positions in government were taken by non-whites. While their political power has decreased, they still control the majority of big companies on the island and the tourism industry, at least what is not in foreign hands.

In Barbados a social hierarchy based on skin colour can be noticed. This characteristic is used to refer to each other and the population is divided into groups based on the colour of skin. Bajans are talking about black, brown, high brown or redskin and white people. However, a high brown person is still judged as more black than white.

The fact that Afro-Barbadians do not believe in friendship between a white tourist and a 'local', did not only become clear through conversations with informants, I could also observe it during my field work. When I walked into a supermarket with one of my informants, close to her house, people stared at me because I, clearly a white female tourist, was accompanied by a young black woman. My informant asked me if I did not feel uncomfortable because people were staring at me. "They act like they've never seen a white person before. They probably think you're lost", she joked.

This belief became even more prominent in the following situation. I was invited to join a few befriended informants to the movie. We were a little early and we walked into the theatre laughing. My informants were talking in Bajan dialect, which made people think I was a white Bajan. When we installed ourselves, a teenager in the row behind us made the following comment: "She ain't got no black in she, then why she breezin' with these redskin girls?" This teenager openly asked herself why a white person was hanging around with a group of coloured woman.

Interactions between beach boys and female tourists

The living environment of the beach boy: a first introduction

The beach boy phenomenon is known throughout the Caribbean and in literature as beach bum", "rent-a-dread" and gigolo. Beach boys are young black men that look for single white foreign woman on the beach and in the entertainment centre.

They are between 18 and 30 years old and often do not have a diploma. They often wear dread locks, smoke marijuana and meet the stereotype of the relaxed "no-problem mentality" of the hypersexual Caribbean man. Rastafarianism is used commercially by them and distinction has to be made between these "dreads" and the religious Rastafarians.

Beach boys come from families where the mother plays a prominent role, whereas the father is mostly an absent and near invisible person. They often live with their mother due to financial restraints. Most of them are employed as renters of jet skis and other water sports. Others rent beach chairs and umbrellas, or sell souvenirs, hand made jewels or Aloe Vera (against sun burn) or drugs to tourists on the beach.

Most of the time, however, these professions are not sufficient to sustain their lifestyle: shoes and clothes according to the newest fashion style, daily meals and drinks in tourist areas and going out every night. Therefore, these men need female tourists to pay for their drinks, meals, entrance fees to the disco, cigarettes and gifts. Besides these material wishes, there is the hope for a better life. Relationships with female tourists open perspectives such as opening an own business, travelling or even working and living abroad.

Tourists became a reference group to the host community. They are the living proof of the wealth Bajans see on television and in movies. Even people that do not work in tourism know how expensive some hotel rooms and tourist activities on the island are. Young locals see what tourists have and how they live and they want it, too. They think this way of life is easy to obtain in the tourists' homelands and forget that most of the holiday takers work all year to be able to spend two weeks in Barbados.

Masculinity in Barbados is highly defined by sexual competence, which in practice equals the highly performative act of attracting and seducing a foreign woman. Friendships are built between beach boys from the same neighbourhood and older beach boys become mentors of the

younger ones. They always operate from the same beach and can depend on their colleagues, whom they consider their real friends. There is a strong in-group solidarity and financial support is given when one of them needs help. "Loosing" a woman to a friend is easily accepted because chances will probably turn next time. However, when a beach boy from another beach "steals" "their" woman, this is considered as unacceptable and a reason for physical violence.

Apart from boasting about their sexual conquests, their alcohol and drug culture is another basic manifestation of their masculinity. Beach boys discuss their tactics and experiences with each other and inform their colleagues which tourist is "hard to pull" and which woman has attracted their attention. These conversations occur while beach boys "lime" (hang around) under a street light or in a rum shop. These rum shops are the social centres of men where opinions are loudly shared and an unaccompanied woman is not socially accepted.

These attitudes of young males are in strong contrast with young women in Barbadian society. While men are more and more attracted to a promiscuous lifestyle, women are attending higher education.

The relationship between a beach boy and a female tourist

The sexual erotic world of the beach boy is entirely focused on women. Beach boys engaging in homosexual relationships do exist, however not openly because they are not tolerated, nor by the peer group, nor by the homophobic Barbadian society.

The beach boy is the one to make first contact. They are often employed in low demanding jobs on the beach, giving them time to observe and select female tourists and to find an acceptable excuse to approach them. Before addressing the woman, the beach boy tries to figure out the tourist's nationality and financial situation by her appearance, clothing, the language of the book she reads and other possessions. This taxation is important, because preferences in nationality, wealth, beauty and age exist.

The motivation of the beach boy determines which woman to be approached. When it is a sexual conquest, he will choose a young, attractive and preferably blond woman (de Albuquerque, 1999). Most of the time these women do not pay. A beach boy that has a mainly economic motive will choose older (above 40) or overweight women. He takes ad-

vantage of their vulnerable side and overloads them with compliments. According to the beach boys, these women are more generous and more open to a relationship.

Having a tanned skin or not also plays a part in the selection of a female tourist. Someone without a tan has just arrived and who is tanned will soon leave the island. The longer a relationship with a tourist can last, the bigger the chance she will get attached to the beach boy and as a result, he will receive more money and gifts.

The conversations are friendly and take place in the most unconstrained way possible. When the beach boy's intentions are revealed too directly, they are often rejected. A beach boy introduces himself as a well mannered, friendly, attractive and worldly man who finds it important that a woman feels comfortable.

Most of the time, an appointment is made to meet at the disco the same evening. Because the first contact is made beforehand, the beach boy can approach this woman more freely in the disco and ask her to dance. He can compliment her more and has a higher chance of physical contact. He can test how far he can proceed in the uninhibited Barbadian dance style, which tourists often find offensive. Dancing forms the ideal situation for a beach boy to move from "friend" to "potential lover". Music and dance in combination with alcohol are seen as an important step in the seduction process.

The beach boy never asks for money although he mentions the lack thereof. They tell these women they would love to pay for the drinks, the disco and the movie, but that they do not have money. As the relationship proceeds, the money problem becomes a returning subject in conversations as well as unrealisable dreams such as starting an own business. Even then, the beach boy does not ask for money, he waits until the tourist offers to help him.

In interactions between female tourists and beach boys, fantasy images of "the other" play a part. For the white woman there is the idea of a black man she can see as "exotic" and there is the popular myth of "the sexual more endowed" black man. Beach boys believe foreign women perceive local men as sexually competent and uninhibited. Beach boys love to take advantage of this: "You know what they say about us black guys and it is all true". Also in the local calypso and dance hall music references hereto are made as for instance as in songs like "The Big Bamboo." Besides the stereotype of the hypersexual black Caribbean man, there is also the stereotype of the sexually emancipated white foreign woman. A white woman is seen as bolder than a black woman.

Former research in Jamaica points out that the main reason for contact between female tourists and local men can be described as the search for a romantic love relationship (Pruit and Lafont, 1995). De Albuquerque (1999) refutes this and his Barbadian research states that it is mainly a search for “sexual excitement and novelty”. Although De Albuquerque defines this form of tourism as sex tourism as sex is as the main reason for a relationship between a local man and a female tourist, he did not interview a female tourist in his research to substantiate this conclusion. Conversations during my field work made me conclude that many women see these relationships as rather romantic. Sex can play a part, however companionship is the most important issue. There are many women that did not expect or had the intention to engage in a relationship with a local man upon arrival but did engage in a relationship anyway. Most of these women stayed with the same beach boy during their entire stay on the island and do not see sex as the main aspect of their relationship. Sometimes there even is no sexual relationship. Remarkable is also that many of these local men participate in several activities with the tourists and spend the largest part of their time together.

Most women do not leave money behind upon departure and some beach boys must be happy with free food and drinks. Others receive gifts such as a watch or expensive clothes.

The approach of the beach boy concerning payment is less direct than between prostitutes from Thailand and the Philippines and male tourists. They often inform about the cost of their services right after meeting their client. Herold and al.'s (2001:992) remark in this matter is an interesting thought: “the issue of payment to the beach boy may be threatening to many female tourists as it may raise doubt about the type of relationship they are having.”

This form of romantic tourism differs from sex tourism in countries as Thailand and The Philippines, where male tourists travel in order to use the paid services of local prostitutes. These women are often forced into the sex industry (Pruit and Lafont, 1995). The relationship beach boy – female tourist is, however paid in a certain way, voluntary and “constructed through a discourse of romance and long term relationship” (Pruit and Lafont, 1995: 432). No deals are made regarding payment for a certain received service. The tourist supports her boyfriend as long as the relationship lasts, mostly during the entire stay on the island. The women spend most of their holiday with the same local man. He shows her the island and together they take part in several tourist activities. From female

prostitutes it is known they negotiate their rate after meeting their client and that the “relationship” only lasts for a few hours. The male tourist does not spend his entire holiday with the same local woman and they do not take part in tourist activities.

Local beach boys are proud of their island and show their girlfriend around with great enthusiasm. On the other hand, conversations reveal that they feel they find themselves in a hopeless situation and that if the possibility occurs, they would emigrate to Europe or North America. Many among them are trying to achieve this by starting a relationship with a female tourist.

As a consequence exploitation cannot be the case in a relationship between a beach boy and a female tourist. The beach boy decides himself who will be approached and the female tourist has the economic power. However, the beach boys are the ones that can manipulate the tourists, through their knowledge and experience, to gain financially.

The beach boys' place in society

Many young women study and build a better life for themselves. Young men are less guided in Barbadian society within the church community, school and family. Most of the time there is no male role model and they are raised in families with their mother or grandmother as the head of family. While girls are kept inside, the socialisation of boys mainly takes place on the street, while they hang around with their peers as young teenagers. They hear the conversations of older boys in their neighbourhood and learn that sexual conquests provide status. They see how tourists spend their time and they want it too. They find however that chances are not given to them and they hang around in the streets and end up more and more in the beach boy environment.

Rich youngsters from other neighbourhoods “got everything thrown in their lap”, according to the beach boys. “When you grow up in a rich family, your father will help you find a job and you will become successful yourself. When you are poor, you stay poor and you do not get any opportunities.” Rich youth and students do not know the real life. “They know nothing with their fancy degrees. They look down on us but who do they think they are? Them only Bajans just like we” (sic).

“Beach boys” do not see themselves as prostitutes that supplement their income by accompanying female tourists. They rather see themselves as entertainers and personal guides who offer a pleasant time to tourists and show them the island.

Most Bajans look down on beach boys and describe them as indecent persons that are too lazy to find honest jobs. Local women believe Bajan men are focused on sex and fundamentally untrustworthy. The beach boy is the typical example. Local women do not want them. "They are only interested in sex and can't stick to one woman. They don't support you and you don't want to be seen with them". Women marginalise them as "musty men", "scum", "ugly and smelly Rastas" and "lowlives". Because of this, while their reputation among their peers rises, beach boys see their chances of a relationship with a local woman diminish and as a consequence they become more and more drawn to tourists.

Relationships between female tourists and beach boys are that well known that many Bajans believe that every foreign woman that arrives in Barbados without the company of a man, came for more than just sun, sea and sand. They are there, according to the Bajans, only to seduce local men.

When a man and a woman are seen together without an obvious alternative, a sexual relationship between these persons is assumed. This prejudgment augments indeed the male macho status among their peers and strengthens the image of the "loose" female tourist.

Bajans think sex is the main reason why such relationships take place and that tourists pay beach boys for their services. However this is often not the case. The beach boy's food and drinks are paid; she supplies him with cigarettes and pays for his entrance fees and excursion. It is very rare that money is paid directly for sexual favours.

For the female tourist, a beach boy is not a prostitute. He is a pleasant companion that makes her feel safe and lets her have an enjoyable time on the island. Sometimes she falls in love with this young man with whom she spends the majority of her holiday. The beach boy can be seen as a mediator between cultures. He is a cultural broker that brings the tourist's and Barbadian culture closer together.

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