

**Pretty Lies, Clear skies and turquoise seas: A study of the Bahamas tourism industry  
in print advertising, 1960- 2020s.**

By

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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my Grandmother Althea Bell, may God rest her soul, my family and friends, and those who work in the Bahamian tourism industry but don't have a voice to speak out about the industry's current conditions. Special thanks to the faculty and staff of Behring Point Primary School, Central Andros High School, and the undergrad and graduate programs at Middle Tennessee State University for shaping and molding me into the young man I am today.

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## **Abstract**

The thesis examines the complex relationship between tourism development, representation, and the national identity in the Bahamas, a nation heavily reliant on tourism for economic growth. The Caribbean region has historically been recognized as one of the most tourism-intensive areas globally, particularly since the emergence of mass tourism. This study provides a critical analysis of the influence of economic dependence on the tourism sector, investigating the advantages and disadvantages associated with it. Drawing on extensive historical and contemporary sources, including print advertisements and academic discourse from 1960 to 2015, this study displays how the representation of the Bahamas in tourism advertisement has influenced the Bahamian national identity. The visual communication strategies employed by the Bahamas tourism industry, primarily through print advertisements, serve as a powerful tool in shaping the perceptions of the Caribbean as a paradise destination. By dissecting the representation of local residents in these advertisements and evaluating their impact on the community, this study offers fresh insights into the dynamics of power and identity within the Bahamian tourism landscape. The results of this study not only make a valuable contribution to the academic discourse on Caribbean tourism but also offer tangible benefits for policymakers and stakeholders who are interested in effectively managing the challenges faced by economies reliant on tourism.

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## Introduction

Tourism plays an important role in countries such as the Bahamas and other Caribbean tropical climates in modern society. Over the last few decades, the small island nation of the Bahamas has prioritized tourism as a form of economic development. However, the recent COVID-19 pandemic served as a wake-up call for the people of this country, demonstrating that, despite their independence from the British colony, slavery in the form of a neo-colonial system of dependency still reigns supreme. Local residents of these tropical countries have been forced to rely on tourism as a means of development, oblivious to the fact that they are enslaved by a system built by and for the dominant culture. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council 2019, the Caribbean was one of the world's most tourism-intensive regions, with international tourism accounting for an average of 20% of exports, 15% of GDP, and 14% of labor force participation prior to the COVID pandemic (WTTC 2019 as cited in Peterson & DiPietro, 2021). The Bahamas is the world's fifth most tourism-dependent country. The tourism industry, upon attaining a position of prominence, has been closely associated with power and prosperity; it was promoted as a mechanism for elevating the Caribbean population from impoverished conditions to a state of "development" and "modernism" (Pattullo 2005, p.6 as cited in Williams, 2012). The country has been devoted to tourism since the late nineteenth century, and its economy is overly dependent, with over 5 million visitors yearly and the industry accounting for 63% of jobs in the country (Nixon, 2011 p.1). Over the years, the Bahamas has been strategically promoted as a paradise destination with white sand beaches, clear skies, and turquoise waters, enticing many tourists to visit. Indeed, this statement is accurate; however, the real question is whether the average

working-class tourist or local resident believe in the concept of paradise as promoted in various print advertisements worldwide, including publications such as *Destination/Discover* magazine, *Travel & Country* magazine, and *Circa* magazine.

The reliance of Caribbean destinations on mass tourism has indeed resulted in an increase of foreign trade and the creation of employment opportunities. However, it has also resulted in financial leakages and a lack of local ownership within the tourism sector (Thomas, 2016). Over the years, the global elite's system of indirect power has contributed to the exacerbation of social divisions within the nation, particularly in the area of print advertising, where local individuals are continuously portrayed in a manner that is influenced by their race, class, gender, and ethnicity. Consequently, this has resulted in a distorted depiction of the Bahamian people and their collective national identity. Since 1960, the representation of black individuals from the Bahamas, whether male or female, has predominantly depicted them as servants whose role is to cater to the needs of their white masters upon their arrival. One of the central myths of Bahamian life has been the belief that we live in “paradise” (Strachan, 2002 p.1).

Print advertisements depict the Bahamas as an idyllic destination, offering a paradise-like experience to all tourists. However, the actual condition of the country remains concealed from the average visitor. Print ads and television commercials have become one of the most powerful avenues for collating and packaging information about the Bahamas and other Caribbean islands for the rest of the world to process and consider (Strachan, 2002). Strachan (2002), author of the book *Paradise and Plantation* has done extensive research on paradise discourse. The primary objective of the book was to

examine the historical, economic, political, cultural, and geographic factors that contribute to the Caribbean region being perceived as an ideal vacation destination. Furthermore, the book provides a comprehensive analysis of the origins and development of this concept. This study aims to build upon the existing body of research conducted by numerous Caribbean academic scholars, offering a dual analysis, first an historical study of tourism in the colonial and postcolonial Bahamas, and second, an analysis of eight selected print advertising promoted by the Bahamas tourism industry from 1960 to 2015, focusing on its particular modes of representations and discourses. A study of the Bahamas tourism industry with a media focus seeks to fill in some of the gaps in literature. By examining how print tourism advertisements in colonial and postcolonial periods represented the nation, we will be able to determine how this representation of Paradise influenced the Bahamian national identity. Visual communication is one the means that is utilized by the Bahamas tourism industry to compete for tourist numbers. The ministry of tourism, which is a government agency responsible for marketing the tourism industry, works to attract more visitors from all over the world by showcasing the beauty and unique culture of the country.

This research will examine the role of print advertisements in shaping our perception of the Caribbean as paradise. As stated by Stachan (2002), these advertisements are typically created by international ad agencies contracted by the local tourism ministry. This results in a depiction that does not accurately reflect the experiences of indigenous residents, but instead present a carefully constructed image of the Caribbean that is appealing to anyone on the outside looking in. This analysis aims to provide further insight into the representation of local residents by examining the manner in which

advertisements appeal to its viewers and the effects this has on the local community.

Also, we will address the issues of economic leakage, struggling small tourism enterprises and the Bahamian national identity.

## Chapter 1: History of Bahamian tourism industry

The Bahama Islands, as depicted in Figure 1, is an archipelago of islands located in the tropical West Atlantic, situated to the north of the Greater Antilles and southeast of Florida (Buchan, 2000). The land was initially inhabited by the Lucayans (island people), a group of Taino people who spoke the Arawakan language and are believed to have migrated to this region from other Caribbean and south American countries in dugout canoes.



Figure 1. Map of the commonwealth of The Bahamas. *The World Factbook 2021*. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 2021.

According to Dunn and Kelley (1989:69 as cited in Berman; Pearsall,2000), Columbus noted in his October 13<sup>th</sup> journal that the canoes of the indigenous people were crafted from a single tree trunk, resembling a long boat. These canoes were skillfully constructed with local techniques, exhibiting remarkable craftsmanship and could accommodate up to 40 or 45 individuals. The Lucayans were characterized by their peaceful nature, in contrast to other Taino groups like the Caribs, who were known for their warlike behavior. These individuals relied on the resources provided by the land and sea for their survival and engaged in reciprocal sharing practices. Their society relied on trade with neighboring tribes, while the cultivation of survival skills contributed to the flourishing of their civilization. The arrival of the first “Bahamian tourist” Christopher Columbus on his voyage from Spain on October 12,1492 marked a significant turning point in the new world. Columbus landed on the island of Guanahani, now known today as San Salvador. Upon arrival to the islands of the Bahamas, he was captivated by the abundant vegetation that he encountered (Berman & Pearsall, 2000). According to Dunn and Kelley (1989:69, as cited in Berman and Pearsall, 2000), it has been noted that on his final day in Guanahani on October 14th, Columbus once again found himself captivated by the enchanting groves of trees, expressing his belief that they were the most exquisite he had ever encountered.

The Spanish had little interest in these islands primarily due to their lack of silver or gold resources, however they did recognize the islands' potential as a valuable source of slave labor. As a result, a significant portion of the Lucayans population was relocated across the Caribbean region for the purpose of laboring in agricultural fields and mining. The archipelago of the Bahamas experienced mass depopulation and was abandoned by

the Spanish. However, scholarly articles have revealed that countries such as Spain, France, Britain, and the Netherlands had tried to reestablish a presence in the region. After the removal of the Lucayans came individuals of the African slave trade that settled in the Bahamas with their slave masters. The country went through a series of different leadership, eventually becoming a pirate's nest during the late 1600s. When Woods Rodgers arrived in 1718, he began working on establishing a British colony in Nassau then known as Charles town. Nassau went through a series of transformations, expelling pirates, strengthening its defense system and striving for economic stability. In this century, the inhabitants of the Bahamas once again had to rely on the resources provided by the land and sea for their survival. This facilitated the development of various industries, including agriculture, boat building, salt production, sisal production, wrecking, sponge harvesting, and the seafood industry. Before the advent of tourism in the Bahamas, some scholars argue that a significant portion of the black Bahamian population experienced poverty, and their quality of life was characterized by these conditions. The primary means of survival for many individuals involved fishing or farming, or both. However, the land itself posed considerable challenges, making agricultural conditions difficult (Higgs, 2015). According to Mackey (2009), after an extended period of unsuccessful agricultural pursuits spanning almost a century in the Bahamas, the British colony eventually identified its specialization in the tourism sector. There was a strong desire to develop and enhance the island's image as a tropical destination.

## **British influence on Bahamian tourism industry**

In the 1850s, the Bahamian government began actively promoting tourism by signing contracts with shipping companies and funding the construction of the first hotel, the Royal Victoria, in 1861 (Albury,1975). The establishment of the Royal Victoria and other hotels that followed along with tourist activities allowed the dominant culture to establish an environment in which they exercise complete control over the industry, while allowing Bahamian citizens, specifically black Bahamians, to work as servants as seen in the print ads since 1960 to present day. The majority of black Bahamians residing in what was formerly referred to as the outer islands, subsequently referred to as the family islands in 1970, relocated to the urban center of Nassau in pursuit of improved living conditions and employment opportunities within the tourism sector. However, it is worth noting that these individuals were completely unaware of the potential negative consequences this migration could have on their national identity. Despite facing difficulties with agriculture and fishing efforts on the out island, these individuals transitioned from self-reliance to dependence on the dominant culture. Therefore, this shift has resulted in the emergence of a generation that is solely dependent on others for their survival. The resilience exhibited by the Lucayans, who inhabited the Bahamas and sustained themselves through the utilization of natural resources, without expressing discontent towards their challenging circumstances, presents a challenge to agree with the perspectives of other scholars who assert that black Bahamians encountered significant hardships. Black Bahamian residents may have made greater effort in order to ensure their survival. However, similar to the Lucayans, they demonstrated resourcefulness by

utilizing available resources to sustain themselves, rather than having those resources taken away systematically.

### **Paradise ideology**

The idea of the Caribbean destinations being considered paradises or related to the Garden of Eden can be traced back to a long history of explorers who sought wealth and were escaping the harsh conditions of the European lifestyle. Strachan (2002) states that, “piracy made the Caribbean a thief’s paradise”. Anyone searching for an opportunity to establish wealth came to the Caribbean. According to the Bahamas tourism today, during the 1800s this was a period of construction for the Bahamian tourism industry. Peter Henry Bruce, an English military engineer dispatched to the Bahamas during the 18th century with the purpose of restoring fortifications in Nassau, is widely acknowledged for his role in the introduction of tourism to the cultural landscape of The Bahamas. Due to his profound fascination with the Bahama Islands and their climatic conditions, he proposed that the government contribute to individuals seeking a speedy recovery from illnesses.

### **American influence on the Bahamas tourism industry**

During the American Civil War, the island of New Providence saw an increase in tourism due to blockade runners and wealthy southerners seeking to exchange goods. Prior to the American Civil War, a number of acts, including the Tourism Encouragement Act of 1851, as well as a second and third act passed in 1854 and 1857, authorized the construction of hotels and the implementation of other ideas to encourage tourists to visit the Bahamas. The hotel and steamship act, however, was enacted in 1898 to promote

tourism and the development of more hotels and steamship services. In 1891, the Telegraph Act was passed, and a cable was laid between Cable Beach Nassau, and Jupiter Florida, allowing messages to be sent to the United States and England. Little happened after the end of the US civil war in 1861 and it wasn't until 1873 The Bahamas started to receive 500 tourists a year (Tourism Today, n.d.). Higgs, (2015) states that it must be mentioned that during this period it wasn't the entire Bahamas that benefitted from this industry. Nassau served as a transit point for cargo bound for European and Confederate ports. During the blockade era, those who profited from this were mostly outsiders, leaving the Black and minority class extremely poor (Higgs, 2015). Higgs (2015) further elaborated that no systematic effort was made to develop the fishing and agriculture industries because only the capital city, Nassau saw an economic boom, leaving the other family islands behind.

According to Saunder's (1990) *Bahamian Society After Emancipation* (as cited in Palmer, 1994, p.7), the early years of tourism development in the Bahamas did not contribute to a greater level of mutual understanding. Instead, exposure to so many white visitors tended to exacerbate the already deeply rooted inferiority complexes of the colored and black population.

### **Post colonial Bahamas.**

The postcolonial era of the Bahamas is a period in Bahamian history when the small island nation fought to become independent from the British empire. Many colonies gained independence and developed their own economic and political patterns from the early to late 1900s. Following World War II, multilateral lending institutions 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 (Sealy & Mouatt 2020). Despite the newfound independence in 1973, no economic restructuring was implemented. Tammy Williams' (2012) argues that after achieving independence 1973, a new form of colonialism known as neo colonization came into existence. According to the Oxford Dictionary, the term "neo-colonialism" refers to the exertion of dominance by a more influential state over the economic and political structures of another state, typically involving the control of a developed nation over a developing one. Since the emergence of tourism as an economic enterprise it has resulted in the marginalization of numerous individuals, specifically the black population in the country. The main source of income is the service industry, which includes banking, tourism, oil transshipment, cement, pharmaceuticals, salt, aragonite, and rum. According to Bound (1978) *the Bahamas tourism industry: past, present, and future*, after World War II, the Bahamian Colonial Government decided to invest its future in tourism due to the initial successes prior to the war. The government desired an all-year tourism industry rather than just a winter season. None of the native products were significant enough in terms of importance, volume, or impetus to sustain the economy above the subsistence level therefore tourism was made number one.

However, tourism did not begin to dominate the economy until the jet engine era of the 1950s and 1960s (Palmer, 1994, p.6). Many islands had to restructure their economies and societies to suit first world countries (Williams,2012). The majority of the 58 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) currently recognized by the United Nations (UN) rely heavily on international tourism from the Global North to finance their economies (Hampton & Jeyacheya, 2020). Figure 2 displays the top producing markets

for the Bahamas from 2016 to 2022. It is apparent that the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom are the three primary countries from which tourists visit the Bahamas. Marketing campaigns within these regions have continuously promoted The Bahamas as a distinct geographical concept, commonly referred to as paradise island (Moore, 2018).

| Country      | 2022    | 2021    | 2020    | 2019    | 2018    | 2017    | 2016    |
|--------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| USA          | 258,151 | 99,937  | 295,714 | 417,584 | 321,323 | 279,444 | 309,263 |
| CANADA       | 10,434  | 881     | 41,937  | 52,206  | 46,213  | 42,866  | 48,759  |
| UK           | 3,701   | 604     | 7,569   | 9,888   | 9,833   | 8,616   | 10,115  |
| FRANCE       | 1,374   | 202     | 3,922   | 6,020   | 5,124   | 4,977   | 3,750   |
| GERMANY      | 1,227   | 156     | 2,432   | 3,536   | 3,581   | 2,917   | 2,861   |
| ITALY        | 595     | 138     | 1,909   | 3,059   | 3,577   | 2,574   | 2,601   |
| BRAZIL       | 779     | 186     | 1,672   | 2,730   | 2,824   | 1,986   | 2,024   |
| ARGENTINA    | 416     | 119     | 932     | 1,534   | 2,607   | 2,527   | 2,022   |
| CHINA        | 41      | 5       | 544     | 1,453   | 1,135   | 954     | 751     |
| SWITZERLAND  | 599     | 138     | 901     | 1,412   | 1,542   | 1,462   | 1,641   |
| JAMAICA      | 770     | 323     | 1,151   | 1,293   | 1,666   | 1,408   | 1,447   |
| POLAND       | 265     | 49      | 684     | 1,191   | 1,402   | 1,160   | 1,017   |
| MEXICO       | 646     | 674     | 796     | 1,069   | 1,573   | 907     | 1,313   |
| AUSTRALIA    | 313     | 154     | 818     | 1,048   | 1,087   | 1,076   | 1,264   |
| SPAIN        | 411     | 123     | 598     | 871     | 1,218   | 766     | 839     |
| NETHERLANDS  | 413     | 123     | 593     | 842     | 626     | 657     | 637     |
| ROMANIA      | 115     | 36      | 545     | 762     | 1,209   | 353     | 560     |
| RUSSIA       | 125     | 79      | 477     | 710     | 753     | 524     | 397     |
| SWEDEN       | 243     | 35      | 379     | 671     | 892     | 828     | 812     |
| SOUTH AFRICA | 377     | 434     | 513     | 640     | 590     | 439     | 562     |
| PHILIPPINES  | 215     | 121     | 296     | 622     | 1,239   | 325     | 269     |
| INDIA        | 145     | 35      | 271     | 591     | 635     | 209     | 193     |
| AUSTRIA      | 169     | 30      | 391     | 564     | 634     | 527     | 537     |
| NORWAY       | 150     | 23      | 340     | 563     | 444     | 316     | 420     |
| CHILE        | 282     | 128     | 354     | 556     | 700     | 492     | 691     |
| COLOMBIA     | 326     | 177     | 639     | 537     | 827     | 493     | 652     |
| DENMARK      | 160     | 35      | 373     | 528     | 534     | 416     | 403     |
| HAITI        | 43      | 12      | 58      | 521     | 195     | 330     | 392     |
| Other        | 3,978   | 1,563   | 8,133   | 11,513  | 14,839  | 9,738   | 10,459  |
| Total        | 286,463 | 106,520 | 374,941 | 524,514 | 428,822 | 369,287 | 406,651 |

Source: Dept. of Immigration, Port Authority, Customs and Bahamas Ministry of Tourism Research & Statistics Dept.

Places and street names constantly remind Bahamians and tourists of the British presence; Parliament Street, Elizabeth Street, Elizabeth Estates, the Princess Margaret Hospital, and the British Colonial Hotel are just a few examples (Palmer,1994, p.15).

According to Bosworth et al. (2008), racism is still very much alive in this day and age, and globalization may be a contributing factor. Globalization, according to Surugiu and Surugiu (2015), is the driving force behind current international integration and global economic growth, resulting in increased interdependence between countries.

### **Bahamian politics and economy**

Sir Stafford Sands, a prominent figure widely recognized for his significant contributions to the tourism sector in the Bahamas, advocated for the expansion and diversification of various industries within the country. His efforts were intended to encourage the growth of a sovereign nation separate from its colonial ties with Great Britain. However, he received significant backlash from the Bahamian public (particularly black Bahamians) when his tourism promotion campaign only landed one visitor, as reported in news outlets around the world. This visitor was Hjalmar Schacht, Adolf Hitler's banking genius who helped Germany rebuild and wage global war. The intentions of Sir Stafford Sands were unknown by the Bahamian public, leading to a sense of uncertainty among numerous Bahamians, particularly those of African descent, prompting them to question the stability of their socioeconomic circumstances. The strategy formulated by Sir Stafford Sands and Hjalmar Schacht in 1962 continues to be used by the current Bahamian government. Sands and the Bay Street Boys, the Bahamas' ruling minority white elite class at the time, were enthusiastic about banking, offshore laundering, gambling, casinos, major land investment, and big business (Bahamianologist, 2017). The Bahamas that exists today is a direct result of the islands for sale campaign that began in the 1800s (Bahamianologist, 2017).

However, the plan to become a developed nation was disrupted when the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) won the 1967 general election. The “Bay Street boys” wanted the British out however the British perceived the presence of a discontented black population and the emergence of the Progressive Liberal Party as favorable circumstances to intervene and impede prospective developmental initiatives within the country. This was done to ensure that Bahamians would continue to be dependent on the British for survival. For the first time, a majority black political party held power, allowing the British to retake control. On July 10, 1973, the Bahamas gained independence and became a constitutional monarchy, which meant that King Charles III remains the head of state. So, the question remained: was the Bahamas truly a free and sovereign nation? Since the adoption of tourism as a business model for economic development, many people have found themselves to be second-class citizens in their own country. To this day, the majority of average black Bahamians work in the tourism or banking industries after independence in 1973. As a result, The Bahamas’ economy has evolved into one in which the majority black population can only meet the needs of wealthy tourists who visit our shores. What television commercials and print advertisements fail to show is that tourists who travel for leisure and cultural experiences are frequently kept apart from the local population, and that not everyone is entitled to the concept of paradise (Strachan, 2002). Several scholars, including Albury (1975), Bounds (1978), MacKey (2009), Nellis (2009), Pattullo (2005), Ramsaran (1979), Saunders (1997), Strachan (2002), and Williams (2012), have addressed the issue of tourism, examining it through the lenses of globalization, colonialism, postcolonialism, neocolonialism and cultural identity.

## **Bahamian race & class issue**

According to the World Factbook (2023), the Bahamas currently has a total population of 358,508 residents. The majority of the population resides in urban areas, with approximately two-thirds residing specifically on New Providence Island (Nassau). The overall population is comprised of 90% persons of African descent, 5% individuals of white ethnicity, 3% individuals of mixed race, and 2% individuals of other or unspecified ethnic backgrounds. Our current societal context is characterized by a historical period in which individuals of African descent were regarded as property and subjected to slavery, and where the achievement of equality remains an ongoing challenge. The phenomenon of tourism has facilitated the free flow of individuals from the dominant culture to various nations, enabling them to exploit the resources and economies of developing nations. Figure 3 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics, household income, and fundamental details pertaining to tourist travel activities in the Bahamas. The data collected from the period 2018-2019 reveals that a majority of tourists visiting the Bahamas, specifically 85%, were identified as individuals of Caucasian descent. Furthermore, it was observed that these visitors had an annual household income ranging from \$150,000 to \$250,000, constituting approximately 19% of the total. It is widely acknowledged that most black individuals in the Bahamas exhibit a tendency to favor employment opportunities with white employers, as opposed to pursuing self-employment or working for other black Bahamians.

|                                    | 2019 | 2018 |                           |         |         |
|------------------------------------|------|------|---------------------------|---------|---------|
| MAIN PURPOSE OF VISIT              |      |      | EDUCATION                 |         |         |
| Vacation                           | 75%  | 75%  | College Graduate or Above | 72%     | 71%     |
| Honeymoon                          | 5%   | 6%   |                           | 2019    | 2018    |
| Visiting friends and relatives     | 3%   | 3%   | ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME   |         |         |
| Business                           | 5%   | 5%   | \$25,001 to \$50,000      | 5%      | 5%      |
| DECISION TO VISIT INFLUENCED BY:   |      |      | \$50,001 to \$75,000      | 8%      | 9%      |
| Beaches                            | 69%  | 68%  | \$75,001 to \$100,000     | 10%     | 11%     |
| Climate                            | 56%  | 53%  | \$100,001 to \$125,000    | 9%      | 9%      |
| Rest and Relaxation                | 47%  | 46%  | \$125,001 to \$150,000    | 10%     | 8%      |
| ACTIVITIES VISITORS INTENDED TO DO |      |      | \$150,001 to \$250,000    | 19%     | 19%     |
| Enjoy Beaches                      | 86%  | 86%  | \$250,001 and over        | 15%     | 14%     |
| Rest and Relax                     | 74%  | 73%  | PREVIOUS VISITS           |         |         |
| Go Snorkeling                      | 31%  | 34%  | First Time Visitor        | 41%     | 42%     |
| Shop                               | 26%  | 26%  | Repeat Visitor            | 58%     | 56%     |
| Go To Casinos                      | 20%  | 20%  | TRAVELLING PARTY SIZE One |         |         |
| Go on Island Tour                  | 19%  | 19%  | Two                       | 16%     | 18%     |
| LIKELY RETURN IN 1-5 YEARS         | 86%  | 86%  | Three or more             | 47%     | 48%     |
| LIKELY RECOMMEND TO FRIENDS/REL    | 94%  | 94%  | HOUSEHOLD SIZE One        |         |         |
| USED ONLINE SERVICE TO BOOK        | 78%  | 80%  | Two                       | 10%     | 12%     |
| USED TRAVEL AGENT                  | 28%  | 30%  | Three-Four                | 43%     | 43%     |
| AGE*                               |      |      | Three-Four                | 33%     | 32%     |
| 25 - 54 years old                  | 50%  | 49%  | COUNTRY OF ORIGIN         |         |         |
| 55 years old or older              | 22%  | 23%  | USA                       | 82%     | 80%     |
| SEX*                               |      |      | Canada                    | 7%      | 8%      |
| Male                               | 46%  | 47%  | Europe                    | 7%      | 8%      |
| Female                             | 47%  | 47%  | Other Countries           | 4%      | 5%      |
| RACE                               |      |      | AVERAGE LENGTH OF STAY    | 6.4 nts | 6.7 nts |
| White                              | 83%  | 85%  |                           |         |         |
| Black                              | 4%   | 3%   |                           |         |         |
| Hispanic                           | 4%   | 4%   |                           |         |         |
| Mixed Race/Mixed Heritage          | 2%   | 2%   |                           |         |         |
| Asian/Pacific Islander             | 3%   | 3%   |                           |         |         |
| American Indian/Alaska Native      | 0%   | 0%   |                           |         |         |
| Other                              | 0%   | 0%   |                           |         |         |

Figure 3

Source: Dept. of Immigration, Port Authority, Customs and Bahamas Ministry of Tourism Research & Statistics Dept.

The prevalence of these tourism related issues in countries such as the Bahamas can be linked to the lack knowledge and comprehension of certain tourists' visitors. The black community faces numerous challenges in today's society in which most individuals lack a comprehensive understanding or firsthand experience of the consequences stemming from the implementation of the dominant cultures' concept of the contemporary plantation system. According to the article *Caribbean Commodity: The Marketing and Consumption of Black Bahamian Female Identity* by Dellareese Higgs, With the development of tourism, the Bahamas, like the rest of the Caribbean, needed to create a brand that would sell the islands and attract tourists' dollars. As a result, the Bahamas is marketed to visiting tourists as a destination where white tourists are able to

participate in relaxation on the beautiful beaches, while black Bahamians catered to their various needs. Walcott (1974, p.9) associates this packaged paradise with an extension of the colonial plantation.

Tourism reinforced the social superiority of whites, promoted the subordination and servitude of blacks, and nourished white prejudice and narcissism. The exclusion of Black people from hotels and beaches frequented by whites is only one example of how tourism has exacerbated class distinctions and social elitism (Strachan, 2002, p.10 as cited in Nellis 2009).

The issue of tourism as the predominant industry in many majority-black third-world countries brings forth a complex set of challenges. While tourism can stimulate economic growth and provide job opportunities, it also creates a range of problems for residents. One major concern is the economic disparity that arises within these regions. The majority of businesses are directly tied to the tourism industry, which often results in lower wages, making it difficult for locals to afford the rising costs of living. As the tourism industry expands, there is an influx of expensive short-term lodging for tourists and increased urban development. This has led to gentrification and displacement of local residents, further exacerbating the economic divide. The result is a situation where the very people who support the tourism industry through their labor are being marginalized and treated as second class citizens. Addressing race, class, and gender issues within the context of the tourism industry is also important. By examining the practices, policies, and impacts of the industry, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of how racial dynamics play out in the global economic sector. Furthermore, there is a significant lack of awareness regarding the inner workings of the tourism industry. Many people are unaware of the challenges faced by the local community residents, particularly in black

third-world countries. By shedding light on these issues through research and advocacy, it is possible to mobilize public awareness and support for more equitable and sustainable tourism practices.

## Chapter 2: Literature review

Tammy William discusses in her analysis of “*Tourism as a Neocolonial Phenomenon: Examining the Works of Pattullo & Mullings*” that many of the tourism industry's problems stem from slavery and colonialism. The tourism industry in the Caribbean employs over 800,000 people directly and generates over 35.5 billion dollars annually in revenue (Caribbean Tourism Organization, 2018). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC, 2016) ranks the Caribbean as the most tourism-dependent region relative to the contribution of travel and tourism to gross domestic product (GDP) (Mackay & Spencer, 2017). Recent study has shown that the people who work in the tourism industry are working in a system that is controlled by both the government & the tourists (Cartwright, 2022). A modern tourist visiting The Bahamas is not only visiting a country that is culturally, socially, and environmentally distinct, but also a country that evokes images of a colonial past (Palmer, 1994). Tourism today is an example of neo colonial control because it is the weight of social expectation for Bahamian people to embody and support a fictitious Caribbean (Cartwright, 2022).

This study aims to investigate the portrayal of the Bahamas by its tourism industry in print advertisements and analyzes the responses of both residents and tourists towards this form of representation. Surprisingly, few academic scholars have researched the impact of print and digital advertising on the tourism industry. As a result, the majority of scholarly literature pertaining to Bahamian tourism industry has centered its attention on topics such as slavery, colonialism, postcolonialism, neocolonialism, capitalism,

globalization, and imperialism. Previous scholarly work has extensively examined the impact of the tourism industry on our cultural identity; however, a definitive understanding of the specific factors that have predominantly contributed to this loss of identity remains unclear. The Bahamas has long been a popular tourist destination, according to previous scholarly articles.

Besides the physical proximity to the richest and one of the largest countries in the world, the natural features of the archipelago make it ideal for the kind of activities associated with tourism, and these were recognized even before the advent of the Second World War, though it might be pointed out that the earliest reputation of the country was as a health rather than a pleasure resort (Ramsaran,1979).

Destinations that once relied on their colonial rulers now depend on these same countries for tourists and multinational corporations to supply and manage tourist facilities (Palmer,1994 p.14). As a result, international ad agencies produce print and digital advertisements for our country that sometimes depict inaccurate images of the Bahamas and the rest of the Caribbean. Also, while there are some locally owned and operated hotels, external players (Nellis 2009 p.28) dominate the majority of the Caribbean's tourism industry. According to Gmelch (2003) *Behind the Smiles* as cited by Williams (2012), on average, the Caribbean loses seventy cents for every dollar earned in foreign exchange.

Tourism promotes the image of a country whose history "labels" it as more British than anything else, which defines the local people (Palmer,1994 p.18). Caribbean people are prone to setting their living standards goals in accordance with the media in the United States (KLAK, 1998 p.11). In order for us to comprehend the effects of tourism in conveying an inaccurate image of Bahamian culture, it is important to examine a variety

of scholarly literature articles, along with print promotional materials used by the Bahamian tourism sector. This analysis will facilitate an evaluation of the influence generated by these factors on our cultural environment. The government controls how our image is broadcast across the world and has chosen the slogan “IT’S BETTER IN THE BAHAMAS” (Cartwright, 2022). Tourism is relegated to the commercial identification as an "invisible export" which refers to a service provided by one country to another in lieu of a material transfer (Bounds,1978). Due to the mainstream media's portrayal of Caribbean living, tourists come to the Bahamas anticipating a very specific type of experience, expecting the entire Bahamas to be a haven of escape rather than just a separate reality from their own (Cartwright, 2022).

With the expected decline in tourism earnings wreaking havoc on tourism-dependent economies, some argue that there is an urgent need to rebuild more sustainable economies and societies “beyond tourism” (Thompson, 2020 as cited in Sheller, 2021). While the above studies provide valuable information regarding some of the factors that contributed to the current conditions of the tourism industry. Further research into how Bahamian culture has been packaged and sold to the rest of the world through print and digital advertising over the years will help us understand the industry's impact and where it is headed in the near future.

Previous studies have found that while many Bahamian people, including workers in the tourist and culture industries and artists, acknowledge the powerful role of tourism in shaping their identity and national culture, they have different strategies of negotiating tourism depending on their relationship to the tourist industry. Bahamian writers, those who are financially independent from the tourist industry yet deeply concerned about tourism, directly challenge tourism’s influence on Bahamian culture and identity by exposing tourism’s power in the country and the region (Nixon, 2011)

In 2008, the Ministry of Tourism & Aviation conducted a survey among the general public of New Providence. The survey was specifically designed to collect data pertaining to a variety of issues, including tourism and media habits, with the objective of obtaining insight from the local residents of the Bahamas. This survey included an equal number of gender demographics, with 47% male and 53% female participants. The largest proportion of participants fell within the age range of 30 to 49 years, representing 42% of the total respondents. A total of 35% of the participants were below the age of 30, with the remaining 22% within the category of 50 years and above. Approximately 97% of the participants successfully attained a high school education or higher, 21% successfully attained a college or university degree, while 16% pursued education in technical or vocational schools. When examining income levels, slightly over half of the individuals surveyed (52%) reported an annual salary ranging from \$15,000 to less than \$30,000. Over half of the participants (52%) were employed within the tourism sector. These participants identified the following as their primary occupations: bus/taxi driver (8%), "maid/housekeeping" (6%), and sales/store clerk (6%). Among all the participants the majority of respondents (77%) expressed the belief that the Government's efforts to provide Bahamians with the necessary skills to replace foreign or expatriate workers in the tourism sector was insufficient. The majority of the interviewees, approximately 61%, expressed the opinion that the tourism industry does not adequately incorporate Bahamian food, music, and other products or services. The survey data collected relates to a variety of concerns within the tourism sector in the Bahamas. However, there has been an absence of general public surveys conducted for the entire Bahamas since 2008 to evaluate the contemporary opinions of Bahamians regarding the tourism industry.

The first labor force survey since November 2019 was conducted by the Bahamas National Statistical Institute in May 2023, including the following islands: New Providence, Grand Bahama, Abaco, Bimini, North Eleuthera, Long Island, and San Salvador. In May 2023, the total labor force in the country stood at 219,465, the unemployment rate in the Bahamas experienced a decrease to 8.8%, as opposed to the 9.5% recorded in May 2019 (The Bahamas National Statistical Institute, 2023). This decline in unemployment was accompanied by a steady rise in labor force participation. Figure 4 below displays the unemployment rate by age group in the Bahamas as of May 2023. The Caribbean Development Bank has reported that the level of youth unemployment in the Caribbean region ranks among the highest worldwide. The unemployment rate among young males aged 15 to 24 in the Bahamas was estimated at 19.2%, while young females in the same age group have experienced an unemployment rate of 18.2%.

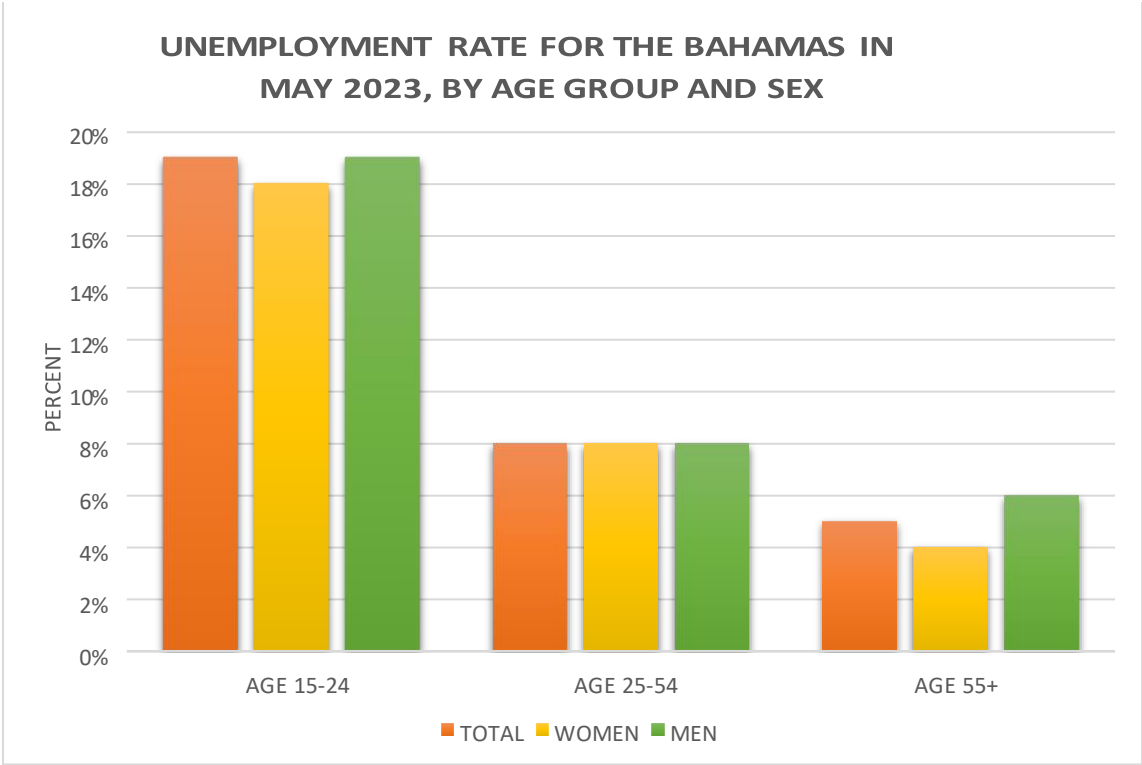


Figure 4.

Source: The Bahamas National Statistical Institute (2023).

### **Chapter 3: Theoretical context and methodology**

To develop a theoretical framework for studying historical developments and constructions of tourism in political discourse, media literature, and Bahamians' perceptions of the role of the tourism industry, this thesis will draw on cultural and media studies scholarship, particularly Antonio Gramsci's (1971) writings on 'hegemony', Franz Fanon (1961), *The Wretched on the Earth*, Paul Gilroy (1993), *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double-Consciousness*, Stuart Hall's (1997) Neo-Marxist formulations and especially the concepts of stereotyping, discourse, constructions and media representation. The concept of 'hegemony' developed by Antonio Gramsci will be used to investigate how the Bahamian and foreign elites deployed a set of ideologies as commonsense to maintain control of the Bahamian natural resources through the discourses of the tourism industry. Gilroy and Hall's Neo-Marxist formulations will be used to investigate further the effects of capitalism on labor, productivity, and economic growth. Drawing on Fanon's (1961), *The Wretched on the Earth*, chapter three ('The Pitfalls of National Consciousness'), the thesis will examine how the national bourgeoisie is responsible for a shared sense of national identity in The Bahamas.

#### **Hegemony**

Gramsci's theory of cultural hegemony addresses the relationship between culture and power under capitalism (Lears, 1985). Hegemony can be described in modern society as the ruling capitalist class use of indirect power to maintain control over capitalist societies. Scholars argue that Gramsci's translated writings contain no precise definition of cultural hegemony and to rely on a single definition is misleading. A comprehensive

understanding of cultural hegemony requires an analysis of both historical and intellectual frameworks. Lears (1985), states that the concept of cultural hegemony has little meaning unless paired with the notion of domination. As it relates to the Bahamas tourism industry it has been dominated by foreign ownership since the start of the islands for sale campaign that began from the 1800s. By examining Gramsci's discourse on hegemony, it is made possible to determine the ways in which the tourism industry has facilitated the dominant class in exerting control over Bahamian society.

### **Media representations of Bahamian culture**

The image in which the black local resident of the Bahamas is portrayed is always in a servant like manner. Stuart Hall uses the concept of representation as a means of examining the relationship between race and the media (Campbell, 2016). Advertising in the Bahamas is the work of foreign advertising firms hired by the local tourist ministries which contains scenes that middle class Americans and Europeans want to see of the islands as they are homogenously known (Strachan, 2002). The idea is to provide exceptional services in paradise to these individuals of the dominant class to sustain themselves. Tourists expect a certain experience in the Bahamas due to mainstream media portrayal of Caribbean life, they expect the Bahamas to be a complete escape from their reality not realizing that the weight of those expectations fall on the local resident (Cartwright, 2022).

Fanon (1961) *The Wretched on the Earth* explores the psychological effects of colonization and the struggle for liberation for individuals of the African diaspora. He discusses topics like decolonization, resistance and the impact of oppression on black

cultures. Cartwright (2022) states that through Fanon's writing on race she developed a critical lens to view the tourism of the Bahamas. As stated:

The Bahamian people are trying to please the tourist who wants an escape from home, but in a place still similar enough that they don't feel discomfort. In an effort to create this fictional cultural performance for tourists, the Bahamian people then mask some of their Bahamian-ness (Cartwright, 2022)

### **Stereotypes within the Bahamian culture**

Bahamian culture can be described as vibrant and diverse. The Bahamas is known for its beautiful beaches, Bahamian music, food and warm hospitality. However, these stereotypes do not capture the full richness of the culture. Palmer (1994) states that the least recognized aspect of colonialism is its impact on the creation of stereotyped ethnic and cultural images, which form the basis of the contemporary tourist's experience of the Caribbean. She further elaborates on how academic scholars have emphasized how colonizers shaped the host community's cultural heritage to reflect their own values which in turn produce the stereotyped images that are currently being presented for the consumption of the tourist.

### **Paradise Constructions**

The development of luxury resorts, private residence and infrastructures to enhance the tourism industry seems to be the main goal of the Bahamas ministry of tourism today. However, while development can bring in more opportunities, there is also the concern of preserving the natural beauty and ecosystem of the country. Palmer (1994) states that a modern tourist visiting the Bahamas is not only visiting a country that is culturally, socially, and environmentally distinct, but also a country that evokes images of

a colonial past. These visual representations contribute to the formation of the concept of paradise by removing the presence of local history.

## **Methodology**

The thesis is organized in terms of two parts: 1) examine historical literature and materials on tourism and tourism industry in the colonial and postcolonial periods of the Bahamas by studying primary sources such as political documents, legislative papers, legal and policy papers, secondary sources comprise of: scholarly studies on colonial and postcolonial Bahamas, trade publications, and popular literature, etc. 2) discourse analysis of select print and digital advertisements from colonial and postcolonial periods, tracking particular representations and discourses in terms of linguistic tropes employed to depict the country as a ‘paradise’ with ‘clear skies’, and ‘turquoise sea.’ The underlying task is to examine the specific ways on which The Bahamas’ national and cultural identity is constructed, the ways in which representations of race, class, and gender are constructed in historical discourse and operate in the advertisements. The following three broad research questions frame the thesis:

- What are the colonial and postcolonial discourses of tourism in The Bahamas?
- How has print advertisements for tourism in colonial and postcolonial periods represented the nation, race, class, and gender from 1960 to present day?
- In what ways has representation in tourism advertising influenced the Bahamian national identity?

Examining colonial and postcolonial tourism discourses on The Bahamas will allow me to discover what areas have already been covered and contribute to any gaps found within the literature. Observing how tourism advertisements represented the country will help us and other scholars understand how international advertising agencies package and sell the idea of vacationing in the Bahamas to the rest of the world, and its impact on Bahamian society and the tourist experience. Given that many tourism advertisements are created by foreign advertising firms in ‘collaboration’ with the Bahamian elites, the ways in which these advertisements have represented the country will shed light on the dominant discourses and politics of representation.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### Print advertising for the Bahamas tourism industry

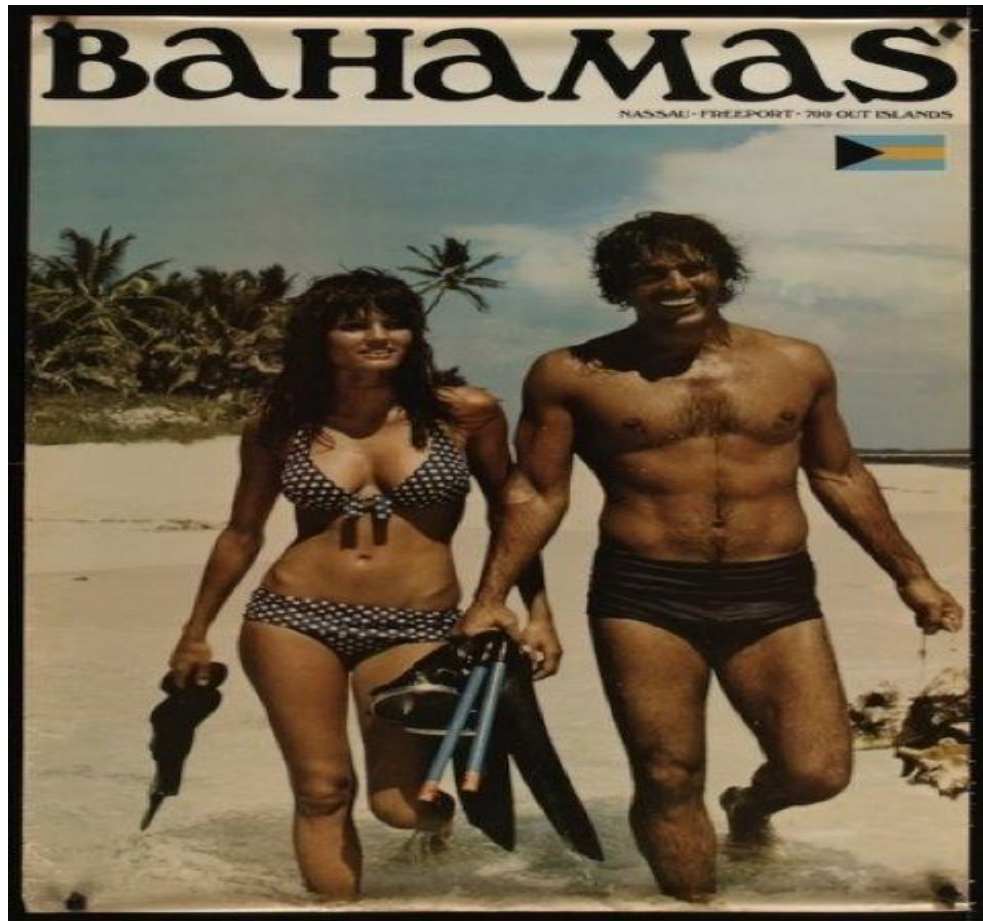
For this study a total of eight print ads of the Bahamas tourism industry was selected from 1960 to 2015. This date range was selected due to the fact that industry now focuses more on digital advertising due to the modern boom in social media platforms, which is another area that can be further examined to understand the effects of these ads on the consumer world. Furthermore, these advertisements are being marketed and sold on popular online platforms such as eBay and Pinterest, under the guise of being vintage advertisement. The prices for these Ads vary, typically ranging from ten to thirty dollars. These visual representations depict a narrative of Bahamian culture that remains absent from scholarly discourse. These images truly reflect a thousand words, displaying the struggle of the Black Bahamian residents through the evolution of a tourism based national identity and continued colonial presences even after self-independence. The observation of these visual representations raises concerns regarding the identity of Bahamians, specifically the black Bahamians seen in the ads. According to activist Erin Greene, “At this point in 2021, the national identity is tied to tourism, tourism defines the people in the Bahamas” (Winter, 2021). The following advertisements have been given detailed titles that explain the visual content from a resident’s perspective. The lack of full detail not being provided by the sellers of these vintage advertisements makes it difficult to identify which publications are responsible for these ads. However, for the purpose of examining these ads we know for sure that these may be the best of their time, given their current market value.

### **1960 Nassau, Bahamas Tourist walking on the beach original vintage advertisement.**

The image depicted in advertisement 1 showcases a scene where a Caucasian couple is seen strolling along the beach, presumably after a day's snorkeling excursion in search of conch shells. The white male individual is observed carrying the conch shells in his hands. Both individuals exhibit big smiles, prompting speculation that they are enjoying the paradise setting. It can be concluded that both individuals are content with their immersion in Bahamian culture, although this assumption is made automatically. The rationale behind the tourist's practice of personally diving for conch shells may be perplexing to observers, as it is often the case that these individuals lack the knowledge and skills required to properly prepare a Bahamian delicacy from the harvested conch. Nevertheless, the advertisement's message appears to target not only tourists but also individuals who are permanent residents of the country. These individuals, who are frequently regarded as wealthy by the local population solely on the basis of their external appearance, are highly respected due to their economic status.

While it is possible for tourists to engage in their own scuba diving activities, it is important to note that the image presented lacks representation of the local residents who play a crucial role in facilitating those services for individuals at the beginning and end of each day. The image showcases individuals of privileged socioeconomic backgrounds who, by virtue of their economic standing, are able to acquire and possess land within the country which disproportionately benefits the lower class. The visual representations depicted can also be characterized as sexualized. On one side, there is a physically strong Caucasian male, accompanied by a slender Caucasian female model exhibiting petite

physical characteristics. This visual displays an image of the dominant culture that is only be imagined by local residents. The concept of hegemony can be seen through the portrayal of the Bahamas as a tropical paradise. This representation reinforces the dominant narrative and power dynamics, where certain ideas and images are promoted while others are marginalized. In this image, the presence of a comprador bourgeois is not depicted. However, this advertisement can potentially influence foreign investment into the local economy. The image may not provide direct evidence of the concept of double consciousness as defined by Frantz Fanon, as the internal experiences of the individuals depicted cannot be determined. Nevertheless, it is crucial to acknowledge that the portrayal of the Bahamas as a tourist destination has played a role in shaping specific expectations and stereotypes and it is extremely important to promote a more nuanced understanding of Bahamian culture so that residents can define and express their own identities.



**This late sixties Bahamas travel poster is just for eye-candy! The Bahamas has been a top travel destination for as long as travel has existed, attracting beautiful bodies from around the world!**

Advertisement 1

### **1966 Bahamas tourism advertisement, tourist on a dingy boat ad.**

The advertisement featuring a tourist on a dingy boat (advertisement 2) further explains the concept discussed in advertisement 1 regarding the tourist's engagement with Bahamian culture. In advertisement 2, a local resident is depicted operating a dingy boat, while individuals from the dominant culture are observed comfortably occupying the front of the boat and engaging in swimming activities in the serene turquoise water. The black individual depicted in the image could potentially be the specific local resident who supplied the conch and offered assistance to the tourist in the previous advertisement. The individual in question isn't given any other recognition other than being portrayed as a servant within the industry. The visual depiction presented in this image may convey an inaccurate portrayal to individuals observing it from the outside. However, when taking into consideration the historical context of this advertisement, we gather a better understanding of the challenges faced by the Black race during the 1960s. There still remains a recurrent idea of local residents being represented in the media as servants catering to the white class.

The caption on this image states "This year, frolic in Bahamian waters. They will not let you down." The oxford dictionary describes frolicking as to play with someone in a flirtatious or sexual way. After careful examination of the depicted image, it is evident that the intended message of this advertisement can be interpreted in numerous ways. This advertisement may be interpreted as sexualized, as it features a shirtless local Bahamian man of African descent showcasing his muscular physique to two white women wearing bikinis, while their respective partners engage in swimming activities

nearby. It is well-known that both women and men, specifically those of Caucasian descent, engage in travel to the Bahamas and other Caribbean countries with the purpose of exploring the local sex culture. While many individuals find pleasure in the concept of paradise, others tend to seek more from the local culture. In this advertisement we can see elements that relate to the concept of hegemony. Again, we see the representation of the Bahamas as a tropical paradise destination. However, based on the race, sex, gender and ethnicity of the individuals being portrayed in this advertisement, the idea of paradise only exists for the dominate culture. The local resident continues to be represented as the servant.



One clear reason for vacationing in the Bahamas. Photograph by Ozzie Sweet.

**This year, frolic in Bahamian waters.  
They won't let you down.**

The seas that lap the beaches of the Bahama Islands are remarkably buoyant and calm. Plunge in and you'll soon feel the same.

The sun is perennially benign. The trade breezes are soothing. The atmosphere is both foreign and friendly. At night, you can go "over the hill" to be beguiled until dawn by native rhythms and dancing. A holiday in Nassau and the Bahamas asks only that you enjoy yourself.

Nassau, gateway to the beautiful Bahamas, is just 2 1/2 air hours or a weekend cruise from Manhattan. Just 30 minutes by air or an overnight sail from Miami.

Hotel rates are as much as one third lower now through Fall! Mail the coupon today...see your Travel Agent tomorrow.

**BY SEA:** From New York—The S.S. Oceanic sails Sat. at 4 P.M. 7-day cruises (2 days and a night in Nassau) from \$190. Home Lines, 42 Broadway, New York, N.Y. ... **From Miami**—The S.S. Bahama Star sails each Mon. and Fri. at 8:45 P.M. 3-day weekend cruises (2 days and a night in Nassau) from \$59. 4-day cruises from \$69. Eastern Steamship Lines, Miami, Fla. **BY AIR:** Direct service from New York, Miami and other principal Florida cities, Toronto and Montreal. **No passport or visa** needed for U.S. and Canadian citizens; some proof of citizenship recommended.

BAHAMAS MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
1701 First National Bank Building  
Miami, Florida 33131

Please send free vacation literature to:

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Resort Islands of the  Bahamas

## Advertisement 2.

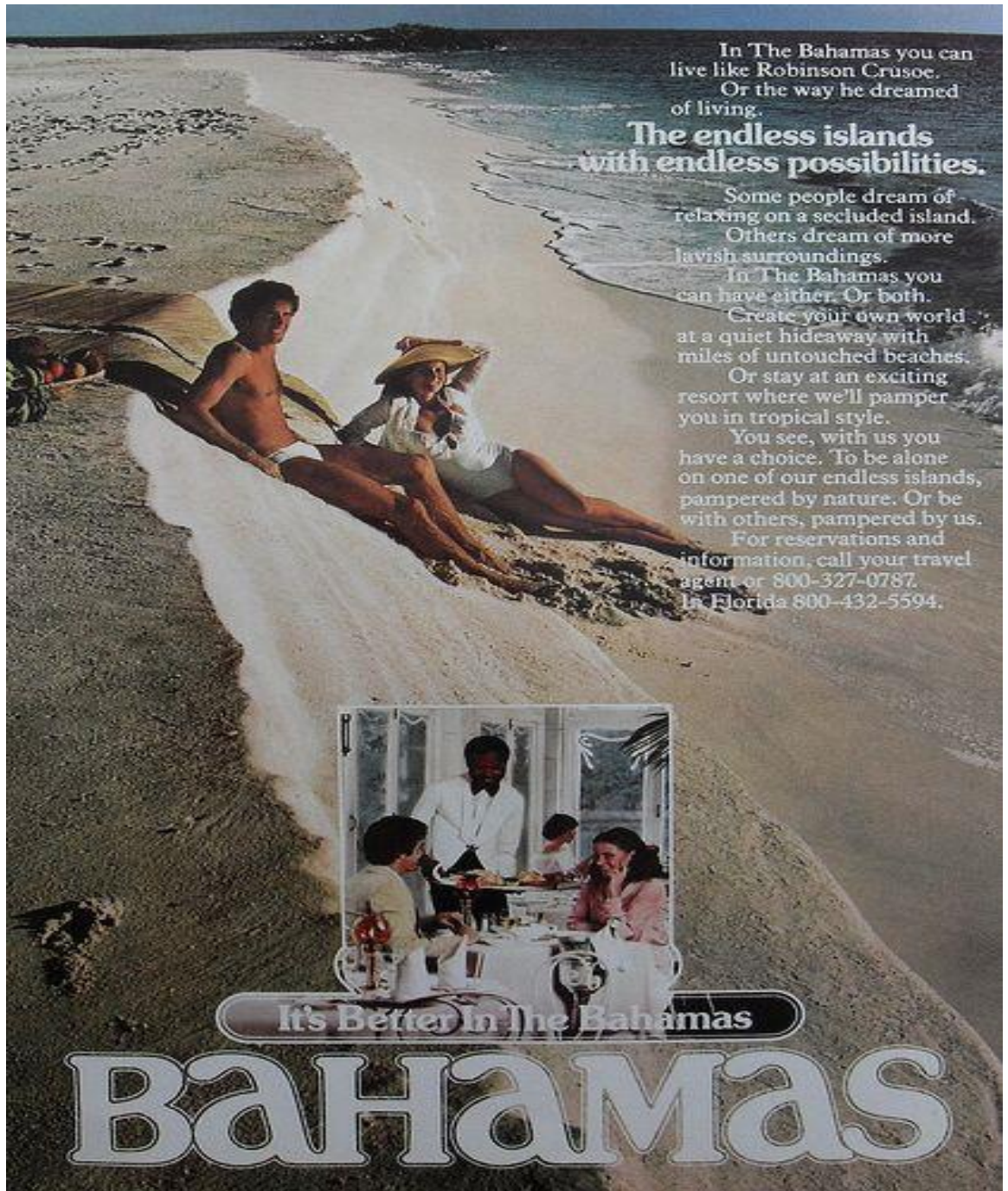
### **1970s BAHAMAS Tourist Vintage Advertisement Man and Woman in Swimsuit**

Fast forward ten years later, this 1970s man and woman in a swimsuit advertisement (advertisement 3). We see an image that displays a white couple on the beach on one of the Bahama islands, however centered in the middle of the page is the image of local black Bahamian resident serving two white tourists. The ads states at the top of the page “In the Bahamas you can live like Robinson Crusoe. However, the question still remains who gets to live like Robinson Cruso, is it the couple relaxing on the beach being served or the local waiter providing the services in the image below. Depending on the individual looking at this this image one would assume life is amazing for everyone. Sitting on the beach in the back of the tourist looks like fresh fruits laying on the sand, further indicating the fresh tropical lifestyle one can enjoy. Again, we see a sexualized image of the tourist making it seem as though nudity displays relaxations in paradise. The viewer’s eyes are automatically projected to see the tourist lying down on the beach. The smaller image in the center seems to have some form of flow with the background image. One would imagine relaxing on the beach with their significant other and after a long day of sunbathing and activities they enjoy dining at a local restaurant.

The advertisement portrays a recurring depiction of the local resident providing service to white tourists. On this occasion, he appears in formal attire consisting of a suit and bow tie, and his demeanor displays a happy expression. Given the nature of tourism as a service-oriented industry, it is imperative for this local resident to consistently deliver exceptional service to ensure a satisfactory income that will sustain their family.

The small body of information presented illustrates the efforts made by our country to promote ourselves excessively to the global community. The product includes various elements such as a pristine white sand beach, clear turquoise water, and clear blue skies. Additionally, it incorporates the presence and contributions of the local residents who are responsible for providing these services. “Some people dream of relaxing on a secluded island” This statement demonstrates the mentality often linked to individuals who hold positions of privileged power. As it relates to the local residents no one ever dreams of relaxing on a secluded island because they already are, yet still struggle as working-class citizens. “Create your own world at a quiet hideaway with miles of untouched beaches.” The government has privatized these beaches, therefore prohibiting local residents from accessing them. Upon analyzing these visual representations, it becomes evident that the advantages of tourism are predominantly enjoyed by a particular socioeconomic group.

The presence of hegemony is evident in these advertisements, since it heavily emphasizes the idea of paradise and consistently depicts the dominant culture indulging in leisure activities within this idyllic setting. Again, we see individuals of the white race enjoying paradise while the black local resident is seen providing the services. Double consciousness, as described by W.E.B. Du Bois, refers to the internal conflict and awareness of belonging to multiple social identities. In this context, we can interpret the presence of both the tourist and the local Bahamian in the image as representing different perspectives and experiences. The tourist may view the country as paradise, while the local Bahamian may have a more nuanced understanding of their own culture and challenges, they face.



In The Bahamas you can live like Robinson Crusoe. Or the way he dreamed of living.

**The endless islands with endless possibilities.**


Some people dream of relaxing on a secluded island. Others dream of more lavish surroundings.

In The Bahamas you can have either. Or both.

Create your own world at a quiet hideaway with miles of untouched beaches. Or stay at an exciting resort where we'll pamper you in tropical style.

You see, with us you have a choice. To be alone on one of our endless islands, pampered by nature. Or be with others, pampered by us.

For reservations and information, call your travel agent or 800-327-0787. In Florida 800-432-5594.



It's Better In The Bahamas

# BAHAMAS

Advertisement 3.

### **1970s black Bahamian male on the beach tourism ad**

The black Bahamian male on the beach ad (advertisement 4) displays again a sexualized image of the typical average black Bahamian male figure. The bold letters “ITS BETTER IN THE BAHAMAS” signifies that this individual is living in paradise and there is no other place like it. He is holding a platter made of native flowers which has a popular product (the spiny lobster), which is well known delicacy in the Bahamas. The background displays an image of a secluded tropical environment enticing the viewer of this ad to imagine being alone on the beach, where fresh produce is right at your fingertips. However, one may fail to recognize that the product can also be the black Bahamian male in this advertisement. He may be viewed as a happy resident encouraging visitors to come on down and enjoy the tropical climate, however others may see this as eye candy as described in advertisement 1. It can be concluded that the black male figure in this image is being portrayed as a sex object. “ITS BETTER IN THE BAHAMAS” but the real question is who it is better for. Being a nation that depends on tourism this image fully explains how much we are dependent on this industry. Although the black male is seen smiling ear to ear, the struggle of covering the pain with a smile has been something local residents have normalized. Although this ad is displaying local culture, the way its represents the locals as black servants waiting to hand you lobster on the flower platter reminds of us of slavery. Not directly is this local resident working for his master based on free will but through a capitalist system that was designed to keep him in the position of a servant. In contrast to advertisement 3, we see a black Bahamian male working in the tourism industry. Rather, we now see a local entrepreneur who is a fisherman but is still portrayed as a servant. As previously stated, the sexualized nature of this image quickly

captures the viewers' attention. The Black Bahamian man is seen wearing nothing but a pair of underwear however the message is unclear in this ad. If the Bahamian male is trying to attract more tourist, what message is he sharing to the outside world. Some may say that he is displaying the black Bahamian male physique but for whom is the target audience. Although the local resident is seen living in paradise, he still doesn't get to experience it.

**IT'S BETTER  
IN THE BAHAMAS.**

There are places where food seems to taste better. Where an afternoon of snorkeling, tennis, golf or just lying on a pure white sunny beach can work up an appetite like you never had before. Where conch chowder, turtle pie and Bahamian lobster are seasoned with the kindness and laughter of the waiters. And for dessert, there's guava duff, sourtop ice cream or an evening in an elegant casino. If you're beginning to get hungry for a different kind of vacation, come to Nassau/Paradise Island, Freeport/Lucaya or the easygoing Out Islands of The Bahamas. See your Travel Agent for reservations. Or call us toll free at 800-327-0787. In Florida 800-432-5594. In Dade County 443-3921. It's all in The Bahamas. And it's better in The Bahamas.

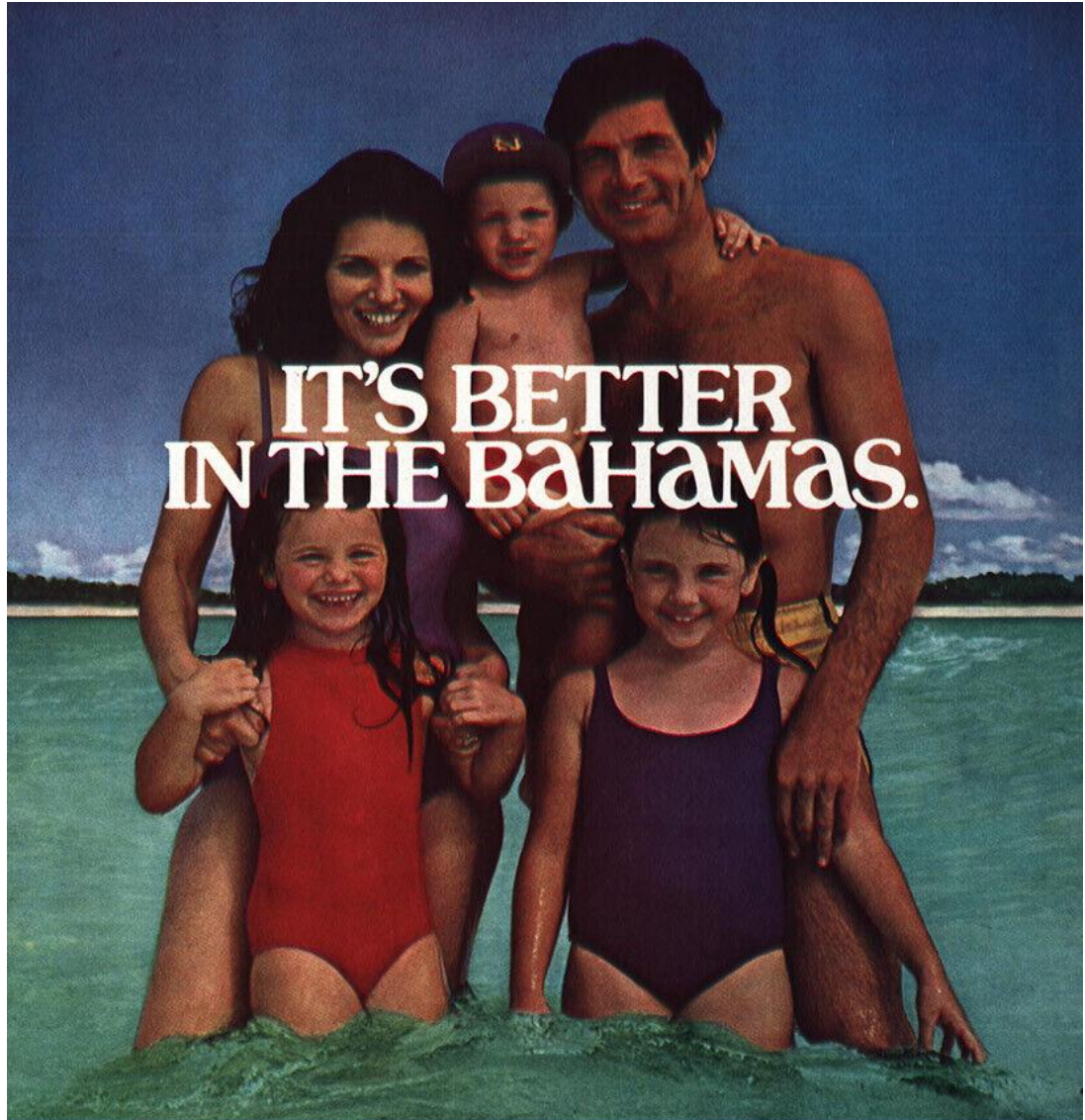
**BAHAMAS**  
Nassau/Paradise Island Freeport/Lucaya The Out Islands

Advertisement 4.

### **1977 Bahamas: Family beach photo, Vintage Print Ad.**

The family photo on the beach ad (advertisement 5) displays an image of a nuclear family enjoying their vacation on the beach. Again, the bold letters “ITS BETTER IN THE BAHAMAS” signifies that these individuals are enjoying vacationing in paradise. These middle class presumably American tourist in this ad can afford a family vacation like this. They are displayed secluded in a tropical environment with miles of untouched beach in the background. The dominant white male in the image would automatically be perceived as wealthy as if he owns paradise in this image. However, unlike the local black male seen in advertisement 4 the struggle continues in paradise. The body of text at the bottom of the ad describes what one can experience when they travel to these islands, however this reality is only true for specific classes of individuals.

The image depicts a happy family on vacation were as the previous ads which has the same slogan “ITS BETTER IN THE BAHAMAS” depicts the struggle in paradise. The only thing that changed in this advertisement was the race, class and ethnicity of the individuals which seem to have a different representation depending on who’s standing in front of the camera. Representation can be seen through the portrayal of different elements and individuals in the advertisement. In comparison to other races that are frequently misrepresented, we see a recurring positive representation of the dominant culture enjoying their time in paradise.



There are a few places in the world where you can really get away from it all, by yourself or with your family.

Where you can relax on your own secluded, pure white sand beach. And swim in a crystal-clear sea that's almost too turquoise to be true.

Where there's snorkeling, fishing, tennis, golf, something for everybody in the family. Where the night life offers everything from disco dancing to dining on fresh lobster, conch chowder and crab 'n rice.

And where the people are glad to see you and want you to have a good time. So good you'll want to come back again.

The places are Nassau/Paradise Island, Freeport/Lucaya and the easygoing Out Islands of The Bahamas.

For reservations or our colorful, informative tour brochure, see your Travel Agent. Or call toll free 800-327-0787.

In Florida call 800-432-5594. In Dade County 443-3821.

It's all in The Bahamas. And it's better in The Bahamas.

# BAHAMAS

Nassau/Paradise Island Freeport/Lucaya The Out Islands

Advertisement 5.

## **1981 straw lady and tourist Vacation Travel Vintage Print Ad**

This 1981 straw lady and tourist vintage ad (advertisement 6) displays an image of a traveling tourist couple enjoying a day at the straw market with a local straw vendor. They are seen smiling from ear to ear and bold at the center of the page is the statement “Our Bahamas”. This shows the local individual’s mindset to treat everyone with respect by including others in their culture. However, at the bottom of the first image displays an image of a white couple enjoying a day out swimming, relaxing in the tropical waters. This is “OUR BAHAMAS”, however does this slogan represent the individuals immersing and enjoying themselves in the culture or the local resident again seen providing a service with a big smile. The struggle is again seen in paradise as we have a local black female entrepreneur who without a doubt has to show her respect to the white couple in hopes of making a decent wage. The local culture is surrounded by the tourism industry making it impossible for these individuals to establish an identity for themselves. Tourists' first encounter with a black Bahamian female is always a straw vendor when they arrive in the Bahamas. This advertisement, however, fails to depict the local black men who also produce straw work. Looking at these images, one might conclude that all women in the Bahamas are straw workers, ignoring the fact that producing straw work is an integral part of black Bahamian identity.

Again, the tourist swimming in the image at the bottom is being sexualized. These individuals consistently exhibit a distinctive physique characterized by a slender athletic build. The primary objective of this ad appears to be attracting wealthy Caucasian individuals, with a focus on financial gain, rather than catering to the average individual

who may not possess a physically fit physique but desires to partake in the paradise vacation experience.

**OUR BAHAMAS**  
**OUR BAHAMAS**

**In The Bahamas, you never run out of things to do. Until you want to.**

You really want to have some fun today? Good.

Spend a morning sailing on clear turquoise water. Splash in it. Or scuba.

Have a quick lunch of conch fritters. They stroll about town. Browse a Straw Market. Bargain for a hat. Play some tennis before dinner. Then dig into a Bahamian lobster. Later, it's on to disco, baccarat and blackjack.

Tomorrow let it begin at noon, just the two of you on a beach. It's peace. It's tranquility. And it's all yours.

You can do it all. Or nothing at all. In one place. In The Bahamas.

The Bahamas, including The Out Islands of Abaco, Andros, Eleuthera and Exuma, is closer to the U.S. than any Caribbean island. For reservations and information, call your Travel Agent. Or toll free 800-327-0787. Florida 800-432-5594. Dade County 443-3821.

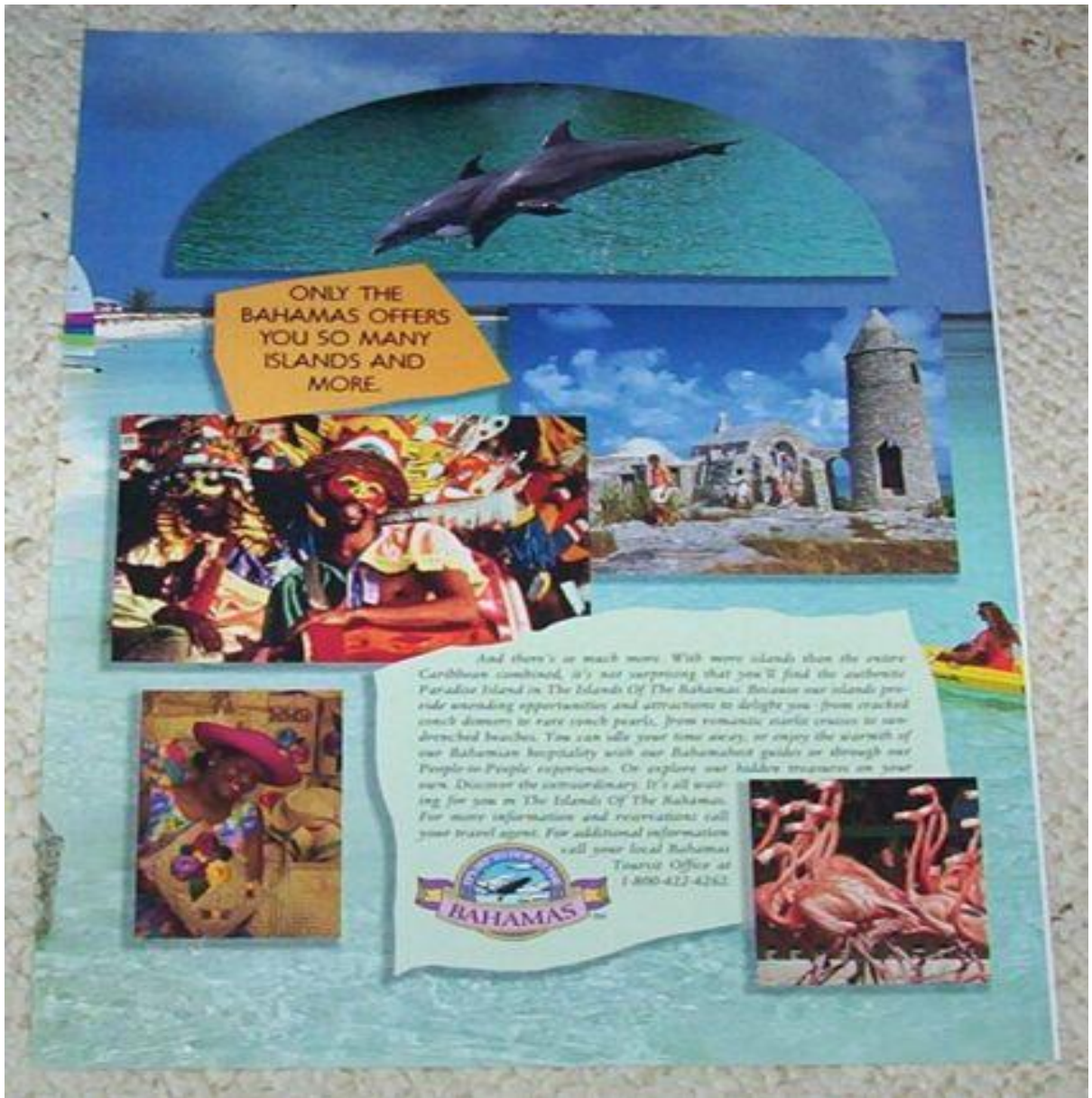
**It's Better In The Bahamas.**

Advertisement 6.

## **1994 Bahama Islands vacation travel AD**

Moving into the 1990s, the tourism industry began to change the images to show more of the Bahamian culture, which was a significant improvement compared to previous print ads in the past that misrepresented the culture and its people. This 1994 Bahamas islands vacation ad (advertisement 7) depicts authentic Bahamian culture. Featuring the native festival junkanoo, popular historical sites such as Mount Alvernia on Cat Island, the country's national bird, and other tourist activities. The ad features an image of a straw lady promoting her straw work in the bottom left corner. White tourists can be seen in the background taking in the historical culture.

This advertisement includes the entire Bahamas, rather than just the most popular tourist destinations such as Nassau and Freeport. The tourism industry frequently makes the mistake of not promoting the rest of the family islands and what they have to offer. As a result, tourists only see Nassau or Freeport as a representation of what the Bahamas has to offer. Culture is represented in this advertisement through various symbols and visual elements associated with the Bahamas. The inclusion of local landmarks, cultural activities and vibrant colors aim to evoke a sense of the Bahamian culture and create a connection between the viewer and the destination. This is why it is important to analyze how these representations are portrayed and whether they accurately reflect the diverse aspects of Bahamian culture.



Advertisement 7.

## **2015 black American man and woman on a boat.**

This 2015 black man and woman on a boat advertisement (advertisement 8) shows a slight improvement in how black culture is represented in print advertisements. The desire to diversify and include has encouraged the tourism industry to expand into new markets, specifically the black American community. As seen in previous advertisements, no image of black people relaxing in paradise is shown, but modern day advertisements have perused to include all persons of different race and ethnicity to encourage working class individuals to travel. However, this still haven't resolved the issue of how the local residents of these tropical destinations are being represented. Indeed black faces have finally made it in advertising, which encourages more individuals of the black culture to travel. However, the hegemonic realtions of western culture further separtates the working class travel experience versus the elite class experience. Alothouhg these individuals are seen enjoying them selves on a boat anchored off shore, not everyone gets to experience this concept of paradise.

In this ad the elements of race, class, gender and ethnicity can be seen through the representation of diverse individuals and their intraction within the concept of paradise. Showcasing people from different racial backgrounds, various socioeconomic classes and highlightligting gender diversity has assisted the tourism industry in creating a sense of inclusivity and a reflection of diveristy to the tagerget audience of these print advertisements. In this ad double consciouness can be seen through the portrayal of individuals who nagavigate between different cultural identities. The individuals in the

advertisement are embracing both their american cultural heritage and their connection to the bahamian culture.



Advertisement 8.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **No true Bahamian cultural identity**

Although the visuals in this study came from a number of various sources. The findings from this study on Bahamian tourism in print advertisements reveal a significant evolution in the representation of the Bahamian culture and its people. In the earlier advertisements, a recurring issue is the portrayal of white tourists enjoying a seemingly carefree paradise, often at the expense of the local residents who are depicted as servants catering to their needs. The colonial power dynamics and the idea that black Bahamians are subservient are maintained by these representations. Black Bahamians previously held the same opportunities, much like the Lucayans who lived in the Bahamas and subsisted on their natural resources, however this way of life was abandoned when tourism was introduced. There is no one definitive answer to the question of who or what defines a Bahamian these days. The claim that there isn't a single, "true" Bahamian cultural identity is a complicated one, and it's critical to acknowledge that this identity is constantly evolving and ever-changing. However, these representations still tend to reflect a divide between the experiences of working-class individuals and those of the elite class who can afford the more exclusive and luxurious experiences.

### **Economic disparity within the tourism industry**

These advertisements frequently sexualize the images of the local residents and the tourist, catering to a potentially exploitative aspect of tourism. As time progress, there is a notable shift towards a more inclusive representation of Bahamian culture in the later advertisements, particularly in the 1994 and 2015 advertising samples. These

advertisements showcase aspects of Bahamian culture such as the Junkanoo festival and historical sites, providing a more authentic and diverse portrayal of the culture. However, despite this positive shift towards diversity and inclusion, there remains an underlying issue of economic disparity within the tourism industry. This issue involves unequal distribution of economic benefits and opportunities among various stakeholders. Jobs within the tourism sector are characterized by a hierarchy, with certain positions paying significantly lower wages than others. Service-oriented roles such as housekeeping and entry-level positions offer lower salaries compared to management or specialized roles. This has created a wage gap and contributes to economic inequality among tourism industry workers. Also, ownership and control of the tourism industry play a crucial role in economic disparities. Larger, foreign international corporations dominate the industry, while local small business enterprises struggle to compete.

### **Servants of the industry**

Overall, this study highlights the power of visual communication in shaping perceptions of a destination and its people. It also analyzes the need for continued critical examination of how tourism is portrayed and its impact on local communities, especially in regions heavily reliant on the industry for economic development. The study's timeline from 1960 to 2015 effectively captures the changing dynamics of tourism advertising, with a recognition that digital social media platforms have further altered these dynamics in recent years. On the other hand, locals are always portrayed in these images as servants. The Bahamas tourism industry's depiction of Black people as servants raises significant questions regarding stereotypes and representation related to the national

identity of the Bahamas. It will take a team effort from industry participants, legislators, local community residents, and the media to address the Bahamas tourism industry's portrayal of Black people as servants. The industry can actively combat stereotypes and encourage authentic representations to help ensure that everyone is portrayed in the Bahamas with more inclusivity and respect.

### **Exploitation of Black Bahamians.**

Black Bahamians face many exploitative working conditions, including long working hours, lack of job security, and inadequate workplace safety measures, particularly in industries such as hospitality and agriculture. The economic structure of the country has caused the young generation to have limited access to business ownership and entrepreneurial opportunities, further contributing to the economic disparities. Black Bahamians experience an abundance of discrimination in various social contexts, including education, healthcare, and housing. As a nation of people, we have become prejudiced against our own people because of the influence of western culture. There are instances of racial profiling by law enforcement or other authorities, leading to unjust treatment and potential violations of civil rights of many black Bahamians. To effectively tackle the issue of the exploitation of black Bahamians, a comprehensive and systemic approach is required. This includes promoting policies and initiatives that ensure equal economic opportunities, combating discrimination, improving educational access, and fostering cultural appreciation without appropriation.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

We would expect a country that has been independent from its colonizer for the last fifty years to be able to provide for and defend itself, but decolonization never took hold, because of how much these countries rely on their colonial masters. Independence in the Caribbean was a combination of native rights and self-determination. The colonial powers were perfectly content to relinquish this responsibility because the old methods of generating profits from the islands were being destroyed by change. During the brief history of these countries, slavery, indentured servitude, and underpaid labor generated a significant portion of the profits that allowed European colonial powers to build and develop their own countries. However, none of the profits or developed infrastructure remained in the islands or with the people who had been used to generate those profits. The detrimental effects of indirect control through tourism on developing nations must be discussed. Major corporations must be held accountable for exploiting these countries for their cheap labor; one of the main causes of poverty in colonized nations.

My purpose is to share the behind-the-scenes images that most people cannot see even if they travel to the Bahamas. Tourism's goal is to bring Bahamian culture to hotels and government-controlled areas, where it is diluted to appeal to the average tourist. Due to high crime rates, people are advised not to blend in with the locals, but the real issue is that they do not want tourists to see the poverty that these residents live in or to experience the authentic Bahamian culture that the locals will provide. We will be able to see firsthand how this representation has affected the Bahamian national identity by examining how the local population is represented in the print media. Also, we will gain

insight into the country's historical development and be able to answer the question of who or what is a Bahamian as discussed by members of the Caribbean academic community. The time has come to uncover the true nature of Bahamian cultural identity.

### **Economic Dependence on Tourism: Advantages and Disadvantages.**

This study has dissected the impact of economic dependence on the tourism sector, shedding light on both the advantages and disadvantages associated with this reliance. The Bahamian economy is intertwined with the fortunes and challenges posed by the tourism industry. While the implementation of infrastructure and job opportunities has fueled economic growth, there is an imbalance between reaping the benefits of tourism and safeguarding the nation's cultural and environmental integrity. This study has provided an in-depth perspective that goes beyond the conventional discourse on tourism as a solution for economic development, emphasizing the difficulties associated with this industry.

### **Shaping National Identity through Tourism Representation**

This thesis makes a substantial contribution to the Caribbean academic community by critically analyzing the impact that tourism representation has on the national identity of the Bahamas. Through an extensive review of a wide range of historical and contemporary sources, such as print ads and scholarly discourses from 1960 to 2015, the study has uncovered the visual communication tactics used by the Bahamas tourism sector. These tactics, which are mainly seen in print ads, display how these advertisements have influenced people's opinions of the Bahamas. A careful analysis of how the local residents in these areas are portrayed in these ads has provided new

perspectives on the complex relationships between identity and power in the context of tourism in the Bahamas.

### **Contributions and Implications: Beyond Academic Discourse**

This study provides valuable data that has practical use for stakeholders and policymakers in the Bahamas, going beyond the boundaries of academic discourse. The findings of this study may serve as a guide for sound decision-making as the Bahamas struggles with the opportunities and problems created by its reliance on tourism. Policymakers can create policies that support sustainable tourism practices, protecting the country's cultural diversity while guaranteeing economic growth, by understanding the complex interactions between representation, identity, and economic reliance.

In conclusion, this thesis has navigated the complex web of tourism development, representation, and national identity in the Bahamas, contributing not only to the academic understanding of Caribbean tourism but also offering tangible guidance for those tasked with steering the course of the nation's economic future. The findings from this study provide guidance for the Bahamas as it develops within the framework of international tourism. In order to further this research, scholars must have a better understanding of the tourism sector. Academic scholars are encouraged to broaden their focus on the complex connection between national identity, representation, and tourism development in the Bahamas. Several avenues for expansion on this study include extending the timeframe of the study to cover both print and digital advertisements, conducting a comparative analysis with other Caribbean nations or regions that share similarities in their dependence on tourism, expanding the focus to include other forms of

media, such as digital and social media platforms and conducting a more in-depth analysis of community engagement in the tourism industry.

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