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Original Article

JAMAICA: A famous, strong but damaged brand

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ABSTRACT Image, brand and reputation are the new capital for nations in the twenty-first century. In this era of the global marketplace, nations, regions and cities are forced to compete with each other for tourists, investment, aid, students, for buyers of their products and services, and for talent. Scholars now agree that nations themselves have become brands, and are now obliged to manage their images in order to influence people's decision in terms of purchasing, investing and traveling. Nations with unknown or poor reputations, including those enduring prolonged crises are thus likely to suffer marginalization and will not easily witness economic success (Viosca *et al*; Avraham and Ketter). In this article, I aim to explore the challenges confronting Brand Jamaica. I argue that positive global coverage of Jamaica's outstanding brand achievements in sports, music and as a premier tourism destination, is being negated by its rival brands – economic instability (debt, poverty unemployment), crime, corruption and perceptions of declining human rights. The consequence is a contradictory, perplexing and problematic public image of Jamaica, with severe consequences for investment, tourism promotion as well as economic and social progress. The article points at the imperative for Jamaican authorities to evaluate the nation's public image, manage the impact of prolonged crises on its brand and attempt to re-imagine Jamaica, in light of changing fortunes.

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INTRODUCTION

Jamaica is a tiny island situated in the Caribbean Sea – a mere speck on the world map inhabited by only 2.8 million people. Yet, Jamaica's remarkable presence on the world stage is well established, having drawn, over time, much attention in the international media. A former colony of Great Britain, shaped by centuries of slavery, violence and plunder, Jamaica today owes

its popular global standing to a massively successful troika of brands – music, sports and destination tourism. Since the 1960s and 1970s, Jamaica's rising popularity and esteem in the world was premised on the ballooning success of the nation's vibrant music culture, particularly its indigenous Reggae – then the world's newest music genre – and its celebrity icon and ambassador, Bob Marley. In the modern era, thanks to its extraordinary

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successes in sport, particularly athletics featuring legendary sprinters such as Usain Bolt, (considered the fastest man in the world), Jamaica has been branded the 'sprint factory' and seen to be an emerging global sports brand. In addition, if this was not enough, white sand beaches, lavish all-inclusive resorts and a tropical climate have catapulted Jamaica into one of the world's premier destination tourism brands, attracting on average, nearly 2 million tourists annually (Jamaica Tourist Board, 2012).

Accompanying Jamaica's largely positive public image, however, has been the development of what may be called a rival brand image. Since the early 1960s, (when the island gained independence from Great Britain) and 1970s, Jamaica's emergence as a progressive nation – legislating new political and social rights to its poor, improving education and actively participating in the global civil rights and social justice movements – has also been attended by international media coverage of the country's internal political civil war (featuring intense warfare between opposing gangs loyal to the country's two main political parties, the People's National Party (PNP) and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP); mushrooming crime, inflation, unemployment and impoverishment. Today, that negative image persists. Consistent reports in the global media of Jamaica featuring gang warfare, upsurges in violent crime, corruption and economic instability lead to troubling perceptions of the country as unsafe – a dangerous paradise, so to speak. Overall, the result has been a contradictory, perplexing and problematic public image of Jamaica, with severe consequences for investment, tourism promotion and the nation's economic and social progress.

Extant scholarship (for example, Avraham, 2009; Avraham and Ketter, 2013) draws attention to nations enduring prolonged crises and negative images caused by long-lasting problems such as economic hardship, high crime rates, continuous war and political instability. Jamaica is one such nation. Jamaican political authorities, including foreign affairs, tourism, industry and commerce ministries, as well as its promotion and trade agency (Jamaica Promotions Agency (JAMPRO)), and other players confront an extremely difficult challenge regarding the nation's ambiguous media

and public international image. These interests believe that Jamaica's success in sports, music and as a top tourism destination make the country attractive and respected on the global stage, as well as potentially commercially successful. Nevertheless, Jamaican authorities must consistently address the negative and controversial aspects of the Jamaican brand if it is to seriously overcome its conflicting international image, and construct a successful and sustainable brand.

For the purposes of this discussion, it is important to make a distinction between Jamaica's media image and its public image. A country's media image has to do with its portrayal in the mass media, whereas its public image concerns its perception in international public opinion (see Avraham and Ketter, 2013). Both these aspects are necessary in any assessment of Jamaica's national brand; yet it is imperative to understand that they are very much grounded in the real, lived realities of Jamaicans at home and in the Diaspora, as well as the experience of visitors (for example, tourists, students, business travelers and returning residents) to the island. This article aims to explore (i) the existing challenges facing Brand Jamaica, and (ii) why it is important that the government address these issues, and construct a more complete and complex international image of Jamaica. Essentially, I argue that Jamaica is a famous, strong but damaged brand. In the global era, a problematic national image is a major obstacle for a country's social, economic and cultural progress. The article thus points at the imperative for Jamaican authorities to evaluate, manage and re-imagine the nation's public international image, through an effective comprehensive national brand build strategy based on strategic rather than cosmetic approaches.

I make a short methodological note. This article draws on qualitative research instruments, including primary and secondary sources to undertake a textual and discursive assessment of Jamaica's public image. These include audio/visual interviews featuring Jamaica tourism industry players, past and ongoing formal branding Jamaica campaigns, advertisements, public relations material, speeches, Websites and social media, as well as news reports, articles and features. I also

draw on selections from ongoing interviews I am undertaking with citizens of Jamaica on perceptions of Jamaica.

NATIONS AS BRANDS

Every country has an image, regardless of whether that image is positive or negative, developed deliberately or by default and formed from education, the media, travel, immigration, product purchasers, business experiences or any combination of sources (Viosca *et al*, 2005). This image, understood as ‘the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold about places’ (Kotler and Gertner, 2002), is becoming a critical lever in international politics and trade. Indeed, image, brand and reputation are seen to be the new capital for nations in the twenty-first century. Nations themselves have become brands, and although there is some skepticism about the nexus between brands and nations, recent scholarship (Anholt, 2006, 2010; van Ham, 2001, 2002; Kotler and Gertner, 2002; see also Avraham, 2009; Avraham and Ketter, 2013) makes a persuasive argument for its merit. Peter van Ham (2001), for example, refers to the emerging phenomenon of the ‘brand state’. The brand state is said to represent the ideas the outside world hold about a particular country. Countries and cities are thus obliged to deploy their history, geography and ethnic and emotional motifs to construct a distinctive image. This image is a form of identity politics. Ham argues that in old world politics, influence was based on ideology and raw power, in the postmodern world, influence is premised on image. In this new age of information overload, he contends that ‘strong brands are important in attracting foreign direct investment, recruiting the best and the brightest, and wielding political influence’ (van Ham, 2001). In other words, smart states are building their brands around reputations and attitudes in the same way that smart companies do (van Ham, 2001).

Focusing on Brand South Africa that has had a controversial public image, as a case study, Viosca *et al* (2005) posit that the benefits of embarking on professional country branding strategies include the ability to win more investment business because a country image communicates to a global

public the right things about taxation, labor skills, safety, the environment and political stability. There is also the chance to apply the ‘made in’ label because it will positively aid the sale of a product in an overseas market. They warn, however, that in global marketing, positive or negative perceptions and attitudes toward particular countries often extend to products and brands known to originate in those countries. The new global economy is thus imposing on all states the obligation to develop, manage and leverage their image in order to stand out in this competitive global marketplace. Nations, regions and cities need now to compete with each other for their share of the world’s tourists, investment, aid, students, for buyers of their products and services, and for talent as well as for the attention and respect of the media and the global community (Anholt, 2006, 2010; Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Viosca *et al*, 2005).

One of the fundamental duties of governments, Anholt believes, is to understand, manage and nurture the good name of its country because good name underpins all success in the marketplace:

The brand powerfully affects the way people inside and outside the place think about it, the way they behave towards it, and the way they respond to everything with regard to the place, for instance its products, sporting and cultural events, relationships with other regions, cities and countries, tourism and heritage attractions, investment and business potential etc. The brand image of a country has a direct and measurable impact on just about every aspect of its engagement with other countries, and plays a role in its economic, social and political progress (Anholt, 2006, 2010).

He argues that most countries communicate with the rest of the world and deliberately create their brand image through six common channels – tourism promotion, exports, the policy decisions of the government, how it solicits foreign direct investment, cultural exchange and activities, and the people, from high profile leaders and stars to immigrants. It is thus crucial for nations to manage their images in order to influence

people’s decision to purchase its products, investing there, and as a destination to which to travel. Nations that are not well known or have poor reputations are likely to suffer further marginalization and will not easily witness economic success (Viosca *et al*, 2005; Anholt, 2006; Avraham and Ketter, 2009). In other words, a bad reputation is bad for business. Jamaica, as I will discuss below, represents a nation that finds itself in a problematic and perplexing situation of prolonged negative images and stereotypes even alongside positive perceptions. Below, I look more closely at challenges Brand Jamaica currently confronts. First, I introduce a conceptual framework, which may help us to make sense of the contradictions in Jamaica’s nation brand.

The dialectic of Brand Jamaica

Brand Jamaica is a nation brand of striking contradictions. A contradiction exists ‘whenever two forces or tendencies are interdependent yet mutually negate each other’ (Miller, 1992). Whereas all nation brands contain both positive and negative aspects, Brand Jamaica exhibits a perplexing combination of competing forces that are struggling for dominance. Dialectic theory appears to be a good model by which to explain these tensions and contradictions. Dialectic, in

the Hegelian sense, is an interpretive method that explains the dynamic interplay between two opposing forces or entities (Baxter and Montgomery, 1996; Rawlins, 2008). It suggests that some proposition (a thesis) is necessarily opposed by an equally contradictory proposition (antithesis). The contradiction often reconciled on a higher level of truth by a third proposition (synthesis). Dialectic theory has its philosophical roots in the idea that the world is in constant flux with creative and destructive forces constantly operating upon each other. Baxter and Montgomery (1996), for example, in applying dialectics to communication and relationships argue that dialectic tension is the ‘tugs and pulls’ that are present in relationships as a result of the ‘co-existence of both repelling (centrifugal) and attracting (centripetal) forces. Figure 1 illustrates the dialectic tensions inherent in the Jamaican brand.

This dialectic tension goes to the heart of the dilemma confronting Brand Jamaica. First, the figure points to the extraordinary presence, influence and promise of many aspects of the Jamaican national brand (for example, tourism, sports, particularly athletics and bobsled; a vibrant culture featuring the popular Reggae and dancehall music genres, a unique language/accents; an indigenous Rastafari movement, vibrant lifestyle, world famous export products such Blue

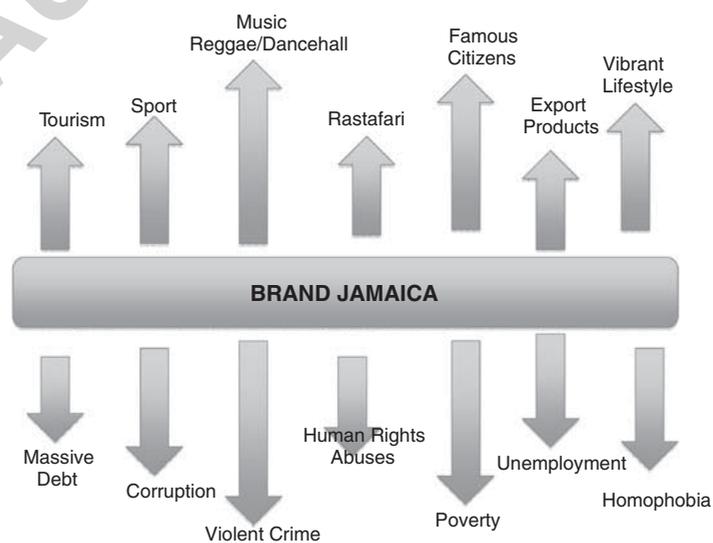


Figure 1: Brand Jamaica dialectic.

Coffee and a multiplicity of iconic citizens, among them Bob Marley and Usain Bolt. Second, it points to the dangerous deficits, and prolonged crisis facing the Jamaican brand embodied in ostensible weaknesses in the institutions, structures and processes of governance – deep debt, corruption, violent crime, breaches of human rights, poverty, rising employment and perceptions of homophobia.

This glaring dichotomy exhibits the dialectic tension within this nation brand, reproducing Brand Jamaica's relative strength versus its profound vulnerability. The positive brand narratives evident in top half of Figure 1 have historically served to elevate and position Brand Jamaica into one of the world's most popular nation brands. However, it is worth noting that the negative discourses displayed on the bottom half of Figure 1, have simultaneously served to undermine Jamaica in international public opinion, and disrupt its capacity to take full advantage of its moral, social, economic and cultural capital. This dialectic contestation between opposing brand attributes in Jamaica suggest that some variables may be performing brand build functions, whereas others are equally and simultaneously performing brand-reducing functions. In other words, both negative and positive brand narratives are vying to become the dominant discourse in Jamaica.

As the case of Jamaica indicates, nation brands can exemplify constructive and progressive features, as well as destructive and undesirable features. This tension causes them to mutually negate each other – leaving the brand at risk of stagnation. This is the position in which Brand Jamaica finds itself. Despite having a globally recognizable brand, Jamaica is yet to truly prosper from the great equity embedded in its brand name and culture. Scholars agree that nations that manage their country images and external reputations are more likely to create more conducive and attractive conditions for foreign direct investment, tourism, trade and political relations. Positive brand narratives must, no doubt, win in order for Brand Jamaica to improve its brand equity, and ultimately ensure its economic and social progress. If negative brand features such

as crime, poverty and corruption are allowed to dominate, it will not only have a considerable negative impact on the nation's socio-economic goals but also detract from and even undermine its existing brand achievements. This article aims to establish the basis for a presumption in favor of proactively managing the Jamaican brand; that is, positioning and promoting its many positive aspects, while strategically reframing its negative features. In the following section, I examine in more specific detail some of the existing challenges confronting Brand Jamaica.

BRAND JAMAICA – IDEOLOGICAL AND DEFINITIONAL DISCOURSES

As a point of departure, the prevailing construct of Jamaica's national brand is itself ideologically flawed; it is predicated on existing exoticized discourses about the Caribbean and other countries of the global South. The first challenge is therefore definitional. Within the past decade, Jamaican authorities, business interests and citizenry have been increasingly captivated by 'Brand Jamaica', but also concerned with its current quality. Jamaica's Prime Minister, Portia Simpson-Miller, in her swearing-in speech on 5 January 2012, for example, acknowledged concerns about Jamaica's brand image. She stated, *inter alia*, that included in her mandate is the imperative to 'protect the good name of Jamaica at home and in the international community'. Jamaica, she declared 'must remain for all a quality brand'. Noted Jamaican political commentator, Buddan (2004), writing in the *Jamaica Gleaner* newspaper, just a few years earlier in 2004 summarized the essential problem confronting Brand Jamaica:

Lately, ... some organisations have described Jamaica as homophobic. Transparency International describes Jamaica as corrupt. International credit agencies have at times said Jamaica is a bad place in which to invest. There is a general perception that Jamaica is a violent place.

These grossly negative perceptions seem to suggest that 'Jamaica needs a clear definition of what kind

of country it is, what it stands for, and where it is going. But Jamaicans need to take the lead in defining themselves or else others will define us for their own purposes, out of their own stereotypes, and based on their own prejudices' (Buddan, 2004). For Buddan, 'the struggle over definition is not just one between Jamaicans and foreigners, but between Jamaicans themselves, both at home and abroad' (ibid.). Unlike a growing number of countries such as South Africa, Japan, India and Australia that have established agencies to interpret and manage their national brands, there is, as yet, no official attempt by any coalition of Jamaican government, business, non-government and civil society groups to determine what Brand Jamaica is, or ought to be. Whereas the Jamaican Government has recently established a national development plan called Vision2030, which is a kind of roadmap to make Jamaica 'a place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business' (PIOJ, 2013), the buy in by all stakeholders is largely absent. And Vision 2030 is by no means the message the government is currently articulating to the world.

At present, the Jamaica tourism authorities are responsible for disseminating the key messages of Brand Jamaica to the world. On the basis of a textual analysis of seven major Jamaican destination tourism marketing and promotion ad campaigns since 1960 done by this author, namely, 'Come to Jamaica' (1960–1963) 'Come Back to Jamaica' (1963–1975), 'Discover Jamaica – We are more than a Beach' (1975–1984), 'Make it Jamaica Again' (1984–1994), 'One Love' (1994–2003), 'Once You Go You Know' (2003–2013) and the recent 'Jamaica – Get All Right' (2013–present), I make the following observation: The 'official' expression of Jamaican identity endorsed by the government, and upon which it has relied since Independence in 1962 is an exotic island paradise of beautiful beaches, tropical weather, friendly, laid back people and Reggae providing a musical backdrop. This ready-made, unchanged, fixed Jamaican identity was manufactured over time through ideology and global mediated discourses that feature the islands of the Caribbean as exotic places; as paradise where the so-called natives are not only laid back, but seen to be poor,

under-educated and under-employed. It is a familiar but largely borrowed identity.

By no means arbitrarily constructed, this hegemonic interpretation of Jamaica is based on sundry representational discourses (cinematic, mediated, linguistic, literary, economic, political and cultural) about 'Third World' countries whose collective histories have been linked to, if not dominated by the ravages of slavery and colonization, violence and underdevelopment. Thus Jamaica is codified and constructed in as mediated and other texts from the global north is Jamaica as either beautiful and mesmerizing or impoverished and dangerous, or both. A glaring example of this definitional dilemma occurred in 2013 when German car manufacturer Volkswagen's Super bowl commercial featured a white office worker simulating the Jamaican patois accent, and encouraging his colleagues – who were in a busy office meeting – to be happy, to 'just chill out' – 'no worries man; everyting will be alright'. A firestorm of commentary ensued on social and traditional media with many pundits blasting the commercial as 'racist' and 'off putting' for its attempt to portray blacks in general and the Jamaican people in particular as happy-go-lucky; untroubled by the obligations and responsibilities of normal life, (*The Daily Mail*, 2013). Again, this exoticized interpretation of Jamaica, and Jamaicans, in reality, recollects a colonial narrative based on stereotypical ideas and predispositions about the Third World and the people from this part of the world.

The Jamaican government, nevertheless, endorsed the commercial as an accurate depiction of Jamaican culture. The country's tourism ministers, for example, hailed the ad as a 'perfect illustration of Jamaican culture's global reach, and our uncharacteristic penchant to be happy even in challenging situations' as well as 'the tremendous appeal of Brand Jamaica and its hospitable people have globally' (*Huffington Post*, 2013). The Government of Jamaica was seemingly gratified with the country's patois language being recognized and used in an advertisement by a respected foreign manufacturer, designed for a popular televised sporting event, the Super bowl that has tremendous global reach. Premised on the

view that the controversial ad had the potential to increase tourist arrivals, the Jamaican Government, through the Ministry of Tourism and Entertainment, unveiled the message of the commercial as Jamaica's new 'official' brand identity at the 2013 World Travel Market event in London.

Calling the new campaign 'JAMAICA – Get All Right', the Jamaican tourism authorities declared that:

Jamaica is more than a just a holiday destination, it's a feeling, it's an experience. The world is realizing that Jamaica has so much to offer and so much more than other destinations. For this reason, we thought it was time to refresh the way we market Jamaica. Jamaica is where people come to find positivity, a force making the world feel more all right through its rhythm, energy and spirit. Capturing that essence and bringing it to life is what comes through in our new brand and campaign identity. We wanted to bring the vibrant, joyous spirit of Jamaica to life. You go to Paris for romance, Las Vegas to get wild, and you go to Jamaica to Get All Right (*The Jamaica Observer*, 2013a).

The Jamaica government, in other words, unapologetically assumed all aspects of Volkswagen's discursive construction of the country, and declined to challenge its subjective limitations or its political and cultural implications. Although a sense of humor and cheerful attitude are fundamentally Jamaican, and does help citizens to cope during difficult times, existing global narratives on Jamaica such as those conveyed in the VW ad, and by the Jamaica Tourist Board for over half a century, are, however, incomplete. Nigerian novelist Adichie writes of the dangers of telling a single story about a people and a place. She argues that 'a single story creates stereotypes. It's not that stereotypes are untrue but that they are incomplete. Stereotypes make one story the only story' (Adichie, 2009). Single stories of a people and a place, she argues, not only flattens one's experience of that place, but also overlooks multiple other stories that help to form that place and people. Since 1963, Jamaican authorities have fed into, reproduced and reflected back to the

world an exoticized island paradise, and a narrative that essentially declares 'come to Jamaica where there is "no problem mon" and "feel alright" as the singular narrative and expression of Jamaica's national identity'. This imported national identity, I argue, has endured far beyond its usefulness.

In addition, rather than take the lead in defining Jamaica, Jamaican authorities, through tourism campaign slogans such as 'Once you go, you know', used to brand the island for the last decade (2003–2013), essentially asked external 'others' to derive their own interpretation of Jamaica based on their individual encounter with the country. Although a few of the images on the print ads of the 'Once You Go You Know' campaign direct tourists to specific attractions and experiences, Jamaican authorities have largely attempted to build Brand Jamaica relying heavily on the sentiments and perceptions of others. The fact is that Jamaica has struggled to define itself in the world, and so has appropriated, over time, a brand that was constructed elsewhere. The process of establishing a coherent, more complex expression of Jamaican identity therefore remains at large.

BRAND JAMAICA – THE LIVED REALITY

Another challenge to Jamaica's national brand is the lived realities of the Jamaican people (as well as the experiences of visitors (tourists, students, business travelers and investors as well as returning residents to the island). It is difficult, if not impossible, to separate a country brand from the lived experience and material conditions of the people of that place. Beyond its idyllic portrayal as paradise lies the reality of Jamaica – a lived reality Jamaican citizens know firsthand. Consequently, one cannot begin to talk about Brand Jamaica, or embark on 'branding' Jamaica without starting at home; without acknowledging the country's brutal history of violence, slavery and colonization, or addressing, *inter alia*, the ongoing challenges of economic instability (debt, unemployment, poverty); corruption and crime the country confronts. Government policy and leadership with respect to economic growth, infrastructure development, employment, national

security and education and so on, are fundamental aspects of what defines and determines a country brand. The everyday lived experience of the Jamaican people, and the effects of these challenges on the country's public image are fundamental to ongoing and future efforts to Brand Jamaica. I will look at some of these issues, and the extent to which they pose a challenge to the brand below.

Economic instability

The Jamaican economy is in a dismal state, characterized by a brutal combination of low growth, high debt and rising levels of poverty. For example, average annual per capita growth has been negative 0.1 per cent over the past 20 years (Johnston, 2013). Indeed, Jamaica is cited as having 'the slowest growth rates in the Americas since 2000, even behind disaster-ridden Haiti', and 'runs fiscal deficits for 44 of the 50 years of its Independence' (*The Economist*, 2012). The country's huge debt is now at a staggering 140 per cent of GDP. The consequence is that debt servicing accounts for the largest portion of the national budget, hampering spending on critical social sectors such as health, education, as well as infrastructural development. Low economic growth means rising unemployment. As of August 2013, Jamaica's unemployment rate stands at 16.3 per cent, a climb from less than 10 per cent in 2008. This is while per capita income stands at only US\$5500 (compared with neighboring Barbados; and Singapore which stand at \$13 400 and \$46 241, respectively) (STATIN (Statistical Institute of Jamaica), 2013; Williams, 2013; *The Jamaica Observer*, 2013c).

Although Jamaica experienced rapid economic growth and remarkable levels of prosperity, in the 1950s and 1960s through new foreign direct investments and foreign exchange earnings from manufacturing and tourism as well as the bauxite and alumina industries (Manley, 1974; *The Jamaica Observer*, 2013b), by the early 1970s, it was all over. Existing scholarship link this economic plummet to the world oil shock of 1973, which upended the world economy causing a massive global recession, and where developing countries such as Jamaica were forced to undertake

a fundamental restructuring of their economies. The structural adjustment conditionalities, while aimed at reducing fiscal deficits and achieving greater competitiveness, dealt a severe blow to an already enfeebled Jamaican economy, leaving social and economic sectors in a state of crisis (Johnson, 2011). Today, as austerity measures continue under newly imposed IMF conditions, the situation in the country is dire. The Jamaican government finds it virtually impossible to boost its economy, repay debts, improve standards of living, create employment and give its poor any kind of meaningful life. Of its 2.8 million population, over 5 40 000 live below the poverty line, and struggle to pay for basic amenities such as food, clothes, shelter and access education, and public transportation (Economic and Social Survey of Jamaica, 2012).

It must be understood, however, that Jamaica's economic troubles are largely homemade, caused by poor economic management; unnecessary bureaucracy; inequitable distribution of wealth; period of political instability and widespread corruption (Manley, 1974; Johnson, 2011; *The Economist*, 2012). To say that the Jamaican people have lost faith in their leaders is an understatement. The economic misery confronting the Jamaican population, including depreciation in the exchange rate in recent months, massive jumps in inflation, reflected in rising costs of utilities and food, as well as new taxes imposed on basic commodities, has been laid squarely at the feet of successive governments. The historic inability of political leaders to generate the kind of policies that are conducive to growth, low inflation and job creation leads to justifiable conclusions of a 'crisis of leadership'. Political leaders are blamed for failing to address socio-economic problems in general and external shocks in particular.

In addition, and oft ignored in the assessment of Jamaica's economic underperformance is the fact that the 1950s and 1960s when Jamaica experienced remarkable economic growth were also periods of relative political stability. The new nation inspired business confidence, particularly in domestic commodities such as tourism and bauxite/alumina and so was able to stake claim in the new world economy. The 1970s

in Jamaica, on the other hand, was a period of unrest. The country's two main political parties, the JLP and the PNP struggled for power in a bloody political civil war that polarized the country, unnerved the international community and frightened investors. Jamaica's economic situation is thus bad for its brand. As an impoverished society, Jamaica is largely unattractive to foreign investors. This loss in confidence is associated with high costs of doing business in the country, including high-energy charges, inadequate provision of public infrastructure services (both physical and non-physical) and increases in security costs because of high levels of crime, as I discuss below. Economic instability also lowers the stocks of available social and human capital, thereby weakening the foundation for long-term economic growth and prosperity.

A 'dangerous paradise' – Crime and Brand Jamaica

When asked what they thought about the current quality of Brand Jamaica, one citizen sums it up with the following:

Violence, music, laissez faire-ism – in terms of pseudo-liberal kind of lifestyle; if you want to find somewhere to go where you can get away with breaking the law, that kind of thing, Jamaica would factor in on the radar; very violent, gangs that you fear; criminals who you should fear, scammers, a place to honeymoon, good ganja, yes and depending on how granular you get, a stable democracy in the Caribbean region, religious tolerance etc. (Personal Communication, 2013).

Crime remains Jamaica's biggest problem, and has the most damaging impact on the country's international image. Leading criminologists describe Jamaica as wedged in the midst of an intractable and profound 'crisis of public safety' (Harriott, 2000). This deteriorating security situation is definitively tied to Jamaica's reputation of having one of the highest rates of violent crime in the world and the most murder-prone. Homicide rates have mushroomed dramatically over the last two decades. In 1990, for example, Jamaica's homicide rate of 22.4 per 100 000 was

four times above the global average of 5.5. By 2001, it had risen to 44 per 100 000 after a record 1138 murders that year. This homicide rate was then only surpassed by Colombia (63 per 100 000) and South Africa (52 per 100 000) (see Harriott, 2000; Acosta, 2005). With limited success at tackling violent crime, Jamaica's murder rate climbed to close to 1500 by the end of 2004. Although murders ebbed in 2012 to 1097, following the extradition to the United States of top criminal boss Christopher 'Dudus Coke', by the end of 2013, homicides again jumped to 1200.

This extraordinary rate of violent crime has not only undermined the rule of law in Jamaica, but also elevated the level of citizen vulnerability, as well as the fear (of crime) by visitors. The presence of garrison communities ruled by criminal overlords called 'dons', with extraordinary political connections, and influence; the emergence of a drug economy at home, and the integration into the international narco-trafficking industry and with it a notable shift in the position of Jamaican gangs in transnational crime (Harriott, 2000; Phillips, 2002; Johnson & Soeters, 2008), has underscored Jamaica's reputation as lawless and unsafe. The perception that Jamaica is a kind of 'dangerous paradise' has also increased with the escalation of non-violent crimes such as scams and fraud in recent years. The US Federal Trade Commission, for example, reported that, in 2011 alone, the Jamaican lottery scam generated some 30 000 complaints from American citizens, who were scammed between \$30 million and \$1 billion per year. The lottery scam has also generated significant negative international media attention for Jamaica, forcing American police departments to issue warnings to its elderly residents to be wary of calls from Jamaica's 876 area code (see Huffington Post, 2012). Although the Jamaican authorities have cracked down on scammers through arrests and new legislation, it is without question that the proliferation of scams and fraud has negative consequences for Jamaica's international reputation and brand image. Scams compromise the money transfer mechanism by which crucial remittances vital to the economy flows into the country from the Jamaican Diaspora, thwart potential investments and leave

the impression to an international onlooker of an insecure, dangerous country.

Former Prime Minister, Patterson, in an apocalyptic remark in 1993, confirmed the centrality of Jamaica's crime problem when he remarked: 'It affects us all. It threatens our personal security; it severely affects the investment climate. It impacts negatively on our tourism industry. All our efforts at economic stabilization and development will come to nothing if the monster of crime is not controlled' (Patterson, 1993, Budget Speech to Parliament). It is no longer possible for Jamaica to think of crime as a minor social problem. It remains the number one concern for most citizens. Indeed, over the last 50 years, Jamaica has undergone a fundamental revolution in the values, attitudes and behavioral norms, which have guided the society. This has manifested itself in the intensification of crime and violence, civil disorder and other manifestations of social deviance (Munroe, 1999; Gray, 2004; Johnson, 2011, 2005, 2008; Boyd, 2004).

Arguably, the most serious manifestation of Jamaica's declining social order and the gravest threat to the state in decades erupted in May 2010 when dissidents concentrated in the JLP stronghold of Tivoli Gardens, the constituency of then Prime Minister, Bruce Golding, barricaded themselves in to protect area leader and alleged criminal Christopher Dudas Coke. Coke was to be extradited to the United States to face drug and gun running charges. In attempting to halt the escalating political and security crisis, the Jamaican Government instituted a national state of emergency for the parishes of Kingston and St. Andrew for a month, and called in the military. This decision resulted in 74 civilian fatalities. These developments serve to reinforce popular perceptions of the Jamaican social landscape as 'aggressive, dangerous, unfriendly and impolite' (Abel, 2004). This view of the public sphere in Jamaica illustrates the breakdown of the social system and paints a bleak picture of the nation among its own citizens at home, those in the Diaspora, investors, tourists and other overseas populations. The overall situation challenges and contradicts the current 'no problem'; 'come and be alright' representation of Jamaica being projected

internationally. Ignoring crime and social disorder, and pretending it is a separate construct unrelated to Jamaica's overall image is unwise, only serving to weaken the brand and limit its potential.

Corruption perceptions and Brand Jamaica

Another major challenge to Brand Jamaica is the perception of corruption. Despite recording respectable levels of human development, Jamaica is ranked among the worst in the world with regard to governance indicators such as corruption. For example, of the 25 countries measured in a 2010 Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP, 2010), the people of Jamaica (and Trinidad and Tobago) perceived their country as the most corrupt. External perceptions are the same. Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, which measures corruption among public officials and politicians around the world – where 10 is the most clean and 1 the most corrupt, ranks Jamaica below 5, among the most corrupt in the world (Transparency International, 2013). This negative appraisal is bad for Jamaica's public image. International organizations such as Transparency International assert that corruption destabilizes a society as it thwarts public investment and undermines the democratic process. In a recent report, the Jamaican anti-corruption agency, National Integrity Alliance (NIA) suggests that corruption also increases poverty and causes a brain drain where former contributors to the economy may choose to leave because of frustration. Corruption, NIA contends, causes citizens to lose faith in their political leaders, leading to a system that is neither transparent nor trustworthy.

Recent surveys carried out by the Centre for Leadership and Governance at the University of the West Indies and Vanderbilt University affirm a general decline in quality governance in Jamaica. The findings of a 2010 poll revealed that the levels of trust Jamaicans have in social and political institutions and in public officials is generally low. On a 100-point scale, the police and political parties were the least trusted, receiving mean scores of 33 and 34, respectively. This is while

the army and the mass media enjoyed the highest levels of trust scoring 66 and 61 points, respectively. The Electoral Office and Supreme Court received marginal scores of 50 points (Powell *et al*, 2010). It is clear that the Jamaican population has lost confidence in their government. Many share the view that the absence of quality governance at home has negative consequences for Brand Jamaica in a global context. Indeed, according to one Jamaican executive interviewed for this study:

I would say it must be very hard for you to convince anybody to do business in a country which ranks as low as Jamaica does in the world competitiveness report, the doing business report and where you have such heinous crimes occurring; where corruption is so high; with a justice system that is operating, functioning but not at a level which causes a lot of confidence on the part of the Jamaican population. I don't know how you go and tell people to come and do business in Jamaica when they have other options (Interview, August 2013).

Human rights and Brand Jamaica

Jamaica's human rights record has long been a stain on its public international image, and as such a troubling issue for Jamaican authorities responsible for the country's brand. The weak observance of civil and human rights in areas of law enforcement, children rights, violence against women and girls, as well as gay rights has received much international media attention. With regard to law enforcement, the historical record on Jamaica illustrates a systematic practice of violence by members of the country's security forces. Police crime statistics reveal that an average of 140 people are shot and killed annually by the Jamaican police, one of the highest rates of lethal killings in the world. In 2001, Amnesty International (2001), in a damning report on Jamaica's human rights situation, argues that 'the manner in which deadly force is frequently employed, and the absence of prompt, thorough and effective investigations are consistent with, in many instances, with a pattern of extra-judicial killings'.

In 2013, 12 years on, Amnesty International reports that high levels of gang-related murders and killings by the police persist in inner city communities, and a bad record with regard to holding the responsible officers to account and providing justice or reparations to the families of victims. Indeed, the report suggests that of the 2220 fatal shootings by the police recorded between 2000 and 2010, only two police officers have been reportedly convicted (Amnesty International, 2012). Amnesty International (2013) also reports that no significant progress has been made in the investigations into alleged human rights violations during the 2010 state of emergency. It must be acknowledged that the Government of Jamaica has, since early 2014, begun a Commission of Enquiry into the 2010 event. In terms of the rights of children, and violence against women and children, Jamaica is not faring well. For example, international organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty helped to draw global attention to the controversial issue of child offenders being housed alongside adults in prisons. The reports suggest that:

Children as young as ages twelve and thirteen are locked up for long period of up to six months in filthy and overcrowded police lockups ... The children are often held in the same cells as adults accused of serious crimes, vulnerable to victimization by their cellmates, and ill-treatment by abusive police; and virtually always they are held in poor conditions, deprived of proper sanitary facilities, adequate ventilation, adequate food, exercise, education, and basic medical care. Some of these children have not been detained on suspicion of criminal activity but have been locked up only because they are deemed "in need of care and protection". (see Human Rights Watch, 1999)

This is while sexual violence against women remains a real concern. The rate of sexual violence against women in Jamaica is very high. In 2011, the police recorded 748 cases of rape, a 6 per cent increase when compared with 704 reported in 2010 (*The Jamaica Gleaner*, 2012). Sexual assault is the most common cause of injury for women. Amnesty International argues that violence against

women in Jamaica persists because the state has failed to tackle discrimination against women, allowing social and cultural attitudes, which encourage discrimination and violence. This, the organization, argues violates the government's most basic treaty obligations under the UN Convention for the Elimination of Violence against Women, among others. It also suggests that the Jamaican Government has not adequately addressed shortcomings in national legislation related to marital rape, incest or sexual harassment, thereby encouraging impunity and leaving women without the protection of the law. This situation does not augur well for Jamaica's public image. The treatment of women and children speaks loudly about the quality of a nation's brand.

Yet it may be homophobic violence where Jamaica's human rights come under the most international scrutiny. Jamaica is perceived to be among the world's most homophobic countries. In its 2013 report, noted human rights organization, Amnesty International reports that attacks, harassment and threats were increasing against members of the Jamaican lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. The global media has given international attention to many of these violent incidents. The Jamaican law also expressly prohibits homosexual expression. Section 76 of the Offences Against the Person Act (1864) prohibits the 'abominable crime of buggery' for which the punishment is imprisonment at hard labor for up to 10 years. Although Amnesty and other international and local human rights bodies consistently criticize Jamaica for retaining what it sees as an outdated 'buggery law' on the grounds that the law is unconstitutional and serves to promote homophobia within the culture, no attempt has been made to amend or repeal it.

In reality, successive governments have in effect, given legitimacy to gay discrimination. For example, former Jamaican Prime Minister Bruce Golding, in a 2008 interview with the BBC's *HardTalk* program, declared that 'there is no room for gays in my Cabinet' (BBC World, 2008). Current Prime Minister, Portia Simpson Miller – while declaring her support for gays in her 2011 re-election campaign, stating that no one would be

discriminated against because of their sexual orientation – have made no attempts to remove the discriminatory laws or raise the debate about gay rights in the Jamaica parliament. In fact, according to Williams (2000, p. 110), 'the notion of a gay or homosexual person is not one that has any standing worthy of protection in Jamaica. The law, of course, is merely a reflection of wider social attitudes where the reality of a gay person or a gay community is not readily acknowledged'.

That gayness is not given political legitimacy or allowed to enter the Jamaican 'national arena' is explicitly manifested in Jamaica's music culture, which paradoxically, has been the most strident pillar of the country's global brand. Although Jamaica's music is celebrated around the world, and Reggae and dancehall artistes have helped to articulate the concerns and grievances of the poor, often mounting a lyrical counter war against oppressive power structures, and have been at the forefront of the global movement against inequality and injustice, some of its contemporary music transmits intensely violent, homophobic messages and lend support to antagonistic values and uncivil norms (Boyne, 2003; Johnson, 2011). Popular dancehall songs bear a call to arms against 'batty bwoy' (male homosexuals) and lesbians calling for their murder. A textual analysis of popular dancehall songs reveals that dancehall artistes publicly issue threats to members of the gay community with impunity.

The anti-gay political stance assumed by the country's political leadership, the Church and members of the artistic community is detrimental to Jamaica's international image. It sends a negative signal about Jamaica to potential investors, other countries that look to Jamaica as a regional leader, tourists and other members of the international community. The unwillingness to engage in change activism or to challenge prevailing attitudes toward homosexuality in the culture has the effects of isolating Jamaican artistes and prevents them from securing economic and other advantages in a global arena. For example, because of aspects of Jamaican music being tagged 'murder music' in some quarters, Jamaican artistes are subject to an international campaign that urges sponsors to pull funding from offending artistes, pressures venues

not to book them and/or stage boycotts and protests when they perform (Nelson, 2010). In addition, Jamaican artistes have, in recent years, been banned from performing at international venues across the United States, Europe, Canada and the Caribbean. The United States has also revoked the visas of several artistes preventing them from traveling to that country (*The Guardian*, 2004; McKenzie, 2010).

These are worrying developments. People outside the country, including Jamaicans in the Diaspora, investors, students and tourists, have expectations of political stability, the rule of law, tolerance and respect for justice. Global media coverage of bad governance, poverty, which itself breeds social ills; crime, corruption and failings of justice and homophobia, have persisted and have served to weaken the Jamaican brand. Although there is continuity in the commitment of Jamaicans in the Diaspora to their homeland, and they continue speak with pride about their country, some commentators argue that there is a great deal of disappointment and sometimes embarrassment among the Diasporic community. It is clear that on the platform of sports, music and destination tourism, Jamaica's brand remains famous and strong, but in many ways, it is a severely damaged brand. Yet it is the kind of brand that is so formidable that nobody gives up on it. So what now?

Moving forward: Branding Jamaica into the future

What are some of the efforts that the Government of Jamaica can and should undertake to reimagine, reframe and reconstruct the Jamaican national image? First, Jamaica, for its small population size and economy, is an undeniably powerful national brand and needs to take full advantage of its current presence on the world stage. As Jamaica finds itself in a problematic and perplexing situation of prolonged negative images and labels (even alongside positive perceptions), it is important that the Jamaican Government seek to cater to more than just the current sun-sand-sea and all-inclusive resorts/tourism-centric model as the singular expression of Jamaican identity in the world, and illustrate and express the true

complexity of Jamaica's brand. To successfully accomplish this, the Jamaican authorities must undertake the following.

Improve governance

The Jamaican brand cannot be distinguished from the lived reality and material conditions of the Jamaican people, as well as the experience of those who come to the island. The Jamaican Government must initiate and expand policy with respect to building world class infrastructure and facilities (roads, ports, transportation and so on), improving education, growing the economy, cutting unemployment, lessening corruption, reducing crime levels and attendant to this, improving human rights and reforming the justice system. The political leadership must also seek to fast track efforts at 'de-tribalizing' the country's politics (that is, making it less partisan and polarized) and at 'de-garrisonization' (dismantling communities controlled by criminals). The Jamaican authorities must also make efforts to invest in the people of Jamaica in order to improve their quality of life with regard to housing, health, environment, youth and sports as well as taking care of women and children. Making these crucial developments at home are inextricably tied to how people see and talk about Jamaica, and thus imperative at improving Jamaica's reputation and re-imagining the Jamaican brand in a global arena.

Establish a comprehensive and coherent Brand Jamaica strategy

It is clear that Jamaica needs to take control of its own destiny. Rather than allow itself to be defined by external others, the country must establish a brand fashioned by Jamaicans for Jamaica. Establishing a comprehensive and coherent nation brand program is the appropriate direction for Jamaica to take, as a major step in addressing some of the current and future challenges to the country's economy and society. This strategy should include a coalition of government, business, non-government and citizen groups to start the process of understanding and managing the nation's brand. The government's national

development plan, Vision2030, based on consultations with a wide cross section of the society, seems a good start point for establishing national consensus on what Jamaica stands for, and its overall mission. Vision2030 anchors itself on making Jamaica ‘the place of choice to live, work, raise families and do business’. However, there needs to be a national ‘buy in’ by all sectors of the society. Jamaican citizens ought to be able to agree on, and articulate what the country is about, and what it wants to achieve in the next 10 or 20 years. In order to achieve this national consensus, Jamaican authorities must resolve their greatest deficit – and perhaps the biggest shortcoming of current Brand Jamaica initiatives, which itself comes down to one core requirement of leadership – effective communication.

The importance of public relations

The fierce competition among places to gain positive media coverage, and to attract tourists has made advertising the publicity tool of choice for place marketers. The World Tourism organization reports that governments spend some \$350 million annually on destination marketing (Avraham and Ketter, 2008). Although extremely costly, advertising has the benefit of giving campaign managers direct control over the message and its timing. Yet advertising has the disadvantage of consumers’ tendency to distrust ads and question their credibility. It is thus important for Jamaican authorities to supplement its repertoire of Jamaica’s promotion strategies with effective public relations. Public relations aim to build and sustain good relationships between an organization and its various publics on whom its success or failure depends. It does so by obtaining favorable publicity, building up a good public image, and handling unfavorable publicity, rumors, stories or events when these relationships go awry (Cutlip and Center, 2009). Deploying neutral mediated tools such as press connections, event publicity and lobbying to portray a place positively, public relations are vital components in place promotion.

At present, Jamaica public relations efforts largely takes place through spokespersons from the JAMPRO and tourism authorities (for

example, Jamaica Tourist Board, primarily the Ministers of Tourism), as well as external PR firms such as RuderFinn, New York. Generally, public relations people focus their efforts on both the positive and negative aspects of a place’s image. For example, RuderFinn (New York), which handles publicity on behalf of the Jamaica Tourist Board, works to promote the nation’s positive side whereas local spokespersons tend to handle responses to negative news about the country. Recent examples include the death of Pakistan’s cricket coach during the Cricket World Cup in 2007, the violence and unrest associated with the extradition to the United States of wanted drug kingpin, Christopher ‘Dudus’ Coke in 2010 and the controversy surrounding VW’s Super bowl commercial in 2013. It is important that Jamaican decision makers effect more organized public relations and work to prevent or mitigate the fallout of bad publicity via global news coverage about crime and the myriad social problems that may cause Jamaica to be perceived as dangerous. Public relations, over and above advertising, thus become crucial particularly during times of sudden crisis. Recent negative publicity stemming from upsurges of crime and violence, natural disasters, economic instability, corruption and declining human rights require strategic public relations responses, not merely advertising.

Promote Jamaican intellectual property (the arts, sports, history and business)

It bears repeating that the articulation of Jamaican identity, as stated, should begin at home. Promoting the country’s credentials in the creative arts, sports, business, as well as its unique history and the genius of its people, as part of a coherent national brand build strategy is required.

The arts

Within the context of Jamaica’s efforts to fight its way out of a severe economic downturn, the arts and culture has a fundamental role to play in getting the nation on track. The arts in general (dance, drama, fine arts), and music in particular

are a substantial part of what Jamaica is about. The country's diverse and vibrant culture represent its 'calling card' abroad and the most dominant expression of Jamaican identity at home. Jamaican culture – expressed in popular songs, dance and dramatic theater– has been important especially during difficult times. Reggae itself has largely been a reaction to society and a sort of soporific for the political dissatisfaction of the population with poor governance and a substandard way of life. Yet this music form has managed to become part of the global mainstream, with many of its artistes known worldwide.

Reggae has been part of the political expression of oppressed people's worldwide particularly those engaged in various liberation struggles throughout the 1960s and 70s onward. Thanks to artistes such as Bob Marley, Jimmy Cliff, Burning Spear and a plethora of others, Reggae's revolutionary message of peace, equality and justice continue to resonate around the world, and continues to be so recognized. For example, in 2000, the BBC named Bob Marley's 'One Love' as the song of the century, while, in a piece entitled 'The Best of the Century', *Time Magazine*, listed Marley's 1977 album 'Exodus', the best album of the twentieth century stating that 'the album is a political and cultural nexus drawing inspiration from the Third World, then giving voice to it the world over' (*Jamaica Gleaner*, 2007).

Jamaica also popularized the dreadlock hairstyle worldwide and gave widespread global appeal to the spiritual ideology of Rastafari, an indigenous religion that began in Jamaica in the 1930s. Indeed, the majority Afro-Jamaican population laid the foundation for the nation's 'rich national culture by retaining their sense of spiritual values, by creating a vivid creole language, preserving their natural love for drama, music, song, drumming, for laughter, sympathy and wit' (Sherlock and Bennett, 1998). All of this gives Jamaica rights to an enormous intellectual property that must be leveraged to add value to the economy.

Sports

Jamaican authorities must not only position sport, particularly athletics, as a part of the expression of

Jamaican identity but it must hasten to build a viable sports economy, including sport tourism, now valued at \$632 billion, 14 per cent of the overall tourism product (Franklyn, 2009; UNWTO, 2009; Beckford, 2007). Jamaica's astonishing accomplishments in sport is well-known. At the London Olympics in 2012, the country recognized 64 years of participation in the Summer Olympic Games stretching from its debut at the London Games in 1948. The nation's dazzling performances at these Games are well-known. At the Beijing Games of 2008, Jamaica captured its largest medal haul of 12, winning both the popular men's and women's 100 meter sprint. Indeed, it was the first time – since the men from the United States did it in 1912 – that athletes from a single country won all the medals in the 100 meter races (Franklyn, 2009).

Jamaican iconic sprinter Usain Bolt (deemed the fastest man in the world), alongside compatriots Asafa Powell, Shelly Ann Fraser-Pryce and Veronica Campbell Brown have set new bars of achievement in world athletics, earning the nation the moniker 'The Sprint Factory'. Although track and field is where Jamaica has had the most dominant presence, producing world records for well over 5 decades, Jamaica has also produced internationally acclaimed athletes in multiple sporting fields, including boxing, swimming, cycling, netball, football, volleyball, weightlifting, wrestling and bobsled, and have won multiple medals across these disciplines. Its historic qualification and participation in the bobsled competition at the Winter Olympics in 1988 (Montreal Canada) – which became the subject of the popular Disney film, 'Cool Runnings', and Sochi, Russia in 2014; as well as the participation of the 'Reggae Boyz' at the Football World Cup in France 1998 are remarkable. These combined achievements have the potential to catapult the nation into a global sports brand, with huge potential to contribute to the Jamaican economy (see Beckford, 2007).

Exploit the 'Made in Jamaica' label

Jamaican authorities should seek to capitalize on the 'Made in Jamaica' label to gain 'country

equity’ and economic traction for its popular export commodities such as Blue Mountain Coffee, Wrap and Nephew Jamaica Rum, Red Stripe Beer and Jerk Sauce. Country equity is essentially an emotional value that stems from consumers’ association of a brand with a country. In global marketing, perceptions and attitudes toward particular countries often extend to products and brands known to originate in those countries. These perceptions can be positive or negative, and is impacted by past promotion, product reputation and product evaluation and experience (Viosca *et al*, 2005). For example, on the positive side, in the same way that Italy is associated with style, Japan with technology, Brazil with football, Jamaica is currently linked with entertainment, notably Reggae, tourism and athletics, but can also take advantage of its association with certain products that carry the ‘Made in Jamaica’ label.

Jamaican manufacturers and business interests must become more alert to the ‘country of origin effect’ on the market’s perception of a country’s products and services and seek to improve the brand equity of its export commodities. For example, given the increasing flood of other coffee brands on the global market, Blue Mountain Coffee must find a way to stand out and still be the coffee of choice for consumers of this beverage. Other products such as Jamaica’s Jerk sauce, rum and Red Stripe beer and other products that manufacturers want to become competitive in the global market require immediate attention. Jamaican marketers for example, should seek to develop and strengthen the impressions global consumers have of its products. Brands with greater equity are less vulnerable to competitive markets and crises. They also benefit from greater trade cooperation and support. It is also important that Jamaica improve the brand of its products in the global marketplace through evaluating choice of labels, packaging and positioning in new markets beyond the Diasporic community.

The Jamaican people

The Jamaican people must be positioned at the center of Jamaica’s national and international

Table 1: Requirements to transform Brand Jamaica

<i>Current state of brand</i>	<i>Future state of brand</i>
1. Jamaican brand identity formed externally; limited and based on stereotypes	Need for a locally derived, and diverse identity involving all stakeholders across the Jamaican society
2. Prolonged crises – Violent crime, corruption, unemployment, debt and so on.	Requires strategic and intentional response to address crises and diminish impact (negative perceptions) on target audience
2. Positive features makes Brand Jamaica formidable	Requires intentional (versus accidental) branding beyond the tourism-focused sun-sea model

identity. The remarkable story of Jamaican achievement must be told through the prism of its people, and the Jamaican people ought to be made more visible in global understanding of Jamaica. That the Jamaica Tourism Board in its recent campaign (2013 Come to Jamaica and Feel Alright) chose to use a white American mimicking the Jamaican accent is regrettable. Jamaica boasts an exceptionally gifted people, many of whom have made a remarkable and substantial impact in their various fields and have helped to shape the nation’s image in the international arena. Others such as the maroons, Rastafarians and early freedom fighters and modern nationalists have all contributed to the country’s unique history. All of these developments characterize the identity of Jamaica and Jamaicans. This aspect must find place in current Brand Jamaica campaign.

Overall, in establishing a comprehensive national brand build strategy, Jamaican authorities have to come to terms with the current quality of Brand Jamaica, take deliberate steps to tackle the challenges impacting the brand, and exploit its positive features. This, I suggest, involves addressing the three major planks, as outlined in Table 1.

CONCLUSION

On the basis of the preceding, I make the following summary conclusions. Despite its popularity in the world community for its astounding successes in sport, music and destination tourism, Jamaica remains a strong,

famous but damaged brand. Although exoticized in global media and endorsed by Jamaican tourism authorities as an island paradise of beautiful beaches, lavish resorts and a laidback lifestyle, Jamaica, is nevertheless experiencing enduring crisis – economic instability, unemployment, high levels of crime and violence, corruption and some human rights issues. These conflicting impressions, and ‘either or’ narratives ultimately serves to weaken the Jamaican brand in international public opinion. They oversimplify the nation, and do not tell the complete story of this remarkable country.

It is without question that good advertising has been essential in creating the model tourism destination brand enjoyed by Jamaica today. However, ‘that’s not the same thing as a positive, famous, well-rounded, nation brand that stimulates attention, respect, good relations and good business’ (Anholt, 2006). The Jamaican authorities, through its Jamaica Tourism Board, Jamaica Promotions and other agencies, ought to call upon the multiple, complex narratives that define Jamaica in its promotion of the country, not just articulate a singular sun–sand–sea narrative of Jamaica. It is worth adopting what Avraham and Ketter (2008) calls a ‘multi-step model’ for altering a place’s image. This model attempts to identify and acknowledge the specific crisis (or crises) impacting a place, pinpoint the target publics for whom the place tries to alter its image and devising the most suitable strategy or a mix of strategies to respond. Current strategies deployed by Jamaica are indicative of a ‘business as usual’ approach – ranging from disregard for or partial acknowledgment of a crisis, to moderate coping measures. Future strategies must adopt a more proactive versus passive approach. These may include, among others, delivering a counter message, spinning liabilities into assets, ridiculing stereotypes of Jamaica and/or branding contrary to the stereotype.

Fundamentally, Jamaican authorities must ensure that the articulation of Brand Jamaica begins at home, that Jamaicans taking the lead in defining themselves. Every Jamaican organization, company and citizen must have the same mission in mind; their energies and behavior ought to be channeled in the same direction that is positive and

productive for the country’s reputation. All Jamaicans should be able to articulate the same powerful, credible and interesting story about what their country is about, what its tourism, sports and cultural products are about, what the nation stands for and do not stand for. This consensus is crucial to Jamaica’s brand success.

It is also critical that Jamaica’s authorities accelerate steps to address the enduring challenges of governance it confronts, including *inter alia*, economic underdevelopment, unemployment, crime, corruption and a decline in human rights if it hopes to gain control over its public image. It also needs to build on the power of its creative industries and establish new intellectual property, and align this innovation with a comprehensive (as opposed to cosmetic) national strategy for enhancing the nation’s reputation, and achieving its economic and social goals.

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