

**Pan-Caribbean Sustainable Development:  
Economics of Carnival**

Jorge Luis Morejón

Department of Creative and Festival Arts  
University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

# Retail and Wholesale Value

- This paper focuses on Carnival from the angle of economics.
- Clearence Jagroopsingh calls it *carniomics*
- Carnival is a Pan-Caribbean economic enterprise with retail and wholesale value for the Tourist Industry
- The profit generated by Carnival can turn the event into one of the region's first industries

# Tourist's Interests

- Caribbean Carnival's history and culture
- Caribbean culture through Carnivals
- Cultural performances that take place within Caribbean Carnival's frame
- Caribbean Carnival in the Global Market with local sensitivity

# Carnival's Socio-Cultural Density

- Carnival's open space absorbs the influences of those that will come in contact with it from the outside: *tourists*
- Tourists add to Carnival "*sociocultural density*," which means, the "critical mass or high concentration of differences (ethnological, political, social, etc.) that makes it valuable.
- Essayist Antonio Benitez Rojo, establishes an interesting proportion: "given conditions that are favorable, *the more sociocultural density, the greater the carnival*" (306).

# International body of tourists

- Having an international body of tourists visiting the Caribbean during carnival serves two purposes:
  - the increase of carnival's sociocultural density
  - the expansion of its market value.

# Tourism as an Industry

John Lea in his book *Tourism and Development in the Third World*, states the reason why Tourism is a suitable enterprise for Caribbean countries:

- only few of the poorest Caribbean developing countries have obvious income-earning alternatives to tourism
- Adoption of tourism as one of the industries to replace the former agricultural industry.
- To develop tourism, a careful account of the complex patterns of costs and benefits involved needs to be established.
- Several key ideas posed by Lea may be useful in the preliminary considerations related to the decision-making process required to develop the industry. The following **key ideas** illustrate the challenge at hand:

# KEY IDEAS

- Tourism accounts for some 6% of all world trade
- Most of the industry is located in Europe and North America with only 1/8 of the market shared within the other world regions.
- The most rapid growth of the industry in recent years has been in the Third World.

# KEY IDEAS

- Tourism is an invisible export with the unique characteristic that the purchasers of its products have to travel to a foreign destination, in person, to consume them.
- The tourist market is controlled by intermediary companies some of them transnational in character which have expanded to include interests in all major sectors of the industry.
- Tourism results in a complex series of economic, environmental and social impacts in host societies.
- Assessing these costs and benefits in the Third World is complicated by difficulties in measurement and lack of local control over the industry and its economic development.



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

According to Stephen C. Smith and G. Rees

Wealth production,

Enhancement of Health

Education

Infrastructure

Sustainable increase in living standards/ per capita income

**Environmental Protection**

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

According to Michael P. Todaro

- Improvement in the quality of human life
- The rise in income
- Job creation
- Consumption habits
- Education
- Health status
- Infrastructure

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

According to Business Economist L.F. Abbot's

- Economic Development is the equitable access and potential for **enhancing quality of life involving all aspects of human experience** through open access to improved quality of life by means of fair trading practices.

According to Professors S. Arthur and S.M. Sheffrin

- Economic Development is the **social, political and economic** wellbeing of citizens in order to **transform** society.

# Economic Development

According to economist J. Stiglitz

- Economic Development means the progression from traditional to modern social relations, which requires improvement in **education**, **incomes**, **acquisition of skills** and **access to employment**.

According to Development Anthropologist Rochelle Spencer

- Thus, borrowing from development anthropologist Rochelle Spencer, in order to affect economic development there needs to be **sustainable transformation** in all areas.

# Economic Development

According to T. Dyllick and K. Hockers,

- Meeting the needs of present generations does not imply; compromising the needs of the future generations. It means using the various taxonomies and typologies of **sustainability** already established to influence “a continuum ranging from defensive to proactive approaches” (leuphna.de).

A.M. Hasna's

- It also means to assess the conflicting interests of the different competing economic goals in order to evaluate, in A.M. Hasna's terms, the specific function of certain outcomes. These outcomes can be narrowed down to the pursuit of **economic prosperity**, **environmental** and social quality in order to generate the social **infrastructure** and **human development** proposed by the economics of carnival.

# WHY CARNIVAL?

- Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival is economically successful
- The complexity of its economic structure forces this study to focus on the mas bands system.
- Based on size categorizations by the National Carnival Bands Association (NCBA) in Trinidad and Tobago, mas bands are classified according to the number of people who perform in it.
- The categorizations are extra-Large, large, medium, small and mini mas bands.

# EXTRA LARGE BANDS

- Extra-Large Mas Bands are composed of over 3000 persons minimum with an individual cost of TT \$ 2,000.00 to TT \$ 4,000.00.
- The average individual cost is TT \$ 3,000.00.
- Each extra large mas band makes a minimum of TT \$ 9, 000 000.00 per carnival and a maximum of TT \$ 12,000 000.00.
- Five Extra large mas bands in Trinidad, make a minimum of TT \$ 45,000 000.00 in revenue every year, a maximum of TT \$ 60,000,000.00.

# VISITORS/TOURISTS

- According to Caribbean Travel expert Robert Curley, many visitors choose to "play mass" with one of the large, all-inclusive bands, like Tribe, Kaotic or Harts.
- If the amount of visitors that make it to Trinidad increase, the projection can be quite optimistic.
- Because of this, Trinidad and Tobago's carnival serves as a point of reference when engaging in future analysis and predictions on economic development in the region.



# ECONOMIC LIMITATIONS

- Trinidad and Tobago's Carnival is a national festival with very little exposure to outside visitors. This may be the case for other smaller Carnivals in the region.
- Even though each country's Tourism Authority Office offers up-to-date information on upcoming Carnivals, exhibitions, and general festivities, the Caribbean experience is fragmented by the fact that dates may change from year to year and from island to island.
- To our knowledge, there has been no successful attempt to implement a Pan-Caribbean initiative to link the Carnival experiences from country to country.
- This study projects the need for a careful study on the possible routes that international tourists, interested in visiting the Caribbean as a form cultural experience, can access by offering a possible journey.

# OVERCOMING LIMITATIONS

- Grouping Carnivals by dates
- Linking Carnival dates with Cruise Lines
- Create liaisons and infrastructure between governments of the different islands, the port authorities and the cruise lines.
- Advertising the cultural resources implicit in the production and management of Carnivals in the region and how easy could be to expose tourists to Caribbean history and culture if the cruise lines create the proposed itinerary.

# ITINERARY

Route of the Norwegian Dawn sailing roundtrip from Miami. This map resembles the kind of route that would make a trip through the Caribbean islands and their Carnivals a successful enterprise.



# CALENDAR OR GROUPING SAMPLE

- **December – January**
  - Bahamas celebrates Junkanoo
  - Turks and Caicos celebrates Junkanoo
  - Puerto Rico celebrates San Sebastian
- Virgin islands: St Croix celebrates New Year's

# MATCHING CARNIVAL DATES BY GROUPS WITH CRUISE LINE ITINERARY

The Eastern Caribbean cruise visits the Bahamas, US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

**IT IS POSSIBLE, CONVENIENT, PROFITABLE**

# THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- This study uses the **Functional Approach** proposed by Lea to explain the place of tourism and carnival in the development of third world economies.
- The functional approach is an analytical approach to the complex issues of tourism defined as an activity or a process which can be broken down into three main subdivisions:
  - the dynamic phase, which deals with the movement of tourists to and from the destination.
  - the static element, which focuses on the stay of the tourist.
  - the economic, physical and social environment of the tourist's destination

# Always Carnival

- When reading the *Overview of the Caribbean's Events and Festivals* website, one finds that the islands of the Caribbean host hundreds of Carnivals, festivals and holiday celebrations every year.
- Special events abound in the region making it a desirable destination regardless of which island country one decides to visit.
- However, the celebration that allows the widest range of cultural manifestations within the period of February to May, extended from December to August, continues to be Carnival.

# CONCLUSION

- Carnival has become the most prevalent and massive celebration of the Caribbean basin, as well as the most representative of Caribbean culture at a larger scale.
- The university system can do a lot to educate professionals in the field of Tourism to enhance the experience of those who come to the Caribbean looking for art forms representative of the Caribbean's multicultural environment.
- Creating partnerships with the private tourist sector and the ministries of tourism of the different Caribbean countries, would make Carnival a great forum to produce money, art and cultural connectivity while maintaining a level of sustainable economic development beneficial to all Caribbean countries.