

# Destination Branding and First Impressions

## An Analysis of Grenada's Tourism Promotion

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## Abstract

As the tourism industry grows so too does the competition between tourist destinations as they compete to attract visitors. The concept of Destination Branding offers countries a framework in which they can differentiate themselves from other destinations offering similar experiences. The promotional efforts of a destination branding strategy are the first points of contact many potential visitors have with the destination. This is the point where their perceptions and first impressions are formed. This paper assesses the destination branding efforts of Grenada through its tourism promotional material. Grenada does not have a defined destination brand strategy, so the material portrays a diverse range of activities that represent the complete Grenadian destination experience. There are some shortcomings in the presentation of information that if not addressed can ultimately impact the first impressions of potential visitors.

*Keywords: Destination branding, first impressions, tourism, Grenada*

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*Grenada the Island of Spice, has everything in it that's nice.  
And when you think of beauty spots, Grenada really has a lot.  
You can visit the Grand Anse, have bathing picnics and romance.  
You can relax on the sand and get a beautiful suntan.  
We are from Grenada if you please. The Spice Island of the West Indies.  
We are happy, peaceful and gay; beautiful and healthy in every way!  
And a warm sun shines every day!<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Author unknown. Written prior to Grenada's Independence from Britain in 1974

## Introduction

Tourism, as defined by the World Tourism Organization in 1994, is the “activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one year for leisure, business and other purposes” (Middleton, Fyall, Morgan, and Ritchie, 2009, p. 3). Since 1950 the international tourism industry has grown exponentially representing the world’s fastest growing industry. The tourism industry plays an important role in international commerce, with its revenue supporting the economies of several developing countries. In 2009, the World Tourism Organization reported export earnings of the international tourism industry as US\$ 852 billion (WTO, 2011).

Tourism is undeniably an important and profitable investment that countries around the world are starting to realize. This has contributed to the continued growth and development of the industry. As the industry grows so too does the competition between destination countries, as they compete to attract potential visitors. This competition has resulted in destinations rethinking their tourism promotion strategies. The Caribbean and Pacific islands are no longer the preferred sun, sea and sand destinations since the Mediterranean destinations also offer viable beach experiences. To survive the competition, destinations have had to analyze not just the experiences they offer, but ways in which these experiences would make them stand out.

Destination Branding provides the framework for the differentiation that destinations seek. In the same way that strong consumer product brands can influence

behavior and perceptions, and create expectations of quality, so too can a positive destination brand establish the destination as a place worth visiting (Morgan et al, 2010, p. xxv). The destinations that have successfully implemented branding strategies understand the ways destination branding can “help bridge any gaps between a destination’s strengths and potential visitors’ perceptions” (Morgan et al, 2010, p. 65). The material produced with a destination branding strategy is a way for potential visitors to form their first impressions of the destination. These first impressions are essential since they are most times the deciding making factor in the choice of where to vacation. The tourism promotional material – websites, magazines, brochures and advertisements – of a destination must not just list the available activities but capture the essence of the destination as well.

This paper is an analysis of the destination promotion efforts of Grenada, an island in the southern Caribbean. Grenada’s tourism industry is a major contributor to the nation’s economy. The industry has seen marked infrastructural development within the past two decades resulting in heavier promotion of Grenada as an ideal destination. Compared to the larger, more popular destinations Grenada has a much smaller tourism marketing budget, so attempting to replicate their marketing strategies is not feasible. Instead of focusing on wide-scale traditional advertising, Grenada needs to utilize all of its resources effectively to develop a promotional strategy that is creative, cost-effective and impactful.

This paper coincides with a recent announcement made by the Grenada Board of Tourism. Director of Tourism Mr. Simon Stiell announced the Board’s intention to

embark on a national tourism strategic plan for the further development of Grenada's tourism industry. According to Mr. Stiell, the plan "will not be an academic exercise...but an immediately useable, pragmatic, action orientated plan with the tools to guide Grenada's tourism industry through the current market challenges" (Barnacle newspaper, 2011). Mr. Stiell also emphasized the need to identify what Grenada represents as a destination and make a unified effort to promote Grenada based on this new strategy.

To analyze the current destination branding efforts employed by Grenada, tourism promotional material such as websites, magazines and brochures were reviewed. This material is the first point of contact for many potential visitors and this is where the first impressions are formed.

The concepts of nation and destination branding as discussed in the review of the existing literature provide the basis for the analysis of the promotional material. The paper concludes with recommendations for further research.

## Literature Review

### Branding

A Brand, defined by the American Marketing Association, is a “name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition” (AMA, 2011). Keller, as cited by Baker and Cameron (2008) defines a brand as “ a product, but one that adds other dimensions that differentiate it in some way from other products designed to satisfy the same need” (p. 85). Additional contributions to this definition recognize the perspective of the consumer. Brands are “clusters of functional and emotional values that promise a unique and welcome experience between a buyer and a seller” (Lynch and de Chernatony, as cited in Dinnie, 2008, p. 14).

The process of branding involves designing, planning and communicating the name and the identity, in an attempt to build or manage the reputation of the brand based on four different elements – brand identity, brand image, brand purpose and brand equity (Anholt, 2007, p. 4). According to Nandan (2005) brand identity relates to how the company strives to identify itself and “convey its individuality and distinctiveness to all its relevant publics” (p. 265). Brand image, as defined by Kotler as cited by Nandan (2005) is the “set of beliefs held about a particular brand” (p. 266). It is the consumer’s perception of the brand. The other two elements brand purpose and brand equity refer to the goals and value of the brand (Anholt, 2007, p. 5).

Baker and Cameron (2008) suggest that the goal of branding is to create an “emotional connection with consumers through the development of a unique personality or image for a product or service” (p. 86) and that it is a “two-way process that is developed *with* rather than *to* the consumer” (p. 86).

### Nation Branding & Competitive Identity

Like consumer products, countries also deal with competition and therefore need to differentiate themselves from their competitors. They find themselves needing to develop a nation brand that is the “unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all its target audiences” (Dinnie, 2008, p. 15). According to Keith Dinnie (2008) in Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice, the concept of applying branding techniques to countries is constantly growing and developing as countries develop nation brands to meet three objectives. These objectives are to attract tourists, stimulate inward investment and boost exports (p. 17). The development of a successful nation brand can also dispel any misconceptions allowing the country to re-position itself favorably (p.18).

Adding to the concept of applying branding techniques to countries is the concept of Competitive Identity. In Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions Simon Anholt (2007) uses the term competitive identity to describe the “synthesis of brand management with public diplomacy and with trade, investment, tourism and export promotion” (p. 3). Anholt (2007) refers to this synthesis as the *Hexagon of Competitive Identity* in which the six points of the hexagon represent

Tourism, Brands, Policy, Investment, Culture and People (p. 26). By having a clear understanding of what the country represents, and the direction for development, Anholt (2007) believes that through effective management of the points on the hexagon governments can develop a competitive national identity. Achieving this requires all stakeholders at each point of the hexagon to work together and align their efforts with the common national strategy (p. 27).

A key component for developing a competitive identity or nation branding strategy is identifying what the country, as a brand, represents. Dinnie (2008) refers to this as the brand essence, and is essentially the “heart and soul of the brand, what it stands for and what makes it unique” (p. 42). Finding the essence of a country or nation is much more complex than that of a consumer product, since this essence involves its culture – the language, music and traditions, history and its people, underscoring the need for involvement from all stakeholders (p. 111)

Once the branding strategy has been developed, Anholt (2007) argues against conventional marketing practices that tend to inject large sums of money into mass advertising. He suggests a more suitable approach of persuading the audience to absorb the information instead of pushing it towards them (p. 66). Anholt also stresses the importance of developing the right message for the right target audience using the most effective communication tools. He notes that in instances where the country is unknown to the audience, the country’s introduction needs to be targeted at the sectors that would yield the most positive results. Sometimes the country is known and targeted at

an audience not suited to fulfill the country's objectives, and therefore the attention should be directed to a more relevant target audience (Anholt, 2007, p. 67).

As seen in the *Hexagon of Competitive Identity*, tourism is a key player in the development of a Competitive Identity strategy. The tourism industry is an avenue through which a country can build its national reputation since the stakeholders in the industry are able to brand the country directly. In so doing, the respective target audiences are exposed to new information about the people, culture, history and development of that country (Anholt, 2007, p. 88).

Tourism is also one of the reasons why a country would see the need to develop a nation branding or competitive identity strategy. According to Anholt (2007), a country's need to stand out amongst tourism competitors is maximized by the "falling cost of international travel, the rising spending power of a growing international middle class and its constant search for new experiences compels more and more places to market themselves as tourist destinations" (p. 19).

### Destination Branding

As a concept, destination branding is still relatively new in terms of research and application of the framework, but as Anholt suggested tourism promotion has long been an element in the Competitive Identity framework. The two concepts go hand in hand as Nigel Morgan, Annette Pritchard and Roger Pride (2010) point out in Destination Branding: Creating the Unique Destination Proposition that "establishing a competitive identity must be the starting point for any destination manager or they run

the risk of promoting a destination which fails to be memorable... in a tourist's mind" (p. xxv).

Understanding this relationship is important because it provides an insight into what the destination as a brand represents. The authors also suggest that the "ultimate goal of any destination must be to ensure that visitors' experiences of that place - from the time when they are first exposed to its online and offline marketing communications to when they return home - is a positive one that encourages repeat visits and creates enthused ambassadors for the destination" (Morgan et al, 2010, p. xxv). In order to achieve this the brand promise has to be prominent through all forms of communication whether online, in print or in person (Morgan et al, 2010, p. xxv).

As part of the study Destination Branding: Insights and Practices from Destination Management Organizations, authors Carmen Blain, Stuart Levy and J.R Brent Ritchie (2005) interviewed several managers of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) to develop a definition for Destination Branding from the perspective of the DMO. According to the revised definition, destination branding is the:

Set of marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; that (2) consistently convey the expectation of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; that (3) serve to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the destination; and that (4) reduce consumer search costs and perceived risk.

Collectively, these activities serve to create a destination image that positively influences consumer destination choice (p. 337).

From this definition it is clear that the process of developing an effective destination brand is complex and requires all aspects of brand management. Five phases have been recognized in destination brand building. The first phase involves market investigation, analysis and strategic recommendations. During this phase the core values of the destination and its brand must be established, and they should be relevant, durable, communicable and salient (Morgan et al, 2010, p.68). The second phase is brand identity. According to the authors, “once the brand’s core values have been established, they should underpin and imbue every component of the brand identity, from photography, colour, typography and tone of voice to the brand marquee, so that the brand values are cohesively communicated” (Morgan et al, 2010, p. 68). Phase three is brand launch and introduction: communicating the vision (Morgan et al, 2010, p. 69). The fourth phase is brand implementation where every step taken through any form of media contributes to maintaining the brand presence, and the fifth phase is monitoring, evaluation and review (Morgan et al, 2010, p. 70).

In order for a destination brand to be successful, Graham Hankinson (2009) argues that, “destination brands must go beyond the communication of an image and make the brand promise a reality” (p. 111). To do this the destination must maintain a “competitive advantage in its delivery of a quality visitor experience” (Morgan, Pritchard, Piggot, 2003, p. 290). This underscores the importance of stakeholder

involvement to invest in the destination's physical environment, such as buildings, infrastructure (Hankinson, 2009, p. 111) and the overall tourism product.

Involvement by industry stakeholders is not only necessary for product development but also for the creation of the branding strategy. According to Steven Pike (2005) in Tourism Destination Branding Complexity, "there is a fine balance to be struck between community consensus and brand theory because a top down approach to destination brand implementation is likely to fail ... without buy-in from these stakeholders the strategy will flail" (p. 259). The emphasis, therefore, should be on "formulating the destination vision through a publicly-driven process based on stakeholder values and consensus, rather than through a more private expert-driven process based solely on market forces" (Morgan, Pritchard, Piggot, 2003, p. 289).

Creation of the destination branding strategy and product development - infrastructure and attractions - are not the only ways that stakeholders can be involved in the development and promotion of the destination brand. Everyone who comes in contact with the visitors is part of the strategy to make the brand promise a reality. The citizens of the destination, from the bus drivers and hotel employees to the friendly person on the street offering directions are just as important and have an impact on the destination brand image (Freire, 2007, p. 435) as the attractions and activities that are promoted as part of the destination brand. This is because the "people are the brand - the brand reflects the genius of the people... without some sense of the people and their particular nature and ability, a place is just an empty landscape" (Anholt, 2007, p. 75).

In 'Local People' A Critical Dimension for Place Brands Joao Freire (2007) considers "local people" - the residents of a destination - to be influential in the way consumers experience a geo-brand or destination since it has an effect on the psychological state of the consumer (p. 427). The "local people" dimension also has an impact on the overall destination image affecting brand loyalty and word of mouth promotion.

In illustrating the impact that tourism employees have on the geo-brand, Freire (2007) shows that the less aggressive and pushy employees are towards tourists minimizes the pressure on the tourists, which then leads to less stress imposed on them. This results in a more relaxed environment that allows greater satisfaction with the geo-brand thus encouraging positive word of mouth promotion and increased brand loyalty (p. 434). Freire (2007) also argues that the people of the destination can be used to differentiate their destination brand from the competition. For promotional purposes, where there is an existing favorable perception of the people, the "use of the local people might be a more persuasive theme than a beautiful landscape" (p. 436).

A challenge often encountered by destination management organizations is bringing life to the destination brand so that "visitors experience the promoted brand values and feel the authenticity of a unique place" (Morgan & Pritchard, 2005, p. 20). This involves meshing new, groundbreaking advertising approaches with public relations. This is an expensive task, especially for the smaller, niche market destinations whose marketing budgets are considerably smaller than their larger competitors.

Morgan and Pritchard (2005) argue in Promoting Niche Tourism Destination Brands: Case Studies of New Zealand and Wales that in these situations, “niche players have to outsmart rather than outspend the competition” (p. 21). Destination management organizations have to create “innovative, attention-grabbing communications on a tight budget and maximize the media spend” (p. 21). Utilizing lifestyle oriented public relations provides opportunities for an effective alternative to traditional mass media sloganeering (Morgan, Pritchard, Piggot, 2003, p. 209). Morgan, Pritchard and Piggot (2003), the authors of New Zealand and The Lord of the Rings: Leveraging Public and Media Relations argue this to be true since “tourists are increasingly seeking the lifestyle fulfillment and experience as opposed to seeing differentiation in the more tangible elements of the destination product such as accommodation and attractions” (p. 209).

The Internet has also presented itself as an alternative to heavy mass media advertising not only in terms of cost, but because it is “interactive, fast, flexible and accessible worldwide” (Cho, 2003, p. 2). Utilizing the Internet as part of a destination branding strategy involves more than just creating a website with photos and general information. According to Adrian Palmer in The Internet Challenge for Destination Marketing Organizations, “in an age when all destinations can develop a website, there must be a coherent strategy to develop, position and promote an electronic presence” (Palmer as in Morgan et al, 2010, p.139). Instead of only delivering a site encounter, the destination is tasked with the responsibility of getting visitors to experience the place and the brand (Morgan and Pritchard, 2005, p. 26). Destinations can give visitors to its

website the opportunity for a virtual experience that would be otherwise unavailable in traditional forms of media (Cho, 2003, p. 3). Some of the ways that destinations can build on the experiential qualities of their websites are through web cams, music clips, weather updates, collection highlights, oral histories and virtual tours (Morgan and Pritchard, 2005, p. 26).

The authors of Searching For Experiences: The Web-based Virtual Tour in Tourism Marketing Cho, Wang and Fesenmaier (2003) suggest that it is the very nature of tourism that highlights the importance of the virtual tour experience (p. 4). According to the authors, when “tourists are seeking information about a travel destination, what they want to know is not only about the physical characteristics of the destination, but also the experience of the destination” (p.4). The virtual tour gives potential visitors the chance to experience multiple aspects of the destination before deciding to visit.

Like any other form of communication used for the promotion of the destination, it is important not to exaggerate the experiences presented in the virtual tour. The information must be an accurate representation of the true characteristics of the destination, otherwise it can negatively affect the visitors’ actual experience. This is because their perceptions are shaped by the exaggerated attractions in the virtual tour, and when their expectations are not met upon arrival it causes dissatisfaction with the complete visit. This can result in negative word of mouth promotion and discourage repeat visits (Cho et al, 2003, p.14).

The current trends of web 2.0 applications or social media tools are becoming more important to the travel and tourism industry. According to Ružić and Biloš (2010) in Social Media in Destination Marketing Organizations, blogs, wikies and social networking sites are some of the ways that tourists can further interact with the destinations of their choice (p. 179). Potential visitors are no longer limited to the official websites of the destination, and tourists can use these newer tools to research the destination by subscribing to the blogs of persons who have visited or are currently there. They can make travel arrangements, and once they have returned home share photos and videos of their trip with friends on their social networks. Once the destination management organizations can effectively utilize these tools then the authors argue that “only imagination is the limit for opportunities offered to destination marketing organizations by social networks” (Ružić and Biloš, 2010, p. 183) and other forms of social media.

## Methodology

In order to analyze Grenada's destination branding efforts the tourism promotional material currently in circulation were reviewed based on Destination Branding concepts, particularly those related to the formation of first impressions. The overall presentation, including the presentation of information and message development, was the key factor in this analysis questioning whether or not the content of the material was consistent with and relevant to Grenada's destination brand. Also under scrutiny were the ways in which the private and public sector publications presented the Grenada destination experience to determine whether there was a coherent approach to promoting the brand and consistency in the general facts and figures.

The tourism promotional material used in this study are websites, magazines, brochures and promotional videos that are easily available for access by potential visitors. The material chosen were part of a package prepared by the Grenada Board of Tourism. This is a standard package used for distribution at travel and tourism shows and presentations. The package included brochures, magazines and a promotional DVD. The official websites of the Grenada Board of Tourism and the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association were included for analysis. The material represent both private and public sector publications and are as follows:

## **Material produced by Grenada Board of Tourism**

### **Official website - [www.grenadagrenadines.com](http://www.grenadagrenadines.com)**

Provides potential visitors with general information about travel, accommodation and events. Picture galleries and videos are also featured.

### **Official brochure**

Brochure provides detailed information about Grenada and the available activities. There is information on banking, shopping, accommodation and places of interest.

### **Promotional DVD**

A glimpse of the many activities - whether for rest and relaxation or fun and excitement - that visitors can enjoy while in Grenada.

### **Skyviews Road Map & Guide**

Produced by Skyviews Inc, a private Barbadian company that produces road maps and guides for several Caribbean islands. The Grenada Board of Tourism has commissioned Skyviews Inc. to produce this road map and guide for Grenada. The Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association has also endorsed this publication.

## **Material produced by Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association**

**Official website - [www.gogrenada.gd](http://www.gogrenada.gd)**

The Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association is an organization of local hoteliers and other stakeholders in the tourism industry. The website features general information about Grenada, but mainly about accommodation and activities.

## **Grenada At A Glance Magazine**

Provides much of the same information as the website and has additional feature articles on Grenada's history and other areas of interest.

## **Material produced by Private Companies**

### **Dining Guide**

Produced by Warren Associates Publishing, Dining Guide is a compilation of a variety of restaurants.

### **Truly Discover Grenada, Carriacou & Petite Martinique**

Produced by Concepts Advertising Inc., Truly Discover Grenada features many of Grenada's most exciting attractions.

### **Lime & Dine, Grenada, Carriacou & Petite Martinique**

Produced by AllyDay Creative Projects Ltd, Lime & Dine promotes various activities around the country.

## Study Limitations

The analysis of the material, while guided by concepts within the fields of nation and destination branding, is primarily subjective and may be interpreted differently during further research. The analysis covers the promotional material provided in the Grenada Board of Tourism package described in the Methodology section. This is a mix of both private and public sector publications but does not include the promotional efforts of other entities such as hotels (efforts outside of the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association) and tour operators.

Since the time of the initial analysis in February 2011, the Grenada Board of Tourism has corrected many of the typographical errors on the website and fixed the broken hyperlinks.

## Discussion

As the second largest producer of nutmeg in the world, Grenada has been known as the Isle of Spice for decades, and this reputation has been integrated into its tourism promotion. The Grenada Board of Tourism, the entity responsible for the marketing and promotion of Grenada's tourism product on behalf of the Government and people of Grenada, has used "Grenada - The Spice of the Caribbean" on all of its official publications. This approach shows the relationship with Grenada's existing reputation, but as a destination how does a vacation in the "Spice of the Caribbean" differ from any other island destination?

Grenada is not, by any means, a player in the mass tourism industry and neither does it cater to any one specific target market. The experience that Grenada offers to its visitors is one that allows them to get far away from the crowds and enjoy a vacation filled with rest and relaxation or fun and excitement, or both if that is what they desire. The promotional material does an excellent job in conveying the diverse range of activities that Grenada offers, but the connection to "Spice" is not immediately apparent. Other than references to the spices that grow in abundance around the island, the way in which "Spice" makes the vacation in Grenada memorable and unique is not adequately developed.

First impressions are formed on first contact with the destination and the official website of the Grenada Board of Tourism is the first interaction that many potential visitors have with Grenada as a tourist destination. Upon first glance the website captivates viewers with its vibrant colors and rotating images of gorgeous vistas.

Looking further, it becomes evident that the text content contains many typographical errors and outdated information. This reflects badly on the destination because it shows a lack of attention to detail since web content can be easily edited and corrected. The same is true for the invalid hyperlinks. Potential visitors should be able to navigate around the website with ease; clicking on links that direct them to the appropriate page.

As discussed in the literature, the website is an opportunity for potential visitors to experience the destination before making the decision to visit. Whether through videos, photos or written features, the content must accurately represent what the visitor can expect to experience. The “Island Activities” page features many interesting and exciting places to visit while in Grenada, including a number of beaches, hiking trails and gardens. Some of the attractions listed have accompanying photos and others do not. There is no reason why each location should not have a photo to entice potential visitors. Added to this, Grenada is too small for it to be too difficult to photograph and display all of the attractions mentioned.

Apart from the typographical errors, broken hyperlinks and missing images the written content also leaves much to be desired. In describing the Culture of Grenada, only three lines have been designated for this. There is an adequate cultural description for Carriacou where the people have retained many traditions and rituals. Even if this is not the case in Grenada there can surely be more detailed descriptions of the dance, drama, songs and poetry through which “Spice Culture” is expressed. The descriptions for many activities are appropriate except for the relevance of some. Grenada offers a wide range of cuisine for all tastes – from elegant dining to quaint restaurants in the

countryside, however for the purpose of the “Luxury Dining” section, “impromptu roadside barbecues” is not appropriate. This should remain with the general description of local cuisine.

Also featured on the website are videos highlighting what makes a vacation in Grenada magnificent. One of these videos is featured on the promotional DVD. This video, while showcasing some of Grenada’s best, is compiled of very old footage and many of the newer attractions that are now heavily promoted, such as the underwater sculpture park and Spice Basket, are missing. This means that it is not an accurate representation of what visitors can expect to experience in Grenada. It also suggests that this video should no longer be in circulation. The tagline “Come and see for yourself” is also no longer a part of the promotional effort.

The point of the video is to expose viewers to the spectacular beauty of Grenada and allow them to imagine experiencing it for themselves. This is why the narration seems unnecessary. It is distracting in parts and takes away from the overall experience. The presentation sequence of the video is confusing at times, as is the relevance of the segment on the St. George’s University Medical School. The University is indeed something that the country can boast of, but it’s relevance to the tourism product is not immediately apparent, and therefore it is hard to make the connection even with the narration.

Since most of the footage is very old, the video quality is far behind what is now being produced by other destinations. Once the video is filmed and produced in high

definition, which is the current trend for video production, the sights and sounds will be more dynamic and enhance the experience for viewers.

The Board of Tourism has also produced a brochure detailing general information about Grenada. It has much of the same information about Grenada and its activities as the official Board of Tourism website. There are fewer typographical errors than the official website, but there are instances where there are differences in the spelling of words, for example *license* and *licence*. Both are correct spellings of the word – one American English and the other British English, but there should be consistency throughout the document in all respects.

The Skyviews Road Map & Guide is a handy brochure highlighting several visitor attractions. The road map is perfect for the more adventurous tourists who wish to travel around Grenada by themselves. In addition to providing some general information, the brochure features a description of the national dish of Grenada, *oil down*. This very accurate description is followed by “popular street foods include aloo pie, doubles and dahl puri served wrapped around a curry, commonly goat.” Aloo pie and doubles can be found in Grenada, but its availability is too limited to be termed a popular street food. This description is more appropriate for a publication for Trinidad & Tobago, where you can find doubles on every street corner. This is a perfect example of how important it is to ensure that all of the material reflects what visitors can expect to experience in Grenada. Even though Skyviews is a private publication, the Grenada Board of Tourism has commissioned it for distribution, and so the Board should confirm that the information is correct and relevant before approving its distribution.

The Grenada Hotel and Tourism publication, Grenada At A Glance, provides readers with information about Grenada – things to do, places to visit and where to stay – and other interesting facts and stories about Grenada. The magazine opens with a message from the former director of Tourism. In his message to the reader he describes what makes a Grenadian vacation so special:

Grenadians observe one simple rule: PRESERVE AND SHARE! Herein lies the powerful lure of the ‘Spice Experience’ which is only available on Grenada and it is our gift to You! It is the warmest gift of a people and a place you can have to satisfy your most valued personal needs in life...choose Grenada because ours is a promise of PURE WARMTH!”

In his message to the reader, the President of the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association says, “more than anything it is the people who will make your visit special.” The official Board of Tourism website also makes reference to the Grenadian people, “Come! See and enjoy a place where all of nature's best gifts can be found. Meet a people whose simple, celebratory, colourful lifestyle and unmatched warmth make Grenadians the very 'Spice' of the land.” These statements are a step in the right direction to defining what “Spice” represents especially in reference to the Grenadian people. If it is the people who make Grenada so special, then they should be featured in ways other than in costume for Carnival or the Carriacou Maroon Festival. In the event that visitors do not read the Welcome Messages, then their perceptions of what makes

Grenada unique is limited to the panoramic views and visitor attractions, since these images are the most prominent.

Returning to the Grenada At A Glance Magazine, there are inconsistencies in the presentation of the content. Different typefaces are used for headlines and main bodies of text. Some of these typefaces are difficult to read, but the main issue is that the presentation should be standardized, giving the document unified appearance. There are also sections where the information is outdated, such as the current Grenadian Ambassador to the United States in the Consular and Diplomatic information sections.

The magazine features several articles highlighting Grenada's rich history and other areas of general interest. While there are few typographical errors, the language used throughout the magazine appears very forced and unnatural. It reads more like an academic publication than a magazine that potential visitors can enjoy and get excited about. A few examples are "the breathtaking vehicular audacity" used to describe the experience of taking public transportation, and "out of respect for the local sense of propriety" in describing the dress codes typically adhered to in Grenada.

The Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association has a website serving a similar purpose as the magazine. It also promotes special rates offered by the local hotels. There are a few typographical errors in the written content, and some of the information requires updating. Air Jamaica, one of the airline carriers listed has since become Caribbean Airlines. The activities are listed according to interest and in many sections there are no images or text available. As with the Board of Tourism website, these errors can be easily addressed.

In addition to the “things to do” and “places to stay” sections of the website, there is a section designated for the Culture of Grenada. This section has one article, a press release about a legendary calypsonian who was born in Grenada but lived and became famous in Trinidad. The Mighty Sparrow is well known for his calypso music, but his fame is associated with Trinidad. Grenada has a rich culture influenced by African and European traditions and encompassing all of it into a few articles will be difficult, but it is possible to produce more than three lines on one website and one press release on the other.

The two magazines produced by private companies are both well written and highlight several of the exciting activities – from soft adventure in the rainforest or on the ocean, to relaxing at a beachside bar. They are advertisement heavy, but Truly Discover Grenada in particular has stories and articles that make for easy and enjoyable reading. Lime & Dine, while more advertisement based, has a strong personality with the written content incorporating some of the local dialect. It reads like a conversation between friends, and you can tell that the writers are really trying to convince their readers they need to experience a “lime” in the Spice. The very title “Lime & Dine” describes the laid back nature of Grenada, making it possible to find a “lime” anywhere. Used by Grenadians both young and old, to lime is to hang out with friends, enjoying their company and having a good time.

The relaxed approach taken by these two magazines best embodies the vacation experience in Grenada. Tourists come to Grenada to escape their fast paced lives and go

to a place where time seems to move a bit slower. It makes sense then that the promotion of the destination be natural and relaxed not stilted and forced.

The Dining Guide features the wide range of local cuisine on offer around the country. From contemporary cuisine to authentic Grenadian cooking to luxury dining onboard a lighthouse ship, the Dining Guide has the locations and contact information for whatever dining experience visitors feel like enjoying.

The literature discusses how important it is for all stakeholders to work together to execute the branding strategy. Whether from the private or public sector, the goal is the same and that is to promote Grenada as a unique destination and attract visitors.

As we have seen from the promotional material, a strong, easily identifiable brand has not been developed. What the material has done exceedingly well is showcase the eclectic product offering that makes up the Grenada tourism industry. History, culture, soft-adventure, eco-tourism and relaxation are all featured, and maybe this is what makes Grenada so unique. There is something that everyone can enjoy – families, honeymooners, mature travelers and friends, and that perhaps these activities, when infused with a little Spice make them even more memorable and extraordinary.

Even though there is a consistent representation of the available tourist attractions throughout the material, there appears to be some disconnect between the entities responsible for the publications. The Grenada Board of Tourism and the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association share similar goals and their websites offer much of the same information regarding accommodation and promotions. There is,

however, no link to the Grenada Board of Tourism website from the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Website and vice versa.

One of the most glaring inconsistencies throughout the material is the reporting of the population of Grenada. According to the Board of Tourism website the population of Grenada is 108,137; the Board of Tourism brochure has 102,000, and the promotional DVD says around 100,000. The SkyViews Road Map & Guide has 107,818 listed as the population. The Grenada At A Glance magazine lists the population as just under 100,000 and the Dining Guide lists it as 110,000. Truly Discover Grenada, Lime & Dine and the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association website do not have any population listings. This inconsistency might not be the deciding factor in someone's decision to visit, but it is evidence of what happens when all of the stakeholders are not working together. Even if nothing else is consistent, something as simple as the population figure should be.

When I first received the promotional material, I was very impressed by its package. I was handed an official Grenada Board of Tourism bag and inside of it was a folder containing all of the magazines, brochures and the promotional DVD. The front cover of the folder is a graphical representation of a beach with an open clamshell with a nutmeg inside of it. The folder reads "Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique" on top, and "The Spice of the Caribbean" on the bottom. What is the significance of a nutmeg in a clamshell? Does it mean that the nutmeg is a hidden treasure, or is it that Grenada is the treasure? There are too many questions surrounding its significance, and when I asked other Grenadians about it, they too were confused. When it comes to

promoting the destination the input of the Grenadian people is just as important as the impact on the potential visitor.

Without the support of the Grenadian people there would be no tourism industry to promote. The imagery and slogans used to promote the destination, therefore, should be just as relevant at home as it is to the target audiences. The material is a representation of Grenada and its people and the total package should be consistent, relevant and impactful for all of the industry's stakeholders.

## Conclusion

Before the national tourism strategic plan can be implemented, the Grenada Board of Tourism and other relevant stakeholders need to revisit the current promotion strategies, especially the promotional material. The promotional material is the first experience many potential visitors have with Grenada, and so it has to serve as a true ambassador for Grenada's product offering.

To achieve success, the promotional material must be an accurate representation of what visitors can expect to experience when they arrive in Grenada. It is where they form their initial perceptions of the destination, since potential visitors want to know what they are getting themselves into. The material therefore requires as much attention as the actual product offering, and should reflect the high standard of Grenada's tourism product.

Once the new branding strategy has been implemented, all of the existing promotional material has to be revised to reflect the new brand. This will require creating new brochures, magazines and videos but the effort will be worth it. All forms of communication – private, public, online, print or in person - must reflect the Grenada brand identity and promise. If the older material does not coincide with this new identity and guidelines, then it should not be in circulation.

Achieving this requires the effort of all of the stakeholders to meet the goal of promoting the destination. There has to be consistency with the elements of the brand from the population figures to the presentation of attractions. The promotional efforts should not confuse potential visitors and it should be clear what Grenada as a

destination represents. The efforts should promote Grenada as a truly unique destination, where visitors' experiences will be memorable and worthwhile.

In light of the recent global economic recession and the increased cost of international travel, it is now more important than ever to ensure the effectiveness of the promotional efforts. How do we convince tourists to travel so far to visit Grenada when there are less expensive options available? The challenge seems daunting, but with a strong destination branding strategy and the determination to have it executed properly, we can promote Grenada as the unique and memorable destination that it is.

#### Recommendations for Further Research

Maximizing on the creation of first impressions is only one part in achieving the goals of a destination branding strategy. Further research into this subject should involve identifying the target audiences and understanding their motivations and needs for travel. From this research the target audiences can be segmented and appropriate messages and communication tactics developed.

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