

# Conceptualizing Caribbean Tourism through Hybridity: The Grenadian Tour Product

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## Abstract

■ From a geographic perspective, hybridity exposes the ways in which different components of nature and culture are entangled, effectively creating a new variant, which blurs artificial distinctions. In this paper, the concept of hybridity is applied to the case study of Grenada. While the principal attraction on this Caribbean island is sun, sea and sand, Grenada's tourists also have a range of secondary interests away from the beach. Tourists who might be classified as conventional mass "sun-and-sand," often want to experience more of the island, and many do so through guided tours. Such tours have developed to reflect these varied interests and are therefore difficult to classify within tourism's typically narrow product labels. This research employs content and semiotic analysis of tourism promotional literature, as well as participant observation on guided tours to illustrate the hybrid variants that have emerged in Grenadian tour products, in which elements of agriculture, culture, nature, and others are blended together almost seamlessly. Moving from dualistic classifications of destinations and tourists, towards more complex and nuanced conceptualizations through hybridity, opens new opportunities for meeting the diverse interests of both conventional tourists as well as more niche market visitors.

### *Key words:*

Hybridity, nature-culture dualism, Grenada, guided tours, tourism promotions

## Resumen

■ Desde una perspectiva geográfica, la hibridación expone la forma en que se enredan los diferentes componentes de la naturaleza y la cultura, creando una nueva variante, que desdibuja las distinciones artificiales. En este trabajo, el concepto de hibridación se aplica al estudio del caso de Grenada. Si bien el principal atractivo de esta isla del Caribe es sol, mar y arena, los turistas que visitan Grenada tienen una serie de otros intereses lejos de la playa. Los turistas que podrían clasificarse como la masa convencional "de sol y arena", a menudo quieren experimentar más aspectos de la isla, y muchos lo hacen a través de visitas guiadas. Estos tours se han desarrollado para reflejar los diversos intereses y por lo tanto difíciles de clasificar dentro de las etiquetas de productos turísticos típicamente estrechas. Esta investigación cuenta con el análisis de contenido y la semiótica de la literatura de promoción del turismo, así como la observación participante en las visitas guiadas para ilustrar las variantes híbridas que han surgido en los productos turísticos de Grenada, en la que elementos de la agricultura, cultura, naturaleza, y otros se mezclan casi a la perfección. Pasar de las clasificaciones dualistas de los destinos y los turistas, hacia concepciones más complejas y matizadas a través de la hibridación, abre nuevas oportunidades para satisfacer los diversos intereses de los turistas convencionales, así como los visitantes más nicho de mercado.

### *Palabras clave:*

Hibridación, dualismo naturaleza-cultura, Grenada, visitas guiadas, promociones turísticas

## Introduction

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■ An archipelago of sunny, tropical islands naturally endowed with exotic flora and fauna, surrounded by blue sea and caressed by gentle breezes, is the general impression of the region in the minds of most visitors” (Jayawardena, 2007:6).

“The Caribbean is often universally invoked as a signifier of sun, sand and sea hedonistic holiday experiences” (Daye, 2008: 19).

Romantic images of tranquil azure seas, sandy white beaches and gently swaying palms have occupied the imagination of the Caribbean visitor since 19th century travelers painted vivid portraits of exotic island paradises in their narratives (Nelson, 2007). Although modern scholars take pains to emphasize the cultural, socio-economic and environmental diversity of the islands, “sun-and-sand” remains the pervasive stereotype of the Caribbean as tourism planners capitalize on the legacy of this imagery (Torres, 2005; Jayawardena, 2007; Nelson, 2007; Daye, 2008). Yet, overemphasis on the beach in tourism promotions, and underrepresentation of local people, places and customs, has had the effect of stripping away the unique cultural landscapes and identities within the Caribbean. Even islands that may be less competitive in “sun-and-sand” continue to vie for this market rather than develop a distinctive product. As this “sun-and-sand” pattern attracts mass tourists who do not go “off the beaten path,” these tourists fail to recognize the distinctive nature of the islands in the region. Likewise, they fail to develop strong attachments to places that might foster a desire to return and explore the region further on future holidays. Indeed, with the rapidly changing and more globalized nature of tourist demand and consumption, the failure to highlight the diversity of the islands and their different attractions is a lost opportunity for all.

Tourism studies in the Caribbean have also reinforced the “sun-and-sand” stereotype by focusing on mass beach tourism and treating alternative destinations or products as aberrations. While there has been considerable research on tourism diversification in the Caribbean (e.g. Cameron & Gatewood, 2008), discussions often imply a linear trajectory from “sun-and-sand” tourism in the past to recent diversification efforts. This fails to recognize that beach tourism often coexist with a variety of other products. Similarly, tourism studies typically place Caribbean visitors in dichotomous and static typologies that do not capture the diverse nature of tourists, even mass tourists and their complex consumption patterns (Torres & Nelson, 2008).

The limited perspective on the interrelationships and interactions between different tourism products conceals diversity and perpetuates homogenized representations of the unique destinations, identities

and activities of places within and between islands. This dearth of analysis reveals a failure to grasp the true complexity of the nature of Caribbean tourism production and consumption. Scholars can play an important role in elucidating the diverse and changing landscapes of tourism products by casting off narrow categories of tourism and dualistic thinking in favor of analysis through the lens of hybridity.

Hybridity is a broad concept applied in diverse contexts to understand the complexities of the world. In geography, hybridity has been used as a metaphor to overcome the nature-culture dualism by highlighting the ways in which the components are entangled (Demeritt, 1994; Castree & MacMillan, 2001; Whatmore, 2002; Castree, 2005; Urry, 2006). The concept has significant potential to enrich theorizations of the evolution of tourism products in place-specific contexts and practical applications to help tourism planning and promotion better capitalize on the unique circumstances of destinations. Ultimately, recognizing hybridity will help better connect tourism development with the rapidly shifting tastes of 21st century travelers.

The primary objective of this article is to draw on the geographic tradition of hybridity and demonstrate its potential as a theoretical tool to understand tourism products as complex and fluid. In particular, the article applies the concept to tourism products at a Caribbean tourism destination where “sun-and-sand” exists alongside special interest tourism, and the typical tour offerings are hybrid products. Drawing upon multi-method research conducted in Grenada, the article examines tourism products through a lens of hybridity to demonstrate how this conceptualization can lead to a more nuanced understanding of products and their representation. This island was chosen for this case study as an example of a destination where the dominant image and largest tourist market is “sun-and-sand” (Daye, 2008) but also where varied dimensions of tourism products have emerged, co-existed and complemented each other. Grenada’s popular “Island” and “Rainforest” tours have emerged to satisfy tourists’ interests beyond the beach, even if their primary objective was “sun-and-sand.” Such tours help create a sense of differentiation for the island and meet the demands of tourists with multiple interests that extend beyond the beach; they do not easily fall into “mass” versus “alternative,” nor “nature” versus “cultural” tourism binaries. Hybridity helps elucidate the complexity and complementarity of the components that make up these products without resorting to reductionism and oversimplification.

The article begins with a brief review of the geographic literature of the nature-culture dualism and hybridity as a means of looking beyond this dualism. This is followed by a discussion of the Caribbean tourism brand and the potential applicability of hybridity to explore the

relationships between different forms of tourism in the region. Next is an overview of the context of tourism on the island of Grenada. The article then outlines the methodology of the research on which this discussion is based. The results section examines the hybridity in the representation of Grenadian tourism products, through promotional imagery and descriptions as well as the products themselves. The article concludes with

suggestions that research can play an important role in shifting conceptualizations of tourism in the islands towards a richer understanding by employing hybridity as an analytical lens that challenges homogenization and false distinctions made between traditional types of tourism products (i.e. “sun-and-sand” versus ecotourism).

## Conceptual Framework: Dualisms and Hybridity

■ Dualisms provide a means by which to organize the world into categories that are perceived as separate and distinct. In this separation, the categories come to be understood as positionally opposite with embedded normative assumptions of positive and negative. Such definitions become naturalized and eventually unquestioned in everyday life. Specifically, nature-culture has long been a fundamental organizing dualism in Western thought and language (Demeritt, 1994; Castree, 2001, 2005; Castree & MacMillan, 2001; Markwell, 2001; Urry, 2006). Geographic literature argues that the division of the world into separate natural and cultural spheres is artificial; the world is not easily divided along clear boundaries. Places and entities are not unconnected, nor are they ever wholly natural or cultural. This means that there is likely to be as many differences that exist within each category as there are between categories (Castree, 2005). Yet, the nature-culture dualism is so deeply entrenched that it is difficult to transcend entirely. Some researchers involved in this debate have called for a new vocabulary or metaphors that would provide a means of moving past the dualism (Demeritt, 1994; Castree, 2005). Hybridity is one of these new metaphors.

Hybridity describes the process in which different entities or elements come together and interact in ways that produce new strains or variants. These new variants are products that are distinct from and can exist alongside the original entities (Gold & Revill, 2004; Ray, 2006). This metaphor forces us to recognize that the world is complex, heterogenous, even messy and impure. In the context of the nature-culture dualism, “Hybridity draws attention to the ways in which the physical and social worlds interact and combine in a multiplicity of ways” (Gold & Revill, 2004: 76). Therefore, a hybrid is made up of entangled, not purely natural nor cultural entities that are not easily separated (Castree & MacMillan, 2001; Whatmore, 2002; Castree, 2005; Haldrup & Larsen, 2006; Urry, 2006). Importantly, it should be recognized that the hybrid variant is not a static third category but an ongoing negotiation of and response to the interacting entities (Meethan, 2003).

The modern world is one of ever increasing complexity (Urry, 2006) and one that is always changing (Meethan, 2003). Hybridity provides a means of organizing the world in terms of the ways in which it is connected

rather than the ways in which it is divided and encourages associations rather than separations (Castree & MacMillan, 2001). It is one response to the limitations of dichotomies such as the nature-culture dualism described above; it offers a new way of seeing the world in which it does not need to be artificially divided into fixed categories. Such a concept certainly has implications that extend beyond the nature-culture dualism. According to Gold and Revill (2004: 243), “If we are to cope with the contemporary world, we must embrace hybridity.”

The concept of hybridity is not completely new to tourism studies, although it has not been used to a great extent. Studies such as Hertzman, Anderson, and Rowley (2008) recognize that tourism is characterized by heterogeneity and identify “edutainment” heritage tourist attractions as a hybrid form of tourism. Hybridity has also been applied in tourism studies to describe to the interactions of different cultures in the context of tourism and the idea of tourism as performance. For example, Meethan (2003) explores the emergence of a hybrid touristic culture from the interaction of the fixed local culture and the trans-local mobile culture of tourism, and Shepherd (2002) finds that the outcome of tourism development in Bali is more complicated than traditional ideas of tourism either destroying or recreating local culture. Also, Haldrup and Larsen (2006) and Ryan and Collins (2008) discuss the hybridity in tourism performances.

In the context of this paper, the concept of hybridity can provide the framework for exploring the ongoing negotiation of special interest tourism products. In recent years, increasingly specialized tourism products have been categorized by labels such as agrotourism, cultural tourism, ecotourism, health tourism, heritage tourism, and wildlife tourism, among others. These labels have value in the development of products that satisfy particular tourism demands with specific goals. However, such labels are often defined in very narrow terms that determine the components that will, or will not, be included in a particular tourism product as well as the type of tourists that participate in the activity. This effectively draws distinct lines between the different categories and frequently leaves little room for overlap. In reality, the definition between types of tourism is rarely clear, often blurred, and

with considerable overlap. Perhaps the reason for the continuous adjustment of tourism labels and definitions is that tourism products are often too complicated to fit into such neat packaging. Tourism products are typically made up of a complex mix of components that might be individually categorized in many different ways and not always the way in which the product is labeled. Moreover, the tourists themselves are equally difficult to categorize. They demonstrate a complex spectrum of motives and behaviors that vary on an individual basis according to different circumstances, contexts

and places (Torres & Nelson, 2008). Therefore, tourists often have a range of primary and secondary interests. As such, “As the international tourism industry expands and develops, it continues to motivate the creation of new forms of tourism and tourist attractions. The desire for innovative, unique, novel, alternative, multimedia and/or multidimensional experiences and attractions has led to processes of hybridization in which new amalgamations of phenomena come into being” (Hertzman et al. 2008: 169).

## The Context of Grenada

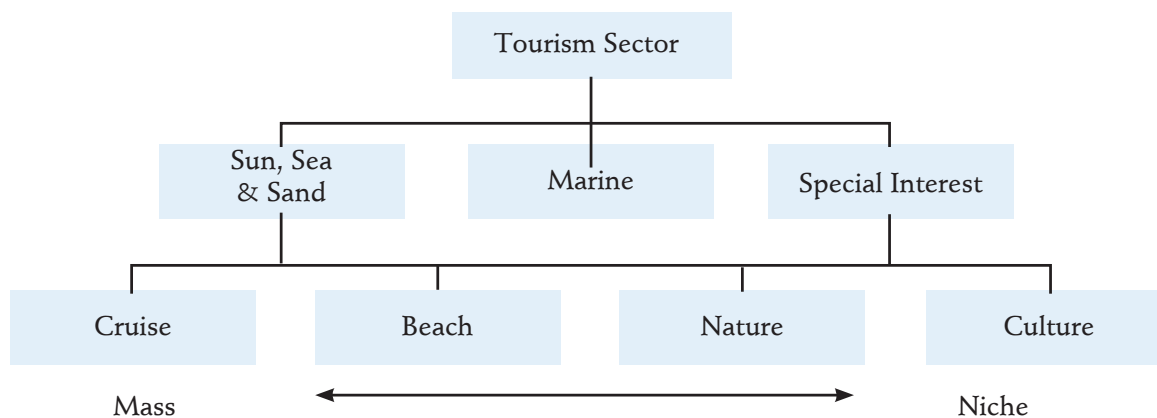
■ Grenada has historically been a predominantly rural, agrarian based society. However, the decline of agriculture was particularly accelerated over the past two decades as the government began to push for tourism to be a major part of its economic development and diversification strategy (Government of Grenada, 2000; Grenada-European Community, 2001; McDonald & Hopkin, 2003; Grenade, 2008).

Grenada was considered to be an appropriate destination for this study because the island has diverse tourism resources that the government has sought to tap, including a tropical climate, white sand beaches, and a mountainous volcanic interior. In 1997, the government of Grenada’s Master Plan for the Tourism Sector identified four primary tourism sub-sectors, including cruise, beach, nature, and culture (Figure 1). Cruise tourism and beach resort tourism, comprising the “sun-and-sand” category, were the principal types of tourism identified. O’Reilly (2005: 266) cites Grenada as one of the islands possessing “beautiful beaches and the ideal sunny climate for leisure tourism,” and Daye (2008: 36) identifies the island as one of the destinations in which the main image construct is paradisiacal, characterized by “the typical recreational sun, sand

and sea holidays.” Indeed, these two sub-sectors have typically accounted for nearly all of Grenada’s tourists (Woodfield, 1998). Yet, despite the importance of these categories, government officials argue that Grenada is not a mass tourist destination (McDonald & Hopkin, 2003).

Recognizing the island’s other tourism resources, two additional tourism categories were identified: marine tourism and special interest tourism. This latter category was further divided into nature tourism and cultural heritage tourism sub-sectors. Nature tourism has been used as a popular marketing tool, as the island has often promoted itself as “the Caribbean as it originally was” (Rare 2004: 1). Ecotourism was also listed in the Master Plan as “an important potential future direction for tourism” (Government of Grenada, 2000: 25). Although the government of Grenada has recognized ecotourism as an alternative to mass tourism (Jayawardena, McDavid & Spence, 2007), Grenada has not been considered a significant ecotourism destination in the Caribbean (Weaver, 2004; O’Reilly, 2005). In many cases, the term is used as a synonym for nature tourism on the island without adherence to the tenets of ecotourism (Woodfield, 1998).

**Figure 1. Grenada's Tourism Sub-Sectors**



As is common in the region, special interest tourism products exist side-by-side with Grenada's conventional tourism sub-sectors (Duval, 2004). This complicates the categorization of Grenada's tourists as well as tourism products. Most stay-over tourists would be classified beach resort tourists, and based on a survey undertaken by Rare (2004), beaches accounted for the largest category in terms of reasons for visiting Grenada. Yet many also participate in marine and/or special interest tourism activities, and in the survey, sightseeing/landscape accounted for almost as high a ranking as beaches. Nearly half of tourists visit the well known

and marketed sites, such as the Grand Etang National Forest, spice estates, and Concord Falls. Respondents were also interested in historic sites, cultural activities, wildlife viewing, and hiking opportunities. (Rare, 2004).

Tourists may participate in these activities independently; however, approximately half of tourists use guides (Rare, 2004). Reflecting the varied primary and secondary interests of tourists, guided tours draw upon the characteristics for different types of tourism and blend them into a type of tourism product that is not easily labeled, as discussed below.

## Methodology

■ To obtain a complete perspective of Grenada's tour products, this article draws upon participant observation of tours and the analysis of promotional literature gathered during fieldwork to examine hybridity in the Grenadian tourism product. Promotional literature gathered both prior to and during fieldwork was analyzed using both content and semiotic analysis.

Participant observation of guided tours provided crucial insights to interpret the promotional literature analyzed in this paper, as well as to apply the notion of hybridity to comprehending Grenada's tour products. As in other tourism studies such as Markwell (2001), participant observation provided the opportunity to understand the places visited and the experiences provided by actually taking part in the tours under study. In Grenada, a few private tour companies dominate the principal markets for tourists, namely through their presence in tourist areas (Rare, 2004). Observations were made during tours with four major tour companies and focused on issues such as the representation of place, elements highlighted or excluded, tour guide narratives, and tourists' reactions and behaviors, among others. All of the tours taken were either "Island" or "Rainforest" tours, the two most common types of tours, offered on a regular basis without special arrangements.

Analysis of destination literature constituted a major component in this project. Twenty-two pieces of print and internet destination literature produced by various tourism stakeholders including the Grenada Board of Tourism, the Grenada Hotel and Tourism Association, and private tour companies. These materials were collected in the ways tourists would obtain such information. As the internet has become an important source of information for tourists prior to the visit (Douglas & Mills, 2004; Miller & Henthorne, 2006), official tourism agency and tour company websites were located through web searches and included for analysis. In addition, requests were made for print materials, such as pamphlets, brochures and magazines, through these websites wherever the option was available. Brochures are also commonly used in the tourism industry, particularly to encourage tourists to purchase a product like a guided tour (Jenkins, 2003;

Nelson, 2005). Other print materials were obtained at key locations of the destination, including the airport, hotel lobbies, and the Board of Tourism office. These twenty-two sources were comprised of a total of 376 images, all of which were included in analysis.

Content analysis of textual and visual elements of promotional literature was used as a quantitative supplement to the more in-depth qualitative semiotic analysis discussed below. This methodology provided a breakdown of the number and type of both the materials used and the images that were found in the literature, and the destinations and activities promoted. The process was further refined as the brochures produced by tour companies specifically promoting tour products underwent a second round of analysis. These images were divided into themes that correspond with the Board of Tourism's tourism sub-sectors. Table 1 provides a summary of the promotional medium, image type, and tourism sub-sector theme observed in the sample of travel literature analyzed. Choi, Lehto, and Morrison (2007) and Hunter (2008) provide examples of the use of this methodology in the context of tourism representations.

In addition to content analysis, materials were submitted to a deeper analysis through semiotics. Semiotics is the study of signs and is used as an analytical tool for interpretation of cultural creations (Hopkins, 1998; Morgan & Pritchard, 1998). The first layer of signs is denotation, in which something is described. The second layer is connotation, or myth, in which ideas are structured to convey particular messages with ideological meanings (Morgan & Pritchard, 1998; Rose, 2001; Hunter, 2008). Bhattacharyya (1997) and Nelson (2005) provide examples of the use of this methodology in the context of tourism representations. Hopkins (1998), Jenkins (2003) and Scarles (2004) each combine the use of content and semiotic analysis as quantitative and qualitative methodological compliments. The two were combined in this study with the theoretical frame of hybridity to provide the means of investigating the overt function of the images in Grenada's destination literature, in terms of the sites and components of guided tours, as well as the deeper ideological meanings.

**Table 1: Content Analysis of Destination Literature**

<i>Medium</i>	%
Pamphlet	9
Tour guide	13
Brochure	32
Magazine	23
Website	23
<i>Illustrations</i>	%
Map	4
Logo	2
Photographs	94
	%
Black & white	4
Color	96
<i>Tourism Sub-Sectors</i>	%
Beach	15
Marine	10
Nature	25
Cultural Heritage	50

## Hybridity in Destination Imagery

Visual imagery is acknowledged to be an important part of tourism promotion (MacKay & Fesenmaier, 1997; Morgan & Pritchard 1998; Jenkins 2003; Scarles 2004; Nelson, 2005; Hunter, 2008). Given that the destination literature used in this study represents one island, much of the imagery is similar in nature and composed of many of the same elements that typically correspond with Grenada's tourism sub-sectors. The elements of graphic logos are used to represent beach, nature and cultural heritage tourism. The photographs were more complex, but each of the beach, marine, nature and cultural heritage tourism categories were represented.

The graphic logos were relatively simple illustrations that contained multiple pictorial elements. Taken together, logo elements are intended to symbolize the character of the island; taken individually, they may represent a type of tourism experience. As a result, different types of experiences may be combined in one logo. For example, the yellow sun, blue water and green palm trees were frequently used elements typically representative of a "sun-and-sand" destination associated with Grenada's beach tourism category. However, this was also combined with elements such as mountains, wildflowers, or birds that would be more indicative of nature tourism experiences.

The other principal imagery used in logos for Grenada is the nutmeg. The nutmeg is a key component in Grenada's destination promotion, as the concept of spice has long been used as a focal point for creating a sense of unique identity and distinction from the other islands in the region. The nutmeg not only denotes the

traditional importance of spice in the island's agricultural industry but also connotes ideas of something natural and exotic. Playing upon this sense of identity, tour companies also incorporate the nutmeg into their logos. For example, one tour company juxtaposed a wildflower and a ripe nutmeg in a striking image. The wildflower is indicative of tropical nature and can be attributed to the nature tourism sub-sector. The nutmeg is perhaps more difficult to classify, as agriculture does not easily fit into one of the identified sub-sectors. Cultivation is a human activity and a sign of civilization; therefore, it may be considered part of the cultural heritage category. The argument could also be made, however, that nutmeg trees are a product of nature. It is a signifier of colonial history, place identity, human-nature interactions, and culture. Thus, while it would be simple to characterize the tourists and destination as primarily "sun-and-sand," the nature of tourists, places and products in Grenada are far more diverse.

Photographs play an important role in not only depicting the appearance of the destination but also in creating expectations for tourism experiences and reinforcing ideologies that permeate Caribbean tourism promotions. The photographs typically depicted an individual scene that might be encountered during the course of a visit to Grenada, such as on a tour, and these images also contained multiple elements. Each photograph was classified by tourism sub-sector in terms of its best fit. The sub-sectors that contribute to "sun-and-sand" (beach and marine tourism) collectively accounted for one-fourth of photographs. Nature tourism also accounted for one-fourth, and fully one half of photographs fell under the broad cultural heritage

category (see Table 1). Clearly Grenada's tourism product, as well as its promotion, is much more diverse than one would expect. Unlike generalized stereotypes, this suggests a hybrid experience where visitors not only avail themselves of the luxuriating beach or cruise trip holidays but also of elements specific to Grenada. This includes the Grand Etang National Park, the Carenage, the spice estates, and more.

To explore the imagery that specifically pertains to Grenada's tour products, tour company brochures were subsequently examined in greater depth. Table 2 highlights further analysis of the photographic

images represented in these brochures, which were also categorized by the principal tourism sub-sectors identified in the Master Plan. Beach tourism accounted for 15 percent of photographs, the majority of which were prototypical beach imagery. Specifically, these were natural beaches in which the primary focus was on clear blue waters, white sands and green palm trees, as opposed to a social beach filled with high rise hotels, umbrellas, and sunbathers (Nelson, 2005). Marine images provided a related category that accounted for 10 percent of photographs and focused on fishing and diving activities.

**Table 2: Destination Imagery in Tour Brochures**

<i>Tourism Sub-Sectors</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Imagery</i>	<i>Connotations</i>
Beach	15	Water White sand Palm trees	Natural beach Tropical island paradise
Marine	10	Sailing Fishing Diving	Adventure Activity
Nature	35	Waterfalls Forest Wildlife	Exotic Undisturbed
Cultural Heritage	40	St. George's Spice estates Food & beverage	Timelessness Indulgence

The majority of photographs in the tour brochures fell under the nature and cultural heritage tourism categories. Nature images in tour brochures accounted for 35 percent of photographs, which is a larger proportion than the destination literature as a whole. These scenes included some characteristic features such as mountains, tropical rainforest vegetation, wildflowers, and wildlife, especially birds. Specific scenes focused on the Grand Etang National Park and volcanic crater lake as well as waterfalls such as Concord or the Seven Sisters. In fact, waterfalls were the most frequently recurring site depicted. These sites often serve as the culmination point for many nature oriented tours and provide powerful imagery of an undisturbed tropical paradise.

The cultural heritage category still accounted for the largest single category of photographs, but at 40 percent of images in tour brochures, the overall proportion was smaller. The capital city, St. George's, was pictured most often and included scenes such as Fort George and the Saturday market. While the urban market serves a function for local populations, it is also promoted to tourists as a unique glimpse into "colorful" island culture and an opportunity to interact with local people. Vendors sell various types of agricultural produce, including tropi-

cal fruits, spices, and wildflowers. Also included in this category were historic sites, spice estates, agricultural produce, prepared foods, and alcoholic beverages.

The imagery in many of these photographs is plainly tapping into certain prescribed categories, though it is hardly clear cut. For example, a photograph of a beach obviously falls under the beach tourism category. At the same time, the imagery of these beaches is distinctly natural. In this regard, these photographs could also be placed under the nature tourism category. Similarly, the photographs of marine tourism focus on water sport activities, yet they frequently picture a beach in the background and could be classified as such. Over one-third of nature images included people in addition to natural features; therefore, these photographs could be considered to depict a cultural activity. The cultural heritage photographs included imagery of agricultural products growing against a backdrop of lush tropical vegetation. Were the products not recognizable, the overall image would be considered nature. Conversely, wildflowers are typically classified as natural; however, if those same flowers were specimens in a botanical garden, they would necessarily be considered cultural.

## Hybridity in the Promotion of Grenadian Tour Products

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■ Guided tours provide an interesting lens through which to examine the hybridity of Grenada's tourism products. Guides play a key role in organizing the tourist experience by selecting sites and pointing out the "signs" they deem most important for visitors to consume. These signs are intended to emphasize Grenada's unique character, as well as fulfill visitors' desire to experience elements of place that are distinct from their everyday lives. Prior to the tour experience, expectations have been cultivated by the tour company's promotional materials that are used to entice tourists to purchase the product. Tour company brochures included in the sample outlined their services and described between six and 11 different pre-packaged tour variations. Two types of tours were offered by all of the companies: an "Island" tour and a "Rainforest" tour. In addition, sailing tours, market day excursions, tours of St. George's, and garden tours were all listed as options by two or more companies.

Each of the companies offered a slightly different variation of the "Island" tour. Several standard attractions for these tours included St. George's, a spice estate, a waterfall, the rainforest in the Grand Etang National Park, and the Grand Etang volcanic crater lake. Additional attractions offered on some of the tours included a historic fort, a nutmeg processing station, a rum distillery, and historic site Carib's Leap. This eclectic hybrid tour clearly suits the needs of the special interest tourism sub-sector within mass tourism. It is billed as "a bit of everything," and incorporates attractions from both the natural and cultural heritage categories. Additionally, two tours included a visit to a beach, although clearly the emphasis was on a hybrid experience, not a beach-centered outing.

## Hybridity in Grenadian Tour Products

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■ The "Island" tour provides a clear example of a hybrid tourism product variant. This type of special interest tourism does not fall neatly into a particular category. Each of the different tourism categories identified for the island are represented in the alternating urban and rural settings. Yet it is not simply a matter of including a cultural heritage component as well as a natural component in the tour. These elements are blended together almost seamlessly so that one cannot be untangled from the other.

In this regard, each attraction may be examined as hybrid. For instance, an example of an historic spice estate is one typical attraction on the "Island" tour. Such sites, frequently dating back to the 18th century, have tremendous appeal in their preservation of the past. These estates are often set in an area in which the agricultural plants cannot be easily distinguished from the surrounding forest. Examples of spice plants, as well as their finished products are shown to visitors,

There were fewer variations in the "Rainforest" tour. These were more active tours billed as walks, hikes or treks for those tourists seeking a nature experience. Each "Rainforest" tour included a light to moderate hike through the forest of the Grand Etang National Park and a visit to one or more waterfall sites. Two tours also included a visit to the Grand Etang volcanic crater lake and a natural warm water spring with reportedly therapeutic properties. This tour explicitly draws upon ideas of the environment and nature tourism. The tourist is invited to discover the natural beauty of Grenada and to experience it away from the crowds. Such "ecotouristic treasures waiting to be discovered" are described as exciting and spectacular – "a naturalist delight" – in the brochures.

The descriptions of these two popular tours appear to take a different approach to self-categorization. In these brochures, the "Island" tour attempts to appeal to a wider tourism market. This type of tour incorporates various elements of both the conventional and special interest tourism sub-sectors and therefore appears to lend itself more readily to hybridity. The "Rainforest" tour, on the other hand, attempts to capitalize on current trends towards nature and ecotourism labels, but it is a rather superficial and brief foray into nature. Contrary to any in-depth exploration of nature, the tour appears to be a more classic example of a neatly packaged, highly structured tourism product and ultimately constitutes only one half day of the tourists' overall vacation. Thus, both tours are ultimately hybrid.

and both their natural properties and their cultural purposes are described. The billed natural attractions are also scarcely indistinguishable from the cultural. For example, the Grand Etang volcanic crater lake, from one view, surrounded by thickly forested hills gives tourists the feeling of something very old and the product of forces nearly incomprehensible to humans. From another view, though, the area is frequented not only by tourists but also by families and schoolchildren as a place for picnics and get-togethers.

The rainforest is one of the primary reasons for visiting Grenada, and the Grand Etang National Park is the most frequently visited attraction (Rare 2004). Although the "Rainforest" tour appears to be a straightforward nature tourism product, the experience is nonetheless hybrid. Initially, the majority of plants are agricultural, including bananas, breadfruit, clove, cocoa and nutmeg. These plants become less dominant farther along the trail; however, the forest is still secondary growth. These are



areas that had been cleared at one time for agriculture; therefore, they have clearly been modified by humans. Such sites continued to be modified for tourism, as paths are cleared and maintained, often by lining them with fragments of nutmeg shells to prevent erosion. Guides provide information about the natural flora and fauna, but this information is culturally conditioned. It is processed into a language that tourists can understand and presented in a way that will be interesting to them. In particular, this refers to items tourists would be familiar with, such as agricultural produce, or stories they could relate to, such as the guide's memories of or experiences in a place. While marketed as a rainforest expedition, which tour promoters believe appeal to "ecotourists," in reality the tourists observed were not particularly concerned with experiencing pristine nature.

Recognizing the hybrid nature of the Caribbean tourist product, as well as the growing desire for diverse experiences (including nature tourism) even among the most conventional mass "sun-and-sand" tourists, is critical to the future of Caribbean tourism. With the rapidly changing and increasingly complex nature of global tourism consumption, it is essential for tourism planners and policy makers to recognize hybridity and to capitalize on this notion in both tourist destination development and place promotion. This may mean offering new products adapted to the time constraints and comfort requirements of mass tourists but also to these tourists' desires to experience "local," "authentic," or "natural" dimensions of a place. For example, there could be considerable demand in a primarily "sun-and-sand" destination for short expeditions to villages,

artisan workshops, nature preserves, agricultural plantations or others; such activities may not be the primary motivation for the visit to the destination but have the potential to considerably enhance the tourist experience. In order to leverage and capitalize on the Caribbean's hybridity, planners and policy makers may need to consider improving infrastructure and working with local communities to make more aspects of destinations accessible, comfortable and convenient to a wider range of tourists. However, this process of adjustment must not sacrifice the authenticity, distinctiveness or hybridity of a place for the sake of mass consumption.

While many islands are developing options to diversify their tourist product, this diversity is often not adequately featured in marketing and promotion to a wide range of tourists. With a marketing mentality often based on segmentation that draws distinct boundaries between different types of tourists and destinations, the inherent diversity and unique character, the sense of place for individual islands, is lost. This is a lost opportunity to capture more hybrid-minded tourists who travel primarily for the beaches but also wish to feel they have experienced some of the local culture, environment, people, and/or history. At the same time, the narrow focus on depictions of beaches in promotional literature represents a lost opportunity to attract tourists who consider themselves to be "travelers" that would reject a perceived "sun-and-sand" destination. Consequently, the failure to highlight the distinctiveness of peoples and places both reduces the occurrence of return visits and limits the potential tourist market.

## Conclusion

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■ According to Whatmore (2002: 2), "Perhaps because geographers have inhabited this 'nature-society' settlement more self-consciously than other disciplines, these (re)turns to the question of nature have particular resonance." As such, a subset of geographers has particularly focused on the ways in which we can move beyond the divisions of nature and culture. Hybridity is one response that has come out of this debate. Certainly the concept of hybridity has been applied in other contexts besides the nature-culture dualism, from ethnicities to agri-biotechnology and, of course, tourism studies. The authors of this article believe the geographic perspective of hybridity was appropriate for this investigation particularly because one of the central divisions in tourism products, as can be seen in the content analysis of Grenada's destination literature, is between nature and cultural heritage tourism.

Tourism product labels may serve to organize tourism, but the resulting categories should not be seen as distinct and definitive. Hybridity rejects these clear cut distinctions that gloss over the unique character of individual islands and interactions between the multiple

tourism products which have emerged and co-existed, thus creating a far more diverse tourism landscape. The concept of hybridity offers a new way of looking at tourism products and understanding those that seem to elude definition. This concept helps us to see the ways in which varied dimensions of a destination may be interconnected in a tourism product, rather than the ways in which they are separated. Indeed, this perspective challenges neatly categorized products and opens the possibility for further innovation, in what might at the surface appear to be a standard "sun-and-sand" destination appealing to monolithic notions of the mass tourist market. Therefore, this type of thinking can be useful in developing special interest tourism products that more effectively address the diverse interests of both conventional tourists, as well as more niche market visitors, to generate more comprehensive tourism experiences.

This case study of Grenada illustrates that tourist products often become hybrid in nature, as a response to the expressed demands of tourists, even those who are superficially portrayed as exclusively interested in "sun-

and-sand.” In terms of primary motivations for travel, the majority of Grenada’s tourists would be considered conventional beach resort or “sun-and-sand” tourists; they are not explicitly ecotourists nor cultural tourists with clearly defined expectations of “authentic” nature or culture. However, even within this market, there is considerable hybridity emerging, which can be leveraged to offer a greater diversity and depth of products, attract new types of visitors, and perhaps generate more return visits. Grenada’s visitors have been shown to have a range of secondary interests beyond the beach, including sightseeing, history, culture, water sports, and others (Rare 2004). Most are interested in an activity to supplement their beach vacation and to experience more of the destination. The reality of hybrid tourism provides some insight into tourism products that have developed to effectively address tourist demands.

Given the dearth of analysis examining interactions, interrelationships and blurring of distinctions between the different types of products and tourists, there is often a failure to grasp the true complexity of current and potential Caribbean tourism. The oversimplification, generalization, and stereotyping in the representation of the Caribbean as the “sun-and-sand” playground hides the diversity which places certain islands at a disadvantage. It fails to recognize opportunities presented by new forms of specialized niche market tourism and may contribute to the stagnation of Caribbean tourism growth. Only through a more nuanced understanding is it possible to make the most of existing Caribbean tourism resources and to create synergies between different products and places. This would more widely disperse tourism revenues across the region and assist in planning for sustainable tourism development that is in tune with the shifting and more diversified tastes of 21st century travelers.

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