

**CREATIVE ECONOMY REPORT 2010**

**Creative Economy: a Feasible Development Option**

**Box 2.7 Brand Jamaica as the home of reggae**

Creativity represents one of Jamaica's most distinguishable assets and competitive advantages as a country. Through its music, fashion, dance and cuisine Jamaican culture continues to influence and impact global pop culture as it has done since the introduction of Garveyism, Rastafari and reggae music. Jamaica's exploitation of this sector is vital if it is to realize development gains from international trade, as highlighted in the UNCTAD São Paulo Consensus.

The United Nations estimates that the creative industries are growing at a faster rate than the world economy in general. Yet there is still a critical lack of empirical statistics on the contribution of Jamaican music or creative industries to national GDP. This has resulted in repeated undervaluation of this sector in an array of studies, with estimates ranging from \$1.5 billion to \$1.7 billion in generated revenue.

Brand Jamaica is a business brand building campaign to expand the country's profile from a primarily leisure destination, celebrated for its cultural icons and athletes, to one where business plays an even greater role. Brand Jamaica has for the most part been an organic evolution driven by the country's creative entrepreneurs and their cultural products. A decade ago, the Government awakened to the potential of culture and creative industries as an important economic strategy for national growth, signalled with the inclusion of music and entertainment as a strategic cluster group in the National Industrial Policy in 1996. Responsibility for promotion of the sector was given to the country's trade and investment facilitation agency, Jamaica Promotions Corporation (JAMPRO). The agency, in partnership with the music industry, facilitated the development of the national Sounds of Jamaica™ brand campaign launched at the *Marché international de l'édition musicale (MIDEM)*, the world's largest music industry trade fair, in 1997 in France. The initiative galvanized the Jamaican music industry in an unprecedented demonstration of strategic cooperation. However, after a vibrant period of active brand management and trade show participation between 1997 and 2000, the initiative lost momentum. Fragmentation of various aspects of Jamaica's creative industries across five ministries and at least six agencies without the benefit of a sector-driven master plan resulted in staggered duplication, inertia and ongoing loss of wealth-generating opportunities. Additionally, Jamaica has a "hustler" reputation internationally, which negatively affects market confidence in supply consistency, legal protection and business practices.

The global appeal and adoption of Jamaican music have spawned home-grown versions and artists within the genre from Germany's Gentleman to United States Grammy winner No Doubt, for example. The increasing availability of home-grown reggae and the rising cost of Jamaican versus home-grown talent have begun to impact the demand for authentic Jamaican reggae, with festivals in major markets such as Germany and Japan successfully producing reggae festivals without any Jamaican artists on the line-up. Product quality in terms of recorded and live music must be maintained at the level of excellence established for Jamaican music internationally by Bob Marley and others in order for Jamaica to grow its market share of the international Jamaican music industry.

Jamaica's music represents the country's most easily exportable creative-industry product and the one that has strengthened the brand internationally in traditional markets as the foundation of Brand Jamaica. Emerging markets for Jamaica's music, particularly in Asia and Latin America, hold great promise for a musical culture that has been embraced by a diverse range of cultural markets. Jamaica's musical success in these markets opens the door for the introduction of other creative products into the market. Jamaica and its culture are inextricably linked in the mind of the international market. Jamaica as the culturally authentic home of reggae music and culture has the opportunity to guarantee its competitive advantage in the cultural market space once it enables creative entrepreneurs to position themselves effectively in the international market with quality products.

Jamaica's creative products are diverse and include finished audio video tangibles that are exported physically and digitally as well as facilities and services consumed by foreigners visiting Jamaica to record in one of its state-of-the-art studios, collaborate with top artists, musicians and producers or shoot a new music video against the flavoured texture of the diverse Jamaican landscape. Given the broad scope of creative industries, the JAMPRO 1996-1997 Marketing Plan for Music and Entertainment estimated that 15,000 persons were directly and indirectly employed in this sector. The impact of this relatively small group on the Jamaican economy is, therefore, out of proportion to the group's size. The products and services generated by the sector contribute significantly to Jamaica's capital wealth, public image and goodwill. In keeping with global trends, this generation of youth is empowered creative mavericks developing their own labels, fashion brands and production houses and building a new creative economy for the future.

It is noteworthy that the creative sector has affected traditionally vulnerable groups as Jamaica's cultural richness has for the most part been produced by the poorer, marginalized class. The creative expression and folk heritage of the poor have evolved into a global phenomenon, with many examples of young people raising themselves out of poverty through their talents and despite their lack of business experience. From the earliest period of Jamaica's music history, it was young people who fuelled the growth of this industry as performers, producers, promoters and agents. Early pioneers and legends include labels Studio One and Treasure Isle and artists such as the Skatallites, Jimmy Cliff, Toots & the Maytals, Prince Buster, Alton Ellis, and Bob Marley & The Wailers. Today, young people continue to fuel the legacy of creative wealth and empower

themselves through their creative capital to bring about individual and community growth. Traditionally, Jamaican music has been a very male-oriented industry with a few women performers such as Millie Small or Marcia Griffiths and an even smaller number as managers, promoters and producers such as Sonia Pottinger. Over the last five to ten years, however, women have become increasingly visible on the entertainment scene in Jamaica, with an unprecedented number of new female solo artists arriving on the scene, female managers and promoters as well as women in the areas of legal and financial services, engineering and video production.

Historically, the fragmented distribution of Jamaican music and limited appreciation of the publishing value resulted in a unique Jamaican music business model that relies heavily on revenue from live performances and special exclusive recordings called “dubplates” rather than depending on record sales and publishing like creators in developed music markets. Most international showcasing of talent or distribution of catalogues was made possible through artist deals or product licensing agreements with overseas distributors or labels and limited media exposure through a network of niche reggae programmes worldwide, particularly on independent and college radio stations in Europe and North America. Jamaican music was internationally established and has been maintained through this touring circuit strategy, making live performances the foundation of the Jamaican music business model. Live performances also are slowly evolving into this role in the international music business as the rise in illegal file sharing and declining CD sales are decreasing the industry’s reliance on revenues from record sales and publishing. Consequently, the substantial divide that existed between the Jamaican and international business models is narrowing.

Overall, Jamaica’s creativity has earned it a place in the global arena despite the small size and inexperienced management of its creative industries. In order for Jamaica and the Caribbean to survive in a globalized world, policymakers and stakeholders seeking economic growth and job creation must position the creative industries as the cornerstone of any serious development strategy. The inherent entrepreneurial talent of Jamaicans has developed and sustained the country’s creative product brands over the past fifty years without a proactive public policy, institutional infrastructure or formalized venture funding. It is now time to unleash the full potential of Brand Jamaica by providing the creative industries with the required overarching support. If properly managed, Brand Jamaica could foster joint venture projects and macro branding opportunities that would maximize the global appeal of the country’s lifestyle brand and national identity.

Jamaica’s national brand identity has international consumer appeal and proven economic potential. The success of Jamaica in nationally and internationally marketing its cultural products demonstrates that Southern economies can expand into international markets by increasing brand awareness and packaging a diverse product line built on their cultural production.

By Andrea M. Davis,  
Jamaica Arts Holdings/International Reggae Day.