

Media in jamaica analysis



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The Media in the Country of Jamaica

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Jamaica is the fifth largest island country in the Caribbean and is home to 2.8 million citizens. It was once known as Santiago when it was under Spanish control until 1655 when England began to rule the country and changed the name to Jamaica. Today, Jamaica is still under the rule of Great Britain with a representative known as the Governor-General of Jamaica and a head of government and Prime Minister. Throughout history, Jamaica has had strong influences on media across the globe and this research paper will look into the many areas in media which Jamaica has had a part in.

The idea of broadcasting to the Jamaican people first came in the form of radio in 1939 when the Jamaican government retrieved ham radio equipment from John Grinan, a Jamaican amateur radio operator, at the beginning of World War II (Pressreference. com, retrieved 12/3/2014). Grinan followed the war closely and convinced the Jamaican government to purchase his equipment and create a public broadcasting system. The first official Jamaican public radio broadcast began on November 17, 1939 and consisted of one broadcast per week coming from Grinan's home. This would continue until the middle of 1940 when the station hired a staff and began to broadcast daily. The station became very popular and as this happened it became very expensive to operate. That's when the decision was made to license a private company to take over the station.

In 1950, Radio Jamaica was born and was a privately owned subsidiary of Re-diffusion Group of London. (Watson, 2011) Because it was owned by a

London group, it was required to broadcast at least 10 hours per week of BBC content. Therefore, the majority of the content of the station was British. This would continue for ten years until the government owned Jamaican Broadcasting Corporation radio was created in 1959 and began broadcasting that same year. (Dunn, 2000) JBC wanted to help further develop in Jamaica and began so by using the motto, "the listening component of nation-building". JBC did very well and received a lot of government funding. However, the station would only survive until 1997 when it was decided that a new organization, the Public Broadcasting Corporation of Jamaica would take over as the official public broadcasting radio station of Jamaica. The PBCJ began broadcasting in 2006 and can still be heard on Jamaican airwaves today.

Like radio, television became an extremely popular medium in Jamaica. In 1962, Jamaica attained independence from England. One year later, the first television broadcasting station was formed. The station was trusted to the Jamaican Broadcasting Company who already had a strong presence in Jamaica with their radio station. The television station would be known as JBCTV. Like the radio sides "listening component" motto, JBCTV would use the motto "the visual component in nation building". One big difference between JBCTV and JBC radio was the way it was funded. Even though the parent company, JBC, received government funding, JBCTV would be financed primarily through advertisement. This was due to the idea that JBCTV would be very expensive to run, therefore the government did not want to finance such a heavy expense.

The satellite boom in the 1980's expanded the broadcasting industry. Prior to this point, JBCTV was the dominate television station in Jamaica. So when satellites expanded the broadcasting industry it created competition to JBCTV by allowing those who could afford it, access to foreign television stations as well. This was due to Jamaica's close proximity to the United States which allowed satellites to pick up US signals. To compete with this, cable companies were born. (Gordon, 2008) In 1997, JBCTV would become TVJ. TVJ became a privately owned commercial station run by JBC's old rival, the Radio Jamaica Communications Group where it still operates today as TVJ.

Well before radio and television was introduced to Jamaica, another form of media had been alive for over two centuries; the newspaper. Way back in the year 1718, the first printing press arrived in Jamaica by printer Robert Baldwin, and soon began printing a newspaper, the Weekly Jamaica Courant. (Fraas, 2012) This newspaper is known as being the second regular newspaper in the America's. It is so old that scholars have only located 10 issues of the theWeekly Jamaica Courantprinted before 1730. This newspaper would run until 1755 and contained information common to many English colonial newspapers. This information included the prices of goods, slave auctions, shipping news, as well as advertisements (Tortello, 2003). Occasionally, local news was posted, such as when the hurricane hit Jamaica in 1722 and 400 people died. Only a few copies of the Courant have survived and are now found in London's Public Records Office.

In the 1830's Jamaican newspaper history would be made when the deCordova brothers launched The Daily Gleaner. The newspaper started out
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as a way for the deCordova brothers to publicize goods for sale. Three months after the first published Daily Gleaner, the paper's name changed to The Gleaner: A Weekly Family Newspaper devoted to Literature, Morality, the Arts and Sciences and Amusements.

Today, The Gleaner is the largest newspaper on the island of Jamaica. The Gleaner employes close to 500 people in Jamaica, with offices in Kingston, Montego Bay, America, Canada and the United Kingdom (Tortello, 2003).

Filmmakers have been coming to Jamaica since the early 1900's. However, Jamaica's own film scene is not really well known but it is growing. The first movie made in Jamaica by Jamaicans was the 1972 film titled *The Harder They Come* (Jamaicans. com, 2009). The film represented a breakout for the island's music scene of the 1960s and early 1970s. Jamaica has been a popular place for filmmakers to shoot due to the jungle environment.

However, Jamaica's own film industry is very small. One of the most obvious reasons for this is most likely cost. Films are expensive to make. However, there is new hope that Jamaica's film industry will grow. The Film Commission of Jamaica was established in 1984. The commission works hard to bring filmmakers to the island, but there is also growing interest in developing Jamaica's own cinematic creations.

Jamaica has recently seen their film industry grow due to a film festival. The Jamaica International Reggae Film Festival is an event that takes place in Kingston, Jamaica and is held annually every February. The festival was created in 2008 by filmmaker Barbara Blake Hannah. Hannah is currently the Executive Director of the Jamaica Film Academy, Managing Director of

Jamaica Media Productions Ltd, and the director of the Jamaica International Reggae Film Festival. Since the film festival was created, the film industry in Jamaica has grown tremendously. This, as well as a recent European film treaty which enables Jamaican film makers to ask for funding in Europe, has given much more opportunities for Jamaican film.

Prior to 1999, the Jamaican telecommunications sector was dominated by Cable and

Wireless Jamaica. This company is a British company that has been the major telecommunications provider to Jamaica since the mid nineteenth century. The company operated in the British Colonial government since as early as 1868. In the 1960s, during the first decade of political independence in the region, the Jamaican government wanted to take control of all telecommunications resources in the country. To do this, the government took over the majority of equity of Cable and Wireless Jamaica. They would gain 51 percent of shareholding in the company, therefore giving the government majority control. However, in the 1970's and 1980's, the technology and ability to control the company and all of telecommunications in Jamaica became very difficult. So in 1987 Cable and Wireless Jamaica was able to take control back and was no longer government operated. This has allowed the company to grow tremendously and has since become a monopoly in telecommunications and now controls the telecommunications industry in 15 Caribbean territories (Dunn, Gooden, retrieved 12/3/2014). Though they are the largest telecommunications company in Jamaica, they are not the only. The other two companies that specialize in telecommunications in Jamaica are Digicel and Oceanic Digital. Both

companies were granted licenses in 2001 to operate mobile services in a country whose telecommunications market was dominated by Cable and Wireless. Today, all three companies share the market in Jamaica with Cable and Wireless Communications being the leading operator in most of the Caribbean and Latin America.

Internet is used in Jamaica, however, it is still behind other Caribbean nations in terms of usage. As of 2010, internet was being used by 55% of all Jamaicans. One can only assume that internet usage today has increased in Jamaica. Internet statistics show that from 2006 to 2010 there was a 16% increase of Jamaican's using internet (InternetWorldStats. com, 2010). There was no statistics on internet use beyond 2010 but with this rate of increase, it is projected that about 70% of Jamaican's are online. That is a tremendous number in terms of Caribbean nations. A 2009 e-commerce report by Jamaica's Minister of Industry, Commerce, Science and Technology, Phillip Paulwell, emphasized the importance of Jamaica to continue to grow in the internet market and to be e-ready. the Minister informed that Jamaica has made tremendous progress and was now " behind the United States, Canada, Brazil and Chile in terms of our E-readiness for this region", and was " looking forward to overtaking them as the first developing country to do so in the region." (InternetWorldStats. com, 2009).

Paulwell discussed the importance of Jamaica to move past telephone technology by saying, the mission " is to move away from the focus on voice and instead to try in greater earnest to ensure that we have the infrastructure for supporting a knowledge-based society." This mission is currently underway and has improved the internet in Jamaica. Over the last

nine years, The Universal Service Fund has invested billions of dollars to provide internet access to Jamaican's. As of September of 2014, the fund has completed a total of 188 Internet community access points throughout the country with the final goal being 236 (Observer, 2014). This will allow internet to flow all throughout the entire country of Jamaica.

The culture of Jamaica is one that is rich and seen worldwide. It is a combination of cultures from the first descendants to the island. The original Taino Settlers, and then the Spanish conquerors all made major contributions. However, the most dominant culture in Jamaica is the blacks and slaves who suffered the harsh conditions of forced labor. One of the most well known culture aspects of Jamaica is Rastafari. It is a religion that was made famous by musician Bob Marley. Rastafari itself is a religious belief system that is based on teachings found in the Old Testament and the New Testament. Rasta cultural traditions include keeping their hair uncut and in dreadlocks, as well as eating unprocessed foods which are known as Ital. Though Rastafari is very well known worldwide, it is a very small culture on the island and is often frowned upon by christian Jamaican's.

Jamaica is also home to a very strong music scene. Reggae music is extremely powerful in Jamaica and has revolutionized dance in Jamaica. Jamaica is also home to a popular theatre scene. Jamaica's first theatre was built in 1682. Other theatres opened up in the 1700's and 1800's and allowed professional touring to perform in the country. Today's most popular theatrical form in Jamaica is known as pantomime and began in the 1940s as a combination of English pantomime with Jamaican folklore (Banham, 2005).

Sports are also very popular with Jamaican culture. By far the most dominant sport in the country is cricket. The Jamaica national cricket team has won ten Regional Four Day Competitions and seven WICB Championship Cups. What we call soccer is also a popular sport in Jamaica. The Jamaica national football team has won the Caribbean Cup five times and advanced to the 1998 FIFA World Cup. Jamaica is also a leader in sprinting. The current world record holder for 100m and 200m, Usain Bolt and the former 100m world record holder, Asafa Powell, are both from Jamaica.

Jamaica is home to several very popular festivals. In 1962, The Jamaica Independence Festival was created. It is a festival that celebrates the country's freedom and is in place to showcase literary, fine, and performing artists, and to celebrate "things Jamaican" (Gleanor, retrieved 2014). The festival is a way to give Jamaicans a sense of what their culture is all about. One of the highlights of the festival is the Popular Song Competition. Every year since 1966, a competition is held at the festival to crown an artist the winner. The winner receives one million dollars and a new car. In addition to this competition, the festival now includes the Miss Jamaica Festival Queen Contest, a national Mento band competition, and a Gospel song competition.

As this paper has shown, Jamaica is a small country with a big media presence. The country has a rich history in all of its media. Today, Jamaica is home to 14 television stations and 27 radio stations (Dunn, 2000). The newspaper industry is still strong after surviving for nearly 300 years. Today, you'll also find cellphones in almost every Jamaican's hand and the internet is still continuing to grow and reaches more and more Jamaicans everyday. The Jamaican culture is a fascinating one and having the opportunity to

research the history in so many different areas is one I'll continue to look into. I'll conclude this paper with the official motto of Jamaica; Jamaica, " Out of Many, One People".

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