

ABSTRACT

After 1838 rum became a very economically important commodity both locally in Jamaica and as an export product. Prior to this rum had generally been regarded as merely a by-product of sugar and of little economic significance. Modern historians have been similarly dismissive and consequently failed to produce works specifically directed at the unique history of the commodity. This thesis will study rum in such a way that the unique trends, peculiar phenomena and important contributions associated with rum can be easily seen.

There was urgent need to adapt to the increased competition, newer taste patterns, the decreased profitability of sugar and the increased alcohol consumption in Europe. Jamaican rum would emerge as a product in its own right. From the 1880s onward it earned significant economic revenue but also had an impact on both the social and political institutions in the island.

As a result of the crises in the cane sugar market it was realized that there was a need for rationalization in the sector and a more scientific approach to production to ensure constant quality and quantity. This emphasis was new in the 1890s to 1900s and many rum producers were late converts as they felt that it made little sense until the immense benefits

were clear. The years until World War I saw positive gains in this area of rum investigation and attempts at standardization of goods. In light of the new need for standardized quality products this emphasis was seen as even more significant.

The years between 1880 and 1938 were the foundation of a specialist industry. The industry shown in crises, transition and changes will clearly indicate that it was fully prepared to undertake the challenge of fostering greater scientific rationalization. The fact that it could by 1938 better channel its growth and further development as a result of the increased acceptance of rum as a commodity in its own right over the century ensured that the industry had finally emerged as one which merited significant attention in the future.