

Exploring A Behavioural Approach to Country Brand Management

By

Mathias Akotia, Brand Ghana Office, Accra Ghana

Anthony Ebow Spio, Department of Business Administration, Ashesi University College, Accra, Ghana

Dr. Kwabena Frimpong GIMPA Business School, Ghana Institute of Management Public Administration (GIMPA) Accra, Ghana

Abstract

Country branding, which is about employing strategic marketing to promote a country's identity, has become a strategic tool of a country's competitiveness. Ghana recently announced the start of her country branding programme. Emphasising country branding as a social construction, this paper presents a conceptual branding model for Ghana, based on the identity brand management approach. Focusing on the role of the country citizenry, the first construct involves articulating country brand identity to purposefully affect country macro leadership, governance structures, country and product brand value delivery and communication. The second construct involves developing country brand mind-set and citizenship behaviours through purposeful brand knowledge and commitment. The third construct explains the country brand equity and citizens well being likely to be engendered through purposeful brand supporting behaviours, conscious creation of supporting country realities, and coordinated and harmonized nation and product communication. This approach emanates from and is supported by insights generated through exploratory in-depth interviews and group discussions involving Ghanaians as well as identity based brand management literature.

INTRODUCTION

Countries, over the years, have competed for inward investments, tourists, talents and exports sales. In recent times, there is even keener competition amongst countries to gain the right to host world events, such as the Olympics and FIFA Football World Cup. Country branding, which is about employing strategic marketing to promote a country's identity, is increasingly becoming a strategic tool that countries are using to gain a competitive edge over other countries.

The notion that a country can be marketed to the rest of world for growth, tourism, trade, inward investment and positive image is not new. What is relatively new is the introduction of the word "brand" being applied to a country or nation. The definition of a brand, like many post-modern concepts, lacks consensus. Two philosophical approaches to defining a brand were identified by Ambler & Styles (1996). The first is the product-plus approach, which views the brand as an addition to the product or service. The second approach views brand from the holistic perspective in which the focus is the brand itself. Based on the second approach, Kapferer (2004), defines a brand as a name with power to influence buyers. Its source of influence is derived from mental associations and relationships a brand builds overtime among customers and stakeholders.

Following from that approach, Delorie (2000) defines a nation or country brand as a national identity that has been proactively distilled, interpreted, internalized among the citizens and projected for international recognition to construct a favourable national image, and enhance a nation's competitiveness (Delorie, 2000). A nation brand must, therefore, have a competitive identity, to evoke the desirable image and to enhance nation competitiveness. In other words, a nation brand or identity has the capacity to influence the behaviour of people it is targeting.

Anholt (2003), also contends that country branding implies that countries behave in many ways like commercial and corporate brands. Thus, nation or country branding is about using strategic marketing to promote different aspects of a nation's or a country's identity.

A nation's brand identity is on the sender's side and, therefore, precedes brand image. That is, for a nation to have a compelling image its true identity must be competitive in the first place. A nation's brand identity is a nation's true self, essence and character, driven by a vision, which is both different from others and resistant to change. All nations have identities: names, espoused values and behaviours, anthems, symbols like flags and coat of arms, feel and build of their cities and the environment, whether these are consciously managed or not. Like commercial brands, a nation must have an identity that is compelling to both domestic and foreign consumers in order to be competitive and resilient.

A nation's brand image on the other hand is on the receiver's side. It is the way that the domestic or international actual or potential consumer perceives the nation brand. A nation's image is the perception of the nation that exists in the mind of the consumer of that nation's products, tangible and intangible. The chosen or targeted consumer may include the people of that nation whose nation brand supporting behaviours form the basis of the nation's value proposition or promise for effective engagement with international consumers. Consequently, central to a nation's identity and execution of a strategic marketing programme to promote the nation is the behaviour of its citizens.

Emphasizing country branding as social construction, this paper presents a conceptual branding model for Ghana, based on the identity based brand management approach. Focusing on the role of the country citizenry, the first construct involves articulating country brand identity to purposefully affect country macro leadership, governance structures, country and product brand value delivery and communication.

The second construct involves developing country brand mind-set and citizenship behaviours through purposeful brand knowledge and commitment. The third construct explains the country brand equity and citizens well being likely to be engendered through purposeful brand supporting behaviours, conscious creation of supporting country realities, and coordinated and harmonized nation and product communication.

This approach emanates from and is supported by insights generated through exploratory in-depth interviews and group discussions involving Ghanaians as well as identity based brand management literature.

THE BENEFITS OF COUNTRY BRANDING

During the last century or so, writes Anholt (2002), much of the wealth of the rich countries has been generated through marketing. This is evidenced by the ability to add attraction to exported brands through country of origin or brand effects, the increasing sophisticated techniques of marketing the country itself as a tourist brand, and the marketing skills, which attract the best talent and largest foreign investment. Further evidence is provided by the acts of marketing coordination, which ensures that consistent and attractive messages about the country in general are communicated to the rest of the world through acts of diplomacy, sports and cultural activities. These skills should now be transferred to poorer countries, thus helping them to graduate from being mere suppliers of low-margin unbranded commodities to brand owners and branded destinations in their own right. Thus, there is now a compelling case for nation branding strategy to direct, or at least embrace the full range of political, economic, cultural and social development. Writing later (2003) Anholt argues that developing countries stand to benefit from the synergy a strong nation brand and goods and services brands generate. India's Bangalore technology cluster led by Wipro and Infosys is rapidly modernising the image of India, as innovative, entrepreneurial and global. Also the emergence of consumer brands like Samsung, Daewoo and LG have done in recent years for South Korea what Sony, Toyota and others did for Japan decades earlier.

Nation branding hinges on the acceptance that in a globalised world, "all nations need to compete with each other for a share of the world's attention and wealth, and that development is as much a matter of positioning as anything else"(Anholt, 2003 p. 221). It, therefore, makes sense for government to do everything possible to ensure consistency of behaviour in every area. Countries will compete daily with neighbors, economic blocks for tourism, investment and export products. However, there is limited business that can go around at any point in time. Therefore, countries that start with unknown or poor reputation will be limited or marginalized and they cannot feature in the minds of global audience to boost their commercial successes (Brymer, 2003).

Functioning states in West Africa have even more compelling reason to adopt branding, for West Africa has well documented negative image: for failing states, political instability, civil/factional wars, poverty and disease-stricken, and “serious” frauds (419). West Africa also continuously boasts of the most corrupt countries in the world (Transparency International, 2004). But Ghana for example, has abundance of resources, is peaceful with educated work force, its infrastructure is improving and its democracy is worth emulating. But why and how would Ghana be perceived as unique, and investment and tourist destination worth considering? Why should investors not see Ghana as part of the basket case of the “wild” West Africa when it has failing and *near* chaotic states as neighbors?

As noted by Olin’s (2002), countries which have thought most about branding must have been those with some kind of traditional position, influence and reputation which they seek to change or improve. Ghana must be one such country. For due to Ghana’s past history of instability and revolutions, current negative image of the sub region as well as the now relative successes at democracy in Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Benin, the truth must begin to be told through country branding and a coherent communication strategy. Porter’s (1985), *Competitive Advantage of Nations* stresses that there is no other way for a country to prosper than by considering itself as a competitor in a single market place. It makes sense therefore, writes Anholt (2003), to say that anything that does not fall under the remit of the brand is a weak link in the strategic chain and can undermine the efforts and investments made in other sectors.

Country branding calls for consistent behaviour. Country branding can actually encourage more moderate and benign foreign policy, because it focuses the minds of political leaders on the real importance of their international reputation. Similarly, making ordinary citizens feel important in shaping and realising the international aspirations of the country may help to create a strong sense of national identity and promote social inclusion (Anholt, 2003). The entire country can be united in an objective examination of its strengths and weaknesses through an open and public process of focus and improvement inherent in internal country branding programmes. In principle, it is the country’s citizens who stand to gain from successful nation branding.

Frost (2004), argues that just as successful corporate branding can raise the morale, team spirit and sense of purpose of a company's employees so can successful nation branding programmes provide a country with common sense of purpose and national pride, not to mention improvements in quality of life. Indeed, successful country branding must begin from inside, getting country brand supporting behaviour from the citizens before communicating to the outside world.

Frost (2004) argues that because of the complexity and multiple dimensions of country brands, country brands serve as an umbrella brand for the branded services/products from that country. According to Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002), once an umbrella concept that is unitary and coherent is established, individual brands can go cheery within it, without the peril of inconsistent messaging. This means that the national brand has to develop consistent and relevant values and symbols so that it can support spin-offs. While it is true brands create country reputations it is equally true that a country brand can translate into guiding successfully the creation and growth of branded products and services as spin-offs of the umbrella country brand. Thus, country brands and individual product/service brands are in self-perpetuating cycle, transferring and capitalising on their brand values (Frost, 2004).

COUNTRY BRANDING AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCT

A country brand defines a symbolic construct, which emphasizes the positively, memorable, attractive, unique, relevant and sustainable qualities of a nation (Allan, 2004) through a country brand strategy which is a plan for defining the realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision for the country (Anholt, 2002). The basic assumption in country branding is that country names constitute brands and as a result evoke meanings and images, assisting audiences to evaluate her services and products, and helping customers make their purchasing decisions. From this point of view a powerful country brand translates into a better perception of the country, increases exports, inward tourism and foreign investment.

In today's globalised marketplace the battle for tourism, exports, and inward investment is intensifying, as brands have become more and more the vehicles for communication. Current process of globalization has highlighted the need for countries to brand themselves because, country branding has become a strategic tool and process of a country's competitiveness since having a bad reputation or none at all seriously detracts from a country's ability to compete at all levels (de Vicente, 2004; Brymer, 2003). It is therefore imperative for countries to be consciously branded, with the careful husbandry of existing perceptions and reconciliation of varied components of the country into harmonious and distinctive whole.

Branding a country in principle is apparently simple. Creating a brand involves developing the brand's programme, which underlies the brand identity and positioning. Thus the brand's reason for being, its identity, vision, core values, and know-how must be clear, simple, differentiating propositions often built around emotional qualities expressing some kind of superiority, which can be readily symbolized both verbally and visually (Olins, 2002). Therefore, the principles of product, service or corporate and a country branding are similar. However, the methods differ.

Anholt (2003), points out that country brands represent limited number of qualities (power, wealth, sophistication) hence there is still space for countries to brand themselves on positioning platforms such as creativity, music, philosophy, trust, innocence, wisdom, safety, and so on. This means that Ghana has a great opportunity to showcase itself and create a powerful National Brand Image and Identity given the enormous natural, human and intellectual resources the country is endowed with.

Widler (2007), criticized the practitioners of nation branding for not allowing citizens to play a significant role in the branding process. A nation is perceived as a social construct. Arguing from social constructionist point of view Wilder asserts that a nation is not natural.

She argues that speaking the same language is not a categorical condition for a group of people to build a nation. Social constructs need to be constantly re-constructed in order to survive. Wilder (2007) contends that nation branding is a practice that targets the nation and therefore contributes to its re-contruction. Widler consequently, concludes that role of citizens in the process of nation branding cannot be treated marginally but needs to be defined.

“ If nation branding is meant to be a strategy on national level - as promoted by the experts – if it is meant to be point of reference for everyone inside and outside the nation, a magnet-like vision built on aspirations and intentions, then there is no way around citizens’ participation in the branding process” Widler (2007,p 149)

Fan (2005), corroborates this position when he advocates that the citizens need to be understood, and that their feeling about national brand at an early stage of the project is valuable.

Anholt (2007), also stretches the role of people in a country and for that matter their behavior in crafting the reputation of the nation. “ No, people only change their minds about places if the people and organizations in those places start to change the things they make and do, or the way they behave. And that’s the only sense in which a nation can start to exercise some degree of control over its image; Competitive Identity is about government, companies and people learning to channel their behavior in a common direction that’s positive and productive for the country’s reputation, so they can start to earn the reputation they need and deserve. It is the creation of a common purpose that leads to enhanced competitive identity both at home and abroad “ Anholt (2007,p29-30)

Consequently, the Brand Ghana office is pursuing a behavioural approach to country brand management. The rationale is to engage the Ghanaian people to develop a shared vision, aspirations and national identity and mobilize them to behave in ways that promote the desired identity and facilitate the realization of the vision.

BRAND GHANA: THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Strong brands are built through identity based brand management (Kapferer, 2007; Keller, 2003). Just like a person, for a brand to be strong, it must have a true self, a field of unique competence, driven by a vision, values and personality that are different from others and resistant to change (Kapferer, 2007).

The reality of a multicultural Ghana requires an insight into an overarching oneness, of the qualities that are shared and how Ghana's cultural diversity can result into a single representative National Identity.

Ghana aims for the well being for her citizens. Well-being may be understood as desirable economic, social and psychological attainments for individuals (personal well-being), communities and organizations (collective well-being) and their manner of relationship between and among persons and social groups (relational well-being).

To achieve these desirable outcomes for the citizens, Ghana must first identify, invest in and manage the drivers of wellbeing. The most critical of these drivers are:

1. Brand Ghana Identity levers
2. Country leadership, promotion and communication
3. Purposeful country culture
4. Conscious country promotion

These drivers when invested in effectively create several country advantages such as citizenship equity and international consumer equity, which are the perquisites for sustainable country well being.

Brand-driven Country Measures

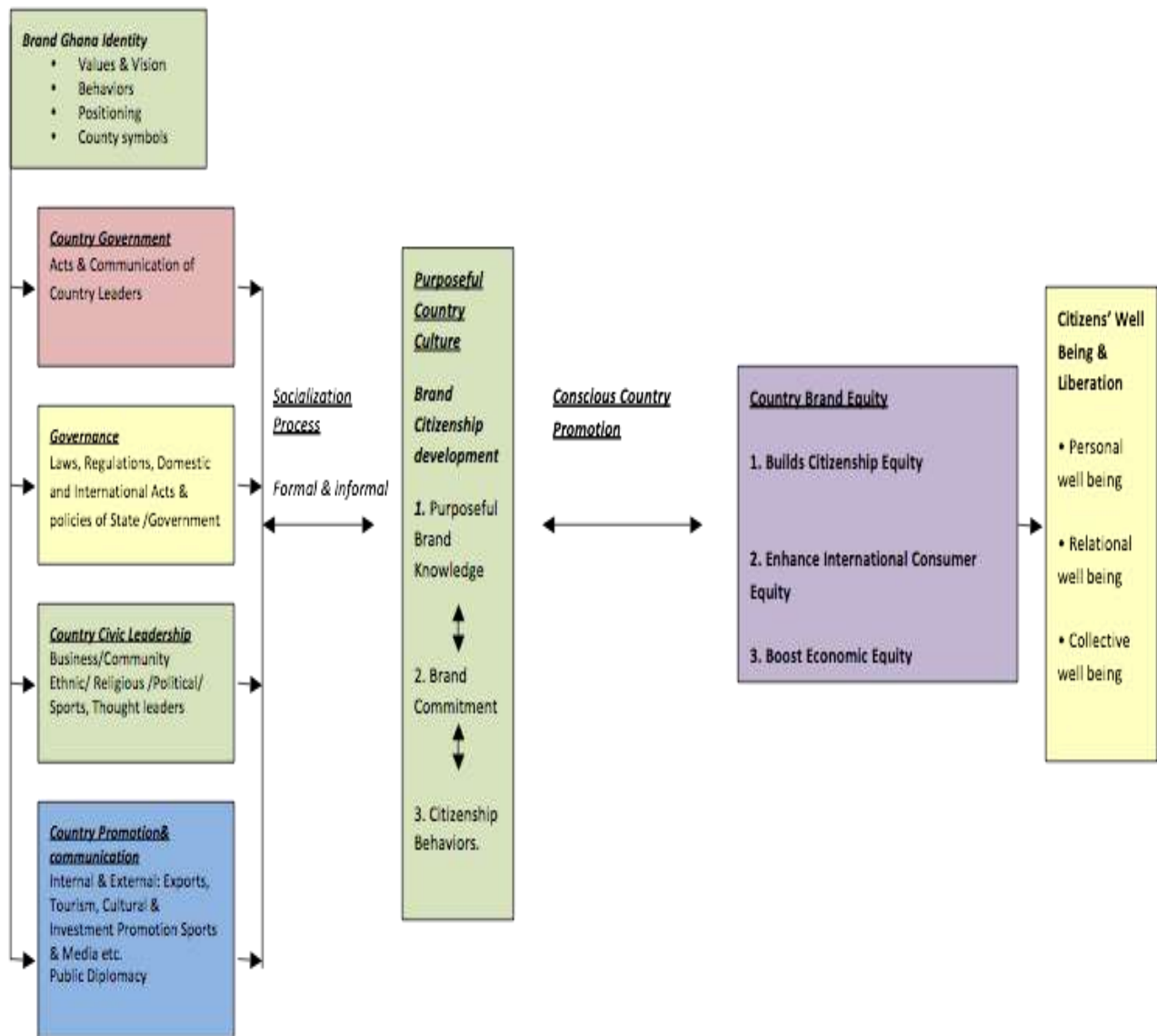
As depicted in the visual (Figure 1 below), Country Competitive Identity (brand vision, values, behaviour, positioning, country symbols/properties) is espoused through country consensus. At independence the country founding fathers decided on country values and behaviours as well as the country vision. These then have defined the Brand Ghana identity.

Brand Ghana management involves Brand Ghana identity directing a large number of country acts, behaviours of country leaders, communication, policies, structures, and country regulations to affect the citizens in a particular way that is desirable. These brand-directed actions, structures and communication are combined in the four levers, as follows.

1. Country Government: acts and communication of country political leadership.
2. Governance: Regulations & laws; Domestic & International Acts & Policies of State.
3. Country Civic Leadership: Business Community & Political leadership behaviours, actions & communication.
4. Country Promotion: Tourism, Exports Brands, Cultural Exchange, Sports Promotion, Public Diplomacy, and Media Reportage.

Figure 1: Branding Model of Ghana 2010

Ghana: Conceptual Branding Model



Purposeful Country Culture

Purposeful country culture will be achieved through the involvement of the citizens in the nation brand development, dissemination of brand knowledge, engendering brand commitment and fostering appropriate behaviour. This will be carried out through purposeful formal and informal socialization in homes, the school system, and work organizations, country clubs and in the communities. The rationale is to ensure that substantial numbers of the country citizens internalize the brand. Citizens then become brand conscious, committed, behaving and communicating in ways that support and promote the Brand Ghana values.

Country Brand Equity

Through conscious country promotion and projection, and the creation of brand supporting realities such as infrastructure and state policies to give meaning to the brand values and vision, several advantages may become spawned to benefit the country such as:

1. Citizenship Brand Equity
2. International Consumer Equity
3. Economic & Financial Equity

Citizens Well-being

Citizenship brand equity, International consumer equity and Economic equities then become the prerequisites for the realization of sustainable citizenship well-being and liberation for the people of Ghana.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND PURPOSE

Effective branding can enrich a Ghana's competitiveness in the global market place and thus open several opportunities for her development and growth. A behavioural approach to nation branding provides the opportunity to engage Ghanaians in crafting a shared vision, aspirations and having consensus of compelling positioning or national identity that energize and shape their behavior.

Unfortunately for Ghana, like most developing countries, very little or no prior research has been done on this subject matter of Nation Branding, to address and find answers to the questions that are raised, to position a nation such as Ghana to compete in the global market place for the share of mind, share of income, share of voice and share of attention.

It is, therefore, imperative that a formal research is conducted to solicit the views of cross-section of Ghanaians in a wide range of areas pertinent to developing a national brand positioning platform or identity and strategic marketing programme.

This research, therefore, aims at closing the information gap by addressing related questions and issues pertaining to nation branding. The research should enable us capture stakeholder insights on Ghana, in order to answer the urgent call to evolve and establish a more compelling identity for the country by translating these initiatives into a nationally-shared vision, values and a competitive strategy that is both robust and inspiring. The specific objectives of the research are as follows:

Research Objectives

1. To find out perceptions of Ghanaians about Ghana.
2. To establish current image associations and attitudes among Ghanaians towards their country.
3. To find out what Ghanaians perceive are the key challenges to Ghana's development.
4. To find out Ghanaian perceptions about Brand Ghana identity

Significance of the Research

1. Add to existing knowledge of literature on the subject matter, especially on the approach to developing country branding.
2. Help to provoke further debate and discussion among stakeholders (marketing professionals, academia, business associations and politicians in Ghana) to begin serious steps towards building a powerful country brand to influence both domestic and international buyers/consumers.
3. Reveal or generate an understanding of how Ghanaians perceive their country today in relation to what they perceive it ought to be.
4. Generate information required to build a powerful national brand identity and promote the identity in order to evoke a desirable image that will enhance national competitiveness.
5. Help inform and provide direction for the design of conceptual model for establishing the national identity and managing Brand Ghana.

STUDY CONTEXT

Ghana, formerly known as the Gold Coast and a former British colony in the West Coast of Africa has a land surface area of about 238,540 square kilometers that is roughly 92,000 square miles. Modern Ghana took its name from the great Sudanic Empire of Ghana, which existed from the fifth to the thirteenth centuries. Ghana attained its independence from the British in 1957 on the 6th of March and became a republic in 1960 on the 1st of July. It is bordered by Côte d'Ivoire on the west, Burkina Faso on the north and Togo on the east. The countries' main city and seat of Government is the coastal city of Accra.

Ghana practises the constitutional democracy type of government, and the legal system is based on the English common law and customary law. Administratively, the country is divided into ten (10) regions; Ashanti, Brong-Ahafo, Central, Eastern, Greater Accra, Northern, Upper East, Upper West, Volta and Western.

Ghana is well endowed with natural resources and agriculture accounts for roughly one-third of GDP and employs more than half of the workforce, mainly small landholders. The services sector accounts for 50% of GDP. Gold and cocoa production and individual remittances are major sources of foreign exchange. Oil production at Ghana's offshore Jubilee field began in mid-December, 2010 and is expected to boost economic growth over the next decade.

METHODOLOGY

To acquire an understanding of how Ghanaians perceive their country today in relation to what they perceive it ought to be, an exploratory research design was employed. The rationale is to enable us gain deeper insight and understanding of how branding strategies could be applied at the national level. A broader qualitative study involving **Group Discussions** and **In-depth Interviews** were used to help elicit Ghana respondents' feelings and intentions about their country since qualitative research is well-suited to the goals of discovering new in-sights aimed at furthering the understanding of a phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). In addition, large-scale Open-ended questionnaires were administered to and completed by the respondents. This paper, however, presents findings from the Group discussions and in-depth interviews. The findings informed the design of the behavioural approach for developing and managing Brand Ghana.

Sampling

Considering the depth of understanding required, purposive sampling method was employed to obtain the relevant sample from a population constituted by people who are literate in English and could freely express themselves in both English and the relevant Ghanaian languages. 200 in-depth interviews and 30 Group Discussions were conducted across the ten regions of Ghana over a period of 2 months, specifically April and May 2010. The regional distribution of in-depth and group discussions are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Regional Distribution of In-depth and Group Discussions

Regions	In-depth Discussions	Group Discussions
Greater Accra	40	7
Ashanti Region	30	4
Western Region	20	3
Volta Region	20	4
Brong Ahafo Region	25	2
Central Region	25	3
Eastern Region	20	3
Upper East Region	5	1
Upper West Region	5	1
Northern Region	10	2
TOTALS	200	30

The Group Discussions were conducted in settings like the Universities where people of similar age and language expression could be attracted to gather at one sitting for the discussions. On the average the group numbers ranged between 8 and 10. The various groups interviewed were, particularly, helpful in generating ideas for the Brand Ghana brand positioning platform. The relatively large number of group discussions and depth interviews conducted was done on purpose. It was a deliberate but an initial attempt at engaging the people in the nation brand process.

Data collection

In all cases, an interview guide and questionnaires were used to elicit responses ranging from how people think about Ghana to a description of the Ghana people want to live in. In many cases, interviews were conducted in the relevant Ghanaian languages where the respondent and interviewer were both comfortable expressing themselves. Respondents were of ages 18 years and above. Fieldwork covered the ten regions of Ghana and lasted from April to May 2010.

Data analysis

All in-depth and group discussions were recorded and transcribed by research assistants. The assistants were recruited from universities in Accra and were taken through an orientation programme ahead of the fieldwork. The transcripts were then grouped into three and assigned two groups of analysts (each comprising 2 or 3 persons) to ensure interpretations were broadly consistent.

The interview guides were pre-coded to assist in various groups in their analysis. The broad themes that cut across the respondents' opinions were identified, and categorized, and subsequently integrated in a coherent report.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Research Objective 1: Perceptions of Ghanaians about Ghana

The first research objective was to find out perceptions of Ghanaians about Ghana. The findings from analysis indicated both positive and negative perceptions about Ghana. Instructively, some respondents had some positive views about Ghana and held the view that Ghana has the potential to be great, but is “grossly performing below expectation and its potential”. Some other positive perceptions included the following:

- *That Ghana is heading in the right direction, although slowly, because Governments can be changed through the ballot box peacefully and not through violence.*
- *That Ghana is the “best country in Africa; hospitable and has the potential to become a successful and developed nation, a must-do business in country, a must-visit country”,*
- *“A place where investors can invest and work without frustration”*
- *The bedrock of “African identity” and very independent from excessive external influences, a “civilized nation” from whom other nations draw inspiration.*
- *A “beacon in an otherwise chaotic continent”, a “home for all irrespective of which place they might be coming from”.*
- *That the country should be “a united Ghana with disciplined hard-working honest people,” known for her “good quality, friendly, hardworking people with democracy that is functional and economy that is growing at a fast pace”.*
- *That “Ghana should be less-known for its natural resources and more for the quality of human development”.*

The key negative perceptions are as follows:

- *That Ghana is endowed with natural and human resources Ghana yet “is under-performing in several critical ways.”*
- *That is a country “struggling to understand itself and find her bearing, a country over-dependent on donor countries for her development”, a country with “rising level of insecurity, low per capita income, with high population growth, divisive partisan politics, growing corruption and violent crime”.*
- *That Ghana is “developing at a slow pace with selfish and corrupt leaders who employ top-down decisions and divisive policies, thereby stifling active citizen participation”.*

Some of the striking themes of respondents included:

- *“Ghana today is a potentially prosperous nation full of corruption, nepotism and tribalism”.*
- *“Ghana has not achieved much in terms of economic growth and there are no values that identify Ghanaians as a people”.*
- *“Country where politicians have hijacked all the goodies to live in comfort: while the masses live in abject poverty, wealth is not shared equally and corruption is the order of the day”*

With regards to perceptions relating to the major **strengths** of the nations, the dominant viewpoints were:

- That Ghana is one of the best football nations on the African continent.
- That Ghana is has rich mineral and agricultural potential, fair quality human resource, emerging democracy and democratic values, peace and political stability, relatively good governance and a rich cultural heritage.

Concerning her **weaknesses**, respondents believed that Ghana does not have a proper focus and their concerns are captured as following:

- *“Too much corruption and poverty, too politically polarized, shambolic democracy, lack of manufacturing companies, over dependence on other countries, lack purposeful and functional education, health and infrastructure, people lack personal-responsibility/consciousness, selfish citizens and leaders, bad economic management, unable to implement policies, undisciplined society, social vices among the youth, unmotivated workers, brain “drained”, tribalism, nepotism, confused priorities, no time consciousness, lack of strategic planning and skilled labour, inability to enforce law and order”.*

On Ghana’s top **priority for national development** the common perceptions concerned:

- Keeping the cities clean by ensuring that refuse is not dumped indiscriminately, being concerned about developing our human resource especially in the rural areas, the country also needs to focus on manufacturing by producing finished products.
- Ghana must become ITC leader in Africa/embark on a massive technological project nationwide
- Ghana should embark on rapid rural development; the country should also focus on human development (education, purposeful culture, fairness in income distribution).
- Some respondents believe the country ought to focus on culture, tourism, proper use of natural resources, law enforcement, export promotion and discourage importation
- The need for transparent and accountable leaders in every sector,

- The need to embark on major restructuring of the education systems to make students more innovative oriented’ run through the responses of a good number of the participants.
- The need for an educational system which will “inculcate best values, teach children to be responsible and encourage them to be involved in national development” also emerged as an important viewpoint. Most of the respondents called for a system of education that not only teaches people how to read and write “but inculcate the values of society in children... to help us use the hand and brains”.

Research Objective 2: Current image associations and attitudes among Ghanaians towards their country

The second objective was to find out the current image association among Ghanaians towards their country. In the view of the respondents a ‘true Ghanaian’ was described as *“patient, kind, polite, and not violent...hospitable and always striving to improve self”*.

However, it emerged strongly that Ghana was losing her ‘true Ghanaianness’. The common associations expressed by the respondents are highlighted below:

- That Ghanaians politicize everything and leave the real issues unattended to: *“unpatriotic, reckless, undisciplined, irresponsible and arrogant...people who misuse state resources and property, self-centered and disrespectful of the law, afraid to take risk and avoid anything that is challenging...worship mediocrity and are apathetic to national development”,*
- *“Ethnocentric and politically polarized to the extent that whatever the government does is unduly criticized by the opposition”.*
- *“The Ghanaian today is only interested in identifying problems with no interest in finding solutions...in fact in some cases, some people benefit from our problems so they won’t address the problem even when the solution is right beside them”.*

- Leaders of the country are thought of as being mostly *“selfish...people who make decisions for their own enlargement”*.
- That the Ghanaian is *“a pretender, always looking for excuses to avoid work”*. Respondents argued *“we behave as if we are in a state of helplessness and over-dependent on the state to do almost everything for us, to even put food in our mouths”*.
- That the Ghanaian *“tends to spend too much of his/her resources on social activities such as, funerals and marriage ceremonies...on top of this behaviour, they do not invest /save and have this concept of hand to mouth approach...”*

Research Objective 3: What Ghanaians perceive are the key challenges to Ghana’s development

The third research objective was to find out what Ghanaians perceive are the key challenges to Ghana’s development. The emerging viewpoints from our analysis are reported below:

The key challenges to the development of the country were seen as:

- Naturally endowed country needing better management of resources; secured nation with uneasy calm in part;
- Culturally-oriented, but not purposeful culture;
- Corruption
- Apparently, well-intentioned people but great pretenders;
- Hospitable people who are not service conscious;
- Excessive reliance on the production of raw materials not finished products.

In spite of her challenges, some respondents expressed a strong belief that there is still more room for improvement. They proposed that Ghana needs to focus its development efforts on building democracy and a vibrant economy, human development, management of natural resources, providing quality education and health, manufacturing – production of finished products, industrialization and technological development, utilizing human resources, infrastructure development, and tourism development in order to improve on or boost her development.

Research Objective 4: Ghanaians perceptions about brand Ghana identity

The fourth research objective was to find out Ghanaians perceptions about brand Ghana identity. The key perceptions from our analysis are reported below:

- A dominant perception here related to Ghana *“heading towards accumulation of more debts...a country that does not seem to be going anywhere”*. In addition, the view that the country *“is stagnant, wavering and always hovering around the same place, just moving in circles”* was strongly voiced by the respondents.
- A respondent provided poignant and apt perceptions as in the following: *“It’s difficult to determine the direction of the country since there is high level of corruption and divisiveness”*. An elderly statesman also reaffirmed these negative perceptions thus: *“Ghana is not going anywhere”,* and that *“Ghana as of now has no developmental plan. The President and the people we elected have good intentions, but good intentions are not enough. They must have a positive goal. For example, if I want everybody in Ghana to go to school, I cannot do that unless I have teachers in my classroom. I also know that if the standard of education is falling, I can’t change it overnight. I must first of all find out why the standard is falling and also find out how it can be changed. So there is the need for planning.”*

- Other less dominant but relevant and positive perceptions were that Ghana has realized her past mistakes and she is now taking steps to address people's attitudes. Some of these respondents saw Ghana as heading towards achieving *"the millennium goal and also to become a developed country... a leading producer of oil in the world"*. Others also expressed the belief that the nation has also made some notable progress in the area of democracy and press freedom.
- The nation should *"achieve a clean environment, move forward and become a stronger democratic nation, feeding and providing security and health for her people"*, one respondent, heartily intoned. Thus, there appeared to be a strong belief among the respondents that Ghana can be developed into a well-developed state *"like most of Western European countries"*.

There was also a strong unanimity among the interviewees that Ghanaians should strive to be good to others and that the true Ghanaian must be associated with values that must be unifying, and driving Ghana's holistic development. The key values, which emerged, were:

- Democracy, freedom and justice, fairness, equality, equity & liberty, open society, national inclusiveness/solidarity/unity/national integration, peace and stability; safety and security, national excellence, achievement, altruism, support for the vulnerable, standing for our rights, bravery, fearlessness, leadership, hard-work, resilience, making a difference, honesty, truthfulness, sincerity, modesty, integrity, probity, transparency & accountable, public virtue/service, loyalty, patriotism, discipline, time consciousness, being service oriented, entrepreneurship, creativity, being adaptive, self-reliance.
- The distinguishing characteristic about Ghana, was the *"peace she enjoys in the chaotic West African sub region"*, successful and peaceful general elections resulting in the smooth change of government from one political party to another.

- In terms of Ghana's contribution to the world, she was described as a major contributor to peacekeeping missions in war torn countries in Africa and around the world, supply of electricity and mineral resources to other countries. She has proven herself to be a hospitable country to refugees from other countries. However, Ghana has allowed itself to become *"the centre for dumping of inferior goods by the world ...involved in drug trade"*.
- That Ghana should position herself as a role-model using her natural resources more efficiently to the benefit of other countries, contribute to the world economy by producing and exporting finished products, provide economic assistance to other nations and stand out as a democratic country, be heavily involved in global policy making, be hosting world activities and also be involved in international cooperation so as to improve her image.

Finally, with a high expectation, most respondents agreed on the view that Ghana ought to be distinguished on the following bases: Civilized and responsible people, vibrant economy, good infrastructure, modernized environment, quality health and education, job opportunities, disciplined country with good leaders. And that Ghana ought to have responsible and knowledgeable citizens as a differentiating factor, a nation with functional democracy.

CONCLUSION

The behavioural conceptual model for country brand management that Brand Office seeks to adopt in branding Ghana appears to be appropriate. This is because several issues and ideas raised by respondents in the interviews, in relations to branding Ghana is about behaviour and attitude of the citizenry and political leadership. The following are some conclusions from the research work which support the approach of Brand Ghana Office:

- Ghanaians have varied perceptions and concerns about Ghana as a nation and, therefore, embarking on any attempt at branding the country without understanding their views about the country would have been a folly.
- Much as Ghanaians aspire for economic development and personal well –being they perceive good behavior and attitudes of the citizenry such as discipline, responsible behavior, quest for knowledge and good leadership as central to establishing a differentiator for Brand Ghana.
- Ghanaians are very clear that nation branding must be underpinned by appropriate policies that lead to the provision of infrastructure, quality education, quality health care and job creation. For them nation branding cannot be divorced from development. It should be the end result of such an initiative.
- Ghanaians appear to be cynical and generally less satisfied about the conduct and performance of their political leaders. Any credible nation branding initiative and implementation will require behavior change. The political leadership and the elites must take the lead in modeling the desired behaviour.
- Ghanaians have very high aspirations and seem to be impatient with the level and pace of development of the country.

IMPLICATION FOR POLICY MAKERS/COUNTRY BRAND COORDINATORS/MANAGERS

- Central to implementing a successful branding and national identity programme, which is competitive and attractive to outsiders, is the behavior of the citizenry. The attitude and behavior of the people must be consistent with the brand essence. Consequently, the key component of the nation branding marketing programme should focus on internal marketing. This means programmes that seek to promulgate responsible behavior and attitudes as well as the enactment and implementation of appropriate policies. A practical example is to organize a well-publicized essay competition for students at all levels of education in Ghana to write about say “ Vision of a prosperous Ghana” or “ How citizens of a progressive Ghana should behave”
- The Brand Ghana office and coordinators should find a way of engaging key stakeholders such as tourist board, investment promotion agency, export promotion agency, chamber of commerce, port authorities, diplomats and so on at crucial stages of the branding initiative to get their buy in and support. This is crucial to align key implementers of the branding programme to a common vision and a single direction. Strong brands have one and consistent essence, personality and identity across several products.

It is even more important for nation branding where different people and different institutions with different products and services are all projecting the image or otherwise of Ghana through the action or inaction.

- Political leaders should serve as genuine models for any behavior change that is required to move the nation towards realizing its brand essence. The politicians cannot afford to say one thing and do the opposite. This will turn the nation branding effort into a political gimmick. Genuine political commitment will require some very tough and at times unpopular decisions from government.
- Building a strong country brand and favourable national identity takes very long to achieve, especially, if a country is seeking to change a stereotype. It is pertinent for the citizens to know that nation branding effort is not the answer to rapid economic

development, and improvement in the well being of the people. It is rather an initiative which seeks to galvanize the whole nation into creating a strong, unique and favourable identity which will attract inward investment and special talents, make Ghana a preferred choice for some group of tourists and putting its people and products in the evoked sets when it comes to competing for attention and patronage from prospective customers. It will require the government to invest in infrastructure, quality education, and quality health care and promulgate policies that align with the identity the nation branding effort seeks to create to make Ghana competitive. The nation branding initiative should be given the time to run over a considerable number of years with proper funding to give it the chance to succeed. Successes emanating from the initiative should be celebrated with Ghanaians

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The ultimate goal of branding is to create preference for a brand. It is to get prospective customers to gleefully patronize a brand instead of another one. It is, essentially, about influencing the behavior of people.

It has been noted that delivering a successful nation branding initiative may require a change in the behavior of people of the country embarking on the initiative, to enable it achieve a targeted national identity or image. Once a country has embarked on nation branding, it may be useful after few years to assess or research the effect of nation branding on the behavior of key internal stakeholders such as citizens, politicians, investment promoters, exporters and tour operators and so on. It means a baseline research needs to be conducted prior to implementing the nation branding programme.

The post-launch evaluation research will throw light on the effectiveness of the nation branding efforts, which tools are achieving results and what inputs are required for improving the programme.

Appendix 1

Research Questions/Information Required

- How do Ghanaians perceive Ghana today?
- How do Ghanaians want the country to be perceived?
- What do Ghanaians perceive as Ghana's strengths?
- What do Ghanaians perceive as Ghana's weaknesses?
- What should be Ghana's top priorities for national development?
- Where is Ghana going?
- Where Ghana ought to be going?
- What makes Ghana different?
- What ought to make Ghana different?
- What needs is Ghana fulfilling in the world community?
- What needs ought to be fulfilled by Ghana in the world community?
- What are Ghana's Values/Behaviours?
- What ought to be Ghana's Values/ Behaviours?
- What are Ghana's fields of competence?
- What ought to be Ghana's field of competence?
- Describe the Ghana you would like to live in

REFERENCES

- Allan, M. (2004). Why brand places? *Opinion No 64*, [www.beyond – branding.com/agenda](http://www.beyond-branding.com/agenda).
- Ambler, T. & Styles C. (1996). Brand development versus new product development, towards a process model of extension decisions. *Marketing intelligence and planning*, 14, 7, 0 – 19.
- Anholt, S. (2003), *Brand New Justice: the Upside of Global Branding*. Butterworth- Heinemann.
- Anholt, S. (2003). Branding places and nations in Clifton R. & Simmons J. (Eds) *Brand and Branding. The Economist in Association with Profile Books*, London.
- Anholt, S. (2007), *Competitive Identity The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan
- Anholt, S. (2002). Foreword: *Journal of Brand Management*, . Vol.9, 4 -5, 229 – 239.
- Brymer, C. (2003) Branding a country, Interbrand, www.brandchannel.com
- de Vicente J., (2004). State Branding in the 21st Century, Master's Thesis. The Fletcher School. www.Fletcher.tufts.edu/research.
- Delorie, J. (2004), Moulding our National Identity. www.msk.com.
- Fan, Y (2005) Branding the Nation: What is being branded? *Journal of Vacation Marketing* vol. 12, no.1, p 5-14.
- Frost, R. (2004). Mapping a country's future, Interbrand, www.brand.channel.com
- Kapferer, J.N. (2004). *The new strategic Brand Management*. London. Kogan Page.
- Kapferer, J.N. (2007). *The new strategic Brand Management*. London. Kogan Page.

Keller, K.L, (2003). Strategic Brand Management, New Jersey, Prentice Hall

Olins, W. (2002). Branding the Nation: The historical context. *The Journal of Brand Management* 4. vol.9.

Papadopoulos N & Heslop L. (2002). Country equity and country branding: problems and prospects, *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 9l.p, 4 – 5, p. 294 – 314.

Porter, M. (1985) Competitive Advantage of Nations. New York, Free Press

Strauss, A.C. & Corbin, J.M. (1990). Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques, Sage Publications

Transparency International (2004) www.transparency.org

Widler, J. (2007) Nation Branding: With Pride Against Prejudice, *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* vol. 3, p 144-150, Palgrave Macmillan