

Nation Branding: Ghana

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Abstract

Akwaaba – welcome to Ghana, also referred to as "island of peace" in one of the most chaotic regions on earth. Ghana is usually known as "Gold Coast" due to large gold deposits in the southern parts of the country. The Ghana as a relatively new nation has not developed extensive symbols. If successful the branding of Ghana would allow the country to flourish at an incredible rate. The nation branding of Ghana can be done from its Coat of arms which represents the most distinctive emblems originated from nationalist movement. The key elements considered while branding Ghana are Gold, Cocoa, Oil and Volta Lake. Ghana is rich mineral resources such as gold, diamonds, manganese, limestone, bauxite, iron ore as well as various clays and granite deposits. Despite of all the advantages of Ghana, the branding is not so successful because Ghana is deprived of any international brands, which provide a success guide framework to emerging brands. The main impediment is the fact that Ghana cannot be separated from the negative image of 'brand' Africa.

Keywords: Nation Branding, Ghana, Africa, Business, Gold, Cocoa, Oil, Volta Lake

1. Introduction:

"Akwaaba-welcome to Ghana" (Alifo, n.d.). The word Ghana is derived from the ancient Ghana Empire, which literally means "Warrior King" (Jackson, G. J. 2001). It has often been referred to as an "island of peace" in one of the most chaotic regions on earth (Ghana web, n.d.).

The country's economy is dominated by agriculture, which employs about 40 % of the working population. Ghana is one of the leading exporters of cocoa in the world. It is also a significant exporter of commodities such as gold and lumber. A country covering an area of 238,500 square kilometres, Ghana has an estimated population of 22 million, drawn from more than one hundred ethnic groups - each with its own unique language. English, however, is the official language, a legacy of British colonial rule (Ghana web, n.d.).

Ghana is usually known as "Gold Coast" due to large gold deposits in the southern parts of the country. The Portuguese were the first to arrive in the Gold Coast and they built a castle at Elmina. After that the British took control of the gold coast. Finally, Ghana became a full independent republic in 1960 (Ghana guide, n.d.).

1.1 Location:

This country is located on the southern coast of the West African bulge and is bordered to the east by Togo, to the west by the Ivory Coast, to the south by the Atlantic Ocean and to the north and northwest by Burkina Fasso (Africa guide, n.d.).

1.2 Land:

Ghana has a total land area of 238,537 km² (92,100 sq. miles) stretching 672 km north to south and 357 km east to west. Its physical size makes it about the same size as Great Britain. Out of a total land area of 23 million hectares, 13 million hectares (57%) is suitable for agricultural production, and 5.3 million hectares (39%) of this is under cultivation (GIPC, n.d.).

1.3 Climate:

Ghana has a tropical climate. The temperature is generally between 21-32°C (70-90°F). There are two rainy seasons, from March to July and from September to October, separated by a short cool dry season in August and a relatively long dry season in the south from mid-October to March. The north, also with tropical climate, is dry and falls partly within the Sahelian zone. Annual rainfall in the south averages 2,030 mm, but varies greatly throughout the country, with the heaviest rainfall in the south-western part (GIPC, n.d.).

1.4 Topography:

Ghana is not a mountainous country, but has some highlands and some steep escarpments in the middle portions and isolated places in the northern parts. The land is relatively flat and the altitude is generally below 500m, with more than half of the country below 200m. The Volta River basin dominates the country's river system and includes the 8,480km Lake Volta (the largest artificial lake in the world), formed behind the Akosombo hydroelectric dam. The coastal area consists of plains and numerous lagoons near the estuaries of rivers (GIPC, n.d.).

1.5 Vegetation:

In terms of vegetation, the north is predominantly savannah and the middle section (extending to the south-western part) is typical rainforest, while the coastal section has thicket interspersed with savannah (GIPC, n.d.).

1.6 Resources:

Rich mineral resources such as gold, diamonds, manganese, limestone, bauxite, iron ore as well as various clays and granite deposits. In 2008, Ghana produced 2,994,610 ounces of gold and 599,007 carats of diamond. Ghana is the second largest producer of gold in Africa (GIPC, n.d.).

Extensive forests, which are arguably the best managed in West Africa (with 252 permanent forest reserves in the rain forest zone alone. In total about 11% of Ghana is defined as forest.). Ghana is the second largest producer of cocoa in the world. It is also the third largest producer of timber and the second largest exporter of wood and wood products in Africa; Rich marine fishing resources (tuna and game fishing); Beautiful landscape, inviting sunshine, pristine beaches, exotic wildlife and exciting national parks and game reserves;

2. Literature Review:

The state symbols of Ghana are represented by flag and coat of arms. The flag consists of Red, Gold and Green color representing the blood of heroes for Ghana freedom, symbolizing rich mineral resources i.e. Gold and Cocoa in Ghana and representing dense forest and green landscape of the country respectively. The black star on the flag represents the lone star of African freedom.

The coat of arms shows that Ghanaians are identified as proud ones. The black star depicts African freedom. On the top left, the staff and the sword represents the national government, the castle represents the Christianborg castle. Two eagles supporting the shield on the right and left hand side shows that very clear and attentive eyes are continuously keeping a watch over the country. The bottom quarters show a cocoa tree on left and gold mine on the right, presenting the exports that form the backbone of Ghana's economical well being (Government of Ghana, n.d.).

The Ghana as a relatively new nation has not developed extensive symbols. The nation branding of Ghana can be done from its Coat of arms which represents the most distinctive emblems originated from nationalist movement (Schwimmer, n.d.).

As with many post-modern concepts the definition of nation branding and associated terms lack consensus. Hence, it is imperative that the terms associated with nation branding are understood in the context in which they are used for the Brand Ghana programme (Akotia, 2010a).

Nations have always managed their reputation, and actively marketed their reputation for growth, tourism, trade, investment, social and sporting exchange, and for image. Nations have always been brands, in the truest of senses, although mentioning this fact worries some. A nation or country brand is a nation's identity that has been proactively distilled, inferred, adopted among the citizens and projected for international recognition to construct a favourable national image, and enrich a nation's competitiveness. A nation brand must therefore have a competitive identity, to evoke the desirable image and to enhance nation competitiveness (Akotia, 2010a).

Nation or country branding is about using strategic marketing to promote various aspects of a country's identity. Country branding denotes that countries behave in many ways like commercial and corporate brands. Country branding is not about spin, neither is it about propaganda. It is about proactive and conscious husbandry of a nation's identity so as to enhance citizenship behaviours and nationhood internally, and to compete favourably internationally. It is about the recognition that image and reputation of a country as well as aggregate citizenship behaviour are critical to a nation's strategic development (Akotia, 2010b).

Simon Anholt, a nation branding expert, emphasises that a nation brand is national identity made tangible, robust, communicable and above all useful. Unless the overall strategy rings true about its people, there is little chance that it will be believed or endorsed by the population, much more the rest of the world (Akotia, 2010b).

Like commercial brands, for a nation to be competitive and resilient that nation must have identity that is compelling to both domestic and foreign consumers. This is one reason why Ghana has embarked on a conscious branding programme to make the country more attractive to her consumers (Akotia, 2010a).

Brand Ghana Office is working to make sure that the people of Ghana have a good, clear, believable and positive idea of what their country really is, what it stands for and where it is going, and manage to coordinate actions, investments, policies and communications of all major channels of national expressions so that they demonstrate and reinforce what the nation stands for. If they manage to do this effectively then Ghana will stand a better possibility of building and managing a competitive national identity, to the lasting benefit of exporters, importers, government, tourism, international relations and ordinary people of the nation (Akotia, 2010a).

The key elements considered while branding Ghana are Gold, Cocoa, oil and Volta Lake.

Ghana is enriched in gold deposit, it is said that in Ghana gold grows in the sand like carrots and it is picked at sunrise, gold is also found in the form of stones (Mining hall of fame speech, 2000). Ghana is among the top gold producers of the world (Brown, D. 2010). The gold deposits attract every country and investors because every economy is based on gold reserves, having gold means potential source of foreign exchange that leads a country towards an economical wellbeing (Modern Ghana, n.d.).

After gold the next major thing on which Ghana's economy depends is Cocoa, Ghana is the second largest producer of Cocoa (World crops, 2011), it is also called Black gold of Ghana (Bartle, n.d.). Due to the positive effects of cocoa, the world consumption of cocoa is estimated at 2,800,000 tons per year, Ghana is producing 13% of world's cocoa (Zchocolate, n.d.). Scientists have found that melted chocolate in mouth is better than a passionate kiss (BBC, 2007). Cadbury is one of the largest chocolate makers of Britain, 90% of its cocoa is imported from Ghana (Ghana web, n.d.).

In 2007, large oil reserves were found in Ghana leading it to enter the oil exporting nations of the world. These oil reserves provide 120,000 barrels of oil a day (Tawiah, 2011). This oil can satisfy 90 % of Ghana's lubricant demand (Modern Ghana, n.d.). Oil has been major concern for every country, Iraq was attacked by America in order to capture oil reserves (Palast, 2005), because oil is the number one energy source and overall country production, transportation and operation depends on oil. Its scarcity has increased its demand and importance (Mast, 2005).

All major countries and global oil companies joined a race to buy stakes in Jubilee oil fields in Ghana (Ghana web, 2009). The oil reserve of a country is also called oil curse as it brings potential dangers as faced by Nigeria and Iran, but Ghana successfully managed the oil resources because it has been already dealing with natural resources i.e. cocoa and gold (Ghana web, 2009).

Ghana has several tourist attractions such as 8500 square km, Volta Lake (Briggs, 2010.). It is the largest artificial manmade lake in the world formed by the Akosombo dam (brand Ghana, n.d.). This lake was made to accumulate water for generating the hydro- electricity. Furthermore, its purpose was to improve inland water transport, enhance fishing, meeting water requirements for domestic and industrial use and for irrigation (ILEC, n.d.).

The Lake Volta is providing electricity to its nearby countries like Togo and Benin, it is also providing waterway for cargo and ferries watercraft. Naturally, the water remains warm all year making it a good location for fishing and tourist attraction (Field, n.d.).

The elements that are not been recognized are football and an underwater forest in Volta Lake which can be a largest source for timber. Ghana should design equipment not only to harvest the timber but also figure out how to do it without harming the underwater habitat for marine (Field, n.d.).

Media, books, publications and articles contributes a lot in promoting the elements, Ghana has a web directory of 2758 Ghana related websites including tourist portal, maps, investor guide, festivals, images and information about Ghana among which Ghanaweb.com, BrandGhana.org.gh, modernGhana.com and the-Ghana-guide.com are the most popular (Ghana web, n.d.).

President of Ghana launched brand Ghana office in 2009, to build a compelling image of Ghana (Bizcommunity, 2009).

Even with all the advantages of Ghana, the branding is not as much successful as Ghana does not have any international brands which provide a success guide framework to emerging brands. The main complication is the fact that Ghana cannot be alienated from the adverse image of 'brand' Africa (Brand Ghana, n.d.).

3. Conclusion:

What has always been part of a country's attempt to influence the world around it will continue and sophisticated elements of marketing techniques will also continue to be used. There will always be room in the global market place for many country brands. Branding is part of the reason there is such an ever increasing gap between the developing and the developed countries. There is now an opportunity, for a developing country like Ghana, to close this gap by turning attention to employ professionalism in its country branding programme.

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