

BRANDING IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: ANALYSIS ON AN EMERGING ECONOMY

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Abstract

The article evaluates the literature evidence on country, and efforts by organizations at branding in Ghana. This is in recognition of the contribution of strong brands to performance of organizations, and the effect of country branding and branding by organizations on each other (Opoku and Hinson, 2005; Wanjuri, 2005). Ghana's image has been a mixture of the good and the bad. The pioneering role in obtaining independence in Africa, and the relative level of stability and good governance are among the positive achievements. However, the umbrella painting of sub-Saharan Africa as corrupt, filled with poor governance, with severe economic challenges have had negative effect on many sub-Saharan African countries, including Ghana. There is therefore no clear positive established brand for the country.

Studies on branding as they relate to organizations have focused on factors influencing consumer choice of brands. In the automobile industry for example, the attributes of a car, emotional attachment, awareness and accessibility were important brand selection factors. In the banking industry, customer selection of bank depended on factors such as level of service quality, customer satisfaction and availability of service and others.

A number of bases for improving country branding are discussed bearing in mind that country branding can improve the fortunes of organizations within, and that branding success by organization can also affect country image (Gotsi et al., 2011; Versi, 2009a, 2009b). Key among these is the need to exploit the positive elements of the environment, culture and history in order to create nostalgia for originality, and to regard ecology as part of the heritage for branding (Abimbola, 2006). These may manifest in artefacts – for example – as a way of boosting performance in tourism.

The work of Coffie and Owusu-Frimpong (2014) serves as good starting point for organizational decision options in branding in Ghana. This is because the typology (Coffie and Owusu-Frimpong, 2014) is consumer based and captures the dominant preferences of Ghanaian customers. While not all of the branding possibilities discussed under the three strategies – service reliability, social responsibility and branding – will suit or provide a fit for all organizations, organizations are better off experimenting with the selected elements deemed fit, and resonate with the nature of the product, and the overall organizational strategy.

The practical implication of this paper is that it provides options based on sound analysis for country and firms to brand. Ministries of government and managers of firms responsible for branding in Ghana may find this useful in their decision making.