

## Assessing the Brand Knowledge of Ghana as a Tourism Destination

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### Abstract

The study focuses on assessing the brand knowledge of Ghana as a tourism destination. It envisages identifying whether Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) projected image and tourists' perceived image of Ghana are same, in order for the country to achieve her vision of becoming a leading tourism destination in West Africa. The study revealed that tourists choose from a variety of information sources such as word-of-mouth and marketer-controlled sources such as brochures and official websites of tourism authorities.

The study envisages to assess Ghana's brand knowledge as a tourism destination and to identify whether Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) projected image and tourists' perceived image of Ghana are same, if the country is to achieve her vision of becoming a leading tourist destination in West Africa. The study reveals that tourists choose from a variety of information sources such as word-of-mouth and marketer-controlled sources such as brochures and official websites of tourism authorities. It came out that top of mind cue for tourists were 'peaceful place', followed by 'football', 'friendly people' and 'culture/heritage' respectively. This contradicts the response from the Marketing Director at GTA that the three major attractions are historical heritage (castles), cultural heritage (kente) and ecotourism (kakum national park). Therefore the induced image as projected by GTA does not influence organic brand images on tourists' image formation on Ghana. In the minds of all the three industry players (GTA, Tour Operators and Tourists), Senegal is the main competitor in the consideration set of tourists who come to Ghana. To the tourists, Ghana is safe, exciting and attractive, has fair weather, has unique attractions, is suitable for children and residents are trendy and communicate easily with tourists. However, more than fifty percent of tourists, majority of GTA Staff and tour operators sampled were of the opinion that the tourism

facilities and infrastructure need to be improved to ensure quality service delivery.

There is therefore the need for officials of GTA as well as tour operators to re-brand and position Ghana as the only choice for tourists which Senegal appeal to. Also, advertising strategies for the tourism industry must highlight features about the country's tourism that will appeal to tourist with children. Officials at Ghana Tourism Authority must re-strategize to incorporate football into the country's attractions instead of the existing focus on culture/heritage. Tourism facilities and infrastructure need to be improved to ensure quality service delivery.

**Key Words** – Brand knowledge, brand awareness, brand image, tourism, Ghana.

### **Introduction**

Brand knowledge according to (Keller, 2003) is a function of awareness, which relates to consumers' ability to recognize or recall the brand, and image, which consists of consumers' perceptions and of associations for the brand.

Consequently, this study envisages to assess Ghana's brand knowledge as a tourism destination and to identify whether Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) projected image and tourists' perceived image of Ghana are same, if the country is to achieve her vision of becoming a leading tourist destination in West Africa. The study reveals that tourists choose from a variety of information sources such as word-of-mouth and marketer-controlled sources such as brochures and official websites of tourism authorities. It came out that top of mind cue for tourists were 'peaceful place', followed by 'football', 'friendly people' and 'culture/heritage' respectively. This contradicts the response from the Marketing Director at GTA that the three major attractions are historical heritage (castles), cultural heritage (kente) and ecotourism (kakum national park). Therefore the induced image as projected by GTA does not influence organic brand images on tourists' image formation on Ghana. In the minds of all the three industry players (GTA, Tour Operators and Tourists), Senegal is the main competitor in the consideration set of tourists who come to Ghana. To the tourists, Ghana is safe, exciting and attractive, has fair weather, has unique attractions, is suitable for children and residents are trendy and communicate easily with tourists. However, more than fifty percent of tourists, majority of GTA Staff and tour operators sampled were of the opinion that the tourism facilities and infrastructure need to be improved to ensure quality service delivery.

There is therefore the need for officials of GTA as well as tour operators to re-brand and position Ghana as the only choice for tourists which Senegal appeal to. Also, advertising strategies for the tourism industry must highlight features about the country's tourism that will appeal to tourist with children. Officials at Ghana Tourism Authority must re-strategize to incorporate football into the country's attractions instead of the existing focus on culture/heritage. Tourism facilities and infrastructure need to be improved to ensure quality service delivery.

### **Problem Statement**

Formally known as the Gold Coast of Africa, Ghana has a rich history, remarkable culture and friendly people which have over the years attracted tourists to the country.

(Gunn, 1988) Proposed two types of brand image: organic and induced. Organic image is formed of a destination from an early stage, and is based on what is learnt about the destination through newspaper reports, magazine articles, TV reports and other non-tourism specific information sources such as word-of-mouth and actual visitation and is more difficult to control by destination marketers (Tasci and Gartner, 2007). Also, the image that a tourist forms about a destination through the help of promotion and other advertising media which are directly influenced by information given out by tourism organizations is regarded as induced image (Gunn, 1988). Subsequently, a third level has been added to the concept of destination image which (Fakeye and Crompton, 1991) call complex image. This refers to the kind of image that tourists have when they actually visit the destination by having a direct contact and actual experience at the destination. Therefore, the perceptions of destination attributes emerge from the image of the place derived from organic sources and projected brand communications referred to as “organic” and “induced” image, respectively, (Gartner, 1994); (Beerli and Martin, 2004); (Govers, Go and Kumar, 2007); (Tasci and Gartner, 2007).

This study envisages to assess Ghana’s brand knowledge as a tourism destination and to identify whether Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) projected image and tourists’ perceived image of Ghana are same, if the country is to achieve her vision of becoming a leading tourist destination in West Africa. Subsequently, Ghana’s ability to attract tourists’ attention and thereby achieve the Ministry of Tourism’s vision of attracting one million tourists arrival will mean that the country will have to be in the consideration set of travelers to capture the mind of tourists when they are planning their visits.

### **Objectives of the Study**

In assessing the brand knowledge of Ghana as a tourism destination, the following research objectives are posed:

- a. To explore the influence of induced and organic brand images on tourists’ destination image formation.
- b. To identify competing countries in the consideration set of tourists in the sub region.
- c. To suggest appropriate marketing strategies to help Ghana Tourism Authority achieve its tourism growth objective of attracting one million tourists.

### **Research Questions**

To achieve the research objectives the following research questions will be answered:

- a. To what extent is tourist’s image influenced by organic or induced image?
- b. Which countries compete with Ghana in the consideration set of tourists?
- c. How best can Ghana achieve its tourism growth objective of attracting one million tourists?

## **Methodology**

This research used a descriptive design, as the study is concerned with specific predictions, with narration of facts and characteristics concerning individual or group situation. As such, this research aims to obtain complete and accurate information and make enough provision for protection against bias and must maximize reliability.

This study used mainly primary data and backed by secondary data sources. The data collection process was in three stages. The first stage involved desk study which mainly was to identify gaps in the literature and to direct the research focus. This stage also saw the redefinition of the research aims and objectives in order to find an appropriate methodology for the study. The second stage involved a pilot study of the research instruments to be used for the data collection to make sure all the information collected were devoid of errors, incompleteness and uncertainties. The final stage was the commencement of field data collection which took three months after all the necessary logistics and support were put together.

### **Secondary Data Sources**

These are sources containing data which have been collected and compiled for another purpose. Secondary data sources provided an idea on existing knowledge on the subject matter. Search for secondary data followed the categories espoused by (Kumar, 2011); they were internal records at Ghana Tourism Authority, journals on the internet, web search, textbooks and so on.

### **Primary Data Sources**

Primary data were directly collected by the researcher from various original sources. Semi-structured interview was used as part of the qualitative data structure to achieve the research objectives. To explore and gain better understanding into brand knowledge of Ghana as a tourist destination, the Marketing Director of Ghana Tourism Authority was interviewed. Also, semi-interviews conducted with some tourist, tour operators and staff members of GTA yielded significant insights on people's feelings, experiences and opinions on Ghana as a tourist destination. In addition, questionnaire survey was used as the main data collection technique under the quantitative structure. Three different questionnaires were administered to the respondents. The first set of questionnaires were for the staff of Ghana Tourism Authority, the second was administered to the travel and tour operators, and finally for the tourists. The questionnaires had three sections: section one contained bio-data of the respondents, the section two included questions relating to access to relevant tourism information, consideration sets of tourists, brand image attributes, and the third section on brand awareness attributes. In this instance, the likert scale was used because the assumption was made that the strength/ intensity of experience is linear. That is on a continuum from strongly agreed to strongly disagree and makes the assumption that attitudes/ opinions was measured. Respondents were offered a choice of 5 pre-coded responses with the neutral point being undecided. Each of the 5 responses was assigned a numerical value (1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral point, 4 agree, and 5 strongly agree) which was used to measure the opinion under investigation.

## **Population and Sampling Techniques**

The population for this study included tourism industry players (public and private sectors and the travelling public). As such, the Staff of Ghana Tourism Authority represented the public sector players, licensed tour operators represented the private sector players, tourists at licensed up-market hotels (for the purpose of this study up-market hotels are 2-5 star hotels), Kakum National Park, Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum represented the travelling public.

To have studied the entire population would have been very tasking and very expensive considering the time frame available to the researcher. As a result, purposive sampling method was used to interview the Marketing Director of GTA, because of the key role her department performs at the Authority (Marketing Ghana domestically and internationally). In addition, the researcher used simple random sampling to solicit information from the staff of GTA, licensed tour operators and tourists. As such, twenty-five (25) staff of Ghana Tourism Authority, ten (10) licensed tour operators, five (5) tourists each at Kakum National Park and Kwame Nkrumah Mausoleum and thirty (30) tourists in licensed up-market hotels were randomly selected.

## **Data Analysis**

Data collected were analysed with the help of tables and bar charts. The responses were tallied in a table, coded and the range of responses depicted visually with bar charts.

## **Findings and Analysis**

### **Characteristics of Staff of Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA)**

The gender, age, position and duration in service are the characteristics of respondents as captured by the researcher in the case of GTA Staff and tour operators.

Gender - Of the Twenty-five GTA staff sampled, fourteen are male, representing fifty-six percent of total respondents; eleven were female representing forty-four percent of total respondents (see table 1)

Age - Table 1 indicates that six, representing twenty-four percent were below the age of thirty, fourteen, representing fifty-six percent were between the ages of thirty-one and fifty and five, representing twenty percent were fifty-one years and above.

Position - As indicated in table 1, ten of the respondents were senior officers, representing forty percent, seven were junior officers, representing twenty-eight percent, and eight were managers, representing thirty-two percent.

Duration in Service - Four of the twenty five GTA staff sampled had spent less than five years in service with the Authority, representing sixteen percent, ten, representing forty percent had spent between five to ten years in service with the Authority, four, representing sixteen percent had spent between eleven to sixteen years in service with the Authority, seven, representing twenty-eight percent had also been in service with Authority for over sixteen years (See Table 1).

The characteristics of the GTA Staff sampled indicate that the response are valid and are coming from relevant respondents.

Table 1 - GTA Staff Details		
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	14	56
Female	11	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Below 30years	6	24
31-50years	14	56
51years and above	5	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Position</b>		
Senior Officers	10	40
Junior Officers	7	28
Managers	8	32
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Duration in Service</b>		
Below 5years	4	16
5-10years	10	40
11-16years	4	16
Above 16years	7	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: By Researcher

### Characteristics of Tour Operators

**Gender** - Table 2 indicates that seventy percent of tour operators sampled were male with remaining thirty percent being female.

**Ages** It is indicative in Table 2 that seventy percent of tour operators sampled were between the ages of thirty-one to fifty years.

**Position** - Out of the ten tour operators sampled fifty percent were management members whiles the other fifty percent were officers.

**Years of Experience (Tour Operators)** - Seventy percent of tour operators sampled, as indicated in Table 2 have been in business between five to ten years and therefore are very experienced.

<b>Table 2 - Tour Operators Details</b>		
	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	7	70
Female	3	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Below 30years	3	30
31-50years	7	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Position</b>		
Management	5	50
Officers	5	50
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
Below 5years	3	30
5-10years	7	70
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

### **Characteristics of Tourists**

In the case of tourists Age Gender, Nationality, Educational background and Monthly income were the characteristics of tourists captured.

Gender - Twenty-one out of the forty tourists sampled were male while the remaining nineteen were female (Table 3).

Age - Nineteen out of the forty tourists sampled are between the ages of thirty-one to fifty.

Nationality - Forty eight percent of tourists sampled were Americans, confirming the existing records at GTA.

Education - Eighty-five percent of tourists sampled had tertiary educational qualification.

Monthly Income - Eighty percent of tourists sampled earn a monthly income above \$1000.

Table 3 - Tourists Details		
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	19	47.5
Male	21	52.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>		
Below 30years	12	30
31-50years	19	47.5
51years and above	9	22.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Nationality of Tourists</b>		
America	19	47.5
British	4	10
Turkey	1	2.5
Lebanese	4	10
France	3	7.5
Austria	2	5
Canada	4	10
Burkina Faso	3	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Education of Tourists</b>		
Others	3	7.5
Secondary	3	7.5
Tertiary	34	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Income of Tourists (month)</b>		
\$300-\$500	4	10
\$501-1000	4	10
Above \$1000	32	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

## Tourist Image Formation

### Access to Information

Hudiono (2008) was of the opinion that tourists spend a considerable amount of time searching for relevant information that will facilitate their destination choice. This is done to reduce the risk associated with travelling since it is a high involvement and high risk decision. He identified travel agents, journalistic reports (press and television), organized advertising campaigns mostly initiated by national tourism authorities as traditional means of information. Given that travel agents and tour operators carry distinct images for the various destinations, it is expected of them to transfer their views and opinions to potential visitors and thereby influence their consideration set. (Baloglu and Mangaloglu, 2001).



### Access to Information Through Relevant Brochures

Majority of respondents were of the view that tourist’s access information about Ghana as a tourism destination through relevant brochures. Table 4 and Figure 1 indicate that fifteen out of the twenty five GTA Staff sampled agreed that tourists get information from relevant brochure, likewise six out of the ten tour operators sampled. Twenty –one tourist out of the forty sampled also indicated that they got information about Ghana from relevant brochures.

	GTA	Tour Operators	Tourists
<b>Brochures</b>			
Strongly disagree	2	-	2
Disagree	4	-	11
Undecided	1	-	1
Agree	15	6	21
Strongly agree	3	4	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Internet</b>			
Strongly disagree	2	-	2
Disagree	1	-	6
Undecided	2	-	3
Agree	16	6	23
Strongly agree	4	4	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Word of mouth</b>			
Strongly disagree	1	-	1
Disagree	6	-	9
Undecided	1	1	2
Agree	17	4	27
Strongly agree	0	5	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>40</b>

Source: By Researcher

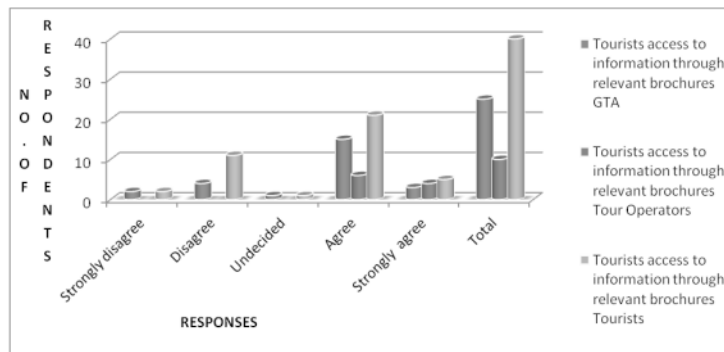


Figure 1 :Tourists Access to Information through relevant brochures

### Access to information through Internet

Majority of respondents were of the view that tourist's access information about Ghana as a tourism destination through internet. Table 4 and Figure 2 indicate that sixteen out of the twenty five GTA Staff sampled agreed that tourists get information from internet, likewise six out of the ten tour operators sampled .Twenty –three tourists out of the forty sampled also indicated that they got information about Ghana from relevant brochures.

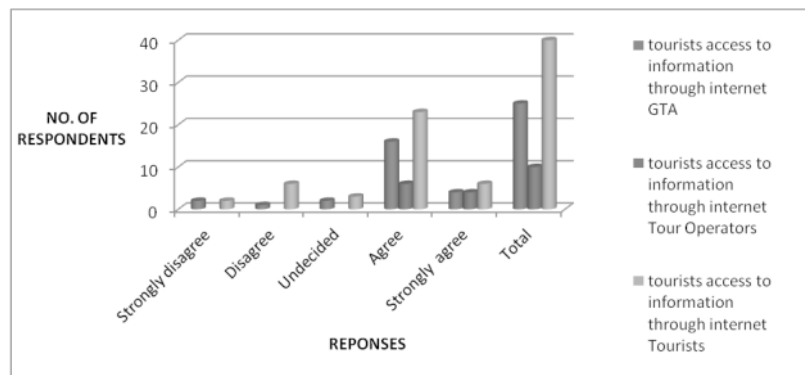


Figure 2 :Tourists Access to Information Through Internet

### Access to information through word-of-mouth

There was general consensus between tourism marketers and the tourists on tourists' access to information about Ghana as a tourism destination through word-of-mouth. See Table 4 and Figure 3.

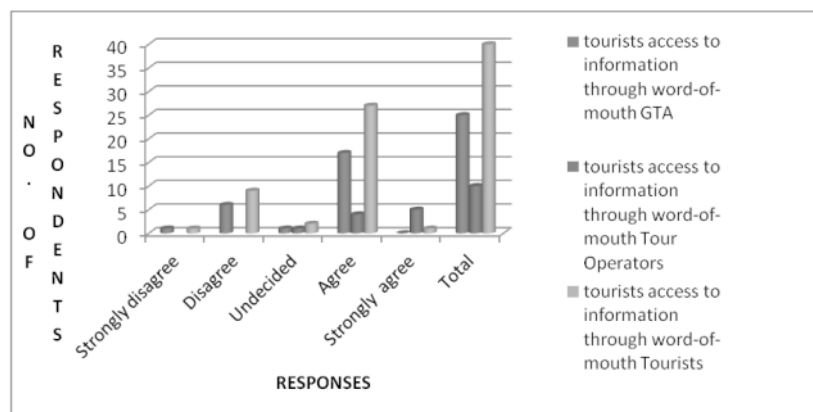


Figure 3 :Tourists Access to Information through Word-of-mouth

### Competitors within the sub-region

Nigeria offers a wide variety of tourist attractions such as river and ocean beaches ideal for swimming and other water sports; unique wildlife, vast tracts of unspoiled nature ranging from tropical forest, waterfalls, and climatic conditions conducive to holidaying. Other attractions include culture and historical monuments. Gambia offers eco trips, wildlife and bird watching safari, historical and cultural experiences, river trips and cruises, sea and river fishing holidays, sandy beaches and striking bargain experience in the country's open markets. Senegal on the other hand offers historical and cultural experience, regattas, boat rides, a bit of wildlife; there is the St. Louis Jazz Festival. Even though Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Gambia have similar attractions such as historical and cultural, ecotourism experiences and bargaining experiences in the open markets for varied souvenir items; only eighteen out of the forty tourists sampled agreed that Gambia offers similar products/ services as Ghana; eighteen out of same sample agreed that Nigeria offers similar products/ services as Ghana. Likewise, twenty-two out of the same sample agreed that Senegal offers similar products/services as Ghana (Table 5). However, among the same sample, fourteen out of the forty were undecided about whether Gambia offers similar products/ services as Ghana; in the case of Nigeria, eleven out of the forty sampled were undecided. Twelve out of the forty sampled were also undecided that Senegal offer similar products/services as Ghana (Table 6). Among the GTA staff, twelve out of twenty-five sampled agreed that Gambia offers similar products/services as Ghana, in the case of Nigeria twelve of the GTA staff sampled agreed that there are similarities between products/services offered by both Ghana and Nigeria (Table 5). Among the tour operators fifty percent of them agreed that Gambia offer similar products/ services as Ghana, forty percent agreed that Nigeria offers similar products/services as Ghana and sixty percent agreed that Senegal offers similar products/services as Ghana. See Table 5& 6.

Table 5 – Services Offered by Competitors		
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gambia</b>		
GTA	12	48
Tour Operators	5	50
Tourists	18	45
<b>Nigeria</b>		
GTA	12	48
Tour Operators	4	40
Tourists	18	45
<b>Senegal</b>		
GTA	14	56
Tour Operators	6	60
Tourists	22	55

## Ghana's Brand Knowledge

(Keller, 2003) Indicated that brand knowledge is a function of awareness, which relates to tourists' ability to recognize or recall the brand, and the image, which consists of the tourist's perceptions and the associations for the brand. Anderson (1983) presupposes that a brand is one node in memory, and brand associations are various informational nodes linked with one brand node (Ormeno, 2007). Adapting from (Keller, 2001) and (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993), brand knowledge has two dimensions; namely brand awareness and brand image. The implication is that the likelihood of memory retrieval (brand awareness) - in which case is there since tourists could not have come to Ghana if they had not heard about the country before- and the favourability, strength and uniqueness of the associations between the brand images of Ghana distinguishes the country from others in the sub-region.

### Brand Awareness

Taking from (Percy and Rosenbaum-Elliot, 2012: 173) assertion that brand awareness is the target audience's ability to identify a brand in sufficient detail to purchase or use it; Ghana's brand awareness is the tourist's ability to identify the country as a must- see tourism destination in detail to visit it. To accomplish this, there is the need for adequate information about Ghana stored in the mind of tourists which will facilitate the purchase decision. See table 6.

Brand awareness can be measured at two levels; namely depth of recall and width of recall. The second level is of utmost importance here since most tourists were not first timers which presupposes that they have heard about Ghana several times and trust the brand Ghana to the extent of facilitating repeated visits. See Table 6.

Width of recall deals with the cues that lead to brand recall. Findings of this study indicate that nineteen out of the forty sampled tourists agreed that Ghana is a suitable destination for children. See Table 6. Responses to a question posed to tourists 'what comes to mind when Ghana is mentioned?' reveal that top of mind cue was 'peaceful place', followed by 'football', 'friendly people' and 'culture/heritage' respectively. See Table 6. This contradicts the response from the Marketing Director at GTA that the three major attractions are historical heritage (castles), cultural heritage (kente) and ecotourism (kakum national park).

Table 6 - Tourists Views		
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Tourists undecided that Gambia/Nigeria /Senegal offer similar products /services as Ghana		
Gambia	14	35
Nigeria	11	27
Senegal	12	30
Accessing tourism information about Ghana is easy		
Strongly disagree	4	10
Disagree	13	32.5
Undecided	2	5
Agree	21	52.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>
Information about Ghana is enough to assist in planning your trip		
Strongly disagree	7	17.5
Disagree	9	22.5
Undecided	3	7.5
Agree	21	52.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>
Information about Ghana motivates you to visit the country		
Strongly disagree	1	2.5
Disagree	13	32.5
Undecided	9	22.5
Agree	17	42.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>
Is it your first visit?		
Yes	9	22.5
No	31	77.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>
Number of repeated visits		
0	9	22.5
2	5	12.5
3	7	17.5
4	10	25
5	3	7.5
6	3	7.5
8	3	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

Ghana is a suitable destination for children		
Strongly disagree	1	2.5
Disagree	3	7.5
Undecided	9	22.5
Agree	19	47.5
Strongly agree	8	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>
What comes to the mind of tourists when Ghana is mentioned?		
Peaceful place	10	25
Football	7	17.5
Friendly people	6	15
Culture/Heritage	6	15
Business	5	12.5
Good weather	2	5
Kakum walkway	2	5
Business and football	1	2.5
Gateway to Africa	1	2.5
Residents are trendy		
Strongly disagree	1	2.5
Disagree	4	10
Undecided	10	25
Agree	22	55
Strongly agree	3	7.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>
Residents communicate easily with tourists		
Strongly disagree	2	5
Disagree	3	7.5
Undecided	5	12.5
Agree	18	45
Strongly agree	12	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

## Brand Image

Brand image is the overall impression in consumers' mind. An image is formed based on the perceptions of association bundle that consumers have about the brand. Destination image is seen as a multi – dimensional, with cognitive and affective spheres, and is an

amalgam of the knowledge, feelings, beliefs, opinions, ideas, expectations and impressions that tourists have about a named location. Several studies have identified the brand image attributes of specific tourism destinations (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993). Others have sought to identify common attributes across destinations (Walmsley and Jenkins, 1993)(Walmsley and Young, 1998). The identified common attributes are classified under five categories: namely economic, physical environment, activities and facilities, brand attitudes and people. The economic attribute considers whether tourists see the destination as expensive or otherwise. Most of the tourists, GTA staff and Tour Operators sampled (35%, 36%, 60% respectively) considered Ghana as an expensive destination. The physical environment attribute looks at the attractiveness or otherwise of the destination in the eyes of the tourists. Tourists consider whether the climate is conducive for the type of activities to be engaged in whiles at the destination. Most of the tourists sampled (48%) indicated that Ghana is an attractive destination. Majority of same sample (50%) indicated that Ghana has a fair weather. Other considerations are whether the destination is busy or quiet, safe or otherwise. Most tourists see Ghana as a quiet and safe destination. The activities and facilities looks at tourists recreation, arts and culture, tourists facilities and infrastructure, accessibility, suitable for what occasions among others. However, less than fifty percent of tourists sampled agreed that Ghana has good tourism facilities and infrastructure.

Brand attitude attribute also looks at whether the destination is exciting, trustworthy, offers quality services and experiences and the risk associated with the purchase of such experience is low. Analysis of the responses indicates that most respondents see Ghana as an exciting destination. The last attribute is people. This considers the receptiveness of residents. (Gallarza, Saura and Garcia, 2002)When reviewing twenty five empirical studies on tourism destination image identified that receptiveness of residents was the most mentioned attribute in the studies. As indicated in the conceptual framework of this study, residents (people) are part of destination image. This attribute however, to a large extent cannot be controlled by marketers as it relies on tourists' direct interactions with residents and other tourists' word-of-mouth. It also looks at the culture of the people, whether they are trendy or not, whether there are language barriers or not. Respondents indicated that residents in Ghana are trendy and communicate easily with tourists. See Table 6.

## **Conclusion**

The summary of the study reveals that tourists choose from a variety of information sources such as word-of-mouth and marketer-controlled sources such as brochures and official websites of tourism authorities. It came out that top of mind cue for tourists were 'peaceful place', followed by 'football', 'friendly people' and 'culture/heritage' respectively. See table 6. This contradicts the response from the Marketing Director at GTA that the three major attractions are historical heritage (castles), cultural heritage (kente) and ecotourism (kakum national park).Therefore the induced image as projected by GTA does not influence organic brand images on tourists' image formation on Ghana. In the minds of all the three industry players (GTA, Tour Operators and Tourists), Senegal is

the main competitor in the consideration set of tourists who come to Ghana. To the tourists, Ghana is safe, exciting and attractive, has fair weather, has unique attractions, is suitable for children and residents are trendy and communicate easily with tourists. However, more than fifty percent of tourists, majority of GTA Staff and tour operators sampled were of the opinion that the tourism facilities and infrastructure need to be improved to ensure quality service delivery.

### **Strategies and Recommendations**

In the minds of all the three industry players (GTA, Tour Operators and Tourists), Senegal is the main competitor in the consideration set of tourists who come to Ghana. There is therefore the need for officials of GTA as well as tour operators to re-brand and position Ghana as the only choice for tourists which Senegal appeal to. It is imperative to study the brand Senegal, examine its branding and marketing strategies to help Ghana come up with a marketing strategy that will give the country a competitive advantage. There is also room for GTA and tour operators to work on the perception of tourists regarding tourism offers from Gambia and Nigeria to ensure that the country captures the interest and attention of tourists when deciding on a vacation. See Tables 5 & 6.

Forty-Eight percent of tourists sampled consider Ghana as a suitable destination for children. This presents a unique opportunity to tourism marketers. Advertising Strategies for the tourism industry must highlight features about the country's tourism that will appeal to tourist with children. Making the country attractive to children is also a long term investment that will yield loyalty some years to come. As the children grow, they will get used to Ghana and will bring their family and friends over.

Besides, responses to a question posed to tourist. "What comes to mind when Ghana is mentioned?" reveal that top of mind cue was 'peaceful place', followed by football and friendly people and culture/heritage respectively. Officials at Ghana Tourism Authority must re-strategize to incorporate football into the country's attractions instead of the existing focus on culture/heritage. International and well known Ghanaian footballers could be made tourism ambassadors and documentaries produced on them as well as facilitate collaboration between sports administrators and the tourism marketers to ensure that sports is used to grow the country's tourism potential. Ghana's tourism slogan 'culture, warmth and much more' as captured by researcher through the interview with the Marketing Director at GTA, must be reframed to incorporate the new brand Ghana with the emerging themes being football, child-friendly and peace. This is even more critical as the tourism slogan does not communicate the peaceful democratic state with friendly people as indicated by the Marketing Director at GTA in her interview with the researcher.

Tourism facilities and infrastructure need to be improved to ensure quality service delivery. Tourism is multi-faceted and as such uses inputs from other sectors in the country. Therefore provision of roads, portable water, sanitation facilities, electricity among others must be done with tourism in mind. The government must show commitment to the tourism industry by allocating funds for rebranding Ghana and manpower development.



## **Literature Review**

### **Travel and Tourism Industry in Ghana**

Tourism industry in Ghana during the pre-independence era mainly focused on the country's natural attributes of beaches and mountains as well as the demand and recreational patterns of the expatriate community (Akyeampong, 2006). Ghana Tourism Authority records indicates that tourism was officially born during Ghana's Independence Day celebration on 6<sup>th</sup> March, 1957 when many world dignitaries, Pan-African loyalists, artistes and Africans in the Diaspora visited the country in solidarity with its achievement as the first African country, in Sub Sahara to gain independence from colonial rule. The well-established state hotels and guest houses, the National Airline (Ghana Airways) and the cultural offers of the country supported the growing and a promising tourism industry for Ghana.

However, there was a slump in tourism arrivals and receipts after 1966 when the country suffered its first major political disturbance and subsequent instability. Fortunately, there was a revamp in the mid 1980's; when the tourism sector was prioritized under the National Investment Code as a strategy for economic recovery. Under the code, generous concessions and incentives were given to potential investors. By 1990, the first international chain hotel Novotel Accra, was established. It was followed by other international and local investors in the accommodation and restaurant business.

In 2012, West Africa Hospitality Group carried out a survey of the international hotel brands' development activities in Africa. According to the survey, Ghana has 11 international hotel brands including Hilton, Sheraton and Marriot that have signed deals and opened hotels. Of particular mention is Mövenpick Hotel which, was opened in Accra in 2012.

### **Destination Mix of Ghana**

The destination mix of the country is made up of attractions, accommodation, transportation, infrastructure and facilities that are used to a large extent for tourism purposes (Akyeampong, 2006).

#### **Attractions**

Ghana's attractions include natural environmental heritage, historical heritage and other man-made attractions as well as the country's central location on the world map (Ministry of Tourism, 2006).

- i) Natural Environmental Heritage
- ii) Historical Heritage
- iii) Other Man-Made Attractions

#### **Accommodation**

The earliest forms of tourist accommodation in Ghana were chalets owned by colonial merchants like CFAO and UAC, located along the beaches, which were to accommodate

visiting colonial provincial or district commissioners (Akyeampong, 2006) The accommodation sector has seen tremendous growth over the past five years. According to records at Ghana Tourism Authority, 2136 accommodation establishments were licensed in 2011 as against 1432 in 2007 representing a growth of 49%.

### Transportation

There are five airports with runways in Ghana. Kotoka International Airport is the only large one that functions as an international airport and gateway to the outside world. The other four medium ones are the Kumasi Airport, Sunyani Airport, Takoradi Airport and Tamale Airport. Road transport runs both within the country and on international routes between Ghana and Burkina Faso, La Cote d’Ivoire and Togo. Taxis, recognizable by their bright yellow fenders operate from city centers to suburbs and can be hired for longer trips or shared with other passengers at cheaper rates. There are also less expensive but adventure-filled mini vans (Tro-Tro) that ply the cities and towns. Coaches like M-Plaza, OA and VIP Express render inter-city services.

### Conceptual Framework

#### Brand Knowledge

Brand knowledge according to (Keller, 2003) is a function of awareness, which relates to consumers’ ability to recognize or recall the brand, and image, which consists of consumers’ perceptions and of associations for the brand. This includes all the descriptive and evaluative.

Brand-related information stored in a consumer’s memory. In effect, it is multi-dimensional as it includes all kinds of personal meaning that consumers associate with a brand.

(Keller, 2003) Conceptualized brand knowledge in two dimensions: brand awareness and brand image. This conceptualization was based on the “associative network memory model” constructed by cognitive psychologist (Ormeno, 2007: 70-80); (Anderson, 1983). Brand knowledge being considered as part of consumers’ long-term memory is conceptually modeled as a network with each unit as a node and the connections between nodes as links (Ormeno, 2007).

Brand Image	Economic Attributes	Brand Awareness	Depth of Recall
	Physical Attributes		Width of Recall
	Activities & Facilities Attributes		
	Brand Attributes		
	People		

Source: (Keller, 2001)(Echtner and Ritchie, 1993)

It presupposes that a brand (a name, logo) is one node in memory, and brand associations are various informational nodes linked with one brand node. The implication is that ease and likelihood of memory retrieval (brand awareness) and the favorability, strength and

uniqueness of the associations between nodes in the memory network (brand image) distinguish brands from each other.

The brand knowledge concept used for this study was adapted from (Keller, 2001) and (Echtner and Ritchie, 1993).

### **Brand Awareness**

Brand Awareness is defined as the percentage of consumers that recognize a brand. According to (Percy and Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2012: 173) brand awareness is the target audience's ability to identify a brand within a category in sufficient detail to purchase or use it. Brand awareness means how strong the brand exist in consumers minds (Aaker, 2010: 10).

### **Brand Image**

Brand image is the overall impression in consumers' mind. An image is formed based on the perceptions of association bundle that consumers have about the brand. Brand image consists of attributes, benefits.

The concept of destination image is seen as a multi – dimensional, with cognitive and affective spheres, and has been defined as an amalgam of the knowledge, feelings, beliefs, opinions, ideas, expectations and impressions that people have about a named location.

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