UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

SOFT POWER THROUGH NATION BRANDING: A STUDY OF

GHANA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY
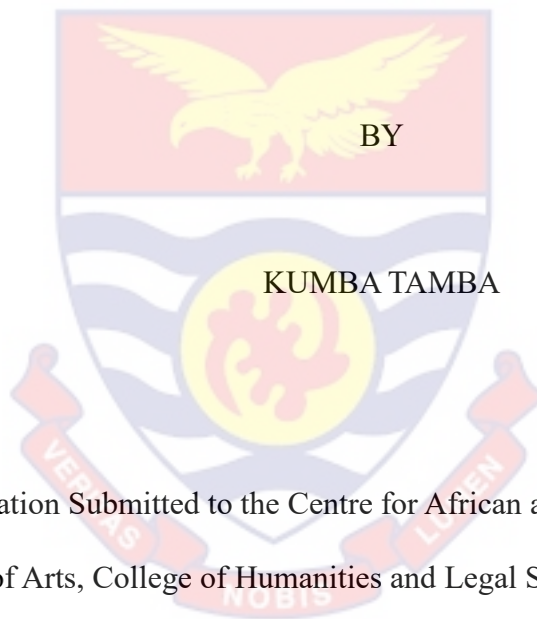
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SOFT POWER THROUGH NATION BRANDING: A STUDY OF

GHANA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

BY

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DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature ………………………….. Date…………………….

Name: Kumba Tamba

Supervisor's Declaration

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertation laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Supervisor's Signature……………………….. Date………………

Name: Dr. Isaac Nunoo

ABSTRACT

The advent of diplomatic relations has brought a twist in power acquisition. In recent times, states barely acquire and demonstrate their power using hard means/ military. Instead, they have resorted to soft means – accruing soft power by doing so. One of the ways states acquire soft power is through nation branding. In Ghana for instance, there was a conscious effort at nation branding in 2009 through the "Brand Ghana" project which covered various facets of the economy. Nonetheless, in recent years, the tourism industry seems to be used as a prop to attain this agenda. Though quite successful, little attention has been paid to what its success means to the nation's diplomatic relations. This project therefore, sought to analyse the existence of Ghana as a brand and ascertain the impact the "See, Eat, Wear and Feel Ghana" project of 2017 and the "Year of Return" project of 2019 has had on Ghana's diplomatic relations. The research was based on thematic content analysis and relied on both secondary and primary data. This text explored the relationship between nation branding, tourism and soft power. An analysis of the Brand Ghana project is also made to aid a better understanding of Ghana's commitment to nation branding. The research found that Ghana has no concerted strategy towards nation branding and that since the futility of the Brand Ghana agenda, attempts have been made to brand Ghana using its tourism prowess. Lastly, the research revealed that Ghana has an enormous tourism potential which can be used as a linchpin for soft power acquisition. For this to happen, there needs to be a nation branding policy, adequate investment in the tourism industry and concerted stakeholder effort.

KEYWORDS

Cultural diplomacy

Image perception

Nation branding

Neoliberalism

Soft power

Tourism

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DEDICATION

To my Mom, Dad, and mentors, Pastor Dr. and Mrs. Senya, thank you for your

unflinching support and encouragement.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

AfCFTA   African Continental Free Trade Area

AU   African Union

DAF   Diaspora Africa Forum

HIPC   Heavily Indebted International Monetary Fund

BBC   British Broadcasting Corporation

CDD   Center for Democratic Development

CNN   Cable News Network

CSO   Civil Service Organisation

DiGh   December in Ghana

EPA   Environmental Protection Agency

FDI   Foreign Direct Investment

GDP   Gross Domestic Product

GEPA   Ghana Export Promotion Authority

GHATOF   Ghana Tourism Federation

GIPC   Ghana Investment Promotion Centre

GTA   Ghana Tourism Authority

IDA   International Development Association

IDEG   Institute for Democratic Governance

IMF   International Monetary Fund

KAIPTC   Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping and Training Centre

MFARI   Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration

MICE   Meetings Incentives Conferences and Exhibitions

MOTAC   Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NBI	Nation Branding Index
NDPC	National Development Planning Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PANAFEST	Pan African Historical Theatre Festival
SEWF	See Eat Wear Feel Ghana
UCLA	University of California
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
US	United States
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
YoR	Year of Return

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Nation branding as a concept has grown steadily since the early 2000s. Due to the competitive nature of the global environment, states, especially developing ones have been forced to channel resources towards creating and sustaining alluring brands to attract investments, tourism and trade (Dinnie, 2008). Countries in Africa like South Africa, Nigeria, Botswana as well as Ghana have not been left out of this quest to distinguish themselves and derive competitive advantage, Amalu (2013) enunciates. As the concept gained popularity, various arguments have been advanced by various theorists. Olins (2002) does not reckon it as a concept worth standing on its own and Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) argue that nation branding is the same as or can be likened to a product or corporate brand. They assert that the relationship between states and corporate institutions can be drawn through their shared use of symbolic and functional elements.

For instance, while companies rely on unique terminology, visual branding, organizational culture, and personnel to define and operate their identity, nations employ distinct languages, flags, cultural heritage, and citizens to establish and project their identity. These ideas are consistent with that of Anholt (2007) in his book "Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities, and Regions" as well as his early writings on nation branding. The above stated features in their view provide the opportunity for states to be managed like corporate brands.

On the other hand, states are assumed to be more complex than corporate organisations, therefore, cannot be treated the same. Dinnie (2008) gleans from the definitions of a brand by (Holt, 2004 and Grant (2006) and establishes that nation brands have better and profounder cultural resources than other types of brands – being product, service, corporate or any other object worthy of being branded – as a result of the uniqueness of their state identity. Holt and Grant highlight the cultural perspective of brands in their definitions by analyzing the relation of these brands with their environment. They posit that successful brands consider the existing social or cultural environment and engage creatively with them while projecting their brands. Holt (2004) establishes that this process is called 'cultural branding'. Trueman et al. (2004) support this school of thought as they emphasize that a brand is a collection of cultural ideals.

Hakinson (2004), Trueman, Klemm and Giroud, (2004) expand the argument by shedding light on the multifaceted nature of place brands which transcends their image perception and includes their scope, relational perception, and internal and external stakeholder involvement, among others. The geographical representations, population size, diversity among citizens, the nature of the global market, and so on also warrant a great deal of specificity and understanding of national brands. This tells of the complexity of nation brands. Also, the existence of states as actors in the global space and their quest for relevance as well as influence as they relate among themselves illustrates the density of nation branding. An attempt to define nation branding therefore, will first require understanding public diplomacy. According to (Cull, 2006; Roberts, 2006, 1994) as espoused in Gregory (2008), public

diplomacy was derived in the 1970s by professionals in this field as a substitute for "propaganda" due to the latter's negative implications and as a shield for the United States government's 'international relations, cultural relations and broadcasting activities'. Decades later, however, the term has been adopted by governments, civil society, as well as state and non-state actors worldwide to advance a diverse agenda.

Gregory (2008) purports that public diplomacy is a term that defines the methods through which states, groups of states, and non-state actors comprehend other cultures, attitudes, and behaviors; establish and manage relationships; and persuade people to act in ways that serve their goals and ideals. In his view, political actors use it to analyze the effects of policy decisions, shape public agendas, sway civil society discourse, and gain support for tactics that call for cost-benefit tradeoffs. Emphasis is laid on the fact that even though public diplomacy is a communication tool, it differs from international public relations, public affairs, advertising, journalism and others (Gilboa, 2008; Gregory, 2008). Thus, it is not only a tool for attraction but considers the norms and values of these fields in practice. In light of this, nation branding can simply be seen as a contrivance of public diplomacy by which states project their culture in the global arena to advance their interests and values.

A more scholarly definition of nation branding is given by Anholt (2008) as the systematic process of aligning a country's actions, behaviours, investments, innovations and communications around a clear strategy for achieving a strengthened competitive identity. Dinnie (2008, p. 15) also explains that "nation brand is the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements

that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences." In essence, nation branding can be regarded as a form of cultural diplomacy because it encompasses promoting a state's values, ideas, morals and institutions related to them (elements of culture) internationally whilst building relevant networks to serve as power domains (Kim, 2015).

Sequentially, nation branding can also be seen as an apparatus used to acquire soft power expressing itself through cultural diplomacy. Joseph Nye (2008) advances that culture (which is a nation's tenet) is also a key component of soft power. Nye (2008, p. 96) opines that

> *The soft power of a country rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority).*

Andrei and Hanes (2015, p. 32) support this claim as they advance that "Soft" power comprises political, cultural, educational, and diplomatic power." Hence, it can be established irrefutably that soft power exists through nation branding, with culture being the linchpin.

Statement of the Problem

The shift from traditional forms of power acquisition to soft power through nation branding has gained global relevance in recent years. Countries, particularly in the developing world, are leveraging this approach to strengthen their international influence (Nye, 2004). Ghana, in particular, has made efforts to brand itself, with a focus on its tourism industry. However, the compelling justification for why tourism should be prioritized over other

methods remains unclear (Teslik, 2007). While the economic benefits of tourism-related initiatives like the "Year of Return" and "See, Eat, Wear, Feel Ghana" are well-documented (Asamoah, 2020; GTA, 2017), the specific gap these projects address, particularly in Ghana's geopolitical or diplomatic relations, has not been clearly articulated.

Furthermore, controversies and challenges surrounding nation branding, particularly the use of tourism as a primary tool, are not adequately explored. Questions remain as to whether tourism is the most viable approach to nation branding, especially in a competitive global arena (Melissen, 2005; Dinnie, 2008). This study seeks to address these gaps by providing a stronger, evidence-based justification for using tourism as a tool for nation branding, while also engaging with the ongoing debates and controversies in the field. Without this clarity, the rationale for focusing on tourism as a linchpin for soft power acquisition in Ghana lacks persuasive depth.

A critical look at South Korea's Hallyu (Korean Wave) Strategy and UAE's Dubai Expo demonstrates how tourism could equally be a viable tool for Ghana to gain soft power. South Korea for instance, has successfully leveraged cultural diplomacy and nation branding through the global spread of K-pop, K-dramas, and cuisine. The Korean Wave (Hallyu) has enhanced South Korea's diplomatic relations, particularly with the U.S. and Southeast Asian nations (Jang & Paik, 2012). Ghana can learn from South Korea's coordinated strategy, where government agencies actively support cultural exports, ensuring sustainability beyond one-off campaigns like the Year of Return. The UAE on the other hand used Dubai Expo 2020 as a nation-branding initiative to attract global investors and boost diplomatic

partnerships. The event provided a platform for soft power engagement, positioning the UAE as a leader in global innovation and cross-cultural collaboration (Govers & Go, 2021). Ghana could adopt similar large-scale branding events to maintain international visibility.

The research thus aims to explore and justify why tourism is a viable and strategic approach for Ghana's nation branding, examine its effectiveness in enhancing the country's global influence, and critically engage with the debates surrounding this strategy. By doing so, it seeks to fill the identified gaps and offer practical insights for leveraging tourism as a tool for nation branding (Anholt, 2008; Nani, 2020).

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to analyze the role of Ghana's tourism industry in nation branding as a strategy for soft power acquisition and its implications for the country's global influence and diplomatic relations. To achieve this, the study will focus on the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the nature and characteristics of Ghana as a nation brand and identifying the key attributes and elements that define its national brand identity.

2. To analyze the geopolitical and diplomatic (enhancement of bilateral relations, foreign policy e.t.c) benefits associated with Ghana's nation-branding initiatives, specifically focusing on the "Brand Ghana" project, the "See, Eat, Wear, Feel Ghana" campaign, and the "Year of Return" initiative.

3. Ascertain the sustainability of Ghana's image globally through tourism and its related projects like YoR and SEWF.

Research Questions

1. What are the key elements that define Ghana's nation brand?

2. What influence/ benefits has Ghana gained as a result of the Brand Ghana, SEWF and YoR projects?

3. How can Ghana leverage on a these elements that define its nation brand and the benefits derived from the Brand Ghana, SEWF and YoR projects to create a sustainable nation brand?

Significance of the Study

This study is relevant in several ways. It adds to academia an aspect that has not been paid attention to. Most, if not all, existing works in the country tackle the influence of nation branding from a socio-economic perspective leaving out the soft benefits of nation branding, especially concerning tourism. The focus has been on the influx of tourists, foreign exchange earnings, investments and developments.

How does nation branding affect Ghana's diplomatic relations? Or how can Ghana leverage its tourism potential as a merit for soft power? These questions remain unanswered.

The study is beneficial not only in academia but essentially, in practice. It challenges the government and other stakeholders to leverage Ghana's tourism potential to pursue global influence and benefits to its diplomatic relations. Nations still seek dominion in an era where weapons of warfare are no longer in existence. States have sought other ways to project their ideologies and culture to assume global power. One such way is through nation branding. In recent times, Ghana has embarked on several branding projects through its tourism industry with little work being done to review

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their diplomatic impact. This paper seeks to highlight this impact as well as suggest measures for the sustainability and growth of the branding projects.

Delimitation of the Study

The scope of this study is quite broad because nation branding has several concepts underpinning it. Moreover, to greatly appreciate it, all these concepts need to be discussed. In order to better appreciate the concept of nation branding, it is vital for one to know about public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy. This is because a national brand cannot be understood simply as a product brand. It transcends image perception to involve relevant relationships with stakeholders. Therefore, this study will shed light on the concept of branding in general and narrow its focus to nation branding. It explores the concept of culture, highlighting its features, with the main focus on its role in tourism and national branding.

As a catalyst of soft power, the study cannot be complete without discussing the relationship between soft power and nation branding particularly since soft power is a benefit derived from nation branding. The study expatiates on both concepts and gives readers a good grasp of their meanings as well as interrelatedness. Clearly, there are reasons why nations embark on branding campaigns which go beyond their quest for development. If it was not so, developed nations or great powers will have no need to brand. Even though their strategies may not be the same as that of developing nations due to their economic and media prowess, they indisputably engage in nation branding (Kahraman, 2016). Often, their form is referred to as public diplomacy, (Wikipedia).

In addition, the history of nation branding and tourism in Ghana will be highlighted and subsequently narrowed to the Brand Ghana, SEWF and Year of Return projects. The researcher begins the analysis from 2009 which is the year Ghana officially initiated a nation branding project dubbed "Brand Ghana". In previous years, private individuals or corporations may have embarked on similar projects to upsell their products or services and the state as well may have taken certain steps towards doing same, however, there was no coordinated effort towards nation branding (involving the government, private individuals or organisations, non-governmental organisations, civil service organisations, the media among others) until 2009 when His Excellency John Evans Atta Mills launched the "Brand Ghana" project. This project, as brilliant as it was, faced numerous challenges and over time became ineffective. Though the 'Brand Ghana' project was not an initiative under the tourism ministry, its evaluation will give a fair idea of the inception and evolution of nation branding in Ghana. It will form a basis for the comprehension of what is being done through the tourism industry. Subsequent governments have reignited the agenda but with focus on the tourism industry as a skateboard. Projects like the SEWF of 2017 and Year of Return in 2019 and its related events, are major examples of Ghana's attempt at nation branding through its tourism industry. The study emphasizes this duration because it provides a realistic and substantial view of the work done towards achieving a competitive nation-brand as well as serves as a practical duration which allows the drawing of reasonable inferences.

Organisation of the Study

The study is organized into five (5) chapters. Chapter one (1) encapsulates the introduction, background of study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, scope of the study and organisation of the study. Chapter two (2) captures the review of related literature then Chapter three (3) follows with the research methodology which includes the research design, population, sample size, sampling techniques, ethical considerations and data analysis. Chapter four (4) is for analysis of the data collected and findings. Finally, Chapter five captures the recommendations and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In reviewing existing literature, the researcher discusses what branding is and narrows it to nation branding as a part of international politics. The study briefly discusses the history of nation branding, where it acquires its roots and brings to bare concepts underpinning it (thus public diplomacy and cultural diplomacy). The concept of soft power is brought to the fore, and the relationship between soft power and nation branding is established. The theory of neoliberalism guides the cause of the discussion. Subsequently, the study discusses Ghana's attempt at creating a competitive nation brand, its successes and challenges and proposes avenues for improvement. This study differs from the pool of others on nation branding because the researcher juxtaposes this study with soft power and the role tourism plays.

Theoretical Framework

The study of international relations often necessitates an understanding of various theoretical perspectives that explain the interactions, behaviors, and coexistence of nations in the global arena. This research adopts neo-liberalism as its theoretical framework, justified by its alignment with Ghana's nation-branding efforts through tourism. The theory of neoliberalism best suits this study because it best highlights the place of collaboration between stakeholders; that is from governmental organisations to private cooperations and the citizenry. Neoliberalism acknowledges public and private organisations as well as citizens as actors in the global economy and emphasizes that their actions do have effect on the state.

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However, to fully contextualize this choice, it is essential to first discuss other relevant theories—classical realism, structural realism, the Copenhagen School, and liberalism—before delving into neo-liberalism. Classical realism, one of the earliest theories in international relations, is grounded in the belief that human nature is inherently self-interested and power-driven, Keohane and Nye (1977). Proponents like Thucydides, Niccolò Machiavelli, and Hans Morgenthau emphasize the anarchic nature of the international system, where states act as rational entities seeking survival through power, Buzan et al (1998) adduce. This perspective, while instrumental in understanding conflict and power dynamics, offers limited insight into cooperative behavior. For instance, while classical realism might explain Ghana's peacekeeping efforts in West Africa as a means to assert regional influence, it does not adequately capture the collaborative, cultural, and economic goals underpinning Ghana's tourism strategy.

Structural realism, or neorealism, introduced by Kenneth Waltz, shifts the focus from human nature to the structure of the international system. This theory posits that the anarchic system compels states to prioritize survival by balancing power, Waltz (1979) advances. States compete for relative power, but unlike classical realism, structural realism considers the international system's influence on state behavior, Buzan et al (1998). According to Addo (2011), while useful in explaining power hierarchies, such as Ghana's reliance on international alliances within ECOWAS, structural realism still fails to account for the role of non-state actors and economic interdependence, both of which are central to Ghana's nation-branding efforts.

The Copenhagen School broadens the scope of international relations by introducing the concept of securitization, which frames certain issues as existential threats requiring extraordinary measures. Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver (1998) argue that security is socially constructed and encompasses non-military dimensions such as economic stability and environmental challenges. This approach is relevant in analyzing Ghana's portrayal as a stable tourist destination, addressing health, safety, and political concerns. However, its heavy reliance on discourse analysis limits its applicability to Ghana's tangible nation-branding initiatives.

Liberalism, championed by thinkers like Immanuel Kant and Woodrow Wilson, emphasizes the potential for cooperation and interdependence among states. It highlights the role of international organizations, trade, and democratic values in fostering peaceful coexistence. Ghana's partnerships with institutions like UNESCO and the WTO exemplify liberalism's principles, particularly in promoting cultural heritage and tourism. However, liberalism's optimism about cooperation often underestimates the competitive aspects of international relations, which remain pertinent to Ghana's strategic branding goals.

Neo-liberalism, the framework for this study, builds upon liberalism while addressing some of its weaknesses. Proponents like Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1977) argue that even in an anarchic international system, institutions play a critical role in fostering cooperation by reducing uncertainty and enhancing trust.

The concept of neo-liberalism has over the years become an exhortation in many political and academic debates. Authors like (Bourdieu

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1998; 1998a; 2001) have pejoratively used the term to describe what they see as the regrettable development of global capitalism and consumerism, as well as the equally regrettable dismantling of the proactive welfare state. Other savants have questioned the existence of neoliberalism as a signifier and argued its intellectual underpinnings. However, instead of treating neoliberalism as a pre-existing form of documented information that has to be interpreted or as an undisputable phenomena or area of expertise that needs to be abstracted, the researcher focuses on how it explains the existence of states in the purported global "single market". Neoliberalism can be said to represent a comeback of liberalism.

Liberalism as a political philosophy had long disappeared from debates and decisions about public policy, only to reappear in the modern era. Alternatively, it is implied that liberalism has undergone a period of preliminary expression, interim collapse, and most recently, contemporary revival. Neo-liberalism may be viewed as a distinct ideology that is connected to but divergent from liberalism in general. The understanding is that neoliberalism and liberalism generally share some historical connections, commonalities, and lexical items. In accordance with this interpretation, neoliberalism which is an idealism or "political persuasion" that is both slightly comparable to and significantly different from a lot of mainstream conservatism, is frequently hardly identifiable as a conservative philosophy (Wolfson, 2004; Fukuyama 2006). Saad-Filho and Johnston (2005: p. 1) opine that "we live in the age of neoliberalism". Its roots can be identified in the classical liberalism that Adam Smith espoused, as well as in particular the conception of man and society that he used as a basis for his economic

principles (Clarke 2005). According to this perspective, neoliberalism is both a novel "paradigm" for the formulation of policies, economic strategy, the philosophy guiding the most modern phase of capitalist society, and the resurgence of the nineteenth century economic principles of Adam Smith and his intellectual heirs. Palley (2005) asserts that neoliberalism has superseded the economic philosophies of Keynes and his fanatics in a "great reversal" that has occurred. Between the years 1945 to 1970, the main theoretical framework for economics and economic policy-making, known as Keynesianism, was subsequently supplanted by a more "monetarist" perspective that was influenced by Milton Friedman's beliefs and findings (Friedman and Schwartz 1963; Clarke 1988).

On the other hand, Saad Filho and Johnston (2005) offer a classic description of neoliberalism as a hegemonic system of increased exploitation of the majority, as a global system of minority power, plunder of nations, and devastation of the environment. According to them, it is not difficult to recognize the beast when it intrudes into new territories, tramps on the poor, undermines rights and entitlements, and defeats resistance through a combination of domestic, economic, legal, ideological and media pressures, backed by international blackmail and military force if necessary. Inferring from this explanation it is evident that nations in this era still seek power and influence beyond the collaborations.

In this regard, even though neoliberalism is not necessarily focused on the use of the military to gain influence in other states, it can be said to be a catalyst for a form of power known as soft power through its global economic concepts. It then makes it expedient for nations especially those who fall

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within the minority to create competitive brands to gain economic advantage and have influence so as to secure a seat at the decision-making table. This, as difficult as it may be to attain, is a necessary venture for developing states.

Today, neoliberalism is referred to as both a dominant political movement and governmental philosophy. It is predicated on the idea that the best means of generating economic growth and social welfare are private businesses, people and most importantly free markets. This idea has made it more possible for states to not only trade among themselves but exchange other dogmas like culture, politics among others. In Africa for instance, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area(AfCFTA) has enhanced trade and cultural cooperation among African states, Olayiwola (2020). Obviously, for states to have better trade relations, their culture will need to be understood among themselves and as they interact there will be cultural exchanges, whether subtle or pronounced. Bockman (2013) asserts that neoliberalism has influenced national, local and international policies ever since the 1970s. In Ghana for instance, a key component of its foreign policy is to enhance its relations with other states and while at it, project the interests of the state.

Currently, the expression "neoliberal" refers to a wide range of concepts, such as corporate governance of universities, the shift in welfare policy in favor of philanthropy and entrepreneurship, the spread of "intensive mothering," the privatization of state-owned businesses, the rise of low-wage service work, the rise in mass incarceration, and others. The idea of neoliberalism implies that such global economic, political, social and cultural events may be linked to more significant changes in global capitalism. Sociologists utilize the idea of neoliberalism to look into potential links

between these changes happening all around the world because neoliberalism takes different forms in different regions (Bockman, 2013). Considering the agreement among states that neoliberalism champions and its projection of the world as a single market, it has made nation branding an essential phenomenon for not just developed states but developing ones as well.

Neo-liberalism's philosophical underpinnings emphasize soft power, interdependence, and the mutual benefits of collaboration. These principles align seamlessly with Ghana's approach to using tourism as a tool for nation branding.

Neo-liberalism is particularly relevant to Ghana's "Year of Return" initiative, which successfully leveraged partnerships with the African diaspora and international organizations to boost tourism and enhance Ghana's global image. A respondent from the Ghana Tourism Authority noted: *"The Year of Return was not just about tourism revenue; it was about forging partnerships, enhancing Ghana's global image, and leveraging our shared heritage with the diaspora."* This initiative exemplifies neo-liberalism's emphasis on soft power and institutional collaboration to achieve national objectives.

Moreover, neo-liberalism highlights the role of institutions in facilitating cooperation and economic interdependence, critical to Ghana's tourism strategy. The preservation of UNESCO World Heritage Sites like Cape Coast Castle and Elmina Castle reflects Ghana's reliance on international collaboration to promote cultural tourism. These efforts underscore the applicability of neo-liberalism in explaining how Ghana integrates tourism with broader nation-branding goals.

Despite its strengths, neo-liberalism is not without limitations. It assumes that states will always prioritize cooperation over conflict and underestimates the influence of power politics. However, its focus on soft power and institutional roles provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing Ghana's efforts to position itself as a global cultural hub through tourism.

In conclusion, the discussion of competing theories such as realism and liberalism provides a comparative context for neo-liberalism's selection as the theoretical framework for this study. Neo-liberalism's emphasis on soft power, interdependence, and institutional collaboration aligns with Ghana's nation-branding initiatives, particularly in leveraging tourism to achieve global influence. By embedding this theoretical lens within the study, the research offers a robust analysis of Ghana's strategies and challenges in using tourism as a soft power tool for nation branding.

Public Diplomacy

Melissen (2005) holds that public diplomacy can be compared to an old wine in new bottles. According to Melissen (2005), public diplomacy is nearly as old as diplomacy itself is the practices of image-building, propaganda, and public diplomacy. Presumably, public diplomacy has been in existence since the epoch of monarchy. According to Melissen, (2005, p. 3) "references to the nation and its image go as far back as the Bible, and international relations in ancient Greece and Rome, Byzantium and the Italian Renaissance were familiar with diplomatic activity aimed at foreign publics". Melissen (2005) posits that the development of a printing press in the 15th century caused a change in diplomatic relations and subsequently the insurance of newsletters by the Venetians for their diplomatic relations, as well

as Gutenberg's invention paved way for the originators of international public relations, Cardinal Richelieu in the 17th century.

Apparently, the French invested a significant deal of work into managing their country's reputation because they saw it as one of the main sources of a nation's power, going much further than other European powers in reshaping their country's image overseas. On the other hand, Gregory (2008, p. 275) as gleaned from (Cull 2006; Roberts 2006, 1994) posits that

The term public diplomacy was adopted by practitioners in the United States in the 1970s as an alternative to propaganda, which had negative connotations, and as an umbrella label for the U.S. government's international information, cultural relations, and broadcasting activities".

Gilboa (2008) also explains that public diplomacy is a concept which sprung up about a century ago and gained prominence during the cold war as a result of an agenda to reduce the use of nuclear weapons as well as the pursuit of supremacy by powerful states.

Gilboa advances that in the course of time however, there seems to have been a significant turnaround in its development. This change is purported to have emerged after 9/11 (Gregory, 2008; Gilboa, 2008). Gilboa (2008, p.56) emphasize that "the new challenges and needs of public diplomacy in the post–cold war/ post 9/11 era have been influenced by three interrelated revolutions in mass communication, politics, and international relations." Gilboa (2008) purports that the internet and international news networks like Aljazeera, CNN International, BBC World, Sky News, and others were two significant developments produced by the revolution in

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communication technologies. These networks are able to broadcast nearly every key development in world affairs to almost every location on the planet, frequently live. Global networks and the internet have become important sources of knowledge about current events. The internet, for instance, offers a wealth of options for states, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), communities, businesses, and even individuals to exchange thoughts regarding international issues, as well as access a wealth of knowledge.

In recent times, especially post Covid-19, the internet has become the most important technological advancement in the world. Schools, businesses, NGOs, governments and individuals rely on it for teaching and learning, to transact their business, keep in touch with clients, and connect with loved one's miles away. Governments mainly use this means and telecommunication to reach out to its citizens informing them of salient issues and reassuring them of steps towards conquering the pandemic. In Ghana for instance, there were almost weekly updates from His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akuffo-Addo via the nation's broadcasting channel. Gilboa (2008) again claims that political revolutions have changed many civilizations from autocracies to democracies, resulting in an increase in the number of people participating in political processes. Civilians as a result of this revolution have more hope in governments and have become more patriotic; forming coalitions that question government actions and hold them accountable to citizens. Some of such civil society organisations are Amnesty International, Center for Democratic Development (CDD) – Ghana, Institute for Democratic Governance (IDEG) – Ghana, among others.

Accordingly, there has been a reform of the traditional aims of the foreign policy of states. Territories, access, and raw materials, which were typically secured through military and economic tactics, are no longer as vital a favorable image and reputation around the world, which are attained through appeal and persuasion (i.e nation branding). Gregory (2008) espouses that state and non-state actors utilize public diplomacy to comprehend, interact with, and shape public opinion on a variety of other issues such as governance, economic development, democracy, the distribution of goods and services, and a variety of cross-border challenges and opportunities. Consequently, Gregory (2008) defines public diplomacy as a word used to describe the strategies used by states, groups of states, and non-state actors to comprehend other cultures, attitudes, and behaviors, establish and manage relationships, and persuade people to act in ways that serve their goals and ideals.

Similarly, Nye (2008) expands that through public diplomacy, cultural resources are mobilized and used as a weapon by governments to engage and appeal to the publics of other countries as well as their existing political regimes.

According to Nye (2008, p. 95) "public diplomacy tries to attract attention to these potential resources through broadcasting, subsidizing cultural exports, arranging exchanges, and so forth". It can therefore be established that public diplomacy aids nation branding by serving as a springboard for the projection of a formulated 'nation brand'.

Cultural Diplomacy

It will be problematic to delve into cultural diplomacy without explaining what culture is. According to Nye (2008, p. 96), "culture is the set

of practices that create meaning for a society, and it has many manifestations". Nye explains that there are basically two demonstrations of culture; that which charms the creams of society, being art, literature and education as well as prevalent culture which involves mass entertainment. It is purported by Nye (2008) and An et al. (2015) that France among certain nations has been using the phrase cultural diplomacy since the late nineteenth century; prior to its adoption by a host of others in the 1990s. This is said to have been after France's defeat in the Prussian war and was adopted as an agenda to rebuild their reputation through the promotion of Alliance France in other states.

Cultural diplomacy is believed to be used to describe the actions taken by diplomats working for national governments when they turned to cultural exchanges and flows or attempted to direct them in order to serve their perceived national goals which later extended to the exchange of concepts, knowledge, art and other forms of culture (Cummings, 2003; An et al., 2015). Obviously, the concept had lived up to expectation such that subsequently, Germany, Turkey, United States among others adopted its use. In America's case, its culture (democracy) was projected through film and art, particularly from the onset, the works of Whitman, Twain and Stowe, Melissen (2005) establishes. Melissen purports that the works of these artists are a reflection of how creativity aids in shaping the image of a country and communicating its value.

Melissen (2005) assumes that in as much as other states had found culture as a relevant tool in reconstructing their state image, it was not until the cold war that the United States leveraged the strength of culture as a surreptitious armament in winning the ideological battle against the Soviet

Union now, Russia's communism. Consequently, cultural diplomacy has now become a norm and a tool for advancing state interests globally especially in influencing other states and projecting foreign policy of the advantaged nations. The most current of such states is China, a nation assumed to be on a quest to take center stage in the world as a Super power. Chinese language and culture are being projected worldwide through their Confucius Institute. The advancement of the Confucius Institute (CI), constant loans given to African, Asian, Latin and South American states by the Chinese government, coupled with developmental projects undertaken in these areas, are viewed as ambitions to gain soft power (Pan, 2013).

Several scholars have made inquiries into the agenda of the Chinese to promote their culture and language. Whilst some see it as a power (soft power) quest, a host of others mostly Chinese scholars (Pan, 2013; Iwabochi, 2015; Lai & Lu, 2017) claim it is embedded in cultural diplomacy and majorly benefits the tertiary institutions who usually engage with their international counterparts. Pan (2013, p. 96) argues that;

> *The CI project involves soft power techniques, but not full soft power capability, because the problems embedded in the CI project and in the wider society run counter to the Chinese Government's efforts to increase the CIs' attractiveness and popularity.*

Regardless of the actual intention of the CI project, the use of culture (language, literature etc.) as an attractive tool to gain global influence is vivid. According to Pan (2013), from 2004 to 2011, 353 CIs and 473 Confucian classrooms have been created in about 104 countries. This is no feat to be underrated. The global prominence of China as a result of this project is

irrefutable. Ghana as a state seems to have picked a cue from France, China, US, Germany among others, and seeks to establish diplomatic relations through its culture.

Nation Branding

It is purported that nation branding did not come into existence in recent times as has been advanced by some; rather, it has been in existence since the 1990s when France embarked on a quest to rebuild its image after being defeated in war by the Prussians, (Melissen, 2005). The concept itself is seen from various perspectives. Most of its definitions are built on business or marketing basis. Meanwhile, nation branding is not only pursued to attract investors, tourists and boost economic growth. If this were the case, great powers will have no need for a nation brand. Contrarily, they have the strongest of brands and invest millions yearly into promoting their images, and have called on developing nations to do the same, Akotia (2009) suggests. Nation branding can also be regarded as a strategy adopted to promote the ideology and foreign policy of states. According to Bull (1977), nations basically seek security and power hence, all their actions are towards attaining this agenda.

As a subset of cultural diplomacy, it is problematic for nation branding's purpose to be relegated to the business perspective alone. An et al. (2015) enunciates that as a national endeavor, cultural diplomacy is carried out in the interest of the country and entails the use of national culture for purposes of strengthening national security and the country's standing abroad. Seeing that nation branding majorly thrives on culture, it can be established that it is used as a springboard for the attainment of global relevance and

power, with culture being the object which lies on the board. To have a proper understanding of nation branding, culture must be defined and the various perspectives of what a nation brand, espoused. Culture in simple terms is a way of life of a people. Thus, the way they eat, dress, dance, their language, beliefs and values.

A more scholarly definition is given by Andrei and Hanes (2015, p. 34) who consider culture from a broad and narrow sense as comprising of "the materials and spiritual wealth created in the history of human society" and as a "social ideology as well as the systems and the institutions related to this, including ideas, political thoughts, legislation, morality, art, religion and science", respectively. According to Olins (2002), numerous nations have worked to manage their reputations, and on occasion, leaders have even created new country reputations by appropriating works by poets, orators, and philosophers in order to sharpen their political acumen.

Teslik (2007, p.2) has defined nation branding as "applying corporate branding techniques to countries". However, this definition does not capture the multidimensional facets of nation branding. Anholt, who first used the term, explains it from two perspectives. Firstly, Anholt claims that the value of a nation's brand as an asset has grown significantly and understanding valuation aids nations to better comprehend the investments they make, in order to enhance their reputation. Secondly, Anholt highlights the need for stakeholder (thus, government, NGOs, the media, business owners and others) collaboration in pursuing what is deemed a common interest to the state.

A country brand is a symbolic construct that highlights a country's positive, enduring, enticing, distinctive, and relevant attributes (Allan, 2004).

When this is arrived at, it can be said a country has a successful brand. But what does a successful brand mean to a country beyond boosting its economy through increased tourist visits and investment? This question has not been explored. Scholars like Nworah, (2005) Amalu, (2013), Agyemang-Duah, (2010), Marfo, (2015) have dwelt on the economic perspective of nation branding neglecting the power element in it. Their focus is set on what percentage is being added to the Gross Domestic Product without considering what influence is being accrued from the spread of the state's culture. Dinnie (2008, p.15) defines a nation brand as "the unique, multidimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences". Amalu (2013, p. 8) also highlights a definition in the Anholt-GfK Roper Nation Brands Index, which explains that "a nation brand is the general perception of a country across six areas of competence: governance; tourism; investment; exports; people; and culture." In order to achieve global recognition and create a positive national image, Delorie (2004) claims that a nation must have a national identity that has been actively distilled, interpreted, internalized, and projected abroad.

It is about time African countries looked beyond economic gains and considered ideological prowess when investing in nation branding so as to put in the requisite effort. Though it is assumed that nations have always existed as brands (Anholt, 2005a; Dinnie, 2008), in Ghana, nation branding was barely explored until 2009 when His Excellency John Evans Atta Mills instituted the 'Brand Ghana' project. Nations are said to be brands because they have characteristics resembling entities that can be branded. In the early days after Ghana gained independence, the Coat of Arms and national flag

were used to brand the state and basically, served as emblems of the state (Hassan et al., 2012). It is argued though, that this was for representative purposes hence, had little to do with stakeholders purposefully projecting an attractive national image so as to attain competitive advantage internationally. According to Hassan et. al. (2012, p.10) then Ghana as a relatively new nation, had 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 using its Coat of Arms, which represents the most distinctive emblems originating from a nationalist movement.

Additionally, Ghana's wealth in mineral and natural resources (i.e gold, cocoa, oil, Volta Lake, forest reserves, vegetation among others) gave it a global image and these were being relied upon for branding the state. For instance, Ghana as at 2008 was the second largest producer of gold in Africa, second largest producer of cocoa in the world, the third largest producer of timber in the world as well as the second largest wood and wood products exporter in Africa (Hassan et. al., 2012). Over time, Ghana's position declined, and this was largely because conscious efforts were not made towards its sustainability. It seemed as though Ghana had the reputation only due to the mere existence and utilisation of these minerals for economic gains but did not see it as an advantage to pursue towards shaping its image. Amalu (2013, p. 8) is also of the view that in any nation brand management, logos, slogans, and advertisements can serve as useful tools of communication to make people aware of what the country offers – its natural endowments, its peoples and its institutions – and ensure it is perceived as an attractive place to visit, do

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business, or even settle in permanently. Only these, however, will not produce a sustainable outcome.

For Ghana to establish a competitive nation brand, it requires thoughtfulness, commitment, huge investments and stakeholder collaboration, (Ofori, 2009; Akotia, 2009; Koku, 2021). It also requires research into its nation branding projects to ascertain their effectiveness and sustainability in order to make informed decisions on our foreign policy. Policy informs practice, and research forms the basis for a great policy. Adequate research on Ghana's image perception, nation brand and the tourism industry, will enhance policy formation in this regard and enable Ghana to leverage its resources and tourism industry to gain soft power. From place branding, city branding, destination branding to nation branding, tourism is playing an enormous role and is seemingly, the easiest tool used to advance this cause.

The researcher thus, aligns with Anholt's (2007) perspective of nation branding as a systematic process of aligning a country's actions, investments, and communications around a clear strategy to achieve a strengthened competitive identity. This perspective emphasizes the need for a unified and strategic approach to nation branding, focusing on how Ghana's tourism initiatives, such as the "Year of Return" and "See, Eat, Wear, Feel Ghana," contribute to projecting a cohesive national image.

Additionally, the research integrates Dinnie's (2008) conceptualization of nation branding as a multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide cultural differentiation and relevance. This is evident in how Ghana's unique cultural heritage and historical significance, especially through projects

targeting the African diaspora, are leveraged as central themes for its
branding efforts.

By adopting these perspectives, the study focuses on how Ghana can
strategically position itself on the global stage through deliberate and cohesive
nation branding efforts, while also emphasizing the importance of cultural
identity in building a competitive and sustainable brand.

According to the Anholt Ipsos Nation Brands Index (NBI), one of any
nation's most precious assets in the modern era is a strong and good national
image; it has the power to initiate social, economic, and cultural processes. In
order to ascertain the image perceptions of nations as well as propose ways to
build effective and strong nation brands, Anholt in 2005 came up with the
Anholt Ipsos NBI. The Anholt Ipsos NBI studies developed and developing
nations that contribute significantly to global trade, international relations, and
the movement of people and ideas in the fields of business, culture, and
tourism, (Markessinis, 2010). In analyzing, it takes into consideration six
factors – exports, governance, culture and heritage, people, tourism,
investment and immigration. Despite the fact that Ghana seems to do well in
some of these areas, it has not been featured in Anholt's NBI.

Ghana has, however, appeared in other indexes. FutureBrand Country Index
(see figure 1), a nation branding index used to measure the strength of a
country beyond its might, conducts regular surveys but emphasis is laid on
their reports in 2014 and 2019. This is because these years give a fair view of
Ghana's efforts since its drive towards nation branding in 2010. The
FutureBrand research is based on values system, quality of life, business
potential, heritage & culture, tourism and products & services. In 2014, the

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report established that people have stronger impressions of countries due to their status and experience; also, they preferred to relate with countries that stand out as brands than those that only exist as typical states. More importantly, the view that a country produces high-quality goods, the desire to live or study there, and its infrastructure all support the notion that for a place to be considered a "country brand," it must satisfy these criteria; thus, to prefer you as a place to live and learn, as well as to desire to use your goods and services.

Out of the 75 countries the FutureBrand research considered, only 22 were regarded as country brands by respondents and that did not include Ghana; however, Ghana placed 70th in the overall ranking in 2014. Consequently in 2019,(see figure 1)the index premised its evaluation on the World Bank's top (economy-wise) 75 countries and this as well did not involve Ghana. A few African countries however, were featured. South Africa came 51st, Ethiopia – 52nd, Egypt – 55th, Algeria – 60th, Kenya – 63rd, Sudan – 65th, Morocco – 66th, Nigeria – 68th and Angola placed 69th, (FutureBrand Country Index, 2019). This is how well African countries fared and it is an indication of how much more conscious effort needs to be put in for African countries especially, Ghana to do better. It is evident that South Africa with its successful nation brand placed first among the African countries.

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Table 1: Based on the FutureBrand Country Index 2019, here is a table summarizing the top 10 countries ranked by their nation brand strength:

Rank	Country	Key Factors
1	Japan	Strong culture, high quality of life, natural beauty
2	Norway	Sustainability, welfare system, quality of life
3	Switzerland	Innovation, governance, cultural heritage
4	Sweden	Sustainability, equality, technological advancement
5	Finland	Education, safety, eco-friendliness
6	Germany	Economic stability, governance, infrastructure
7	Denmark	Happiness index, governance, cultural appeal
8	Canada	Multiculturalism, natural beauty, global reputation
9	Austria	Tourism, historical heritage, quality of life
10	Luxembourg	Financial strength, safety, cultural charm

Source: Compiled by the researcher using data from FutureBrand Country Index 2019

This ranking evaluates countries based on two key dimensions: **Purpose** (value system, quality of life, business potential) and **Experience** (heritage, culture, tourism, and product reputation). These dimensions collectively shape perceptions of nation branding beyond traditional measures like GDP.

		Overall Ranking			Overall Ranking			Overall Ranking			Overall Ranking			Overall Ranking
	Japan	1		Netherlands	16		Russia	31		Chile	46		Lebanon	61
	Switzerland	2		France	17		Bahrain	32		Estonia	47		Romania	62
	Germany	3		Italy	18		Puerto Rico	33		Malaysia	48		Colombia	63
	Sweden	4		United Arab Emirates	19		Oman	34		Peru	49		Vietnam	64
	Canada	5		South Korea	20		Malta	35		India	50		Kenya	65
	Norway	6		Ireland	21		Taiwan	36		Jamaica	51		Indonesia	66
	United States	7		Belgium	22		Costa Rica	37		Uruguay	52		Bulgaria	67
	Australia	8		Spain	23		Thailand	38		Turkey	53		Cambodia	68
	Denmark	9		Quatar	24		Saudi Arabia	39		Egypt	54		Zimbabwe	69
	Austria	10		Fiji	25		South Africa	40		Mexico	55		Ghana	70
	New Zealand	11		Israel	26		Panama	41		Hungary	56		Iran	71
	United Kingdom	12		Portugal	27		Argentina	42		Morocco	57		Bangladesh	72
	Finland	13		China	28		Brazil	43		Jordan	58		Pakistan	73
	Singapore	14		Czech Republic	29		Croatia	44		Slovakia	59		Ukraine	74
	Iceland	15		Greece	30		Poland	45		Sri Lanka	60		Nigeria	75

Figure 1: Top 75 countries per the FutureBrand Survey in 2014
Source: *FutureBrand Country Index, 2014*

Again, another research to ascertain the global positions of countries in the digital space and to reframe the traditional perception of international relations as the face-to-face interactions between nations, revealed that occurrences in the digital world are a reflection of what happens in the actual world (The Digital Country Index, 2017). Per the analysis the United Kingdom happened to be the most prominent nation in the digital world with Canada placing first as the country with the most successful nation brand. Inferring from this, it is essential that Ghana creates a competing digital presence in order to stand out since digital diplomacy is becoming a norm. In addition, a survey by Brandirectory on the economic relevance of states indicates a

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decline in Ghana's position from 79th in 2015 to 88th in 2017 then, a rise to 83rd in 2018 and subsequently, 71st in 2019.

Ghana dropped again to the 91st position in 2020. Obviously, Ghana is striving to project a competitive national image but its efforts are not enough if it wants to compete with the top players. How are its efforts shaping perceptions of the country? How committed are stakeholders to the vision of #ExperienceGhana #ShareGhana?

Table 2: Top Countries and their ranks in various areas per the 2017 Brandirectory survey

Country	Exports	Investment	Tourism	Talent	Prominence
United Kingdom	6	6	4	3	1
United States of America	1	3	15	2	6
Japan	3	4	5	6	5
Germany	5	5	7	5	3
Canada	9	/	14	1	4
Australia	13	8	8	4	2
Spain	10	11	1	7	8
France	12	9	3	10	7
China	2	1	12	12	24
Italy	8	15	2	11	10
India	4	2	17	16	14
Singapore	18	10	11	9	20
Mexico	7	14	9	27	34
Brazil	11	12	25	29	27
Switzerland	15	18	31	15	13

Source: Compiled by the researched from the Brandirectory website

Caldwell and Freire (2004, p. 50) establish from a 2003 report by the Travel and tourism Council that "travel and tourism' has become a global industry and is widely considered to be one of the fastest growing industries in the world, if not the fastest growing industry" and employs a great percentage of the world's population. Tourism's potential is widely acclaimed and countries like Kenya, Dubai and those in the Middle-East have taken due advantage of it. For a country to have a successful nation brand, Giannopoulos et al. (2011) propose that it takes into cognizance its strengths

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and most flexible features. For Ghana, tourism is one of such features which has been taken into consideration. Its rich heritage and culture have attracted millions of tourists over the years. It presents the history of the transatlantic slave trade which took place about four centuries ago as well as delicious African cuisines, the popular kente fabric, forests, national parks and also serves as the hub of authentic Afro-pop music.

Ghana's tourism industry has over the years been a tool for its branding. Known for its history, natural resources, peace and hospitality, it is the most preferred tourist destination in West Africa, Nti (2014) claims. According to a report by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (2020), 44.9 million foreign tourists arrived in Sub-Saharan Africa, with Ghana and Gambia being the most well-liked travel destinations. Ghana's tourism industry happens to be the fourth income earner, adding millions of dollars to the country's GDP. There has been a significant growth in the tourism industry since 1993 when the Ministry of Tourism was set up and the first comprehensive tourism plan developed (Teye, 2000; Mohammed, 2014) and in recent times, since the introduction of the SEWF and the Year of Return Projects. It is reported that there was a 20% growth in tourism as compared to the previous year (GTA, 2017) and 45% in 2020 as a result of the 2019 Year of Return Campaign (Asamoah, 2020). Also, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts in the National Tourism Development Plan, (2013 – 2017) projected an increase in tourist receipts from US$1.5 billion in 2017 to US$2.5 billion in 2022.

Asamoah (2020) highlighted a statement in a 2018 Oxford Business Report which claimed that more quality lodging facilities were operating in Ghana due to an influx of international corporations. These strides in the tourism industry consequently, have not only brought socio-economic development but have also made Ghana more attractive. How these figures have affected Ghana's position on various global ranking schemes is still quite stupefying?

Soft Power

The term soft power was coined by Joseph Nye though there are debates that it was not a new idea (neither the only definition but the most common) as it already existed in practice and inferences must have been made from existing scholarly works, (Martino, 2010 & Lee, 2011). According to Nye (2004, p. 94) soft power is defined as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments". Nations seek power and will do whatever it takes to promote their ideals and dominate. Realists like Thucydides, Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer are of the view that the world is anarchical; thus, there is no order neither a single authority controlling global affairs – as such states are bound only by forcible coercion or consent (Bull, 1977; Waltz 1979). Nye dissents this claim by self-described realists who discount the value of soft power and opines that such thinkers are comparable to persons who are unaware of the allure of seduction. Slaughter (2019), reveals that state power is essential since it is the only variable of concern and means in anarchic systems can defend themselves and have any chance of surviving. It is purported that this thirst for power and dire need of security is what has led countries like the US, Britain, France, China among

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others to employ researchers and set up international corporations (including governmental and nongovernmental organisations) to study and monitor the power dynamics in the global arena. Evidence of this is in a speech given by NATO's General Secretary, Jens Stoltenberg where he expressed concerns on the rise of emerging states having effect on the political credibility and military capacity of NATO, (Smolnikov, 2018).

Presumably, weaker states are to remain weak and the stronger ones remain strong by protecting and advancing their ideologies as well as conquering territories. Liberal scholars, on the other hand, hold a varied view. Liberalists posit that the features of the state are relevant in their diplomatic relations. That is, unlike realists, they do not believe that all nations have the same agenda which is to gain power and secure their territories through military force. Liberalism, a theory propagated by Immanuel Kant, relies on the characteristics and behavior of nonstate actors (private individuals and organisations) and the state, with the state being an institution seeking the welfare of its citizens (Holsti, 1985; Slaughter, 2019). It emphasizes democracy and collaboration between stakeholders in ensuring peace. Arguably, it is from the theory of liberalism and subsequently neoliberalism that the new world order exists. However, the quest for power and influence is still at the center of the actions and in actions of states and unlike centuries ago, power is sought in a soft way thus, through dialogue (negotiation, collaboration, humanitarian actions etc.) with culture playing a major role.

Gallarotte (2011) on the other hand, assumes that soft power can be related to meta-power which depicts circumstances where power relationships are themselves a part of a larger network of social relationships that affect

those relationships and, in turn, have an impact on the ultimate results that ensue from interactions between actors. That is, unlike scholars who dwell on the pull factors, others consider soft power attraction from the push factors (thus, psychological orientation). Wu (2014), highlights the perspectives of Robert Putman and Elinor Ostrom on the relevance of trust and social capital in analyzing soft power. These savants are of the opinion that it is crucial to consider trust and the bond between actors in order to make an informed judgment on soft power. They purport that great soft power is reflected in successful diplomacy. Patalakh (2018), admits that indeed the basis for the determination of soft power by the thinkers aforementioned is problematic and establishes three separate ways in which attraction can be generated – through emotional, rational and social attractions. These arguments take critical consideration of political communication as they seek to advance the existence of consent and a mutually beneficial relationship among the actors.

Soft power is exceedingly relevant in the 21st century as collaborative effort has become paramount in peaceful co-existence and global action De-Martino (2020) asserts. Even so, several states use it to promote their foreign policy. Skeptics of soft power nonetheless, claim that it is only with hard power that states can attain their foreign policy, (Ferguson (2004; Ikenberry, 2004; Motyl, 2006; Trunkos, 2013). Gray (2011), asserts that hard power must continue to be the primary tool for policy since soft power is inadequate for directing and controlling policy because it depends too heavily on perceptions of other nations. Ferguson (2004), also argues that the exercise of soft power is what was formerly known as "imperialism," it is nothing new; soft power is only an iron hand with a silk glove on it. Neoliberal scholars have a dissenting

opinion as they see soft power activities as a stitch in time that has saved the world from continuous destruction.

Soft power is the adoption of diplomatic strategies by states to cajole other ones to buy into their ideologies, and this is achieved using culture, education, sports, film/ movies among others Chitty (2017) asserts. Nye (2004) also advances that soft power stems from the attractiveness of a nation's culture, policies and political ideology. As a result, governments in collaboration with other stakeholders have taken the pain to distinguish their countries with some promoting themselves as peace loving, more humanitarian, global advocates, tourism hubs among others. Caldwell and Freire (2004), posit that because the world is now seen as a single market, nations are bent on differentiating themselves and improving their global image to succeed; and this is being done through nation branding.

Amalu (2013) believes that the concept has been largely embraced by countries worldwide and African states are not left out even though their European counterparts take the lead. According to Amalu, the call for Africans to own their stories by the president of Rwanda, Kagame, at the annual World Economic Forum conference convened in Davos in January 2013, is precisely what some African states have resolved to do since the previous decade.

Amalu (2013) advances that African states "seek to foster national pride, improve investment and trade, and attract tourists and professionals" by recasting images of their countries. Most of these countries are leveraging their history, culture and natural resources to do this and undoubtedly, their attempts if successful, will give them soft power even if that may not be the outright plan. It is obvious that Ghana has adopted the same strategy and has soft

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power entrenched in its foreign policy. However, it is difficult to create, revise or implement a good policy when it has not been subjected to rigorous scientific enquiry about the circumstances under which governments can deploy soft power to their advantage. Sanusi and Gyamfi (2017) posit that Ghana has had a foreign policy since the days of Kwame Nkrumah.

Ghana has established itself as a pillar of the political system on the African continent since its political reforms in 1992. It became a leader in the sub-region by demonstrating its abilities and maturity in political reform and good administration, as well as its role in peacekeeping in the field. Yet, Amalu (2013) asserts that hard evidence that good governance and political systems aid in improving a country's image barely exists. Thus, an alluring nation-brand does not automatically arise from these but conscious and consistent efforts preceded by research. Kroenig et. al. (2010) in their work discusses the essence of scientific research and theoretical experimentation in order for a state to achieve its foreign policy. Consequently, for a nation like Ghana to have a competitive advantage by creating a pleasant image and adequately achieving its foreign policy, research is paramount.

The concepts of "geopolitical" and "diplomatic" benefits are crucial in understanding how states interact and relate to one another in the international arena. While both terms are often used interchangeably, they encompass distinct dimensions of state relations. Geopolitical benefits refer to the strategic advantages a state gains in its geographic context, including influence over neighboring states, control of resources, and the ability to shape regional dynamics. These benefits often arise from a state's geographical location, natural resources, or military capabilities, allowing it

to exert power and influence in a way that can affect regional stability and security (Mearsheimer, 2001). For instance, a country situated at a critical trade route may leverage its position to enhance its economic and political clout.

On the other hand, diplomatic benefits pertain to the relationships and interactions that states cultivate through formal and informal channels. This includes the establishment of alliances, treaties, and partnerships that facilitate cooperation on various issues such as trade, security, and cultural exchange (Kissinger, 1994). Diplomatic benefits are often achieved through soft power strategies, where states project their values and culture to foster goodwill and mutual understanding among nations. For example, Ghana's nation branding initiatives, such as the "See, Eat, Wear and Feel Ghana" project, aim to enhance its image internationally and build positive diplomatic relationships through cultural diplomacy.

In the context of my research, the term "geopolitical benefits" is understood as the strategic advantages Ghana seeks through its tourism initiatives, which can enhance its influence in West Africa and beyond. Conversely, "diplomatic benefits" are viewed as the improved relationships and collaborations that arise from effective nation branding efforts. The interplay between these two concepts is vital; while geopolitical benefits may provide a foundation for diplomatic engagement, successful diplomacy can further solidify a state's geopolitical standing. Therefore, understanding both dimensions is essential for analyzing how nation branding can serve as a tool for enhancing Ghana's soft power and global influence.

Geopolitical and Diplomatic Benefits

The concepts of geopolitical and diplomatic benefits are crucial in understanding how states interact and position themselves in the global arena. While both terms are often used interchangeably, they encapsulate distinct dimensions of statecraft. Geopolitical benefits refer to the strategic advantages a nation gains due to its geographical location, natural resources, or regional influence (Mearsheimer, 2001). These benefits often manifest in economic dominance, military positioning, or regional security influence. In contrast, diplomatic benefits pertain to the relational and cooperative engagements between states, achieved through treaties, alliances, cultural exchanges, and international negotiations (Kissinger, 1994). Despite their differences, both concepts intersect, as geopolitical positioning often enhances a state's diplomatic leverage, and successful diplomacy can solidify geopolitical influence.

In the context of this study, Ghana's nation-branding efforts, particularly through tourism, are analysed for their ability to enhance both geopolitical and diplomatic benefits. This research aimed to fill that gap by exploring how initiatives such as the "Year of Return" and "See, Eat, Wear, and Feel Ghana" not only attract economic gains but also strengthen Ghana's global diplomatic engagements and regional influence (Asamoah, 2020). The study argued that while Ghana's tourism branding has enhanced diplomatic recognition, a more strategic approach is needed to translate these efforts into tangible geopolitical advantages, reinforcing the importance of integrating soft power strategies into national development policies (Nye, 2004).

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History of Ghana's Tourism Industry

Tourism has proven to be a tool of soft power to enhance a state's diplomatic relations. Countries such as Egypt, South Africa, UK, USA, among others have demonstrated how the power of tourism contributes towards projecting a country's heritage, (Keith Dinnie, 2008). Tourism is regarded as one of the largest and most important sources of commercial activity, income, employment, international exchanges, and connectivity for many countries around the world (Teye, 2000; Obalade & Dubey, 2014; Preko, 2020).

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (2019), the tourism industry contributed 10.4% of global GDP in 2018 and employed 319 million people, with that number expected to rise to 421 million by 2029. In Africa, tourism continues to play a fundamental role in economic development. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2019), Africa saw a 7% increase in international arrivals, bringing the total to 67 million, a new high in 2018.

Before the official establishment of the Ghana Tourist Board in 1973, Kwame Nkrumah's administration laid a solid foundation for tourism development by positioning Ghana as a hub for Pan-Africanism and African liberation (Boahen, 1987). The various "Black Star" projects, including Ghana Airways, Black Star Line, State Transport Corporation (STC), Blue Rail, and State Hotels, were instrumental in promoting Ghana as the place to be for all Africans (Yankholmes & Akyeampong, 2010). These initiatives facilitated the movement of people, both internally and internationally, and served as early branding efforts that enhanced Ghana's image. The role of these projects in hosting prominent African leaders and diaspora communities further

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reinforced Ghana's status as a destination of historical and cultural significance (Prah, 2009). These early branding efforts, coupled with the "Ghana: Gateway to Africa" initiative of the late 1990s, highlight Ghana's long-standing commitment to leveraging tourism for national development.

Later in 1973, the Ghana Tourist Board was established in to look into methods of attracting tourists and generating income for West Africa, but due to the dire economic and political crises the country experienced in the 1970s and the early 1980s, not much could be done to advance the cause of encouraging tourists to travel to Ghana for vacations, Williams (2015) asserts. However, the narrative changed as Teye (2000) purports that tourism received enormous recognition in 1980 with an upsurge in its related activities and investment from both the public and private sectors. In 1993, the government of Ghana with aid from the United

Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) prepared a 15-Year Tourism Development Plan for the years 1996 to 2010 in order to demonstrate their support for tourism development, (Teye, 2000).

The government subsequently established the Ministry of Tourism in 1993. Since then, the ministry has been in charge of the development and promotion of tourism related activities. In 2006, the Ghana Tourism Development Policy was drafted and adopted as a guideline for the promotion of tourism, Mohammed (2014) espouses. Despite all these efforts, there is supposed to be a gap between the policy and practice of tourism. Local communities do not seem to reap the benefits it brings.

After gold, cocoa, and oil, Ghana's tourism industry is recognized as the country's fourth-largest source of revenue, Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture – MoTAC, (2019). Tourism has contributed significantly to the Gross Domestic Product of Ghana over the years such that there are considerations to invest more in it so as to augment exports, (Mohammed, 2014). Acheampong and Asiedu (2008) affirm that Ghana saw 304,840 visitor arrivals in 1996, which is more than three times the number recorded in 1986. Tourist arrivals summed up to 698,069 in 2008, bringing in US$1.4 billion as a result, (Mohammed, 2014). In 2011, there were 1.08 million more visitors than the previous year, bringing in US$2.17 billion (Ghana Tourist Authority, 2011). According to Adu-Ampong (2019), Ghana's tourism and travel business contributed US $ 3.0 billion to GDP overall and US $ 1.3 billion directly in the year ending 2013; this represented 3.0% of overall GDP and 7.2% of overall GDP.

Yet again in 2018, the travel and tourism industry contributed US$ 1,947.5 million to Ghana's GDP, representing a 4.9% rise (MoTAC, 2019). As a percentage of Ghana's GDP in 2028, this amount is expected to rise by 4.2 percent to US $4,522.3 million (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017). According to Arc. Ekow Sampson, the tourism industry in 2015 employed an estimated 393,000 people directly and indirectly from hotels, restaurants, travel trade, entertainment, recreational, tourist sites managers etc. As the tourism industry keeps contributing largely to Ghana's economy, some scholars assume that with composite efforts, it can become the backbone of the economy. In 2013, the Ministry was expanded to incorporate the creative

industry, thus causing the change in name from just the Ministry of Tourism to Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts.

Also, in order to scale up performance, the National Tourism Development Plan 2013 – 2027, was adopted, and it is the framework the ministry currently uses in implementing projects. In order to regulate tourism facilities in the various regions in Ghana, the Ministry works through the Ghana Tourism Authority. The tourism industry's contribution to Ghana's economy is obviously huge and it is understandable why governments are committed to investing into it and increasing its potential.

Ghana's Attempts at Nation Branding

Ghana's attempts at nation branding can be dated back to early post-independence efforts, led by Kwame Nkrumah, which laid the foundation for tourism. Kwame Nkrumah envisioned Ghana as the beacon for pan-Africanism, creating an image of Ghana as a unifying force for Africans and the African diaspora. The "Black Star" projects, such as the Ghana Airways, Black Star Line, State Transport Corporation (STC), and State Hotels (including the Ambassador Hotel), were critical components of this vision. These initiatives were not only infrastructure projects but also branding activities that highlighted Ghana's readiness to host international dignitaries and African liberation leaders. For instance, Nkrumah's hosting of the 1958 All-African Peoples' Conference positioned Ghana as a hub for African unity and independence struggles (Boahen, 1987; Prah, 2009).

Ghana's nation branding efforts like has been established did not begin with the Brand Ghana project in 2009; rather, historical initiatives laid the groundwork for the country's current soft power strategies. The Black Star

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projects initiated by Kwame Nkrumah in the 1950s and 1960s, including Ghana Airways, Black Star Line, and State Hotels, were early branding efforts aimed at positioning Ghana as a beacon for African liberation and unity (Boahen, 1987).

Additionally, Ghana's "Gateway to Africa" project in the 1990s sought to attract foreign investment and diplomatic relations, further shaping the country's brand identity as an entry point into Africa for global trade and cultural exchange (Yankholmes & Akyeampong, 2010). These efforts align with contemporary branding strategies, such as the Year of Return, which similarly leverages Ghana's Pan-African identity to engage the diaspora.

The Role of Infrastructure in Early Tourism

The infrastructure established during this period, such as Catering Rest Houses and rail transport (Blue Rail), provided a backbone for early tourism and hospitality development in Ghana. These facilities supported domestic and international travel, promoting the exploration of Ghana's culture and landscapes. This era of nation-building emphasized the need for accessible transport and accommodation, laying the groundwork for formal tourism promotion efforts in subsequent decades (Akyeampong, 2011).

The "Black Star" as a Branding Effort

The concept of the "Black Star," symbolizing hope and freedom for Africa, can be regarded as Ghana's first nation-branding effort. It represented Ghana as a leader in the liberation and development of the continent, which attracted global attention and African solidarity. The name itself became synonymous with progress and unity, resonating across Africa and beyond. Scholars like

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Yankholmes & Akyeampong (2010) emphasize how this early branding contributed to Ghana's cultural identity on the global stage.

The "Gateway to Africa" Project

Another omission in the reviewed literature is Ghana's "Gateway to Africa" initiative. Launched in the late 1990s under President Jerry John Rawlings, this branding effort sought to position Ghana as the prime investment and tourism destination in Africa. The program aimed to attract international tourists, investors, and the African diaspora by emphasizing Ghana's stability, rich history, and cultural heritage. Projects like the PANAFEST (Pan-African Historical Theatre Festival) further solidified Ghana's image as the "Gateway to Africa" (Addo, 2011; Yankholmes, 2014).

Nation Branding through Historical and Cultural Promotion

Ghana's independence celebrations and subsequent activities to highlight its historical significance—such as the preservation of castles and forts tied to the transatlantic slave trade—further reinforced its nation-branding agenda. The UNESCO recognition of these sites and their integration into Ghana's tourism strategy have remained pivotal in promoting Ghana internationally. These efforts also tie into modern branding initiatives, such as the "Year of Return 2019," which echo Ghana's pan-Africanist legacy.

The "Brand Ghana Project"

In September 2009, President Mills introduced the Brand Ghana project which was to coordinate the creation of an alluring national image for Ghana, (Spio, 2016; Koku, 2021). The Brand Ghana Office in its bid to ensure effectiveness, drafted a three-year strategy plan to improve Ghana's reputation and draw in more investors in 2016. The goal of the new image was to

"highlight the investment opportunities in Ghana, the Ghanaian culture, values, democracy, and heritage, among other things, and to establish a significant and distinctive presence in the international market that will attract and retain investors", Koku (2021) states. Subsequently, there came the 2017–2019 Branding Ghana strategic plan which did not see the light of day. This plan was intended to be in line with the National Development Planning Commission's (NDPC) 40-year growth plan. Undisputedly, President Mills established the Brand Ghana office with an understanding of the value of branding, but without the requisite exposure it needed. Akotia (2009) argues that branding is a requirement for national growth in a developing nation and requires collective efforts.

Koku (2021) purports that the location of the Brand Ghana office in some ways diminished the role and potential of the agency. In 2018, a committee including members from the Ghana Tourism Authority, Ghana Investment Promotion Center (GIPC), GEPA, and the Free Zones Board were charged with the role of the management of the Brand Ghana Office. The agency's concentration was now on luring foreign capital into the Ghanaian economy after being transported here. The office had been established, but its broad and all-encompassing goal had been cut short. According to (Ofori, 2009; Akotia, 2009; Ghanaian Times, 2010; Koku, 2021), a well-researched, well-planned, and well-executed brand Ghana agenda would include initiatives to retroactively foster a sense of belonging, rekindle a healthy sense of nationalism and patriotism, prepare the population for economic growth and development, brand and sell our uniqueness to the world for foreign exchange, and make destination Ghana a choice for tourism and

industry. This is exactly what the "See, Eat, Wear, Feel Ghana" and Year of Return projects sought to do.

See Eat Wear Feel Ghana (SEWF) Project

In order to demonstrate a sense of responsibility for Ghana's legacy and the future, the campaign "See Ghana, Eat Ghana, Wear Ghana, Feel Ghana" was introduced in the gardens of Christiansborg Castle, a former slave holding and administrative center for colonial governments. The campaign aimed at evoking the feeling of "I Am a Ghanaian" through the noises, distinctive sights, and fusion of traditional foods from each of its formerly ten (10) regions – now sixteen (16).

Information on the Campaign's website indicates that there are 325 Paramountcies in Ghana, each of which has a special tale to tell about the interconnectedness that exists among Ghanaians as well as the individuality. There are eleven (11) official languages and nearly ninety-five (95) dialects used in communication. In the decade leading up to Ghana's 60th Independence anniversary and in the year when the United Nations celebrated Peoples of African Descent; the Ghana Tourism Authority, working under the direction of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture, created the See Ghana, Eat Ghana, Wear Ghana, Feel Ghana Campaign as an inspiration from the untold tales and forgotten places.

The SEWF Campaign was part of attempts to rebrand and advertise Ghana to locals, to support domestic travel and education, to enable the possession of what is truly Ghanaian. It also aimed to give current historical and cultural events, such as traditional festivals, a platform to build upon. Examples of new festivals included were PANAFEST, the Charlie Wote

Festival, and others.   Again, it was to provide a calendar of activities for the entire year that directs attention to the opportunities around the nation; for the ministry to find and work with business owners who are innovative in supporting and advancing domestic tourism through value chains for small and medium-sized enterprises; then to serve as a one-stop multimedia store where one may get anything they need in the Ghanaian tourism industry. Finally, it set out to explore options in working with the private sector to rebrand or rehabilitate historic tourist sites as to whether all these objectives were met, it is still uncertain but the SEWF did boost the economy a great deal. (SEWF Website).

Mohammed (2014) alludes that economic benefits arising from this project in the form of tourism receipts are incredible. According to President Akuffo Addo as cited in an article by Kennedy Mornah (2017; i.e the year in which the SEWF project was launched), the Ghana Tourism Authority recorded an impressive growth of 20%, with over 600,000 visits to tourist destinations nationwide. In the Tourism and Hospitality Sector Skills Strategy report (2020, p. 4), it was established that "domestic tourism increased from 1,353,253 in 2016 to 1,420,915" visits with tourist receipts being US$1.5bn in 2017. Even though the SEWF Ghana project was majorly targeted at imbibing the "I AM GHANAIAN" spirit, promoting the consumption of locally manufactured goods, services and domestic tourism, its international reach cannot be overlooked. Beyond its primary purpose, the project also aimed to strategically market Ghana to the African diaspora and the globe. In the same year (2017) this program was launched, Ghana hosted the World Tourism Summit – Africa, for the first time.

It is worth noting that it was the first time an African state hosted the forum, Gyesi (2017). Additionally, savants have admonished that stakeholder collaboration – government, private individuals and organisations, the media, locals and non-governmental institutions and CSO's – especially the involvement of locals is essential for the promotion of a nation brand. This strategy was adopted by South Africa and it is proclaimed that it contributed to the success of "Brand SA". It is believed that the locals, investors, and institutions in the country serve as its agents indirectly and they carry a message across to the world per their engagements, making it vital that they are brought together to achieve a common goal. SEWF, therefore, can be seen as a step which was taken in the right direction to unify stakeholders in pursuing a viable "Brand Ghana" agenda. The sustainability of the project however, is questionable.

The Year of Return (YoR) and its related Events

The "Year of Return, Ghana 2019" is a significant spiritual and birth-right journey that invites the global African family, both at home and abroad, to commemorate 400 years since the first slaves from Africa arrived in Jamestown, Virginia (Year of Return, 2019). Forefathers of the African continent was forcefully taken and subjected to poverty and humiliation during the slave trade. August 2019 marked the 400th anniversary of the arrival of slaves from Africa in the United States therefore, "The Year of Return, Ghana 2019" was put together to honor the collective tenacity of all those who perished in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and were dispersed across North America, South America, the Caribbean, Europe, and Asia. Leading the project in partnership with the Office of Diaspora Affairs at the Office of the

President, the PANAFEST Foundation, and The Adinkra Group of the USA was the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), which operates under the direction of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (Year of Return, 2019). The Year of Return Events (YOREs) have had a tremendous impact on Ghana and continues to, with the introduction of "Beyond the Return".

Concerning the "Year of Return" (2019), a report by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture indicates that the country received about 1.13 million guests as compared to 956, 372 in 2018, signifying a growth of 18%, which exceeds the global average of 5%, (Tourism Report, 2019; Africa Renewal, 2020). In a statement to the BBC News Reality Check Team (2020), the then Tourism Minister, Madam Barbara Oteng Gyasi said that the Year of Return contributed a whopping $1.9bn to the economy. As a result of these two projects and other initiatives like the #ExperienceGhana #ShareGhana, Beyond the Return, 'December in Ghana' among others instituted by the Ministry of Tourism, Ghana has seen an enormous increase in international visitors, investments, partnerships, foreign exchange earnings and so on. Among these is the agreement to host Afro Nation for the next five years from 2019. Afro Nation is an annual event that brings together 'diasporans' to celebrate the culture of Africa through music (Yfm, 2017).

Furthermore, Ghana has been spotted as the next destination for shooting Part 2 of the popular American movie "Girls Trip" which stars global industry players such as Regina Hall, Queen Latifah, Regina Pinkett Smith and Tiffany Haddish, (Lartey, 2023). Tracy Oliver, a co-producer and writer of the movie, announced this. As part of the project, the ladies are set to attend the annual African music festival "Afrochella", which Ghana hosts. This project is

one with the propensity to boost Ghana's movie industry and create partnerships that could foster the promotion of Ghana's culture through the film industry when duly taken advantage of. The Year of Return, without any doubt, has fostered great partnerships and hoisted the flag of Ghana high. An article by the BBC Reality Check (2020) lists several global personalities (Naomi Campbell, Idris Elba, Steve Harvey, and Cardi B, among others) who visited the land of gold to experience true African culture.

There were some events outlined as part of the Year of Return. One of such is 'December to Remember' (D2B) which according to information on the YoR website is an "annual concert held every Christmas Eve (24th December); it is the biggest Christmas event in Accra, dubbed (The official Christmas Party)". December to Remember saw an enormous number of inbound tourists with 97% of them willing to return to experience Ghana, according to a statement on the Visit Ghana website.

D2B is also referred to as December in Ghana (DiGh) and "highlights events, activities and festivals happening in Ghana from November through January that are officially endorsed by Beyond the Return and the Ghana Tourism Authority, under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture", retrieved from the Visit Ghana Website on 14th June, 2023). In 2022 for instance, DiGh organised programs like Afrochella, Afro Nation, Little Havana, Akwaaba UK, Kids in Tourism, BHIM Concert, Samini Xperience, First Time Home Buyers Seminar, Jollof and Afrobeats Arstastic, Ada Calypso Riverfest, among others.

Information on the YoR website indicates that all these events are in line with the seven tenets of the Beyond the Return Secretariat and the Ministry of

Tourism, Arts and Culture's agenda to promote tourism. Beyond the Return is a sustainability project that has been instituted to consolidate the efforts and continue the works of the Year of Return. A comment by Bright Simon, a researcher with the Imani Centre for Policy and Education, captured in the BBC's report on the YoR, suggests that the Year of Return was a huge success taking PR and advertisement into consideration. This notwithstanding, substantive evidence on the impact of the project on Ghana's diplomatic relations is limited. Obviously, the focus of the Year of return did not encompass global prominence; that seemed more like a ripple effect than a carefully laid out strategy unlike plans to attain economic benefits.

Ambassador Barfuor Adjei-Barwuah – Ghana's ambassador to the US, who, when asked by the Africa Renewal Journal how he would assess the YoR, unequivocally spoke of its economic benefits only. His comment was

> *like any event of that size and spread, you can only use a measurement like the number of people who visited Ghana, how long they stayed, what activities they were involved in and, of course, what receipts the country got out of all that. (Africa Renewal Journal, 2020)*

The global spread of Ghana's culture was definitely not considered as a substantial merit.

Chapter Summary

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing literature on branding, particularly nation branding within international politics. It traced the historical development of nation branding, highlighting its foundational concepts, such as public and cultural diplomacy. The study draws from neoliberal theory to emphasize how nations, including Ghana, leverage

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branding for economic and diplomatic advantage. A significant portion of the discussion focuses on soft power and its relationship with nation branding, particularly in how Ghana attempts to project itself as a cultural and tourism hub. The review critically assesses Ghana's branding strategies, including past projects like "Brand Ghana," and recent initiatives such as "See, Eat, Wear and Feel Ghana" (SEWF) and the "Year of Return" (YoR). The writer argues that while these projects have improved Ghana's visibility, there is a lack of a coordinated branding strategy. The chapter concludes that Ghana needs a structured nation-branding policy to maximize the benefits of its tourism industry.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Every research project follows a specific process and takes certain methodological factors into account. The research methods are significant because they outline the processes that can be used to approach a research subject. This chapter provides a thorough explanation of the method employed in carrying out the study. The qualitative approach to research was used in this dissertation. According to Saunders et al. (2011), qualitative research allows for the thorough examination of the behaviors and attitudes of respondents and aids in exhaustive inquiry and it was in light of this qualitative research was chosen. Interviews were adopted as a means of accessing data as they have the potential to be crucial for all academic efforts, (Atkinson, 2017). The research methodology covered in this section includes the research design, study population, data collection method, sampling technique, data analysis and ethical considerations.

Research Design

The research employed the case study approach as it took into cognizance and analyzed the nation branding campaigns since 2009 especially, those related to Ghana's tourism industry and its impact on Ghana's global image and foreign policy. In the view of Flick (2009), a case study enhances accuracy in describing or reforming cases. The study focuses on Ghana's branding campaigns from 2009 – 2019. The basis for selecting this duration is because it captures the period within which "conscious" steps have been taken towards branding Ghana. The approach used is known as the multiple case

study approach which is believed to be instrumental in deriving substantial analysis. Vohra (2014, p. 55) established that the "multiple case study approaches strengthens and increases the robustness of research results and findings".

Data Collection Methods

The research explored the use of primary and secondary data in gathering data on Ghana's attempts at nation branding and its relation to soft power. Secondary data was sourced from relevant scholarly works like books, articles, journals, and websites. Primary data was collected through interviews and reports published by and given to the candidate by the institutions, practitioners and government agencies involved in the execution of these campaigns as well as tourists who visited the country within or after these periods. Interviews were conducted with government institutions charged with the task of nation branding, diplomatic missions, the media, investors and tourists who visited within the period under consideration.

Semi-structured interview guides were used to ask open-ended questions which allowed the researcher to probe for further understanding. All questions asked were aimed at ascertaining the experiences and standpoints of respondents on how they believe nation branding has affected or could affect Ghana's diplomatic relations and what it means for its foreign policy. According to Yilmaz (2013), open-ended responses enable the researcher to understand and present the world as it is seen and experienced by the respondents without predetermining those viewpoints and direct quotations capture the participants' rich feelings, experiences, thoughts about what is happening, and its meaning on a personal level.

In analysing the data the field notes and interview transcripts were sorted and categorised in a systematic manner as Williamson et al. (2018) propose for qualitative research. Analysing the data was challenging as there was the need to connect the data collected and derive meaning out of it. However, conducting a thematic content analysis made the process simpler. The researcher grouped similar meanings derived from the data into themes – a strategy espoused by (Atkinson, 2016). The researcher relied on audio recordings, write-ups and any other documents shared from interview sessions in making deductions. According to Malhotra and Birks (2007), primary data are created by the researcher with the express intent of solving the study topic. The researcher used documents acquired from government organisations, websites, news portals, articles, journals and other academic writings in understanding the relation between Ghana's nation brand agenda and soft power. These documents espoused what Ghana seeks to derive from nation branding and the investments it is making into the same.

Population and Sample Size

According to Atkinson (2016) and Yilmaz (2013), populations are any complete group of entities, such as people, organisations, institutions, or the like, that share some common set of characteristics consistent with the goal of the study under investigation and about which researchers want to be able to draw conclusions and plan to generalize. The population, Polit and Hungler (1999), also claim, is made up of all the things, subjects, or people who satisfy a given set of criteria. Officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, MoTAC, Ghana Tourism Authority, GEPA, GIPC, the Year of Return secretariat, government agencies, International Relations scholars, multinational

corporations, diplomatic missions and international organisations like UNESCO, NGOs, media personnel, investors and international tourists who visited within the period under consideration, made up the study's accessible population. These organisations and individuals were considered because they are essentially the main stakeholders in the Brand Ghana campaign and have a better understanding of the relationship between nation branding and diplomatic relations.

Qualitative research, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), aims to comprehend or explain occurrences in terms of the meanings people ascribe to them. In sampling, a subset of the population is chosen to represent the entire population. The sample choice, which is of utmost relevance, determines the caliber and clarity of the study's findings. A sample size ought to fall somewhere in the middle; a big sample size might result in data overload problems and unnecessary difficulty in data analysis whereas a small sample size tends to cast doubt on the validity of the study conclusions. As a result, when choosing the sample size, consideration was given to the difficulty of the research question, the diversity of the population, accessibility of the respondents and the study's resource constraints. The sample size for this study was decided based on saturation. Bryant & Charmaz (2007) establish that saturation is arrived at when more information about a theoretical construct is gathered and no new properties are revealed or new theoretical understandings about the developing grounded theory are gained.

Some academics have offered recommendations for selecting a sample size for saturation. For phenomenological research, Morse (1994) suggested a minimum of six participants, and for ethnographies, grounded theory studies,

and ethnoscience studies, about 35 participants. For a phenomenological study, Creswell and Poth (2016) recommended five to twenty-five interviews, and for a grounded theory study, twenty to thirty. Six to eight interviews for a homogeneous sample and twelve to twenty data sources for maximal variance are recommended by Kuzel (1992), who also related his recommendations to sample heterogeneity and study objectives. Although the fundamental components of the meta-theme may already be present in six interviews, according to Guest et al (2006), saturation happens during the first twelve interviews. Research with typically homogeneous study populations and defined study goals, in the opinion of Hennink and Kaiser (2022), can obtain saturation in a relatively small number of interviews, thus about 9 – 12 interviews.

Patton, (2002); Murphy and Dingwall (2003); Crouch and McKenzie (2006); Lee and Lings, (2008); Crouch (2009) and Merriam, (2009) agree that small samples are acceptable and credible in qualitative research, especially when elites are chosen for primary data collection and provided that the small sample provides rich and detailed data for the study. The saturation sample size to be used in this study is thirty (30) and this is based on the argument of Creswell and Poth (2016). In the end, the researcher is of the view that the selected sample size is sizable enough to adequately represent the research issue and manageable enough to carry out the study.

At the inception of the research, the researcher intended to interview ten (10) diplomats from consulates (US, UK, France, Germany, among others), international agencies like UNESCO, officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, MoTAC, Ghana Tourism Authority, Year of

Return secretariat, Diaspora Relations Office, SEWF office, Brand Ghana office, GEPA, GIPC and NDPC. Ten were supposed to be IR scholars, five analysts, five media practitioners, and ten foreign visitors. However, it turned out differently due to the rigid schedule and nonchalance of some of the respondents. The researcher as a result was able to interview eight (8) scholars, four (4) media practitioners, seven (7) government officials/ agencies, three (3) international organisations and NGOs, one (1) investor and three (3) international tourists totaling twenty-six (26).

Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling plays a key role in qualitative research. Irrespective of the kind of unit of analysis, the main aim of purposeful sampling is to select and study a small number of people or unique cases whose study produces a wealth of detailed information and an in-depth understanding of the people, programmes, cases, and situations researched. Tongco (2007) establishes that when studying a social issue using knowledgeable experts, the purposive sampling technique is a type of non-probability sampling that might be helpful. Purposive sampling, which focuses on people with certain traits, experiences, or expertise pertinent to the study's research goals, was the sample approach employed in this study. The researcher chose individuals who have a thorough understanding of nation branding and international relations using this method. The sampling strategy was intended for a wide range of individuals, including government agencies, diplomats, and visitors. The selection was based on the expertise of the respondents and their involvement in these campaigns. The researcher interviewed twenty-six (26) respondents. The interviews enabled the

researcher to actively indulge respondents and get information not captured in reports and web materials. The respondents of the study are addressed by the letters of the alphabet for easy identification.

Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

The researcher used interviews in collecting data for the research. Simply put, an interview is a discourse that has a specific goal which is gathering information, (Berg, 2001). Schostak (2005) refers to an interview as a protracted conversation between two people with the aim to learn as much as possible about a specific subject or issue. It also allows the interviewee to evaluate a phenomenon in terms of the meaning that the interviewer has communicated to him or her. According to Creswell (2012), an interview enables the researcher to gather more specific information that is inaccessible through observation. The study explored the semi-structured interview for data collection. Berge (2001) elaborates that in this kind of interview, a number of predefined questions and/or unique subjects are used – while they are normally asked of each interviewee in a systematic and uniform order, the interviewers are free to stray; they are allowed (and even required) to ask questions that go much beyond the scope of their pre-planned and pre-standardized queries. With this, the researcher has a guide to follow but is at liberty to probe for further details. This style aided the researcher in acquiring indepth information on the subject matter. Each interview lasted for about thirty minutes to one hour and was conducted in English.

In the longer term, Wu (2014) argues that it would be possible to develop a data set of soft power ratings based on openly collected information that can be reused, similar to the information used to calculate national gross

domestic product in the field of economics. Interviews were conducted both in-person and via telephone calls. The researcher's intent was to have all interviews in-person as it aids in generating feedback that may not be communicated verbally (thus, collecting data through observation; for instance, an action indicated upon being asked a question could be substantial information. However, due to time constraints the researcher was unable to conduct all interviews in-person.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis comprises the process of organizing and analyzing the data collected on site. Wu (2014) posits that polls or focus groups can be used to determine whether a particular resource is a desirable soft power resource, and tourism has been established as one (Giannopoulos et al., 2004; Dinnie, 2008; Marfo, 2015). Traditional measures include international migration, tourism, education and cultural interaction (Wu, 2014). Wu believes that in order to ascertain whether the attractiveness derived from such tools leads to the desired political outcomes, an assessment must be made. The researcher employed thematic analysis to do this. The goal of thematic analysis is to find themes or patterns in the collected data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that involves searching a dataset to find, examine, and report recurring themes.

Thematic content analysis was used in this research. Bauer and Gaskell (2000) define content analysis as one of the classical procedures for analysing textual materials ranging from media products to interview data. Berg (2001) advances that researchers look at social communication artifacts when conducting content analysis and typically, these are written materials or

transcriptions of verbal communications that have been recorded. Interviews were used as the primary means of data collection. The information from the interviews conducted were firstly transcribed, categorised then combined with other collected documents.

To create topics from the collected data, the researcher used content analysis. This information allowed the researcher to thematise and categorise data to gain insights into complex models of participants' ideas on how branding campaigns are being utilised as a tool to gain influence globally. Direct quotes were used to state the views of respondents and codes were generated. Ideas that run through the responses of the interviewees were put under one theme (for example; Cultural Preservation and Sustainability). Scholars argue that carefully evaluating the data while maintaining the context of the research questions makes this step of qualitative research the most time-consuming and difficult. As part of the analysis process, the data was carefully examined and re-read. The data was coded, categorised and themes or patterns identified (Alhojailan, 2012). During the analysis process, the researcher focused primarily on those parts of the data that are relevant to the study objectives.

Ethical Consideration

Adhering to ethics in research is crucial to generating valuable results. Globally, there are ethical standards a researcher ought to abide by in order to ensure validity, confidentiality, anonymity among others. It is challenging for readers to verify the data and the technique utilized without adherence to ethical issues and consequently, disregarding research ethics decreases the credibility of a study, (Gregory, 2003; Aguinis & Henle, 2003). Due to this, the

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researcher endeavored to enforce all relevant ethical considerations. Prior to data collection, the researcher took an introductory letter from the Center for African and International Studies at the University of Cape Coast in order to be identified by respondents as a student of the same. The research was also subjected to strict supervision and scrutiny to ensure that it does not succumb to plagiarism. Before requiring responses from respondents, the researcher assured them of confidentiality and anonymity. This helped respondents feel safe and freely shared vital information with the researcher.

Summary

The study employed qualitative methods, using semi-structured interviews to gather in-depth insights into Ghana's nation branding efforts. A total of 26 respondents were purposively selected based on their expertise and roles related to nation branding and international relations. These included professionals from organizations such as the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture; Ghana Tourism Authority; Brand Ghana Office; and diplomatic missions. Specific positions, such as directors, policymakers, and senior officials, were prioritized due to their strategic involvement in nation branding initiatives.

To determine the suitability of respondents, the researcher conducted a preliminary review of their professional backgrounds through organizational websites, publications, and referrals. Individuals were identified as having thorough knowledge of nation branding and international relations based on their participation in key projects, such as the "See, Eat, Wear, Feel Ghana" initiative and the "Year of Return" campaign, ensuring that the selected participants could provide informed perspectives on the research objectives.

Due to time constraints, not all interviews were conducted in person. Instead, a combination of in-person, virtual (via Zoom or Skype), and email-based interviews was used to ensure data collection from participants who were unavailable for face-to-face interviews. However, this mixed approach posed challenges, including reduced opportunities for probing responses and a potential lack of non-verbal communication cues. To mitigate these limitations, follow-up sessions were conducted via phone or email to clarify ambiguities and deepen responses. Additionally, triangulation was employed by corroborating data from different respondents to ensure accuracy and reliability. Detailed field notes and audio recordings (where permitted) were also used to capture and verify responses, thereby maintaining the credibility and depth of the data collected despite the methodological challenges.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This research sought to ascertain the elements that enhance Ghana's existence as a brand, and examine ways Ghana could leverage these elements and benefits brought through these projects to create a sustainable nation brand. The paper also focused on verifying the geopolitical and diplomatic benefits branding projects like Brand Ghana, SEWF, and YoR have brought to the country. This chapter presents the findings and results of both primary and secondary data that were qualitatively collected. It presents results from interviews conducted, reports from government agencies, documentaries, newsletters, journals, articles and other online materials. The discussion is based on the data collected compared to the theories and concepts underpinning the study and the literature reviewed. The themes were generated based on the research objectives as well as consideration to the recurrent ones from the respondents.

The Existence of Ghana as a Brand and Soft Power Manifestations

One of the aftermaths of the Cold War is the interconnectedness that currently exists between states, (Gaddis, 1992). Relations among states have become highly pronounced, and the world is now seen as a global market (Baylis, 2020). As a result, states compete for the world's limited resources, making nation branding a worthy cause to embark on (Dinnie, 2008). According to Bourdieu (1998, 1998a, 2001), countries are now seeking to protect and promote the interest of their consumers who, in this case are other countries, MNCs, IOs and private investors. Dinnie (2008) also posits that global

competition has resulted in most states' doggedness in promoting their image to attract investment. Amidst the escalating globalization and intensifying economic competition, African nations are exploring novel paths to maintain relevance in the global economy (Ankomah et al., 2011). These nations aim to stimulate economic growth and diversify their economies by implementing new forms of economic development. Nation branding is the strategy most of these states have embraced, with Ghana being no exception.

The majority of respondents in the study acknowledged the impact of globalisation and the need for a state to be distinguished. They postulated that for Ghana to stand out globally, it should have an alluring brand. Respondent F, a Political Analyst and thought leader of the subject from the Centre for Democratic Development stated that "Ghana has much to do if it intends to be a power. Like China, it would have to consciously scrutinize its foreign policy and devise nonconventional strategies to pursue its goal" (interviewed on 28th August, 2023). This affirms the position of Ofori (2009), Akotia (2009) and Koku, (2021) who advocate for conscientiousness, stakeholder cooperation and investment in order to establish an effective brand for Ghana. Respondent M, an official at MoTAC averred that in ascertaining Ghana's existence as a brand, its name and emblems (national flag, pledge, anthem, coat of arms, etc.) should not be overlooked as they establish their distinctive image (interviewed on 6th September, 2023). This view was supported by a few other respondents who added that Ghana's wealth in products and natural resources such as cocoa, gold, bauxite, forestry, and oil projects its image. Hassan et al. (2012) shares the same view.

Alternatively, respondents CDE believe that the mere existence of the emblems does not qualify Ghana as a brand because viable brands are not determined by only their features, but by their ability to attract and keep their target market. Hence, for Ghana to be revered as a brand worth associating with, there should be internal developments, a stable economy and a strategic plan towards promoting its image globally, Akotia (2009) espouses. Respondents with this opinion, among whom are scholars, government officials, investors, and media practitioners, assume that the underdevelopment in various sectors of the economy, especially the tourism sector, which is being considered in this study, is a significant limitation to Ghana's brand. Respondent J, a journalist at Citi TV stated that nation branding is not about running campaigns and events, creating hashtags; instead, investing in the development of tourist sites, facilities, amenities, and infrastructure to meet international standards (interviewed on 26th August, 2023). This opinion corroborates with that of Ofori (2009) who asserts that nation branding transcends campaigns.

Pan-Africanism, Democracy, Political Stability and Security

Politically, Ghana has carved a niche as a leader in Africa for being the first country to gain independence. Respondent C, an expert of International Relations, mentioned that Ghana is seen both within and outside Africa as "the Mecca of Africa or African liberation or black people liberation" (interviewed on 2nd August, 2023). Ghana's role and that of its first president, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, when it comes to the independence of African countries is what majorly sets it apart globally. This view is also advanced by Sanusi and Gyamfi (2017) who posit that Nkrumah's promotion of a united Africa brought

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Ghana into the limelight. The famous statement of Dr Nkrumah that "the independence of Ghana is meaningless unless it is linked with the total liberation of the African continent" has obviously been a guiding light for Africa's liberation and unification. It ignites a sense of connectedness and responsibility among Africans worldwide. Respondent H, an Ellen Gurney, professor of History, African and African-American Studies at Harvard University, asserted that Nkrumah's role in African liberation and Pan-Africanism is the driving force for Ghana's image globally and essentially among Africans in the diaspora, (interviewed on 20th October, 2023). According to respondent H, the works of Osagyefo Dr Kwame Nkrumah on Pan-Africanism and the fight for the civil rights of African Americans lifted Ghana's image. He emphasizes this in a statement on Nkrumah below:

> *When Ghana became independent in 1957. He invited African Americans to come and live here and to help build the first black, African independent nation. So, many African Americans came, Dubois, Maya Angelou lived with all of these people. The African American presence and Nkrumah's years in the US, made him very vested in African American civil rights struggles, to the point that when something happened with the African American community, American presidents would write to Nkrumah to update him. So, he became a champion for civil rights. So, Ghana came to have an outsized influence. Something that often irritated Nigerians because they were bigger, and everything, but Ghana's influence today if you go to the AU in Addis Ababa, the statue standing outside the AU is Nkrumah pointing to the future or whatever it is.*

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So, for a small niche, and a small country, we wielded a big stick. And I think that was also primarily due to Nkrumah and Nkrumah's packaging, and his own networking. (interviewed on 20th October, 2023)

Respondent E, an expert in Diaspora Studies and Pan-Africanism at the University of Cape Coast, emphasized in his comment that Nkrumah's role enhanced Ghana's image because people often thought of Ghana as Guyana. However, tracing Nkrumah's lineage to Ghana, a country in West Africa, brought more attention to Ghana, (interviewed on 11th September, 2023). Also, whereas all the countries around its borders have had insurgencies with some still battling this menace, Ghana remains democratic and politically stable. Consequently, it plays a crucial role in peacekeeping missions in Africa. It has built a reputation for itself in this regard through the works of some of its forefathers like Kofi Annan, in whose honour the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping and Training Centre (KAIPTC) was established. Ghana's Ministry of Defense set up KAIPTC, and it currently serves as a knowledge hub for African leaders in peacekeeping, mediation and conflict resolution strategies (KAIPTC, Accra – Ghana, 2023). Ghana's election to the UN Security Council in 2021 for a two-year term can be ascribed to its peace operations across Africa. Respondent P, an official from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration (MFARI) asserts that Ghana's stability is also a significant reason it was selected as the headquarters of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), (interviewed on 31st October 2023). Additionally, Ghana has fostered a reputation as a safe place for business in Africa (GIPC, 2022). The existence of AfCFTA and the

interconnectedness it brings is a testament of neoliberalist thoughts advanced by Clarke (2005).   Furthermore, tourists find it as the safest destination in West Africa. Time and again, international tourists have rated Ghana as one of the safest countries to visit in Africa. Though respondents in this study who were tourists said they had yet to hear of Ghana before planning their trips, they admitted that it came up as a safer option upon their research on the country. Respondent W, who happened to be an Italian tourist, made this statement:

> *I think that the main thing which was surprising for me in a good way is how welcoming people are there. I think that's how they are. Of course, they see you as a tourist that's not from the country but at the same time you always feel protected and welcomed by everybody there. Unsafe, that's also a very important thing. I never felt unsafe in Ghana. (interviewed on 15th September 2023)*

This is to claim that Ghana is the most preferred tourist destination in West Africa due to its peace and stability, (Ntim, 2014). Respondent U, an official from the Confucius Institute in Ghana also mentioned that the Chinese government and investors like to invest in Ghana because it is safe (interviewed on 20th September, 2023). The political climate makes investors feel secure, knowing insurgencies will not disturb their investments. On the other hand, a diasporan investor who had decided to resettle in Ghana after many years in Europe through President Kufour's call for diasporans to return home and invest in Ghana is not appeased with the economic climate. He claims it is unsafe and unfavourable as there are ineffective agencies and a high degree of indiscipline among Ghanaians, making it challenging to get the

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right workforce. Regarding economic security, asserting Ghana's image positively is difficult as it needs to perform better on financial brand rankings. Surveys conducted by the brand directory in 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2020 indicate fluctuations in Ghana's already "not so good" positions.

Another reflection of Ghana's image is its hospitality. Ghanaians are known for their warmness and reception towards guests. All over the world, Ghana is seen to be a friendly nation in terms of tourism and reception towards investors. Tourists and investors from around the world share this view. Respondent R noted that all over the world, Ghana has a consistent image of being hospitable (interviewed on

5th October, 2023).

Sports

The majority of the participants of the study highlighted sports as one of the things that has placed Ghana on the map globally. Ranging from boxing, which was introduced in Ghana in the early 1930s (Akeampong, 2002), where David Kotei and Azuma Nelson made a name for themselves with the likes of Abedi Pele, Asamoah Gyan and Michael Essien, Ghana stands tall. Respondent Q, also an official from MFARI claims that Abedi Pele is the most famous Ghanaian besides Dr Kwame Nkrumah. Undoubtedly, Ghana's soccer prowess is one which various nations admire (interviewed on 31st October 2023). It is among the few African countries that have groomed global athletes. According to Mensah (2016), Ghana has also made strides in athletics and has been at the Olympics about fourteen times.

With its sports potential, Ghana can take the lead in Africa as a sports hub; however, its sports sector is heavily plagued with politics and corruption,

and talents are being left to waste away. In Ghana's sports sector, the contribution of private individuals supersedes that of the government, and there is no intensive collaboration to see to the nurturing of talents. Mensah (2016) claims that:

> *Whilst the government wields the power to direct sports development in the country, it can be argued that the participation of private individuals and groups in the organisation of sports in Ghana has been the backbone of sports development in the country.*

Whereas respondent C assumes that in terms of football on the continent, Ghana has branded itself as a powerhouse (interviewed on 2nd August, 2023), respondent Q asserts that Ghana has not averted its mind to the possibility of sports being a major tool for its global prominence hence enough investment is not being made into it (interviewed on 31st October, 2023).

Tourism and Culture

Ghana is known for its rich culture. It has tasty cuisines and is a leader in highlife and Afrobeat music on the continent. Again, its Kente fabric has gained global prominence such that it is seen as a representation of the continent. In recent times, global leaders, particularly those of African descent, have worn or hung a kente sash to show their connection to and love for Africa. According to Karen Bass, chairperson of the Congressional Black Caucus at the US Senate *Kente* signifies the heritage of African Americans and respect for their past (BBC, 2020).

Ghanaian meals have spread abroad and are currently gaining grounds in the US, especially in New York, where Ghanaian restaurants are being opened. Nani (2019), asserts that food diplomacy is one area the state needs to

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pay crucial attention to as Ghana's wide range of delicacies (jollof, *gob3* – boiled beans with fried ripe plantain, *ampesi*, *fufu*, *waakye*, etc) are gaining global prominence. This is crucial as tourists love local cuisines, fruits and vegetables sourced within the country. Respondent W expressed his passion for the popular *gob3* (interviewed on 15th September 2023).

 Festivals are also a viable selling point for Ghana. Local festivals are crucial for economic growth. They attract thousands of visitors, which boosts local businesses such as hotels, restaurants, and artisans. This influx creates job opportunities and encourages infrastructure development in host communities, World Bank (2018). Tourists and international actors from around the world visit Ghana to witness the festivals that are celebrated by various ethnic groups. *Akwasidae, Hogbetsotso, Homowo, Oguaa Fetu Afahye, Edina Bakatue, Aboakyire* among other traditional festivals and international festivals like PANAFEST, AFRO Chella, AFRO Nation etc. have attracted thousands of visitors to the country and have the potential of bringing more with a carefully laid out plan and concerted effort from all stakeholders.

In 2022, Ghana recorded approximately 645,047 international arrivals from January to September, marking a 57% increase compared to the previous year. The Ghana Tourism Authority projected a year-end total of about 900,000 visitors, Statista (2024). Respondent G, a tourism expert mentioned that the tourism potential of Ghana is enormous and has not been explored to its fullest (interviewed on 25th August, 2023). Respondent W again stated that unlike other countries especially Western ones with only a few festivals to celebrate, Ghana has as many festivals as its regions. He said that he noticed how peculiar each of these festivals were and added that it gave a

tourist something to look out for when touring each region. His exact words were:

> *There are different cultures within Ghana from the north-south and west to east but I think they all bring you something new. The moment you travel, you discover and then you see this diversity of cultures within the same country. That's also something that stays in your mind. I attended the one in Cape Coast which was the name again, the Oguaa Fetu Afahye. Yeah, it's like they don't fish for like a month and then they go back and they do this ceremony at the end. It's usually celebrated in September (interviewed on 15th September 2023).*

The benefits that the participation of the international actors bring to these communities are worthwhile, it is therefore, no wonder that in recent times, traditional leaders and other stakeholders are putting in conscious efforts to attract and involve tourists in these celebrations. It is worth stating that such involvements and developmental works of the immediate past French Ambassador, Anne-Sophie Avé across the country led to her enstoolment as queen mother of Bonobutu and Osu, (Debra, 2000; Amartey, 2022). The idea of promoting Ghanaian festivals as a pull factor is strongly hinged on Joseph Nye's (2004) proposition that culture is key in achieving soft power.

Traditional festivals provide an opportunity to experience various aspects of an ethnic group's culture hence, it often serves as a one stop event to understanding a group of people and connecting with them. Preko (2020) advances the same and highlights the socio-economic benefits. Aside from these festivals, there are natural resources Ghana is blessed with waterfalls, national parks, safari among others. Though Ghana's Mole National Park can

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currently not be compared to those in East Africa, it undoubtedly has a potential to supersede the aforementioned, when adequate investment is made into it. The study's respondents who were tourists established that Ghana's wide range of tourism resources make it a more exciting place to visit.

More importantly, Ghana is known for its outstanding heritage tourism. Its past usage as the transit region for the transatlantic slave trade has made it the number one destination for Africans in the diaspora who are trying to trace their lineage and reconnect to their roots. Respondent M stated that the Joseph's Project was developed in cognizance of this. This project was to connect all the points at which enslaved people were trafficked or transported in Ghana during the transatlantic slave trade to give tourists an experience of what the enslaved people went through (interviewed on 6th September, 2023). Nevertheless, the project at some point was left hanging until the YoR. It is purported, however, that it served as a foundation for the YoR. The YoR and Beyond the Return projects were flagship projects for Ghana. Even Though scholars like Filho and Johnston (2004) assume that embarking on such a project amount to consume-rising one's culture, the venture is worth it especially, for a developing nation striving to project its image for economic and geopolitical gains.

Conversely, Respondent P refuted the claims that Ghana is known for its tourism instead, opined that Ghana is weak in tourism and needs to do more to project its image (interviewed on 31st October 2023). Arguing on the basis of the state of tourist sites, accessibility to these sites and requisite facilities to host tourists, he supposed that Ghana has a long way to go. This assertion is supported by various tourism savants and think tanks like (Mereku, 2018;

Akotia, 2009; Koku, 2021 & Preko, 2020).   Respondent Q supported the assertion by respondent P and advanced that even intra-country tourism is not being adequately promoted and patronised. Respondent P is of the view that *if there is anything projecting Ghana now at the multilateral level (that is the UN, ECOWAS, AU settings), that is where Ghana has couched a name for itself to be peacekeeping (interviewed on 31st October 2023).*

Concerning Ghana's representation in international organisations, respondent Q mentioned that initially, Ghana was not deliberate about getting its citizens elected to various offices because that was not the focus of the ministry (interviewed on 31st October, 2023). However, recently, MFARI has set up the Candidatures Bureau to coordinate issues relating to the employment of Ghanaians within international organisations. Since this initiative, Ghana has made strides, notwithstanding the language barrier, as most international organisations seek bilingual and multilingual candidates. For instance, in October 2023, Ghana was elected to the Human Rights Council for two years. The advancement made by Ghana in this regard is evidence of what having a focus and concerted effort towards nation branding means to Ghana's diplomacy.

Education

Several African countries find Ghana to be a study-abroad destination. Students come from countries within the West African sub-region and the East, North and Central. It is purported that Ghana's education standard is of higher quality than most African countries. Ghanaian universities meet global standards and stand out in rankings and competitions. Amongst them is the University of Cape Coast's (UCC) ranking as the number one university in

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Ghana and West Africa, number four in Africa and twenty-fourth globally in terms of research influence in 2023. The ranking was conducted by the Times Higher Education (THE) World Rankings, (UCC website, 2022). University of Cape Coast's Wildcats basketball team is also the current basketball champions of Africa. They were privileged to represent the continent at the 31st FISU Games Summer (World University Games) in China (Dzakpata, 2023).

Again, the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) placed second in the Pan African Debate Championship (PAUDC) as well as the World University Debate Championship (WUDC) in 2023, having competed with universities like Harvard, Yale, and Cambridge, amongst others. University of Ghana (UG), Ghana's premier university, was also ranked among the top 6.1% of world-class universities by the Centre for World University Rankings (CWUR) in 2023 (UG website, 2023).

These achievements, among a host of others, solidify Ghana's position as a hub for quality education. According to Sasu (2023), there were 17, 821 inbound foreign students in Ghana in 2015. Though there was a disappointing decline afterwards, 2022 was more promising with a steady increase in the number from 5,301 o 5, 416. The report highlighted that a huge number of these students were from other African countries. This gives credence to the fact that Ghana is the citadel of quality education in the region. Nonetheless, it is expedient to acknowledge that all these are possible as a result of neoliberalism which allows for states to relate with each other (Bockman, 2013). It is only when there is this relation that there can be cultural exchanges whether through public diplomacy or cultural diplomacy.

Work Ethics, Human Resource and Development

Additionally, the work ethics of Ghanaians within the multilateral space gives Ghana a good image. Candidates presented at such levels for roles often win, especially when representation for the sub-region is being considered. Again, according to respondent Q, Ghana is more developed than most countries in West Africa, making it a beacon of hope and a preferred destination for education, trade, etc. His opinion that Ghana has a very unique system is interesting to note. He articulated it this way:

> *We have all the best international standard systems in Ghana. Not only in our democracy, but even in our governance, the public sector, how we operate. For instance, if you come to see how we run our diplomacy or embassies vis-à-vis how we account to the public, most African countries don't have that kind of system of accountability. In our missions for instance, because of our public account management system, we do not have the Ambassador as the signatory to the account because he is the head so if you make him the signatory, he may impose and accountability becomes an issue so if you are an ambassador, yes you are the boss but when comes to the finances of the ministry you have no hands in it. We have what we call the head of chancery, the head of chancery is the spending officer and he must be a foreign services officer and for that matter, a civil servant. He is the principal spending officer at the mission then you have the accounting officer so if there is an expenditure, it goes up to the ambassador, he approves of it and then the head of chancery who is the spending officer can authorize*

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the accounting officer to expend. But in other nations, interestingly,

it is not like that when you go to the mission, the ambassador is the

sole signatory to the account (interviewed on 31st Octobe,r 2023).

Respondent Z, a diasporan who returned to invest in Ghana had a dissenting opinion on the work ethics of Ghanaians; he claimed that Ghanaians have poor work ethics and are seen to be full of excuses by foreign employers (interviewed on 24th September, 2023). Generally, however, Ghanaians seem to have a "goodwill" with foreign employers. There are several instances where the Ghanaian government has partnered with other States to send health workers to their jurisdictions. An example is the Ghana-UK nurse transfer discussions which was initiated in 2023. Though this agreement has not been signed yet, the fact that the UK prefers nurses from Ghana is an indication of the excellent work ethics of Ghanaian nurses (citinewsroom.com, 2023; Ford, 2023). Lomotey (2014) suggests that Ghanaians working with American multinational companies exhibit good work ethics. This obviously, helps promote the image of Ghana. The more Ghanaians travel to other countries for work, the more the Ghanaian culture spreads and the more influence it is likely to bring to the State.

Admittedly, the concept of a nation brand is so broad that it is challenging to tell explicitly whether a nation is a brand. Like products, nations have names, colours, slogans, logos, etc. In this vein, Ghana can be said to be a brand. Ghana is also presumed to be a national brand with enviable influence in West Africa and the continent. Nevertheless, the question to be answered is, "*Is Ghana a viable global nation brand?*" The perspectives of scholars, practitioners, and respondents in this study vary.

Nonetheless, there is a consensus that Ghana has much to do should it consider becoming a global force. Ghana's reputation appears generally good; in respondent Q's view, Ghana has general goodwill globally (interviewed on 31st October, 2023). This goodwill, however, has to do majorly with Ghana's posture on Pan-Africanism and its peace operations within the continent. Though the country has made strides in sports, mainly soccer, it has yet to hone Jamaica's talents concerning athletics consistently; hence, it has an inconsistent brand in soccer.

Although its standard of education is appealing within sub-region regions and continent, it is not an area where the state has paid peculiar attention to developing as a linchpin for global recognition. Respondent C believed that Ghana has a long way to go regarding branding itself through its tourism industry. The sector that has seemingly caught the government's attention in this regard is tourism. As a result, various initiatives and programs have erupted around it. Among these are the SEWF and YoR. Other projects that were attempted and with some in progress are the Joseph's project, Ghana Center of the World, Face of Africa, Culture, Rhythm and Warmth, Experience Ghana, Ghana the hub of Meetings Incentives Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) in West Africa/ Africa. Unfortunately, as innovative and exciting as these projects may sound, most are yet to see the light of day or live up to expectations. Respondent J suggests that most are only campaigns with no strategic plan (interviewed on 26th August, 2023).

Most respondents also shared this view, with some stating that Ghana's underdevelopment is one issue that is hampering the progress of its tourism sector. It was claimed that once Ghana appropriately brands itself through

investment in developmental projects, people who want to travel worldwide would find it an appealing destination. Respondent X, a tourist, opined that if Ghana had several large and world-standard conference facilities, it could host several international conferences; however, that is different (interviewed on 6th September, 2023). Ghana has much to do if it is considering branding itself through its tourism industry.

Geopolitical and Diplomatic Benefits

Brand Ghana

Established by President Atta Mills in 2009, the Brand Ghana initiative became ineffective after the demises of President Mills and Martin Akotia, the director of the initiative. The office had been set up to unify and solidify efforts towards creating a compelling image for Ghana in order to attract and retain investors, (Spio, 2016). Nevertheless, it did not live up to expectation, majorly due to political regime changes. Respondent P, who was part of the framers of the 3year strategy for the Brand Ghana office, affirms that change in governments is one of the core reasons why the Brand Ghana office did not stand (interviewed on 31st October, 2023). Successive governments came with their vision for the country and should have paid more attention to what their predecessors had started (Respondent P; interviewed on 31st October 2023) Koku (2021) cited the office's location as another reason that caused its downfall, arguing that it was hidden from the populace, and so was its vision.

As a result of its ineffectiveness, its goal was not attained, and it had a minimal impact on Ghana's diplomatic or geopolitical relations. However, its mandate passed on to Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) and Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA), among others, lives on. These

organisations are working assiduously to promote Ghana's image and attract investment and can be said to be making strides. Statistics prove that during the first three months of the 2018 fiscal year, which ended on December 31st, investments were registered at US$ 1.27 billion, of which US$ 1.26 billion was foreign direct investment (GIPC website, 2018). According to the same report, their concerted effort in the previous year brought the economy strong confidence, the attention of the international investment community was attracted, investor interest and leads were created around the clock, and there was hope that these would materialize into concrete investment commitments. These comments indicate a boost in Ghana's economy and image, leading to international partnerships. Therefore, it is plausible that the operationalization of Brand Ghana's mandate has manifested these diplomatic benefits through international investments.

See Eat Wear Feel Ghana Initiative

The SEWF project started during Kufuor's regime when he introduced the Friday wear, respondent M asserts (interviewed on 6th September, 2023). It encouraged the citizenry to imbibe Ghana's culture and a sense of nationalism (visitghana.com). The strategy was to rebrand Ghana and make it attractive to its populace. Akotia (2009) and Ofori (2009) agree that a strategy is necessary for a country to create a prosperous national brand that will be appreciated internationally. Also, the project's secondary goal was to strategically promote Ghana to the world's population who are of African descent. It can be said that this aim was achieved when the tourism receipts from that year and the subsequent one are considered. According to Mornah (2017), there was a 20% growth in the influx of tourists the year the project

was launched. More tourists indicate that seeing and experiencing Ghana will promote Ghana's image because they will, in turn, share their experiences with friends and families back in their countries of origin. All tourists interviewed for this study said they would gladly recommend Ghana to others for tourism. Additionally, for the first time, Ghana hosted the World Tourism Summit – Africa, the first time an African country had been selected as host. Though the SEWF was not primarily focused on attracting and fostering relations with the international community, respondent S adduced that it somewhat laid a foundation for the YoR which enhanced Ghana's relations with other States, private individuals and institutions (interviewed on 3rd October, 2023). This affirms the position of Gregory (2008) that public diplomacy enhances comprehension of cultures between States and non-state actors as well as fosters cooperation between the same.

Year of Return and Beyond the Return Initiatives

The Year of Return was a project birthed by the GTA emanating from the African Union (AU). According to respondent M, as the African Union marked 400 years of slavery, it required all its members to acknowledge the occasion and plan events to bring the diaspora back to their home countries; Ghana's initiative was the YoR, which gained global attention (interviewed on 6th September, 2023).

Though inaugurated about four years ago, its impact is widespread in Ghana and Africa. Several Africans in the diaspora have returned to the continent to reconnect with their roots (Asamoah, 2020). The YoR, beyond the influx of tourists, FDI and dollars it brought to Ghana, earned the country global reportage. International media like BBC News, CNN, Aljazeera, and Forbes,

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among others, published articles on the event, bringing the nation to the spotlight. Forbes featured the visit of the Koshie Mills, an African-American family whose three sons are Hollywood actors. According to the publication, since their initial journey, which was documented in Essence magazine, the family has returned to Ghana every December, bringing an increasing number of friends. This indicates that the more people hear of, see, and visit Ghana, the more likely they are to recommend it to others to visit. A compelling and sustainable image will go a long way to benefit the country. Respondent G, shared that:

> *There are Ghanaian markets and African-Americans wear Ghanaian fabrics. There was recently a Hollywood award ceremony where one of the celebrities wore a Ghanaian outfit. The speaker of the US senate was in Ghana during the Year of Return in 2019 as well as some celebrities. They are influential people who post pictures and people buy into it. ...Not those powerful States per se but certain constituencies could be influenced (interviewed on 25th August, 2023).*

Even though Filho and Johnson (2004) view neoliberalism as a worldwide system of minority dominance, growing exploitation by the majority, nation-state looting, and environmental destruction, the recent global order makes nation branding an essential phenomenon. It is acceptable for a country to commercialise certain aspects of its economy to attract investment, trade or global prominence provided there is fairness and understanding between the parties involved. It is permissible if it is not being exploited and there is a mutually beneficial relationship between the state and its clients. Nation

branding has made states like South Africa, Rwanda and others embrace development and stand out globally (Amalu, 2013). They have become voices that reverberate within the African continent and beyond. In as much as Ghana may hold a similar position, it is considering other innovative ways beyond being known for peacekeeping and pan-Africanism, to boost its economy and spark a chord globally and to do this, it needs to engage in public diplomacy (McCormick, 2019).

Like Kenya, Tanzania or Seychelles, Ghana can be known for tourism as it possesses diverse resources and unique cultures. It is highly possible for Ghana to be the hub of tourism in Africa considering its resources. Respondent O highlighted the numerous tourist sites in Ghana that are listed as part of the world's heritage conservation sites (ranging from the forts and castles/ slave dungeons to the Ashanti traditional buildings, they total 8) and the host of others that have the potential of being on the list (interviewed on 15th September 2023). He added that if the proper steps are taken, Ghana's kente fabric and Adinkra symbols could be included. In a report published by Ghana - UNESCO World Heritage Convention, (n.d.), six (6) tentative sites are awaiting approval. If these are successful, Ghana would have fourteen (14) World Heritage Conservation sites, making it a more preferred destination as these ratings by UNESCO are relied upon by tourists in choosing destinations to visit. Respondents B and W asserted that aside from these, Ghana's hospitality gives it a competitive edge as most East African and Caribbean countries are less welcoming than Ghana.

Travel is a huge industry. It represents more than 10% of GDP worldwide.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) Economic Impact Report (2023), the travel and tourism industry increased global GDP by 22% from 2021 to 2022, contributing 7.6%. The same report established that 22 million new jobs were created, which is a 7.9% increase from 2021. WTTC reported that the tourism industry added one in five employment during 2014 – 2019. Yet only 3.6% of GDP is accounted for by it on the African continent. It seems to make sense that African governments are attempting to boost tourism to their countries given their explosive growth and employment-generating potential, McCormick (2019) assumes. In this regard, Ghana seems to have done it better than anyone else. There is a resonance with the "Year of Return." Beyond the diplomatic merits, the inflow of tourists and FDI was astonishing. Even though Ghana's primary agenda for the tourism sector is to attract high-impact tourists, it should cast its net wide as there are more benefits it could earn by establishing an outstanding national brand.

Additionally, some successes of the YoR campaign can be associated with the Beyond the Return initiative which is a ten-year plan post YoR. As part of its pillars, Beyond the Return has "Brand Ghana." Nevertheless, gleaning from its mission, it can be concluded that the entire initiative is a nation branding strategy. It has at the core of its mandate promoting Ghana for investment, tourism and trade; fostering national consciousness as well as championing cooperation between Ghana and the African diaspora. These can only be attained through soft power strategies (Nye, 2008). Though, the actual

goal may not be global influence, these strategies when adopted will gradually bring Ghana global influence and repute.

In sum, Ghana's branding initiatives, particularly the *Year of Return (YoR)* and *See, Eat, Wear, and Feel Ghana (SEWF)*, have enhanced cultural diplomacy, which has translated into improved diplomatic relations with the African diaspora, the United States, and Caribbean nations. For instance, the *Year of Return* received strong endorsements from high-ranking U.S. officials and institutions, leading to increased diplomatic exchanges and cultural partnerships. In 2019, U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Ghana with a congressional delegation to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the transatlantic slave trade (Gyasi, 2020). This visit underscored Ghana's strengthened diplomatic ties with the U.S., as it paved the way for discussions on trade, investment, and historical reconciliation.

Additionally, Ghana's tourism-driven branding has facilitated bilateral agreements with Caribbean nations. In 2019, Jamaica's Prime Minister Andrew Holness and Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on tourism cooperation, recognizing the role of cultural diplomacy in fostering stronger political and economic ties (UNWTO, 2019). Furthermore, the YoR contributed to a new wave of diaspora engagement, leading to initiatives such as the *Beyond the Return* campaign, which seeks to deepen diaspora relations and encourage investment in Ghana (Teye, 2020). These diplomatic gains illustrate that tourism branding can be strategically leveraged to enhance foreign relations and soft power.

Nation Branding Efforts made by the State

 Though Ghana does not have a composite nation brand strategy, it has invested efforts into projecting its image through various agencies. These efforts are minimal, considering the purported goal. According to most of the study's participants, Ghana's championing of democracy within the sub-region and continent as a whole, its peace operations and its spirit of Pan-Africanism are among its works toward nation branding. Respondent M asserts that all presidents after Nkrumah have contributed to this legacy (interviewed on 6th September, 2023). The comment of respondent G below succinctly captures the contributions of the various presidents:

The efforts by President Nkrumah to brand Ghana as the Black Star has been the most successful branding. He was able to set up a shipping line known as Black Star line, named the football team Black Stars…There was a conscious effort to bring back African Americans. Out there, Ghana was seen as the shining star and Nkrumah provided the leadership qualities. We had a series of military takeovers. At the latter part of President Rawlings' rule, he tried to take over from where President Nkrumah left off. He championed PANAFEST, and the Joseph projects. He also supported PANAFEST celebrations. President Kuffour also made an attempt by embarking on a mission to bring in investors. He met Ghanaians abroad and convinced them to invest in the country.

Under Kuffour; Mr. Obetsebi Lamptey was the tourism minister. Our brothers and sisters in the Diaspora were supposed to help us develop. President Mills set up an institution to brand the industry

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to have one image. Mr. Akwatia was made the head of the branding office of Ghana. The inefficiency of the office disappointed many people. The office only came up with a slogan and failed to achieve the purpose for which it was created. President Mahama continued to improve the tourism industry after taking over from President Mills. Another great attempt to improve tourism was when President Akuffo-Addo introduced "Eat Ghana, Wear Ghana" policy (interviewed on 25th August, 2023).

Additionally, respondent F supposed that:

Ghana is seen as a country that respects the rule of law, Ghana creates an opportunity for private sector participation, foreign direct investment in the economy, Ghana respects international rules and regulation, Ghana is seen in the international community as a model or instrument for championing democratic governance and all the other indicators mentioned earlier. In that vein, Ghana is doing very well in the international community, highly respected on the personal side. Individually when you travel outside Ghana, Ghana is highly commended for its contribution to the development of sports, both juvenile and at the national level, Ghana has competed in the world cup about two or three times or more (*interviewed on 28th August, 2023).*

President Kuffour's role in promoting the idea that the diaspora be adjudged the "Sixth Region of the Continent " is also worth highlighting as it is built on Nkrumah's works in strengthening relations between the continent and its children abroad. The idea of the Diaspora Africa Forum serving as a link

between Africa and her diaspora was initially brought to life by President John Kufuor of Ghana (diasporaafricaforum.org, 2002). For the first Embassy for the Diaspora, His Excellency donated land at the famed W. E. B. Dubois Compound. In keeping with his dedication to the diaspora, President Kufuor became the first president to grant The

Diaspora African Forum (DAF or Forum) full diplomatic status

History will note that at that pivotal point in time, President Kufuor's recommendation to President Wade in response to Dr. Bennett's question gave origin to the idea and tenet of "The Sixth Region of Africa."

December, 2023 (Agbetiloye, 2023). All these have gone a long way to expose Ghana and grant it more recognition internationally.

Ghana's Tourism Potential

Undoubtedly, Ghana has a vast tourism potential. All the respondents admitted to this, and there is extensive literature on Ghana's tourism value and how it can transform the economy with adequate investment. Aside from its heritage and cultural tourism, which it is widely known for, it is blessed with national parks and forests for ecotourism, Sampson (2022) alludes. Furthermore, Ghana's dual citizenship policy, enacted in 2000, has also, to a large extent, helped make the state appealing to African Americans. Tetteh (2022), in an article published by Africa Renewal, established that to allow for dual citizenship, Ghana's parliament established the Citizenship Act in 2000, allowing people of Ghanaian descent who have obtained citizenship abroad to apply for Ghanaian citizenship if they wanted to Again, the nation passed the Immigration Act that same year, granting any "Person of African descent in the Diaspora" the "Right of Abode" to enter and exit the nation "without

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hindrance." In recent times, there have been more initiatives by the government to ease the immigration of diasporans. Amongst them are the conferment of citizenship on returnees, support for returnee settlement, set up of the Diaspora Affairs Office at the Presidency and state partnerships with private ventures (https://diasporaaffairs.gov.gh/). Lastly, the government has declared visa-free travel for all foreign nations visiting Ghana this

From the North to the South, there are several natural resources, among which are the Mole National Park, the Larabanga Mosque, the Paga Crocodile Pond, the Kintampo Waterfall, the Wli Waterfall, the Boti Waterfall, the Lake Bosomtwe, the Volta Lake, the Wechiau Hippo Sanctuary, Buabeng Fiema, Tafi Atome etc. Some respondents said Ghana has overly relied on its heritage and cultural tourism assets, neglecting other prospective areas. Respondent O emphasised Ghana's tourism worth and cited tourist destinations on the UNESCO World Conservation list (interviewed on 15th September 2023). These include the Mole National Park, the Tenzug - Tallensi settlements, the Navrongo Catholic Cathedral, the Nzulezu Stilt Settlement, the Trade Pilgrimage Routes of North Western Ghana and the Kakum National Park.

Considering cultural tourism, it was ascertained that the focus is usually on festivals. Meanwhile, a broader spectrum has to do with cuisines and textiles (kente, fugu). Assumedly, even the potential of the local festivals has yet to be adequately explored. Moreover, the projection of our textiles, particularly the *kente* and *fugu*, is yet to spark flames as diplomatic tools. Even our traditional footwear (*ahenema*) is an excellent marketing tool. While Ghana has yet to explore these areas, international brands like Balenciaga have adopted it as part of their products (tv3_ghana Instagram handle, November

30, 2023). Also, it was noted that Balenciaga sells the famous "Ghana must go" bags, and this caused a stir among the Ghanaian public (Yen.com, 2021).

Additionally, international fashion brands collaborate with Ghanaian celebrities to promote their brands and products (tv3_ghana Instagram handle, November 30, 2023). One Ghanaian celebrity who has benefitted from such collaboration is Stonebwoy as a brand ambassador for Tommy Hilfiger (WatsUpTV, 2017). Even though some Ghanaian attire, especially the kente, is being used representatively on international platforms and stirs up interest among African Americans, the state has not averted its mind to actively promoting it as a tool for attraction, international trade and diplomatic relations, respondent Q alluded (interviewed on 31st October, 2023). Most of the promotional work is done by individuals; hence, the efforts are dispersed without a national goal or monitoring. Nani (2019; p. 99), on the other hand, has extensively researched food diplomacy and highly recommends that the state consider it. In Nani's opinion, "for Ghana to embark on a successful gastro diplomacy campaign or promote its culture and influence in the world through food, the government should design an extensive foreign policy document to project Ghana's global influence through food." Ghana's music, Afrobeat and highlife are also unique genres. In recent times, however, the Nigerian music industry has done better and is making waves globally with Afrobeat more than Ghana (Fofana, 2023). Ghana's ability to dominate the international market is tremendous, and with an effective strategy, it can fully manifest its status as the black star of Africa.

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Sustainability

Sustainability is paramount in every area to ensure efficiency, continuity and safety. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Tourism Organisation (2005) claim that the World Commission on Environment and Development's 1987 report contains the definition of sustainable development that is still most frequently used: it is defined as "a process to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." Therefore, the goal of sustainable development is to improve everyone's quality of life in ways that will be viable long into the future. Respondent G elicited that sustainability cuts across generations. As such, whatever a country has today must be preserved to be used by future generations. In view of this, sustainability must be included in national branding. When considering the concept of nation branding through tourism, issues of sustainability range from environmental to social and then cultural. Tourism, to a large extent, affects the environment.

In addition to putting a great deal of strain on host communities and uprooting traditional societies, tourism directly threatens delicate ecosystems, degrading the physical environment and upsetting wildlife. This can be associated with what Filho and Johnston (2004) refer to as developed States taking exploiting less developed ones leading to environmental devastation as a result of neoliberalism. Tourism also intensifies competition for limited resources, particularly water and land, and contributes significantly to local and global pollution. According to the UNWTO, "solid waste management is an important aspect in the sustainable development of tourism in a destination." The University of California (UCLA) suggests that destinations

must quantify waste amounts and identify sources and destinations to track the efficacy of upcoming waste management techniques. Everyone involved in the tourism industry must understand the significance of sustainable development. The positive effects of tourism are enormous. However, it can also act as a conduit for the very forces that have the potential to destroy the resources it depends on. When tourism is developed without consideration for sustainability, it has the potential to destroy society and the environment, in addition to carrying the seeds of its demise.

Furthermore, tourism threatens the sustenance of the culture of both the tourist and the host, but mainly to the host (Ofori, 2009). Host communities tend to imbibe the lifestyle of tourists. It is assumed that today's youth, primarily those in local communities, pick specific dressing styles from tourists. This has been a massive concern for elders of host communities amidst the dangers posed to the environment, and the fact that they do not receive or see the direct benefits tourism brings them. Due to tourism, locals are said to lose focus of their culture and identity with time. Though some scholars argue that it is more of a cultural exchange between tourists and locals, the impact tourists have on locals is greater.

In considering nation branding through tourism, culture preservation has to be looked at because there is the tendency for a state, in its bid to brand, to stage its culture to attract more tourists or investors and, with time, lose its authenticity. Bourdieu (1998) asserts that states have to commercialise their values and economy to attract clients (tourists, investors, states and others) leading to adulteration of their culture. Cultural adulteration is a significant challenge in tourism; therefore, to successfully brand Ghana with

sustainability in focus, a strategy must be adopted to avoid alteration of its cultural values because it is one of the pillars of soft power, according to Joseph Nye (2004). So far, Ghana needs to perform better at preserving its culture. Most of its traditional songs, stories, folklore, etc., must be appropriately documented; however, it has lost several of them. Ghana's *Adinkra* symbols, *kente*, among others, have not been patented. Notably, the strength of its tourism industry, heritage tourism, needs to improve with conservation.

Some respondents believed that due to the involvement of some international bodies like the UNESCO, WTTC, etc., and some advocacy from CSOs', the forts, castles, and national parks would have long deteriorated or been exploited. The government, however, was given credit for the work done through its regulatory bodies such as MoTAC, GTA, and Forestry Commission, among others. Besides cultural adulteration and the deplorable state of several tourist sites, accessibility to most of them and access to essential facilities within host communities were significant concerns to several study participants. All these need to be addressed in order to create a luring and sustainable image.

Chapter Summary

The study aimed to explore how Ghana can leverage tourism as soft power for nation branding, identifying opportunities and challenges while capturing stakeholder perspectives. To achieve this, thematic analysis was employed, guided by the overarching themes derived from the study objectives. These included "Ghana as a brand and Soft Power Manifestations, Geopolitical and Diplomatic Benefits and Sustainability of Ghana's nation brand. Under these

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three main themes, subtopics were developed to aid a better appreciation of the issues.

The primary goals of the data analysis were to uncover patterns that addressed the study's objectives and research questions. Themes were categorized into overarching and organizing themes. Overarching themes like "Sport as Soft Power" captured global ideas, while organizing themes such as "Policy Gaps" and "Infrastructure Development" detailed specific issues. For example, participants frequently noted the role of cultural festivals and historical landmarks in attracting diaspora tourists. One respondent from the Ghana Tourism Authority emphasized: "Our heritage sites and festivals, like the Cape Coast Castle and PANAFEST, resonate deeply with the diaspora, positioning Ghana as the spiritual home for Africans worldwide. "The global theme, "Tourism as a Soft Power Tool," encompassed organizing themes such as:

- "Cultural Festivals and Diaspora Engagement" (highlighting events like the Year of Return),
- "Infrastructure Development" (addressing issues like road networks and accommodations), and
- "Policy Gaps and Stakeholder Collaboration" (identifying weak policy direction and fragmented efforts among stakeholders).

For instance, regarding infrastructure, a participant noted:

"Our roads to key tourist destinations are poor, and basic services like water and electricity are inconsistent, which frustrates tourists."

The analysis was refined to clearly present the identified themes and their connections to the research questions. Each theme was supported by direct quotes and literature, ensuring alignment with the study's goals. For

example, the organizing theme of "Diaspora Engagement" was linked to the objective of leveraging tourism for nation branding. Insights from participants and literature such as Addo (2011) highlighted Ghana's ability to attract diaspora communities through strategic initiatives like the Year of Return. Yankholmes (2014) provided a foundation for discussing diaspora tourism, while Akyeampong and Yankholmes (2010) emphasized the role of cultural heritage in tourism development.The themes were systematically aligned with the research questions. For instance, to answer the question, "How can Ghana utilize tourism as soft power for branding?" the findings emphasized cultural heritage as a central asset. A respondent noted: "Our culture is our unique strength. Showcasing it through tourism gives Ghana an edge in creating soft power."

This finding was supported by Addo (2011), who argued that cultural heritage serves as a critical element in positioning Ghana as the "Gateway to Africa." The analysis clarified how tourism serves as soft power, positioning Ghana as a leader in African heritage and culture. The Year of Return was cited as a landmark example, bringing in over one million tourists and generating significant revenue (Addo, 2011). A respondent observed: "The Year of Return was more than tourism; it was a cultural movement that showcased Ghana's heritage and built emotional connections with the diaspora." By aligning the themes with the research objectives and ensuring clarity in the analysis, the study provided compelling evidence of how Ghana can use tourism as soft power to brand itself. The analysis tied the findings to the research framework, emphasizing the need for strategic collaboration, policy improvement, and infrastructure development to realize Ghana's tourism potential.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview of the Study

This study aimed to analyze Ghana's branding initiatives, particularly the "See, Eat, Wear and Feel Ghana" (SEWF) project and the "Year of Return" (YoR) campaign, and their impact on the country's diplomatic relations. Through thematic content analysis of both primary and secondary data, the research sought to understand Ghana's positioning as a nation brand and the potential benefits derived from its tourism industry.

Findings Related to Research Objectives

Objective 1: Ascertain the elements that enhance Ghana's existence as a nation brand

The research revealed the elements which enhance Ghana's nation brand are mainly tourism and culture; pan-africanism; political stability, democracy and security; sports; education and work ethics internationally. It also heighted the fact that Ghana has made significant strides in establishing itself as a nation brand through various initiatives. However, there is no cohesive strategy that integrates all branding efforts effectively. The findings indicate that while individual projects have gained traction, they lack a unified vision that aligns with broader national goals.

Objective 2: Explore the geopolitical and diplomatic benefits of branding projects

The SEWF and YoR projects have attracted international attention, resulting in increased tourist arrivals and foreign investments. These initiatives have further enhanced Ghana's global image, contributing positively to its soft

power. However, there is no comprehensive foreign policy that would guide Ghana's efforts towards leveraging these benefits to enhance its influence regionally and globally.

Objective 3: Ascertain the sustainability of Ghana's image regionally and globally through tourism and its related projects like YoR and SEWF

A key weakness of Ghana's nation branding efforts is the lack of continuity and sustainability. Sustainability of Ghana's brand image hinges on continuous investment in tourism infrastructure and stakeholder collaboration. The "Brand Ghana" project for instance failed due to insufficient stakeholder collaboration and government commitment (Akotia, 2009). Similarly, the impact of the SEWF and YoR projects may diminish if follow-up initiatives lack long-term investment. The research found that without a long-term commitment from both government and private sectors, the momentum generated by these projects may diminish over time. A sustainable branding strategy should include:

Institutionalization of a Nation Branding Policy – South Korea's Korea Foundation ensures continuity in cultural diplomacy efforts (Kim, 2015). Ghana could establish a "Ghana Branding Council" to oversee its branding initiatives.

Digital Diplomacy and Global Engagement – Ghana should increase its presence on global branding indices like the FutureBrand Index and Nation Brands Index. Countries with strong digital nation branding—such as the UK and Canada maintain a competitive global image through online engagement (Dinnie, 2016).

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Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Tourism – In Rwanda, public-private collaboration in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) industry has sustained Visit Rwanda's branding efforts beyond single events (Nsengimana, 2019).

Recommendations

The study's conclusions have led to the following recommendations for Ghana to maintain and create a more competitive and sustainable nation brand.

Develop a National Branding Policy: Establish a comprehensive policy that outlines clear objectives for nation branding efforts, integrating tourism with diplomatic goals.

Engage Key Stakeholders: Identify and involve stakeholders such as government agencies (e.g., Ministry of Tourism), local businesses, community leaders, and international partners in branding initiatives. Each stakeholder should have defined roles:

Government Agencies: Lead policy formulation and resource allocation.

Local Businesses: Promote local culture through products and services.

Community Leaders: Foster grassroots participation in tourism initiatives.

Invest in Marketing Campaigns: Launch targeted marketing campaigns that highlight Ghana's unique cultural offerings to attract international tourists.

Monitor and Evaluate Branding Efforts: Implement mechanisms for regular assessment of branding initiatives to ensure alignment with national objectives and adaptability to changing global trends.

Promote Cultural Diplomacy: Leverage cultural events to enhance soft power by showcasing Ghanaian arts, music, and traditions internationally.

By implementing these recommendations, Ghana can enhance its nation branding efforts while fostering stronger diplomatic relations globally.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Based on the findings of this research, several suggestions for further studies can be proposed to deepen the understanding of Ghana's nation branding and its implications for diplomatic relations. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of specific branding initiatives, such as the "See, Eat, Wear and Feel Ghana" project and the "Year of Return," on both tourism growth and international perceptions of Ghana. Additionally, comparative studies between Ghana and other African nations that have successfully leveraged tourism for nation branding could provide valuable insights into best practices and strategies. Investigating the role of digital media and social networks in shaping public perceptions of Ghana's brand would also be beneficial, especially in an increasingly interconnected world. Furthermore, qualitative studies involving stakeholder interviews could uncover the nuanced perspectives of local communities, government officials, and international partners regarding the effectiveness and sustainability of branding efforts. These avenues for research would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how nation branding can enhance Ghana's soft power and diplomatic influence on the global stage.

Summary

The study concludes that while initiatives like SEWF and YoR have elevated Ghana's global image, they lack long-term sustainability due to policy inconsistencies and insufficient infrastructure investment. The research highlights the potential of Ghana's tourism sector as a tool for soft power and

diplomatic influence. Key recommendations include the development of a national branding policy, increased stakeholder engagement, targeted marketing campaigns, and continuous evaluation of branding efforts. The study further suggests leveraging cultural diplomacy to strengthen Ghana's soft power. The writer asserts that implementing these recommendations will ensure Ghana's nation-branding efforts translate into sustained economic and diplomatic benefits.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE: SOFT POWER THROUGH NATION

BRANDING - A STUDY OF GHANA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

INDEPTH INTERVIEW: GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and your role?

Understanding Nation Branding and Soft Power:

2. How do you define "nation branding" in the context of Ghana's tourism industry?

3. a) Of what benefit do you think nation branding is to Ghana?

b) Are there benefits aside the economic ones? For example; geopolitical benefits (positioning in the global space), advancement of our foreign policy etc.?

4. a) What does "soft power" mean to you, and do you think Ghana is manifesting it as a result of nation branding?

b) If yes, how is it being manifested?

c) If no, how do you think Ghana can take advantage of its nation branding to better position itself globally and derive soft power?

Ghana's Tourism Industry:

5. Could you give an overview of Ghana's tourism industry, including its main attractions and target audience?

6. How do you perceive Ghana's current image on the global stage as a tourism destination?

Nation Branding Initiatives:

7. Have the initiatives (Brand Ghana, SEWF and YoR projects) taken by Ghana to enhance its image been successful, and how do you measure their effectiveness? (Eg. Is a force to reckon with in terms of investment, collaboration, being a party in diplomatic discourses etc.)

8. Are there other nation branding initiatives Ghana has undertaken to promote its tourism industry and improve its soft power?

Stakeholder Collaboration:

9. How important is collaboration between the government, private sector, and local communities in shaping Ghana's nation brand in order to build a competitive and sustainable nation brand?

10.   Could you provide examples of successful collaborations that have positively impacted Ghana's tourism image?

Challenges and Obstacles:

11.   What are the major challenges and obstacles Ghana faces in its efforts to enhance soft power through nation branding in the tourism sector?

12.   How do you think these challenges can be effectively addressed? *Authenticity and Cultural Preservation:*

13.   In the pursuit of nation branding, how does Ghana ensure the authenticity of its culture and heritage while appealing to a global audience?

14.   What steps are being taken to preserve Ghana's cultural identity amidst the influence of international tourism? *Sustainability and Responsible Tourism:*

15.   How is Ghana integrating sustainability and responsible tourism practices into its nation branding strategy?

16.   Can you share examples of sustainable tourism initiatives that have positively impacted Ghana's soft power?

Competitive Positioning:

17.   How does Ghana differentiate itself from other African countries in its nation branding approach to tourism?

18.   What unique selling points or aspects of Ghana's culture and tourism does the nation emphasize?

Future Outlook:

19.   What are the future plans and strategies to further enhance Ghana's soft power through nation branding?

20.   How do you envision Ghana's nation brand and its soft power evolving in the next 5-10 years?

Conclusion:

21.   Is there anything else you would like to add or any important aspect we haven't covered regarding Ghana's nation branding and tourism industry?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW GUIDE: SOFT POWER THROUGH NATION

BRANDING - A STUDY OF GHANA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

INTERVIEW GUIDE: DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS, INTERNATIONAL

ORGANISATIONS, NGOS

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and your role? *Understanding Nation Branding and Soft Power:*

2. How do you define "nation branding"?

3. Do you think Ghana is a nation brand and how is it doing that?

4. a) Of what benefit do you think nation branding is/ will be to Ghana?

b) Are there benefits aside the economic ones? For example; geopolitical benefits (positioning in the global space), advancement of our foreign policy etc.?

5. a) What does "soft power" mean to you, and do you think Ghana is manifesting it as a result of nation branding?

b) If yes, how is it being manifested?

c) If no, how do you think Ghana can take advantage of its nation branding to better position itself globally and derive soft power?

Ghana's Tourism Industry:

6. How do you perceive Ghana's current image on the global stage (as a tourism destination)?

Nation Branding Initiatives:

7. Have Ghana's attempts at nation branding been successful, and how do you measure its effectiveness? (Eg. Is a force to reckon with in terms of investment,

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collaboration, being a party in diplomatic discourses etc.) ***Stakeholder Collaboration:***

8. How important is collaboration between the government, private sector, and local communities in shaping Ghana's nation brand in order to build a competitive and sustainable nation brand?

9. Could you provide examples of instances where you have contributed or collaborated with other stakeholders to promote Ghana's image?

Challenges and Obstacles:

10. What major challenges and obstacles do you think Ghana faces in its efforts to enhance its image?

11. How do you think these challenges can be effectively addressed?

Competitive Positioning:

12. In your view how distinct is Ghana from other African countries?

13. How do you envision Ghana's nation brand in the next 5-10 years?

Conclusion:

14. Is there anything else you would like to add or any important aspect we haven't covered regarding Ghana's nation branding and tourism industry?

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APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE: SOFT POWER THROUGH NATION

BRANDING - A STUDY OF GHANA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

INDEPTH-INTERVIEW: SCHOLARS, PRACTITIONERS, THE

MEDIA

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and your role?

Understanding Nation Branding and Soft Power:

2. How do you define "nation branding" in the context of Ghana's tourism industry?

3. a) Of what benefit do you think nation branding is to Ghana?

b) Are there benefits aside the economic ones? For example; geopolitical benefits (positioning in the global space), advancement of our foreign policy etc.?

4. a) What does "soft power" mean to you, and do you think Ghana is manifesting it as a result of nation branding?

b) If yes, how is it being manifested?

c) If no, how do you think Ghana can take advantage of its nation branding to better position itself globally and derive soft power?

Ghana's Tourism Industry:

5. Could you give an overview of Ghana's tourism industry, including its main attractions and target audience?

6. How do you think Ghana is perceived as a nation brand on the global stage? *Nation Branding Initiatives:*

7. Have the initiatives (Brand Ghana, SEWF, YoR projects) taken by Ghana to create a nation brand been successful, and how do you measure their effectiveness? (Eg. Is a force to reckon with in terms of investment, collaboration, being a party in diplomatic discourses etc.) *Stakeholder Collaboration:*

8. How important is collaboration between the government, private sector, and local communities in shaping Ghana's nation brand in order to build a competitive and sustainable nation brand?

9. Could you provide examples of successful collaborations that have positively impacted Ghana's tourism image?

Challenges and Obstacles:

10. What are the major challenges and obstacles Ghana has faced in its efforts to enhance soft power through nation branding in the tourism sector with referenece to the Brand Ghana, SEWF and Year of Return projects?

11. How do you think these challenges can be effectively addressed? ***Authenticity and Cultural Preservation:***

12. In the pursuit of nation branding, how does Ghana ensure the authenticity of its culture and heritage while appealing to a global audience?

13. What steps are being taken to preserve Ghana's cultural identity amidst the influence of international tourism? ***Sustainability and Responsible Tourism:***

14. How is Ghana integrating sustainability and responsible tourism practices into its nation branding strategy?

15. Can you share examples of sustainable tourism initiatives that have positively impacted Ghana's soft power?

Competitive Positioning:

16. How does Ghana differentiate itself from other African countries in its nation branding approach to tourism?

17. What unique selling points or aspects of Ghana's culture and tourism does the nation emphasize?

Future Outlook:

18. What future plans and strategies do you think Ghana can explore to further enhance its soft power through nation branding?

19. How do you envision Ghana's nation brand and its soft power evolving in the next 5-10 years?

Conclusion:

20. Is there anything else you would like to add or any important aspect we haven't covered regarding Ghana's nation branding and tourism industry?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW GUIDE: SOFT POWER THROUGH NATION BRANDING - A STUDY OF GHANA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

INDEPTH INTERVIEW: TOURISTS

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and your role?

2. When was the first time you visited Ghana and what was the element of attraction?

3. What was you impression of Ghana prior to your visit and how did it change?

4. How do you perceive Ghana's current image on the global stage as a tourism destination?

5. From your experience in Ghana, would you recommend Ghana to others for tourism or investment and what will be your point of sale?

6. Can you share your view on "nation branding"?

7. Of what benefit do you think nation branding is or would be to Ghana?

8. What makes you prefer Ghana as a tourism destination to other African countries?

9. Did you visit Ghana during the 2017 (SEWF year) or the Year of Return (2019)?

If yes, how was the experience?

10. How successful do you think it was?

11. How do you think the organization of these events have impacted the image of Ghana?

12. Is there anything else you would like to add or any important aspect we haven't covered regarding Ghana's nation branding and tourism industry?

Here are the APA-format references for the in-text citations used in the paragraph: