

GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM

REBRANDING AND ITS EFFECTS ON PROFIT: A CASE STUDY OF AIRTEL

GHANA

BY

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND

RESEARCH, GHANA INSTITUTE OF JOURNALISM IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF A

MASTER OF ARTS IN MEDIA MANAGEMENT

SEPTEMBER, 2015

DECLARATION

This is to declare that except for references to other peoples work, which have been duly acknowledged, this dissertation is the authors original work researched and carried out under supervision



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CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this dissertation was supervised in accordance with the laid down procedures by the Ghana Institute of Journalism

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rhodlene Amartey', is written over a horizontal dotted line.

MRS RHODALENE AMARTEY

SUPERVISOR

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to the Grace and direction of the Lord who has seen me through this process. Glory be to his name.

I also dedicate this study to my parents and siblings whose encouragements in seeking higher academic pursuits have brought me this far.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am extremely grateful to you, Mrs Rhodalene Amartey, my supervisor for your patience and guidance throughout my research work.

My sincerest appreciation also goes out to Mr Cornelius Kakrabah, Head of Brands & Marketing Communications, Airtel Ghana and His team for their time during the interview sessions.

To my friends Kwame Owusu Ansah, Peter Bozarah, Miss Daniella Agyei and all my MAMM mates, Class of 2015, I cannot thank you enough. God richly bless you

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ABSTRACT

Rebranding is often necessitated by the desire to create value for a brand that is becoming obsolete or due to a change in ownership of an organization as the new owner seeks to portray the organization differently. This study examined rebranding in Ghana with Airtel Ghana as a case study. In depth interviews were conducted with four informants of Airtel Ghana to understand the rationale behind their decision to rebrand Airtel. The study took a critical look at the process according to the following thematic areas: Rationale for rebranding, Process of Rebranding, Benefits and impact of Rebranding. The research showed that the primary reasons behind Airtel's decision to rebrand were borne out of the need to synchronize the brand with moving times with the youthful population as a core focus. Also, the desire for a fresh start with a strong brand that is in sync with latest technology played a major role. The study found that branding has enormous influence on brand performance as it increases brand awareness, sales and the firms overall profitability. The research also revealed that there were internal and external processes concerning rebranding which is consistent with best practices which suit a rebranding profile. Some of the recommendations put forward by the study include the fact that research is key in every rebranding process. Also organizations should ensure that the migration from one brand to the other is not abrupt but rather a gradual change over as companies risk losing loyal customers with an abrupt change as it must be well planned and re-planned with the necessary strategies long before implementation or launch time to ensure a smooth process.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Competition is vital for the growth of any industry. Competition can cause commercial firms and entities to renew existing products or develop new ones. The consumer who plays a significant role per the produce of these companies is now spoilt for choice with several options to choose from. This in turn causes variations in prices for products and services. Competing products have only intensified the need by producers to do more to their brands to give them the competitive edge they so desire (Stigler, 2008). The global space of today has led to an increase in very serious competition. No single country on the planet can profess to have all that its inhabitants would need. This has led to an exponential growth in cross border movements of goods, services, technology and capital. The intensification in competition between multinational companies and local companies providing similar goods or services has also increased by several notches. This increase in economic globalization, along with its antecedent characteristics mentioned above has brought about a multiplicity of options and increasing discrimination by consumers in any industry. Consumers now have the option of choosing from varied products the globe over.

This global competitive space means brands have had to step up or remain stale. High performing brands project an image of continual customer loyalty and the ease to plan and manage the development of the business (Blackett, 2004). Strong brands also tend to add both economic and strategic value to their respective companies (Schultz & de Chernatomy, 2002),

create options of growth, command market share, act as barriers to entry for competitors and ensure consumer loyalty. A strong brand enhances positive evaluations of a product quality and maintains a high level of product awareness and a consistent image or brand personality (Petburkal,2009).Since corporate brands need to remain relevant to sustain their appeal in a dynamic environment where customers' needs and wants, industry standards and strategic priorities are constantly evolving (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004), advertising and marketing strategies of organizations are periodically aimed at building or sustaining a strong brand as well as encouraging consumers build affinity and long term commitments to the brand(McEnally & de Chernatomy,1999). With increasing competition among products on the market, consumers quest for constant product differentiation and the need for a heightened awareness of what a company's brand stands for, the process of branding and re-branding has been brought to the fore. The recent surge in rebranding is a demonstration that change is inherent in contemporary corporate brand management (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004).

The rebranding of Ghana Telecom to Vodafone, Buzz to Tigo highlights the importance of a strong brand amidst fierce competition, changes in ownership of organizations and the need for a competitive brand that can stand the test of time. In some rebranding instances, organizations have undergone drastic changes in names and other visual elements in order to drive home their new ideology and brand as in the case Buzz to Tigo. In other instances, the changes have been barely visible, as in the case of Ecobank, where the name which doubled as the logo remained the name though the representation of it changed along with the slogan. The numerous instances of corporate rebranding have presented an interesting conceptual challenge for the marketing

discipline. This is because revitalizing and repositioning a brand through brand positioning and marketing aesthetics which are a necessary part of brand management in response to changing market conditions do not come easily (Lambkin, 2006).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Over the past decade, the spread of mobile technology has varied significantly between countries (Boateng & Quansah, 2013) with accelerated rate of adoption in mainly emergent economies (ITU, 2009) like Ghana. In June 2015, the National Communication Authority (NCA) put mobile phone penetration rate at a whopping 115.64 per percent. Moreover, current events such as the increasing entry of mostly 4G technology companies, coupled with mobile number portability facilitated by the Ghana government has more than before offered increased opportunities to customers. On the receiving end, however, many mobile communication firms have had to come up with a number of innovative strategies' all in a bid to survive in what many has described as one of the fiercest competitive sectors of Ghana (Boohene & Agyapong, 2011). One such strategy has been to rebrand the organization. Indeed, different opinions exist regarding the notion of rebranding. The first is that rebranding is essential for business success to evolve the brands so as to ensure they are strong, modern and in line with current competition of meeting customers ever changing preferences (Kotler & Keller, 2007).

The other opinion questions the need for rebranding. It argues that if age old brands like Coca Cola and Toyota can be market leaders for years, why should rebranding ever be considered?

(Bahl, Badal & Sabhlok,2007). While opinions remain divided about the value of rebranding, there has been a general rise in rebranding activities in Ghana as companies seek to reflect the change in their core ideologies, the most recent being Airtel Ghana. The obvious expectation of rebranding as a strategy has been to reposition the brand to distinguish itself from negative opinions about the previous brand, or to climb the success ladder by moving the brand upwards. However, to what extent rebranding has been successful in Ghanaian business organizational context has received to the best of the researcher's knowledge scanty scholarly attention. Hence, the study is commissioned to explore the impact of rebranding in one of Ghana's foremost telecommunication organization "Airtel", formerly "Zain" Ghana which is to position the brand as a global brand with same position in each market and also to move from a functional orientation to a more emotional focused brand with the consumer in mind.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the problem articulated, the research question that would be asked are:

1. What are the rationale underpinnings to these rebranding activities are?
2. What are the processes involved in rebranding?
3. What are the benefits that justify investing huge sums of money into the process?

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

From the research questions, these objectives are sought:

1. The rationale and conceptual underpinnings that informed Airtel's rebranding.
2. The process of rebranding in terms of strategies and communication channels employed.
3. The potential benefits and impact of rebranding on the organizations performance considering the high cost of re-branding.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study's scope will cover the impact of rebranding on Airtel's Ghana's operational performance as a case study. A critical review of the situation should have involved a study of all or a significant number of communication's company operational branches in Ghana. However, the scope of such study is beyond the capacity and resources of the researcher. Problems such as secrecy and indifference on the part of respondents would be limitations to the study. Nevertheless, due to the integrated business process employed by all branches of the organization, results from studying one, which also happens to be the head branch would be a fair representation of how rebranding has impacted the organization.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The importance of a strong brand has soared among top level management with the growing realization that brands are one of the most crucial assets organizations have in fighting off competition and being leaders in the industry. Increasingly, rebranding has become one of the strategies adopted by marketing and advertising executives of these organizations to ensure that their brands remain strong and vibrant. Though there has been a surge in rebranding activities, little academic research has been undertaken to understand the process, Merrilees & Miller (2008). Thus this dissertation will add to the existing literature on the rebranding process especially in Ghana as well as provide some form of framework for the understanding of the process involved in re-branding.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter One

Chapter one presents Background and Introduction to the study, the Problem Statement, Research Questions, Arguments for the study, Objectives of the Study, Significance/Relevance of the Study, Scope / Limitations of the Study and the Organisation of the study.

Chapter Two

Chapter two presents a comprehensive review of relevant literature in an attempt to position the study in an appropriate theoretical framework. Thus it will discuss findings of related researches to this study.

Chapter Three

This chapter presents the methodology to be employed for data gathering as well as the relevant statistical analytical tools that will be employed for analysing the survey results gathered during the study.

Chapter Four

This section presents the findings from the survey, using the statistical tools and methods chosen for data analyses.

Chapter Five

This chapter concludes by analysis of the findings, conclusions and recommendations for the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes several supporting concepts from literature that provide assistance in the conceptual mapping of gathered expert opinion. All concepts are considered for their relevance to the subject area of research. It also provides the theoretical framework for the research and reviews relevant literature for the research in the area of study.

2.1.1 THE CONCEPT OF BRANDING

Branding is a marketing concept that has been around since the 1800's. According to Aakers (1996), consumer branding came about after the industrial revolution when railroads began transporting goods to other destinations. With the rise in trade and production, consumers were given various choices of products, and therefore manufacturers were forced to distinguish themselves from each other. However, it was not until the twentieth century that branding became a necessity to companies and manufacturers. Aaker (1996) contends that differentiated brands have become a defining component of modern day marketing. Companies now more than ever must fight for the consumer. Aaker states that in recent years brand loyalty has been decreasing and companies must now fight more than ever to gain a long-term customer (p. 8). For instance, gone are the days when people bought Oldsmobile automobiles out of loyalty for the brand. Today, consumers shop around to different manufactures to compare quality and prices.

Doyle (1990) defines branding as the way in which companies who offer competing merchandise distinguish products from competitors. He defines a successful brand as, “a name, symbol, design, or some combination, which identifies the ‘product’ of a particular organization as having a sustainable differential advantage” (p. 6). In other words, a successful brand conveys something that make consumers want to buy their product. Doyle contends that successful brands portray an image that customers strive to achieve, therefore conveying the belief that if a customer buys a specific brand it will help them attain a certain status or image. There are many subsets of branding such as brand equity, brand identity, and brand management. To better understand the concept of branding, these subsets are discussed below.

2.1.2 BRAND EQUITY

Aaker (1996) states that brand equity is an intangible asset that is represented by the brand name. There are four ways that brand equity generates value for a company: brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations (p.8). Aaker asserts that brand awareness is how strong a brand is in the mind of a consumer. Brand awareness is measured by the various ways people recognize brands. According to Aaker, psychology research shows that when people recognize a brand they are immediately more positive and relaxed (p. 10). This goes hand in hand with brand name dominance, which is the ultimate goal for many companies. For example, there a certain brands in which consumers use the name of the brand rather than the product name such as: A-1 Steak Sauce, Kleenex, and Xerox (p. 15). Brand equity is an intangible asset that depends on associations made by the consumer. There are at least three perspectives from which to view Brand Equity.

2.1.2.1 Financial

One way to measure brand equity is to determine the price premium that the brand commands over a generic product. For example, if consumers are willing to pay a certain amount for a branded mobile phone over the same unbranded mobile phone, this premium provides important information about the value of the brand. However, expenses such as promotional costs must be taken into account when using this method to measure Brand Equity.

2.1.2.2 Brand Extension

A successful brand can be used as a platform to launch related products. The benefits of brand extensions are the leveraging of existing brand awareness thus reducing advertising expenditures, and a lower risk from the perspective of the consumer. Furthermore, appropriate brand extensions can enhance the core brand. However, the value of the brand extensions is more difficult to quantify than are direct financial measures of brand equity.

2.1.2.3 Consumer Based

A strong brand increases the consumers attitude strength toward the product associated with the brand. Attitude strength is built by the experience of the product. This importance of actual experience by the customer implies that trial samples are more effective than advertising in the early stages of building a strong brand. The consumer's awareness and associations lead to perceived quality, inferred attributes and eventually brand loyalty.

Strong brand equity provides several benefits.

- It facilitates a more predictable income stream
- Increases cash flow by increasing market share, reducing promotional costs and allowing premium pricing
- Brand equity is an asset that can be sold or leased.

Brand equity has its negatives though.

- Some brands acquire a brand reputation that results in negative brand equity. Negative brand equity can be measured by surveys in which consumers indicate that a discount is needed to purchase the brand over a generic product.

Farquhar (1989) outlined the following three stages that are required to build a strong brand

- **Introduction:** Introduce a quality product with the strategy of using the brand as a platform from which to launch future products. A positive evaluation by the consumer is important.
- **Elaboration:** Make the brand easy to remember and develop repeat usage. There should be accessible brand attitude, that is, the consumer should easily remember his or her positive evaluation of the brand.
- **Fortification:** The brand should carry a consistent image over time to reinforce its place in the consumers mind and develop a special relationship with the consumer. Brand

extensions can further fortify the brand, but only with related products having a perceived fit in the mind of the consumer.

Brand equity requires a significant effort with some companies using alternative means of achieving the benefits of a strong brand. Brand equity can be borrowed by extending the brand name to a line of products in the same product category or even to other categories. In some cases, especially when there is a perceptual connection between the products, such extensions are successful. In other cases, the extensions are unsuccessful and can dilute the original brand equity. Brand equity can also be bought by licensing the use of a strong brand for a new product. As in line extensions by the same company, the success of brand licensing is not guaranteed and must be analyzed carefully for appropriateness.

2.2 THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

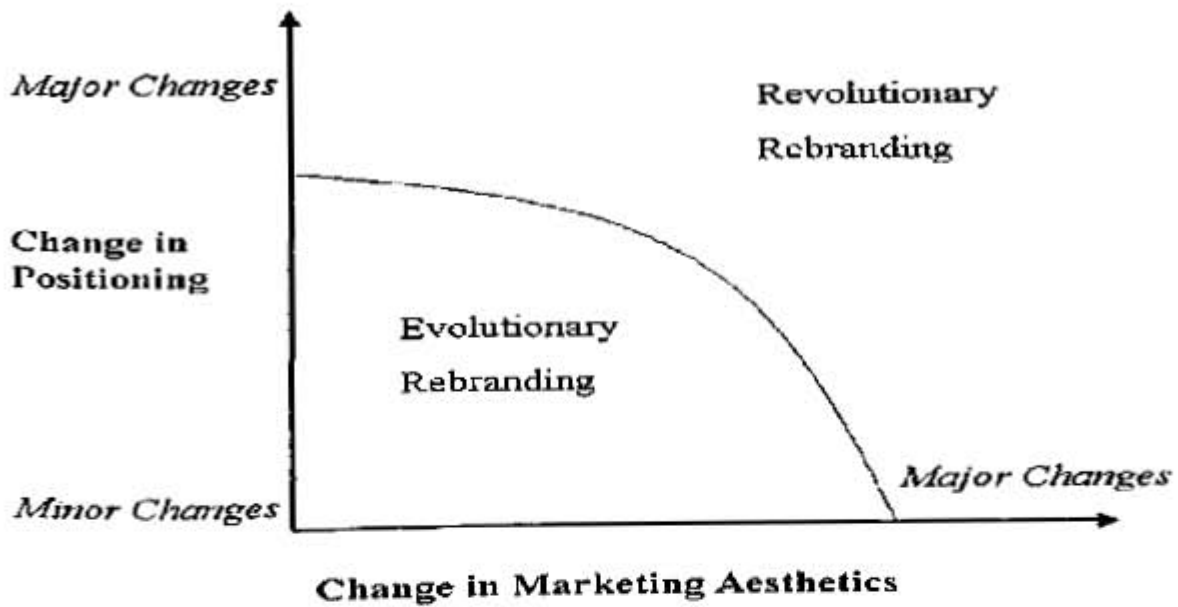
2.2.1 FUSING DARWIN'S THEORY OF EVOLUTION BY NATURAL SELECTION INTO CORPORATE REBRANDING.

A corporation is a form of an organism. Just as a corporate body consists of different departments and specializations, an organism consists of systems and organs (Stuart and Muzellec, 2004). Stuart and Muzellec (2004) argue that "Genes" are responsible for the physical expressions of an organism, which in the corporate body context refers to, organizational values. de Chernatony, (2010) concurs, and posits that that is why a brand is defined as a cluster of functional and emotional values that enable a promise to be made about a unique and

welcomed experience. Each experience is a manifestation of the brand to the customer. Corporate brands are expressions of a combination of values. The unique combinations of values give corporate brands their unique identities, just as genes organisms (Aaker, 1996). Values dictate the physical manifestations and behaviours of brands, which is brand identity. Taking the correspondences between an organism and a corporate body further, evolution by natural selection in organisms is akin to rebranding in corporate organizations (Stuart and Muzellec, 2004).

Evolution by natural selection shows that environment influences the observable expressions of genes and also selects particular heritable traits for survival (Stuart and Muzellec, 2004). The environment of genes includes the cell in which it exists and other matter exterior to it (Stuart and Muzellec, 2004). This corresponds with the internal and external factors that influence a corporate brand the author further argued. They influence the creation and expression of values. Corporate rebranding therefore is a continuous recombination of values or their extensions in an attempt to be selected for survival by the environment; the most important of which are the customers (Stuart and Muzellec, 2004). Only brands continuously chosen by customers survive. The ultimate goal of the corporate rebranding phenomenon is to survive and thrive; same with natural selection by evolution (Stuart & Muzellec, 2004). Thus, organisms adapt to an environment through evolution by natural selection; corporate brands adapt to their environment by corporate rebranding (Stuart and Muzellec, 2004). This theory is relevant because it enables us to know how brands the evolutionary stages rebranding goes through before it eventually leads to success.

Figure 2.2: Rebranding in a Brand Hierarchy



Sources: Stuart and Muzellec, 2004



Sources: Keller, 2000

2.3 RE-BRANDING

Re-branding is another tactic of branding. Re-branding is used when a company is attempting to redefine and change the consumer's perception of the corporation. Some companies change their name and logo in an attempt to signal new beginnings. Others choose to change specific aspects of their brand such as the target audiences, new campaigns, and a newly defined image. Muzellec and Stuart (2004) define rebranding as the way a brand is "reborn". They state that a corporate rebranding has different facets. Revolutionary change means that everything is created anew by changing three elements: name, logo, and slogan. Evolutionary change is when a company changes their logo, slogan, or both (p. 473). Muzellec and Stuart contend that when a company decides to go through the rebranding process, the overall goal is to show the stakeholders, consumers, and the marketplace that the company has changed (p. 473).

Scholars have suggested various reasons why a corporation chooses to re-brand. According to Muzellec and Stuart, corporations may decide that the company needs to be taken in a new direction, with a fresh vision and new strategies. More common reasons include mergers and acquisitions, economic reasons, legal reasons, or a desire a company possesses to become a global brand. Re-branding is an expensive endeavour whether a corporation changes everything or just the company's slogan. Muzellec and Stuart state, "An Advertising campaign can prove to be extremely expensive but it is a minor cost when calculating the total cost of a change of identity" (p. 478). Corporations must determine how best to change the image of the company while maintaining the loyal customer base of the company. According to Muzellec and Stuart, when corporations decide to re-brand, they will have to spend money not only to promote the

new brand, but to disassociate the company from the old one. Moreover, corporations must determine a way to compensate employees for both the work they do in their day-to-day tasks as well as the time the spent on the re-branding effort of the company.

Muzellec and Stuart contend that the success or failure of a company's rebranding effort is very difficult to measure. The best way to evaluate a rebranding campaign is to look at the initial goals and objectives of the campaign. However, many companies use changes in performance of the company to evaluate the campaign such as increased revenue. Muzellec and Stuart also state that companies should be aware that many rebranding campaigns face ridicule and skepticism from the press. Re-branding efforts are not always successful and some revert to the old image of the company.

2.3.1 CORPORATE REBRANDING STRATEGIES

Corporate rebranding refers to a firm's input activities designed to differentiate themselves within the marketplace. These activities are engaged by the means of name and visual identity devices. For an established brand with the intention of developing a distinguished position, a possible description of either corporate rebranding or brand rebranding is the conception of "a new name, term, symbol, design or a combination of them." (De Chernatony & Dall'Olmo,1998). Moor (2007) further supported that the branding is, not only the simple application of a brand name or logo, but also includes product design, retail design, and a marketing plan. Karen (2008) defined the new-born brand, as "a brand with a renewed spirit and a relevant connection to the

market". Two effective ways are utilized to conceptualize rebranding strategies in business. One was conducted by Stuart & Muzellec (2004).

According to Stuart & Muzellecs' (2004) model (Figure 2.1), rebranding can be distinguished as evolutionary or revolutionary. Evolutionary rebranding is a minor expansion in the company's positioning and aesthetics. In contrast with evolutionary, revolutionary rebranding represents a major change in the company's positioning and aesthetics. The other conceptual model of rebranding strategies was presented by Keller (2000). This model shows a rebranding hierarchy which consists of a corporate rebrand, a business unit rebrand and lastly a product rebrand, which is equivalent to a brand rebrand. Sometimes, rebranding might occur at only one level, at more than one level or at all levels. This would depend on the corporation. This rebranding hierarchy model allows companies to identify which rebranding level their brand occupies (Figure 2.2). No matter if it is a corporate or a brand rebranding strategy, each has been effectively employed in business. There is more than sufficient evidence to prove that companies productively adopted new brand names, new designers or new product designs. All of the rebranding strategies carry a high level of risk as well as a potential high level of financial gain.

2.3.2 THE CONCEPT OF CORPORATE REBRANDING

Building on the definition of a brand by the American Marketing Association, Muzellec et al (2006) suggest that rebranding can be defined as the creation of a new name, term, symbol, design or a combination of them for an established brand with the intention of developing a

differentiated (new) position in the minds of stakeholders and competitors. Also building on the definition of Einwiller and Will (2002) for corporate branding, Juntunen et al (2009) consider corporate rebranding as a systematically planned and implemented process of creating and maintaining a new favorable image and consequently a favorable reputation of the company as a whole by sending signals to all stakeholders and by managing behaviour, communication and symbolism in order to pro-act or react to change. Breaking away from the mould of adapting existing definitions, Merrilees and Miller (2008) propose that corporate rebranding is the “disjunction or change between an initially formulated corporate brand and a new formulation.” These definitions have one thing in common; they define a process based on empirical knowledge.

However, they fail to look at the causative factor: the environment. They fail to also emphasize the theoretical perspective. With a realization of the need to have a theoretically and empirically balanced perspective in literature, the authors submit this new definition. Corporate rebranding is a continuing process whereby an organization responds to the dynamics in its business environment by changing its self-identity in order to survive and thrive. Going by the biologic insight and analogy of rebranding, an organism announces its new identity by simply reflecting it. For this reason, no attempt has been made to accommodate the reflecting of a new identity in this new definition. It is assumed to be automatic in the whole process. In addition, the definition goes beyond the inclusion of brand image and equity as the main goal of corporate rebranding. This is because brand image and equity is not an end in themselves. They only serve to make the brand survive and thrive.

2.3.3 RE-BRANDING TECHNIQUES

According to Muzellec and Stuart (2004), consistency and continuity are key elements of a corporate re-branding campaign. Moreover, research as with most marketing and communication campaigns is a necessity. Corporations must research the long-term effects of changing the logo, slogan or brand name. Muzellec and Stuart contend that one of the most common mistakes corporations can make is being too short sighted. They suggest that the following questions be addressed before launching a corporate re-branding campaign (p. 480):

- What will happen if we don't make this change?
- Exactly what is being signalled?
- Are the key stakeholders cognizant and positive about the change?
- What will be the reaction of my competitors to this change, or is the organization merely reacting to competitor changes in corporate branding?

Muzellec and Stuart note that it is vitally important that companies recognize the important and decision-making role stockholders have in companies. Muzellec and Stuart contend that many stockholders do not believe that corporate re-branding leads to a positive outcome. Instead, stockholders become suspicious of the change and become very upset by the costs accrued by a re-branding campaign. The scholars also state that many corporations neglect to realize that the employees of the company may feel loyal towards the old name, logo, and missions of the corporation, and not necessarily the new ones. According to Kaikati (2003), "re-branding is the

buzzword of the moment” (p.17). Kaikati states that, re-branding has increased by 7 percent all around the world. In the first half of 2001, the United States led the world with 1,761 name changes (p. 18). Kaikati contends there are four pitfalls of re-branding campaigns. First is “the heritage re-branding trap,” which is when a company attempts to distance itself from its heritage.

For example, many companies have been trying to stay away from their “Britishness”, such as British Telecom, British Gas, and British Petroleum (p. 18). Secondly, they “do not follow the crowd pitfall” mean that many companies may feel that if competitors are consolidating brands and launching re-branding campaigns then they must also do same. Corporations then rush into re-branding campaigns that are unnecessary for their particular company. The third pitfall, ‘resist merger re-branding,” is when two companies merge together and then automatically launch a re-branding campaign. It is most effective for companies who have recently merged to do research and take time to decide whether a re-branding campaign is necessary and will be effective (p. 20). Finally, the “watch out for celebrity re-branding snits” means that when corporations feel they need to revamp their image, they immediately turn towards celebrities. However, corporations cannot solely rely on celebrities to boost their image.

2.3.4 RE-BRANDING FOR SUCCESS

Kaikati (2003) asserts there are six strategies that can lead to a successful rebranding campaign. The first is the “**phase in/phase out**” strategy. The phase in/phase out strategy is when the campaign ties the new brand to the old brand for a certain time period in the beginning of the

campaign. Disney used this strategy when they launched Disney in Paris. In the beginning, they called the new theme park Euro Disney, but then changed the name to Disneyland Paris (p. 21).

The second is the “**combined branding**” strategy. Combined branding is when the campaign combines existing brands. Kaikati uses the example of the National BankAmericard and Visa. They combined both brands and became Visa International, which is in over 120 countries (p. 21).

The third is the “**translucent warning**” strategy. Kaikati asserts that the translucent warning strategy is when the campaign is designed to alert customers before and after the brand change. The campaign uses communication tools such as promotion, in-store displays, and product packaging (p. 21). An example Kaikati gives for a success of this tactic is the Marathon campaign. The marathon bar in the United Kingdom was re-branded as snickers.

The fourth strategy is the **sudden eradication** strategy where a corporation distances itself from the old brand name immediately and then replaces it immediately. Kaikati contends this is a good option for companies who need to distance themselves from a brand that has been negative. Kaikati cites the McCall magazine campaign, which re-branded the magazine as Rosie immediately.

The fifth strategy is “**counter-takeover re-branding.**” According to Kaikati, this method is used most frequently when a company has been taken over. However, the company that is taken over does not re-brand the company that acquires the brand and leaves behind their brand for the acquired one.

Finally, the **retro branding** strategy is when a company changes its name, realizes it is the wrong decision and then restores the old name. Kaikati cites the case of Wunderman, which is a marketing company, founded by someone deemed “the father of marketing” (p. 22). The firm went through several acquisitions and was ultimately re-branded as Empiric. However, clients were confused and it dramatically hurt their business. They eventually went back to the original name, Wunderman (p. 22).

2.4 CASES OF SUCCESSFUL & UNSUCCESSFUL RE-BRANDING

Over the years many companies have decided to launch re-branding campaigns in an effort to define an entire corporation or specific products companies manufacture. Below are various successful corporate re-branding cases and an unsuccessful summary of a re-branding case.

2.4.1 AT&T and Cingular

Interbrand was hired to manage a re-branding campaign for AT&T when the company acquired Bell South and Cingular. According to Goi and Goi’ (2011), Interbrand’s case study, that conducted brand research to determine if the AT&T brand is still well-known and respected. According to the author, Goi and Goi’ (2011), it was determined that AT&T was in fact a viable brand and it was found to have a 98% awareness rating all over the United States (www.interbrand.com). The re-branding campaign launched a new logo and was supported by an integrated communications plan to highlight the new, fresh and revitalized brand. Interbrand

assisted AT&T in creating various advertisements, conducting media outreach and showcasing the new logo.

2.4.2 Coca Cola in the United Kingdom

The Coca-Cola Corporation launched a re-branding campaign in the United Kingdom of their diet drinks in 2002. Coca-Cola determined that it was necessary to rename their diet products from Diet Fanta and Diet Dr. Pepper to Fanta Lite and Dr. Pepper Lite. The corporation did this so that the products were the same as others marketed throughout Europe. However, interestingly enough, it was decided that Diet Coke would not change its name due to its brand equity. A significant amount of financial resources have been invested in the product since it was introduced to the United Kingdom in 1983.

2.4.3 British Petroleum

According to a case study conducted by Ogilvy Public Relations, in 1999, British Petroleum merged with Amoco and renamed itself BP- Beyond Petroleum. The company launched a global re-branding campaign to redefine the brand now that two companies had successfully merged, and a few smaller ones merged under one name. Ogilvy states it was hired to execute, “ The re-branding entailed the introduction of a new visual identity and a new brand positioning, designed to help BP transcend the oil sector, deliver top-line growth, and define the company as innovative, progressive, environmentally responsible, and performance driven” (www.ogilvypr.com/case-studies/bp.cfm).

The re-branding campaign consisted of an integrated communications plan consisting tools such as numerous video news releases, town hall meetings, interviews with key executives, and advertisements. In the immediate aftermath of the campaign, it was hailed as a success, especially because of the image portrayed as a more environmentally friendly, socially responsible corporation. However, in recent years, BP has come under criticism, with some saying that the re-branding campaign was just a tool used to boost the company's image, as environmentally friendly and their actions have not reflected the new image. According to Beder (2002), "It seems BP is investing more in image than environment. Would a company spend hundreds of millions of dollars in solar investment just to enhance its reputation? Well, BP has already spent that much just on its 'beyond petroleum' re-branding campaign" (p. 3).

2.5 CAUSES OF REBRANDING

The causes of corporate rebranding can be summarized under two main umbrellas, namely internal and external causes (Goi and Goi, 2011). Under internal causes, factors such as changes within the structure of business organizations Lomax et al, (2002), the need for a new image Gambles and Schuster (2003) and the desire to upgrade a firm's personality in the minds of consumers and other stakeholders play a critical role in understanding the reasons why business organizations engage in rebranding. Please see other internal drivers in Goi and Goi' (2011). With reference to external factors, Goi and Goi (2011) contend that issues such as competitiveness, perception of external stakeholders, economic slowdown, shifts in marketplace

and so on constitute the critical external factors that drive the rebranding of business organizations.

2.6 RISKS AND BENEFITS OF REBRANDING STRATEGY

As previously stated, rebranding strategy does not carry any assurance of success. Retailers should understand their target market and customers before making any adjustment to their brands. Otherwise, retailers might lose their existing target markets (Uggla, 2006). Take the example of Marlboro. In 1993, when Marlboro faced price-oriented rivals in powerful retailers, it dropped its brand's price by 20%. This approach was quite risky and ended up hurting its reputation (Aaker, 1997). This unfortunate approach carried with it the risk of customers devaluing Marlboro's brand image and losing confidence in its brand personality. On the other hand, some retailers were able to execute rebranding as a new marketing strategy successfully to save their decline in sales. One example is Wal-Mart. Even though Wal-Mart was enjoying a measure of success, it still faced a marketing campaign challenge. Lake Research Partners conducted several surveys to determine how consumers' attitudes towards Wal-Mart. The results found that, in general, people thought that the Wal-Mart business model resulted in a rising jobless rate within the United States, that it violated laborers legitimate benefits and that it was sexually discriminating (Lake, Mermin & Weifek, 2005).

Therefore, Wal-Mart rebranded its corporate image by adopting a new logo and new slogan in 2008, trying to establish a fresh and healthy image (Armin, 2008). According to Walmart's

official 2009 Annual Report, net profits for the company were up by 7.2% and earnings per share were up 6% following its 2008 rebranding campaign (Walmart, 2010). Pringle is a Scottish luxury brand that has been doing business for over a century. In early 2002, Pringle almost became a near-bankrupt company, so it injected new blood by poaching a new chief executive, Kim Winser, from Marks & Spencer. Mr. Winser brought a new brand vision and approach to rebuild Pringle's reputation, and launched two lines into the luxury market (Hugo, 2002). Pringle has since recovered from its economic crisis.

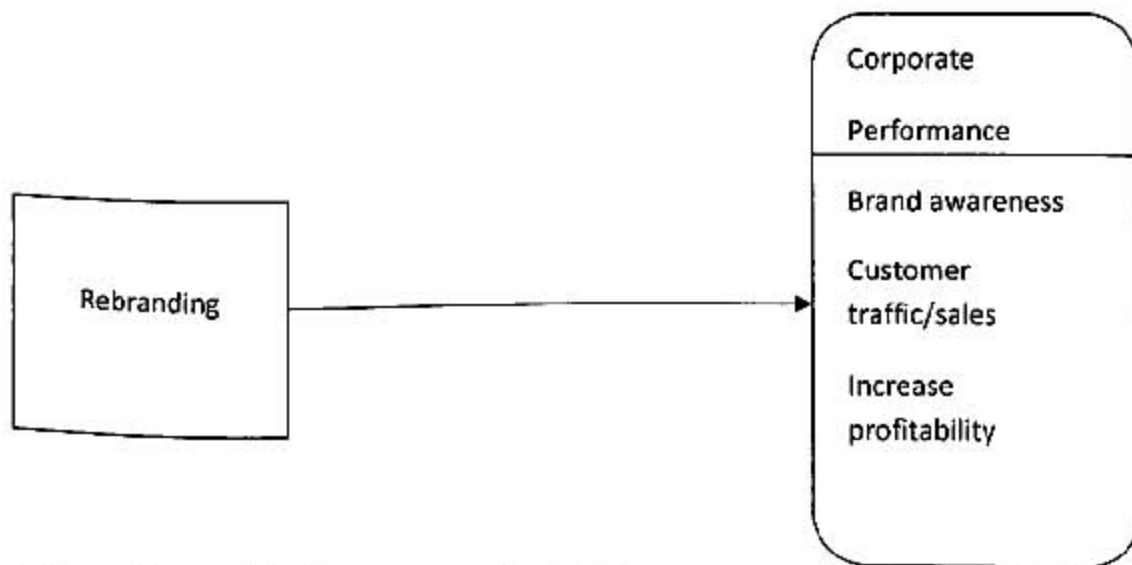
Another successful rebranding experience is that of Burberry, a long-established British luxury brand. As its brand aged, Burberry updated its image to young, modern and cool with an infusion of classic style in the late 1990's. Burberry recruited new designers and started a new design line based around trendy pet chic instead of trench coats (Karen, 2008). From 1999 to 2000 Burberry's profits trebled from £21.7m to £69.5m revealing a successful rebranding campaign (BBC, 2001). Rebranding strategy sometimes seems like a marketing paradox. When rebranding strategies are employed by companies, some can realize benefits while others simply learn hard lessons. Therefore, if companies strive to know how to minimize their risks by understanding their external and internal resources, and their associated limitations, they might possess a greater capability when faced with the dilemma of rebranding.

2.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

While the increasing need for rebranding has been stressed by various scholars (Uggla, 2006; de Chernatony, 2010; Hugo, 2002; Armin, 2008), not least for the fact that rebranding helps brands reposition as favourable ones, other scholars hold the view that a good rebranding campaign should on the whole increase the organizations performance (Armin, 2008), in terms of increase

awareness (Stuart & Muzellec 2004.), sales and customer traffic (Armin, 2008), as well as overall profitability (Kaikati, 2003). In this light, the conceptual framework of this study is situated on the premise that Airtel rebranding campaign(s) where effective should first lead to an overall corporate performance measured in terms of increase brand awareness, customer traffic and sales, and above all should impact on the firm's overall profit position. In line with the assertion made from previous sections, Ghana's corporate sector has witnessed a number of rebranding campaigns. However, till date relatively little insights can be shed on the rebranding programmes/campaigns of most Ghanaian rebranded organizations, and whether or not such rebranding have achieved their intended objectives. Hence, this study explores using the conceptual model as shown in Figure 2.10, the role of rebranding in the financial or profit performance of Airtel, which is one of Ghana's foremost telecommunication firm which has undergone a major rebranding phase from Zain to Airtel.

Figure 2.7: the relationship of rebranding to performance



Source: Researcher's own conceptualization

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 OVERVIEW

This chapter discusses the research design, population, sample size and technique, data collection methods, and data handling and analysis. It also highlights the profile of Airtel Ghana.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

Qualitative research is a type of scientific research. In general terms, scientific research consists of an investigation that systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer a question, collect evidence, produce findings that were not determined in advance and produce findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (Shallwani & Mohammed, 2007)

Though numerous qualitative methods are used for research purposes, the most commonly used are the participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups. Each method is mainly suitable for obtaining a specific type of data.

For this research, in-depth interviews would be used. In-depth interviewing, as a qualitative research technique, involves conducting intensive interviews with a small number of respondents to explore their perspectives on a particular idea, programme or situation. In-depth interviews are useful when a researcher wants detailed information about a person's thoughts and behaviour or want to explore new issues in depths (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

However, for the research, the Brands Manager and selected key personnel were interviewed. The Brands and Marketing Communications Unit is made up of a team of individuals who are responsible for the image and outlook of brand Airtel. They are tasked with the responsibility of constantly drawing up and implementing programs and activities meant to sustain the brand. In rebranding Airtel with the tag line “The Smartphone Network, the Brands, Marketing and Communications Unit was at the forefront and responsible for charting the rebranding process.

3.2. POPULATION

The population of a study is the total number of individuals or items that the researcher wishes to understand (Neuman, 2007). For the purpose of data collection for this study, the population chosen was specific to staff of the company, who were drawn from marketing, communication and brands department respectively. The rationale for the choice of these departments is because they were the departments that were largely involved in the planning of the company’s rebranding. The Brands & Marketing Communications Manager was interviewed together with the Assistant Brands & Marketing Communications Manager, The Marketing Officer and the Marketing Manager in charge of Accra and Tema because the department acted as a team during rebranding with a sole purpose and mentality which was spearheaded by the Brands Manager together with management and the Board.

Permission was sought from the Brands Manager to be interviewed during which it was explained to him the purpose of the interview, why he had been chosen, the expected duration of the interview, and how the information would be used for academic purposes. An appointment with

the Brands manager for the interview was made and location conducive for the interview was agreed upon. The entire interview was conducted by the researcher. A tape recorder was used to complement the interview process.

3.3 SAMPLING SIZE AND TECHNIQUE

Sampling can be done using the probability or the non-probability approach. Probability sampling involves some form of random selection where the various units in the population have equal chances of being selected. Probability sampling include simple random, stratified random, systematic random, cluster random and multi-stage. Non-probability sampling on the other hand is a sampling technique that does not employ random selection and whose results cannot be used to generalise for the population. The purpose of non-probability sampling is to get the sample size proposed. Non-probability sampling include convenience sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling, expert sampling, heterogeneity sampling and snowball sampling.

Convenient sampling approach is the technique for selecting a sample from a population based on the convenience of the sample to the researcher. For the purpose of this study, convenient sampling technique was used to sample seven key informants from the targeted population. However, out of these seven, four granted the researcher an interview at the premises of the company. These key informants were interviewed as and when the time was appropriate to them.

3.4. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Data was collected with the help of both primary and secondary data. The section that follows

details how the data was collected.

3.4.1 Primary data

For the primary data, an interview guide served as the instrument of data collection. An interview guide was developed and this basically spelt out the rules guiding the administration and implementation of the interview. It contained instructions that are to be followed for the interview, to ensure consistency, and thus increase the reliability of the findings. Questions of the interview guide were formulated along the main thematic areas of the literature review. The first of which is the nature and rationale of re-branding. Questions under this theme touched on the rationale in rebranding to the Smartphone network that Airtel sought to propagate, the duration between re-branding decisions to actual rebranding and how long the whole process was to take. Under the theme, the process of re-branding, the questions sought to explore who was involved in the rebranding process and the roles they played, the input of staff of Airtel Ghana, the strategies used during the rebranding and the importance of certain key factors in the rebranding strategies.

Questions under the theme “benefits and impact of rebranding” addressed the re-branding, its impact on the performance of the company and the extent to which re-branding was necessary.

Under the theme, problems and challenges of rebranding, the questions examined the major challenges encountered during the process, how the problems and challenges encountered could have been averted and the general impression of the rebranding process. Furthermore, the re-branding principles formulated by Merrilees and Miler(2008) offer a credible point of reference

for interview questions. For each thematic area, specific, open ended questions were asked with follow up questions. The flexible nature of the approach made it possible for all aspects of the research topic to be explored.

3.4.2 Secondary data

The secondary sources of data were however from scholar sites such as Emerald, Google scholar, JSTOR, as well other renowned scholarly sources. These data sources mainly helped in the literature review section, and also, helped the researcher in coming out with a suitable framework for the study.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The data generated from the interview was transcribed and analysed in accordance with patterns or themes that correlate with themes identified in the literature review. The data was also analysed in comparison with findings of the literature reviewed and the research objectives set for the study. Based on comparison with the principles of corporate rebranding proposed by Merriless and Miller(2008) and the various literature reviewed, some recommendations were made.

3.6 PROFILE OF AIRTEL

Airtel Ghana is a subsidiary of Bharti Airtel Limited, an Indian multinational telecommunications Services Company headquartered in New Delhi, India. It operates in 20 countries across South Asia, Africa, and the Channel Islands. Airtel provides GSM, 3G and 4G LTE mobile services, fixed line broadband and voice services depending on the country of operation. It is the largest cellular service provider in India, with 228.25 million subscribers as of April 2015. Airtel is the largest mobile operator in South Asia and the third largest in the world with a 303 million subscriber base. Airtel was named India's second most valuable brand in the first ever Brandz ranking by Millward Brown and WPP plc. Airtel is credited with pioneering the business strategy of outsourcing all of its business operations except marketing, sales and finance and building the 'minutes factory' model of low cost and high volumes. The strategy has since been adopted by several operators. Airtel's equipment is provided and maintained by Ericsson and Nokia Solutions and Networks whereas IT support is provided by IBM. The transmission towers are maintained by subsidiaries and joint venture companies of Bharti including Bharti Infratel and Indus Towers in India.

- *Vision*

The vision of the organization is to be the most loved brand in the daily lives of African people by the end of 2015 and also:

1. Preferred by more customers.
2. Targeted by top talent.

3. Benchmarked by more businesses.

- *Brand Promise*

As one of the world's top 5 mobile communications companies, Airtel aims to connect communities across Africa by providing affordable, relevant and innovative mobile solutions to all together with providing:

1. A clear Business Focus
2. Exciting products & services for all 3 screens (Phone, TV, Computer)
3. Network expansion and IT transformation to create improved customer satisfaction as well as economies of scale
4. Leading industry innovation for the benefit of customers
5. Delightful & locally relevant brand experiences
6. Best in class leaders who nurture talent at all levels
7. Build strong partnerships for generating superior value

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

4.0 INTRODUCTION

With specific reference to the objectives sought by the study, the interviews were conducted such that the question revolved around (1) the rationale underpinnings of rebranding activities, (2) the benefits that justify investing in rebranding, and; (3) the experiences of the company with rebranding. The section that follows detail the demography of key informants and the findings thereof.

4.1 PROFILE OF INTERVIEWEES

The Brands and Marketing Communications Manager (Informant 1 as captured in the table below) of the Organization was the first to be interviewed. He has held this position for about over two years with years of experience in this area from other Fast Moving and Consumer Group companies. He holds a Masters of Arts in Marketing Communications. His responsibilities include identifying resources needed and also work with all agency functions to assign individual responsibilities, creating and executing project work plans, leads project scoping, reviews deliverables prepared by team before presenting to client and managing project budget.

The Marketing and Communication officer was also interviewed (Informant 2 as captured in the table below). He is responsible for not only growing service brands but also juggle between the Marketing and Sales Department as brand communication officer. He has been in this position for the past five years and holds a Master of Arts degree in Communications.

The Regional Marketing Manager in charge of Greater Accra and Tema respectively was also interviewed (Informant 3 as captured in the table below). He started his career at an early age of 23 with the organization as a sales analyst, and has moved on the ranks to his current position. He holds a Master of Business Administration degree in Marketing and has worked with organization for seven years. His responsibilities include Initiating Market Segmentation, Designing and implementing market research studies and Developing and overseeing the production of marketing campaigns and materials

The Assistant Brands and Marketing Communications manager was also interviewed (Informant 4 as captured in the table below). He has been with the organization for four and half years, and holds a Masters in Business Administration in Marketing. His role includes supervising and directing the workflow of marketing, advertising and public relations, facilitating interdepartmental communications and managing external communications. He is also responsible for allocating company resources to maximize collaboration, efficiency and creativity in the building and maintenance of consistent branding or corporate identity across

marketing and public relations channels. He is also responsible for staying up to date on industry trends and the management of the public's perception of Airtel Ghana.

Table 4.1: Profile of Respondents

Interviewees	Years in Existence	Position	Level of education
Informant 1	2 yrs	Brands and Marketing Communications Manager	Masters of Arts in Marketing Communication
Informant 2	5yrs	Marketing and Communication officer	Master of Arts in Communication
Informant 3	7yrs	Regional Marketing Manager	MBA in Marketing
Informant 4	4yrs	Brands and Marketing Communications Assistant	Masters in Business Administration(Marketing

Source: Field Data, 2015

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS FINDINGS

The findings of the interview was analysed under the following thematic areas;

4.2.1 Rationale for re-branding

The first thematic area sought to investigate whether there is the rational for branding. According to Stuart & Muzellec (2004) there are several motives for rebranding, among which include the need to reposition, inform or change attitudes towards a given brand. Similarly the interview showed that there could be several reasons why a company would wish to rebrand.

According to the Brands and Communication manager of Airtel, per their brand building and branding strategy, their challenge had to do with colours (Red) as there was a competitor with virtually the same colour, which is Vodafone. The company he explained had to differentiate itself in several angles. This meant that "Its communication had to be differentiated, its product offering had to be differentiated, and its brand approach in terms of philosophy had to be differentiated". He elaborates further that the "decision to rebrand was based on the fact the company wanted to be more competitive at the Global level".

In arriving at this decision he mentioned that a consumer research had to be conducted on the brand across all the markets where the brand was established, and it was found that in terms of global positioning, the brand was not competitive enough in terms of its brand offering and brand message but not on product. In his words, "The imagery, the perception consumers have in their mind about the product was good so the decision was taken to rebrand". He concedes that rebranding could take several forms. "Some could just be a change in the logo, it could be a refreshing of the logo, or the deep rebranding itself or the absolute rebranding itself where you would change your brand logo, your brand imagery, the look and feel of the brand, and very importantly, your mission, your vision and your values which is a total rebranding which is what the company did in 2014".

This assertion was reiterated by the Assistant Brands and Communication manager who intimated to the researcher that the organization sought to make the company attractive and thus embarked on a total rebranding aimed at shaping a favorable perception of consumers about the brand. He laments that previously the organization "was just selling products without a real affinity strategy behind it." However, the current strategy is to make the product offering "look

and feel good". He believes that by doing this they connect more closely and emotionally with customers, as can be judged from this excerpts ; Connecting to the consumer not only through our product offerings, but even our communication, the look and feel of the brand, the new vision and mission statement speaks volumes of what we relish..."

The Regional Marketing Manager diagnosed the motive behind Airtel's rebranding quite differently. According to him "Airtel did not consider the old brand as having a strong brand in Ghana as compared to other telecommunication companies that operated within her boundaries". He explained that the re-branding of Airtel with the tagline "The Smartphone Network in Ghana was thought to provide a stronger brand to withstand the level of competition that existed at the time. The company he continued had been making significant strides in the Far East especially in India and had also been making inroads into several countries on the African continent. The Ghanaian market according to the Regional Marketing Manager had "the potential to match up to the ambitions of the new investors. This was after a very careful survey and analyses of the existing brands on the market at the time and the opportunities that could be exploited".

However, he painfully conceded that despite the figures, it did not seem to appeal to the growing technology savvy population between the ages of 15-45. This demographic group he explained had the potential of positively affecting the revenue base of the company if structures were put in place to address their needs. In his words "... there were obvious challenges with modernity and technology. There was the growing perception within management that these technological needs had to be met and with expertise from a brand that has the wherewithal to execute it". This he explained led to the motive for rebranding Airtel to a mobile company with "The Smartphone Network".

4.2.2 The process of rebranding

This assessment was explored on the process (es) involved in rebranding. Consequently, informants were asked the processes involved in their rebranding. The Brands and Communication Manager answered in the affirmative. He responded that rebranding within the organization took place at two levels. The first phase was more of an internal one and involved the planning and strategizing of the rebranding process. This he elaborated took the form of “planning and strategizing [which] was spearheaded by the Brands, Marketing and Communications team with each team member responsible for a particular sector of the rebranding process with assistance from top management including the Managing Director, Chief Operational Officer, Head of Finance and Human Capital. They were responsible for drawing up the implementation plan to ensure that the process was a very successful one. The team worked on areas such as communication and advertising, marketing, brand identity, procurement, branding, design and more”.

Describing what made the rebranding successful; he said that “the team was structured in such a way that it had personnel from every department who played supporting roles along the way”. He cites particularly activities such as; an internal launch coupled with training sessions for internal staff as playing an incredible role in launch success.

On the second phase, he explained it as a phase where implementation of the rebranding and its structure takes place. He further stated that this phase in the rebranding process began with the change in identity and ended with awareness of the new brand clearly spelt out with the commensurate tag lines, slogans, logos and brand colours.” He also argued that this would not have been possible had it not been the fact that there was a “Network Campaign stage” which

consciously communicated the new services, benefits and advantages of Airtel and the product at the second phase.

However, he adds that it was not all rosy as the organization was faced with several challenges in implementing its rebranding strategies. "You know, business is full of challenges but it is the approach to these challenges that would make you win or otherwise. In our case, we have been using tactical communication to build our brand. It is just like the popular saying where you don't expect to get different results when you do the same things. We realized that we needed to change from a functional approach to more of an emotional approach to our communication which is what has done the trick for us".

Similarly, when the same question of the processes of rebranding was posed to the Marketing Manager in charge of Accra and Tema, he said that even though he does not directly deal with building brands their role with the brands management team is intertwined. For instance, he explained that "when they are doing any brand activity, we juggle personnel. We plan on the target, how to reach them, build a business case for their re-branding efforts, and do a whole lot to ensure they are successful".

He elaborated that although he cannot pin-point a specific rebranding process that rebranding processes go through in the organization, he could emphatically say that top-to-bottom of the organization everyone is involved.

A similar sentiment was expressed by the Marketing and Communication officer, who said that "i remember that when we rebranded from Zain to Airtel everybody was involved. Sometimes

we even have to educate our security men and women on the product and services so that they will know that we working with a new philosophy now”.

4.2.3 Benefits and impacts

The last assessment was explored on the impact and benefits of rebranding to the organization. In this light, respondents were asked whether in their respective views rebranding has ignited any benefits to the organization. The responses were unanimous as all of them answered in the affirmative as can be judged from these excerpts:

“We have a research department that measures how we fare in the market in terms of our brand building activities. As a matter of fact the rebranding took place in November/December last year (2014) but we started a deliberate strategy to have a different approach to our brand building strategy and the whole approach was to draw affinity for the brand so 9 months down the line, it has really shown in the research that our brand (Airtel) is the most loved brand, because it is the brand that connects the most to customers within the telecommunications industry in Ghana and if you understand what the brand pyramid is about, you would clearly understand that moving from 3% on bonding scores or what is called convection in the FMCG(fast moving consumer goods) world to a current score of 29% in that period which is a huge leapfrog, it tells you that both the brand building strategy and the rebranding has really driven home the strategy of connecting to the consumers using our product offering, our imagery out there and everything we do as a business

- Brands and Marketing Communications Manager

"[There are] some measurement and matrix that tells you how you are faring out there in relation to competition. One of such measures is to what extent you have consumers "showing love to the brand" or to what extent they connect to the brand in terms of your product offerings, how they perceive the brand in a positive light, that is, the affinity bit of it. Also to what extent are they using your products? That is KPI (Key performance index) or Matrix number one to measure it. Also, to what extent they have your brand top of mind. For example, if I walk to you as a customer using a mobile phone and I ask you which network you prefer at that moment, would you mention Airtel or a competitor? That is another matrix. It is called top of the mind awareness. Then there is another matrix that talks about one being a potential customer of mobile phones or a consumer of mobile phones, which Sim card would you consider which is what we call consideration. These are more or less technical matrixes which we use in measuring the growth of the brand and to a larger extent its profitability and its value as a brand Airtel. So in the business world, you need to measure what you do. These are the backbone or drivers of revenue and these indications are very positive after the rebranding".

-Regional Marketing Manager

"Despite the numerous challenges, some which looked unsurmountable at some point associated with the process of re-branding, it was relatively successful. The various teams were often times able to meet their timelines within the agreed confines. The impact on the companies' image and profits has been huge. By dint of our hard work, we are now the reigning Telecommunications Company of the year (2014) with a customer base of 4,250,766 from 3,354,461 in November 2014 translating into a 13.3% growth. Revenues have also increased significantly. This performance has ultimately catapulted in the increase in customer base where

we are almost hitting the 4.5 million mark. We must definitely be doing something right since we rebranded. We clearly set out and dared to be different. The results after only a year speak for itself. We are not resting on ours with management and staff keen to grow our dominance and maintain our competitive edge. Our new tag slogan, "The Smartphone network" is fast catching up with the mobile consuming base. The rebranding process has really been a massive booster."

-Assistant Brands and Communication Manager

"At the beginning of every year, we have a strategic approach to our brand building activities and at the beginning of this year (2015) our focus was either sustaining that score and better still improving on it because it is one thing getting to the top but how you sustain it is another story altogether. The good thing about brand building is the fact that what you do to reach where you are, you either improve on it or you sustain it which in strategic terms means its either you want to grow or you just want to sustain your current level of performance. We want to grow as a brand and it's not just about having consumer affinity to the brand. The consumer affinity must reflect in your product pickings or usage. It must reflect in your customers also patronizing your product offerings either than that you are not in business.

So you have a very good brand that people are also happy about, people are also excited about the things you do but if it doesn't bring money, there is a problem. A typical example is the strategy of ensuring that Airtel connects to the consumer and doesn't restrict us in doing activities that just excite the consumer. We have what we call our passion points. So we have

huge sponsorships with Roverman for their quarterly theatre productions which delight our consumers from an emotional point of view.

Within that space of delighting them, we are making money good money as well, Adom Praiz with Adom FM which for us is the biggest Gospel Fiesta in the country at the moment, our ARS (Airtel Rising Stars) holdings and Golf together with this year's maiden edition of the Millenium Marathon. These are passion points where we connect with our consumers. So the strategy now is to sustain and grow and the growth is made from the incremental sales that we make from every front. New customers coming in from every front is part of the growth strategy. A brand could be built up to a point but the brand must deliver you business. The assets must deliver the business".

-Marketing and Communication officer

4.3 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

These findings are analysed according to the thematic areas that guided the literature reviewed and the conceptual framework used in this study. From these, detailed discussions are presented. To most scholars who researched into the subject of rebranding , it usually involves changing a company's name, target and positioning in a attempt to assign a new meaning to the corporate brand and communicate new benefits to stakeholders (Stern, 2006; Gotsi & Andriopoulos 2007; Muzellec, Doogan & Lambkin, 2006; Merrilees & Miller 2008). They describe rebranding as a multi-faceted process which includes brand renewal, refreshment, reinvention, renaming and repositioning and these processes tend to dominate marketing trade strategies and publications in

the rebranding process. In line with the findings of this study, the rebranding of Airtel was meant to reflect a new target and positioning and an endeavor to communicate new brand values to stakeholders which involves our vision incorporating our target of being the most loved brand by the end of 2015 in Ghana, preferred by more customers, targeted by top talent and benchmarked by more businesses.

The findings reveal that there are four major reasons why rebranding was undertaken at Airtel Ghana. First was the desire to have a strong brand rather than the existing brand that seemed to have lost touch especially with the youthful population. This rationale is in consonance with various scholars (see; Gotsi & Adroipoulos, 2007; Muzellec, Doogan & Lambkin, 2006) who argue that the quest of strong brands is a rationale for a company's decision to rebrand since strong brands ensure that a high level of product awareness together with positive valuations for a project translates into product adaptation and turnover.

Airtel Ghana was somewhat not resonating in the global space and its brand equity was becoming stale. Thus the rebranding of Airtel to "The Smartphone Network" was a way of giving an existing brand a new image which was also to translate into profits. Also, Airtel's desire for a fresh start and its plan of ensuring that the brand projected a technologically savvy outlook sets well with the study of Petburkul's (2009). The research was undertaken among telecommunications firms in Thailand, and gives evidence to this rationale as he explains that rebranding decisions may be triggered by the need for a fresh start and for an old declining brand.

Similar to the works of Emerald Group (an independent publisher of research works) rebranding may be undertaken to accurately reflect the ideology of the new brand, or alter the brands current

associations. Generally, the rationale behind the rebranding of Airtel are consistent with Stuarts(2003) that corporate rebranding must send a signal to the market out there and communicate to stakeholders the uniqueness of the new brand. In this instance, what had changed was the look and feel of the new brand and its tag line to signal a new direction. Comparatively, the rationale for rebranding Airtel is professionally prudent, strategically viable and practically effective. It is also clear that the decision to rebrand Airtel was a good decision which among other things was consistent with other reasons and rationale underlying rebranding endeavors in other companies.

Also, the findings of the study show that rebranding at Airtel occurred in two major phases, internal and external. The internal phase involved the planning and strategizing of the rebranding process and staff awareness of the impending process. The external phase comprised of three major changes including Change of Identity, Consumer benefit and the implementation stage. The study finds that Airtels strategy and processes of rebranding to be in line with the ideologies and findings of the literature. Daly and Maloney (2004) find rebranding as essentially a series of successive processes which comprise of minor changes(aesthetics), intermediate changes(reposition) and complete change(rebranding).Airtel's rebranding involved a fair share of these changes though it was not in the strictest sense as expressed by Daly and Maloney.

Thomson (1999), Kaikati & Kaikati (2003), Lomax, Hand and Hankinson (2007) have all stressed the importance of participation by staff of the existing company in the rebranding process. Airtel sought to achieve this through the formation of a strong member teams made of the entire Brands, Marketing & Communication team with support from other team members

being the Managing Director, Head of Finance and Human Capital and also conduct numerous training sessions and an internal launch for the staff of the company. They were thus able to internalize and create an understanding and appreciation of the values of the new brand, which is required for a successful rebrand implementation. The optimism of staff translated into a zeal that helped propel the success of its rebranding. The finding is similar to that of Thomson et al. (1999) which emphasize the importance of staff understanding of the values of the new brand and also the need for staff to internalize these values before they deliver them to stakeholders.

Airtel's rebranding is also in line with Kaikati & Kaikati (2003) sudden eradication strategy. This strategy, they suggest, is one of the six strategic options or combinations for implementing rebranding. This strategy involves dropping of the old brand name and immediately replacing it with the new name with little or no transition period. Weak brands are viable candidates for the sudden eradication strategy but companies have to develop a well thought out strategy for handling the transformation.

Last but not the least, the findings pointed to numerous benefits of rebranding to the organization. In summary, the following bulleted points underpin the success of rebranding in Airtel.

- I. An eighty five percent (85%) brand awareness since its rebranding process.
- II. An ever increasing customer base way beyond the projected figures.

III. Less money spent on advertising compared to what had earlier been budgeted for. Thus comparing their expected expenditure to the actual expenditure, and the assessed impact, rebranding was considered beneficial.

IV. The rebranding endeavor boosted the morale of the staff thereby instigating efficiency at the various departments

However, 85% brand awareness did not necessarily mean an 85% reception or acceptance by any number of the market or population. Hankinson, Lomas and Hand (2007) measure the benefits of the rebranding on factors like the acquisition of new knowledge (new strap lines, messages and values), more favorable attitudes and more positive behaviours. The increases in customer base of the company from 3,354,461 to 4,250,766 describes customer's acceptance of the new communication, taglines, new slogans and values. The optimism of staff of Airtel about the new brand which translated into favorable attitudes by staff also tallies with Hankinson, Lomax and Hand (2007) findings. Per their study, the rebranding of Airtel was beneficial and continues to impact positively on the company.

In conclusion, the earlier paragraphs have shown that the rationale behind the decision to rebrand has been in conformity with scholarly and practical reasons underlying most rebranding activities. It also demonstrated that the rebranding processes Airtel undertook were mostly well informed for a peculiar situation. Challenges encountered could have been minimized if certain prudent internal considerations were made. This notwithstanding, the rebranding has been to a large extent, beneficial to Airtel.

CHAPTER FIVE

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes the findings, draws conclusion and makes the appropriate recommendations.

5.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Research question 1:

The study showed that there are several motives unpinning the motive for rebranding. Stuarts (2003) posits that corporate rebranding must send a signal to the market and must communicate to stakeholders the uniqueness of the new brands. The findings revealed that four major motives drove Airtel's rebranding namely; the need to position the brand as a global brand, the need to move from a functional orientation to a more emotionally focused brand, desire for a fresh start, and the plan to ensure that the brand projected a technologically savvy outlook. The implication is that organizational managers considering rebranding need to understand motives for their rebranding and whether or not these motives are in sync with the thinking of the market.

Research question 2:

The second research question sought to investigate the strategic processes involved in rebranding. In the literature studies have put forward a number of strategic process or steps to a successful rebranding. Among the most touted strategy is the incorporation of the brand

philosophy to both internal and external customers, so they can understand the new position of the organization (Juntunen et al (2009). It was established by the study that Airtel's rebranding strategic processes takes place at two levels or phases. The internal phase involved the planning and strategizing of the rebranding process and staff awareness of the impending process where as the external phase comprised of three major changes including Change of Identity, Consumer benefit and the Implementation stage.

Research question 3:

This research question was set up to investigate the potential benefits and impact of rebranding on the organizations performance. On this assessment, the findings established that rebranding has enormous impact on the firms' performance in terms of customer, sales and profitability.

5.3 CONCLUSION

This study was commissioned to investigate the impact of rebranding on Airtel Ghana's operations. The objective set up for the study was in three folds. The first was to investigate the rationale underpinnings rebranding activities of the organization. The second was to find out whether there are any strategies processes involved in rebranding, whiles, the last objective was to explore whether rebranding has any benefit or impact on the firm's overall performance. On the first objective, the study established that four major motives drove Airtel's rebranding namely; the need to position the brand as a global brand, the need to move from a functional

orientation to a more emotionally focused brand, desire for a fresh start, and the plan to ensure that the brand projected a technologically savvy outlook.

On the second objective, the study established that Airtel's rebranding strategic processes takes place at two strategic levels which are internal and external levels. The internal phase involves the planning and strategizing of the rebranding process and staff awareness of the impending process where as the external phase comprised of three major changes including Change of Identity, Consumer benefit and the Implementation stage.

On the last objective which seeks to explore the benefits of rebranding to the firm, it was established that rebranding has enormous benefits to the firm.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the major findings uncovered in this study, the following recommendations are made;

- I. Research is key in every rebranding process. Companies wanting to take this path need to conduct extensive research on all stakeholders to factor their insights into strategizing for rebranding
- II. In rebranding, organisation's should ensure that the migration from one brand to the other is not abrupt but rather a gradual change over as companies risk losing loyal customers with an abrupt change. However the circumstances where an immediate disassociation is required because of what the previous brand stood for, an abrupt change should be adopted.

III. Rebranding must be planned, and re-planned with the necessary strategies long before implementation or launch time to ensure a smooth process. Also rebranding strategies need to be customized for different companies.

IV. Time allocations should be made for delays in delivery during planning and strategizing for rebranding.

V. A successful rebranding can only be achieved if there is the full support and participation of the staff of the organization. Activities such as training and an internal launch must be done to ensure that staff buys into the ideologies of the new brand.

VI. A detailed advertising or marketing communications plan is required for a successful rebranding as it is the means through which the new brand is communicated to both internal and external stakeholders.

5.5 Limitations

Limitations to this study were generally encountered at the data gathering stage. The informants were extremely busy people and so were a bit difficult to track down but when they did, they were extremely helpful.

There were also challenges of finance and the limited time available.

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INTERVIEW GUIDE

FACTORS OF REBRANDING

- Does Airtel's new brand bring about Competitive advantage?
- How has Airtel's brand Stimulate growth from its time as Zain?
- Long terms market expansion,
- How does rebranding brought Innovation and Profitability to Airtel?
- What is the status of Airtel's current brand? Was anything wrong? Does our target market understand the meaning of the current brand? Is re-branding farfetched? (Brand audit)
- What is Airtel's position with regards to the new brand?
- What is Airtel's doing to ensure that your brand is keeping up with the industrial changes? (Marketing and Communication strategies)
- What do you (Airtel) want your new brand to be that it is not?
- What will the new brand do for the Company? (Brand objectives)

CONCEPTS OF REBRANDING

- Do you agree that rebranding can result in higher sales of not only one product
- How is Airtel's current organisational culture supporting the current brand?
- How has the new brand catered for the organisations current customer base?
- How is the current brand affecting the organisational image and positioning?
- How did your human resources base support the transition of the new brand during the rebranding process? (Qualifications, knowledge and commitment)
- How long did it take?

EFFECTS OF REBRANDING

- What intentions have inspired the changes on Airtel?
- What does Airtel gain from the acquisition of a new Brand (What do you bring to your customers)?
- Currently, what is Airtel's market position? (What does Airtel want to be?)
- What are Airtel's competitive advantages?
- How can Airtel respond to customers' constantly changing needs?
- In the process of internationalization, many companies improve their image through cooperating with sporting events. What did Airtel do in this field?
- Has Airtel customer profile changed?
- Why should anyone care about Airtel's new brand?
- Is the goal of this rebrand a stepping stone (evolutionary) or a milestone (revolutionary)?
- Will this rebranding solution work in 5, 10 and 15 years from now based on what you can anticipate?

TRANSCRIPTIONS

RESEARCHER: What does Airtel gain from the acquisition of a new Brand (What do you bring to your customers)?

B&MCM: Airtel entered into this market with an entirely different approach and strategy from that of Zain and of course the background of the business determined how the brand values and philosophy was positioned. In terms of competitive advantages, we entered this market and had a number of competitors, about four of them. Per our brand building and branding strategy, our first challenge had to do with colours and there was a competitor with virtually the same colour, which is Vodafone. We had to differentiate ourselves in several angles

- Our communication had to be differentiated
- Our product offering had to be differentiated
- The brand approach in terms of philosophy had to be differentiated

Our brand philosophy essentially talks about the power of potential and that is a unique philosophy in which we approach virtually everything concerning the brand both corporate, product offering and communication out there as a business. So in the nutshell it has given us that competitive edge over the years. Of course, we have come a long way since 2010 and over the years there has been several changes which h are all meant to adapt to the changes and tastes of consumers.

QUES: Were you only driven the colour similarity with Vodafone?

B&MCM: Our rebranding took place only last year and I would try to explain the philosophy behind this rebranding. Our colours are clearly similar to that of Vodafone, that is, red and white but that is not the basis of our decision to rebrand. Our rebranding as a brand Airtel was based on the decision that we need to be more competitive at the Global level. Consumer research was conducted on the brand across all the markets that we are established and it was found out that in terms of global positioning, we were not competitive enough in terms of our brand offering and our brand message but not our product. The imagery, the perception consumers have in their mind about the product so the decision was taken to rebrand. Rebranding could take several

forms. Some could just be a change in the logo, it could be a refreshing of the logo, or the deep rebranding itself or the absolute rebranding itself where you would change your brand logo, your brand imagery, the look and feel of the brand, and very importantly, your mission, your vision and your values. That is total rebranding which is what we did last year. So there was a total rebranding that went across the brand philosophy, the brand essence, that is, what the brand stands for, the brand values, the corporate identity, that is what the consumers out there say about you. So it was a total rebranding which was driven by a wrong perception of consumers about the brand and the fact that globally, in terms of brand image, we were not competitive enough. So the output of this process is to essentially make the look and feel more emotional and draw more affinity to the brand. Previously, the brand was seen more as a functional one. We were just selling products without a real affinity strategy behind it. The current look and feel which is the output of the rebranding is meant to connect back to the consumer and lay more emphasis on how we connect to the consumer not only through our product offerings, but even our communication, the look and feel of the brand, the new vision and mission statement are our consumer focused.

RESEARCHER: Almost 12 months down the line would you say that all these plans have stimulated growth in anyway?

B&MCM : Sure. We have a research that measures how we fare in the market in terms of our brand building activities. As a matter of fact the rebranding took place in November/December last year (2014) but we started a deliberate strategy to have a different approach to our brand building strategy and the whole approach was to draw affinity for the brand so 9 months down the line, it has really shown in the research that our brand (Airtel) is the most loved brand, as in, the brand that connects the most to customers within the telecommunications industry in Ghana and if you understand what the brand pyramid is about, you would clearly understand that moving from 3% on bonding scores or what is called convection in the FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) world to a current score of 29% in that period which is a huge leapfrog, it tells you that both the brand building strategy and the rebranding has really driven home the strategy of connecting to the consumers using our product offering, our imagery out there and everything we do as a business.

RESEARCHER: What are the indicators to show that your company has made this momentous leap?

AB&MCM : Some measurement and matrix that tells you how you are faring out there in relation to competition. One of such measures is to what extent do you have consumers "showing love to the brand" or to what extent they connect to the brand in terms of your product offerings, how they perceive the brand in a positive light, that is, the affinity bit of it. Also to what extent are they using your products? That is KPI (Key performance index) or Matrix number one to measure it. Also, to what extent they have your brand top of mind? For example, if I walk to you as a customer using a mobile phone and I ask you which network you prefer? At that moment, would you mention Airtel or a competitor? That is another matrix. It is called top of the mind awareness. Then there is another matrix that talks about one being a potential customer of mobile phones or a consumer of mobile phones, which Sim card would you consider which is what we call consideration? These are more or less technical matrix which we use in measuring the growth of the brand and to a larger extent its profitability and its value as a brand Airtel. So in the business world, you need to measure what you do. These are the backbone or drivers of revenue. They may not bring in cash directly but indirectly, they influence revenues that come in. For instance, if customers don't have you top of mind, it means, you are not easily recalled in the market. It also means that they may not purchase your SIM card if a potential new customer wants to pick up a SIM card. It also means that they would not be considering your brand when they want to take a decision concerning the brand. So invariably, all these contribute to your revenue at the end of the day which is what you are in business for. Remember that the brand in itself is an asset so if it is not delivered, then you have a weak brand.

RESEARCHER: What are the plans to ensure that this phenomenal quantum leap in % terms is maintained or improved upon?

AB&MCM : At the beginning of every year, we have a strategic approach to our brand building activities and at the beginning of this year our focus was either sustaining that score and better still improving on it as a matter of fact because you see, it is one thing getting to the top but how you sustain it is another story altogether. The good thing about brand building is the fact that what you do to reach where you are, you either improve on it or you sustain it which in strategic

terms means its either you want to grow or you just want to sustain your current level of performance. We want to grow as a brand and it's not just about having consumer affinity to the brand. The consumer affinity must reflect in your product pickings or usage. It must reflect in your customers also patronizing your product offerings either than that you are not in business. So you have a very good brand that people are also happy about, people are also excited about the things you do but if it doesn't bring money, there is a problem. So with our strategy, yes we are having people singing your song but it must reflect in what you do. A typical example is the strategy of ensuring that we connect to the consumer doesn't restrict us in doing activities that excite the consumer. What we call our passion points. So we have huge sponsorships with Roverman for their quarterly theatre productions which delight our consumers from an emotional point of view. Within that space of delighting them, you should be making money as well, Adom Praiz which for us is the biggest Gospel Fiesta in the country at the moment, our ARS (Airtel Rising Stars) holdings and Golf. These are passion points where we connect with our consumers. So the strategy now is to sustain and grow and the growth is made from the incremental sales that we make from every front. New customers coming in from every front is part of the growth strategy. You can build the brand up to a point but the brand must deliver you business. The assets must deliver the business.

RESEARCHER: What do you want to see of the company that it is not at the moment?

M&CO: Personally, I want to see a growing base of customers. In terms of customer numbers we are the fourth on the market so if you are leading in terms of consumer affinity or loyalty, it means you current base of customers are loyal to you but the question is how big are you in terms of numbers in relation to competitors? I want to see an exponential growth where we can reach the top because if you are number one in terms of loyalty, you should also in terms of cash, numbers as in customer base. That's what I want to see.

RESEARCHER: What is it that your competitors may be doing to beat you at the moment?

M&CO : This industry is an interesting one. John Collins an expert in strategy developed the Hedgehog principle. For him it is essential that you focus on your strategies, your key activities

no matter what your competitors are doing and you shall eventually get your result. Within the telecommunications industry in Ghana, what is happening is that there are so many product offerings and innovations that are coming up and each player wants to either respond or react which for me is not the best of strategy. Within the sphere of strategy again, all of us (telecoms) are in the business of providing services to customers which is our mission. However, the visions differ. How we at Airtel want to deliver our mission to our customers would probably be different from MTN or any of other Telecommunication Companies. So if we stick to our brand vision and our core values, I believe that we don't have to necessarily follow the path of our competitors and react to what they do. It is good to learn from competition. It is good to pick ideas from them. I would want to go into theatre and music. May be, Tigo would want to do football. How we implement our ideas would surely differ from what Tigo would want to do though the two activities touch on the emotions of customers.

RESEARCHER: Has your marketing and communication plan served your purpose?

RMM (Accra & Tema): In terms of our marketing and communication strategies, it is not static. It changes as frequent as every three months as a matter of fact. However, the overall approach of the annual view remains the same. So this year for example, our strategy is to ensure that every campaign that comes on board in terms of a revenue driver, a huge campaign, a thematic campaign, it must stay on air not less than three months. That is key for us. One of the key elements in our marketing communications strategy is our events and sponsorship aside all that we do in terms of the above the line TV/Radio, they play a very crucial role in terms of our brand positioning out there. As a brand there are key focus areas that we look at it: music and theatre which is why we are big on the Roverman platform and Adom Praiz which has been a huge game changer for us, sports (with a strong emphasis on football) particular the Airtel Rising Stars and Millennium Marathon. These are key focus areas which would ran throughout the year. If we complete this year, we would do a review and decide whether we want the follow these paths or otherwise and that is only possible after a brand audit. Again, digital is a key driver for us as telecom business with emphasis on social media. The way we use social media is more a case of product offering and customer experience on a digital space. By next quarter, (Our quarter starts in October), we would be having a change in the digital strategy. There as an

annual view as well as a quarterly view to our strategy. Annual view is enshrined in the strategy to show how we intend to deliver our communication throughout the year. The quarterly view is to review the strategy and see where some tweaking can be done and not necessarily changing the strategy. What we would be doing is about reviewing an aspect of the strategy for the year where we want to be more brand building or social conversation focus than product offerings on a digital space.

RESEARCHER: How important is brand audit to your rebranding process?

B&MCM: Brand audit is critical, not necessarily for rebranding strategy and if you are in an environment where you are in a go to market brand, it is not every brand that is a go to market one. Go to market means your focus is on sales and marketing. Some businesses are not necessarily sales and market focused but this environment is "go to the market". Good examples of a business that do real brand building are FMCG's (fast moving consumer goods). The believe is that when you invest in the brand, it shows in the bottom line. Brand audit, depending on the strategy of the business, often times, is an annual affair which is to review the overall performance of the brand right from the brand propositioning. This we do from the 6 P's. The proposition, the pricing so there again you bring in the finance people not to only talk of price the products but profitability. We also do promotions, how your communication is faring out there. We do place audit, that is, your distribution compared to competition as well as the people. We review all the elements in terms of how consumers relate to your brand. These are key performance indices that you need to review for over a reasonably lengthy period (about 5 years) to get to see a trend. Based on that audit, then you know that you either have an opportunity or an issue with the brand. So that opportunity or issue is what you term as Problem statement in Project Management. You therefore have to metamorphose this opportunity or issue into a business case which we typically call a job to be done. If you put this through a business case, you now think through what must be done to bring results to this business case. So you are looking at your communications, your sponsorships, your products and more. So the brand audit is very critical. If you do a brand audit on an annual basis, you are giving the brand an annual view in the sense that you don't build a brand in three months or six months. At least twelve months for you to know whether your communications have had the desired impact on the

bottom line or the brand itself. So businesses that want to see a turnaround in three or six months are treading a dangerous path. Let us not forget that loyalty to a product is developed over a reasonable period of time and not a short period. The audit is this not for just the rebranding process but the annual strategy in terms of the brand in the New Year.

RESEARCHER: What role has the Human Resource Department played in the process?

B&MCM : Certainly, you would need the experts to do the job like any other field where you need a certain criteria to recruit people into an organization. For a brand and marketing communication role as well, you would need expert hands. Within my unit for example, there are individuals in charge of brand development (creative ideas), Brand management (strategy and execution), Communication (through traditional media TV/Radio) essentially media buying, Digital management (web, social media, search engine optimization). There is also an events team which is where we do our connection with our consumers and they manage all our events. Within this same unit, because we do a lot of advertising and collateral development, we command huge marketing budgets. We have a budget person, a finance person who manages the budget. It depends on the structure of the organization. The individual oversees payments to vendors, processes, making sure that we don't overspend. We have individuals who have been properly trained and are qualified to do the job.

RESEARCHER: How have these plans affected the short, medium and long term plans of the rebranding process?

B&MCM : We do reviews for quite a number of reasons

- How the company has fared and whether the strategies being implemented can last into the future?
- Whether the current strategy is the best or needs some tweaking

We do that typically on a quarterly basis. It does not mean that when we notice something we don't attend to it. We would but it would be that dramatic from the initial plan. So those reviews help us to take the right decisions on going strategies and auto pilot activities. The review should be able to tell you whether you have to change or otherwise especially with competition in mind.

Medium term, profitability that is to deliver the figures for bottom line. Short term you want to see how consumers pick your sim cards, products and in the long term, where you want to take the brand in the long term. However, the core of the strategy does not change.

RESEARCHER: Any major challenges along the way?

RMM: Business is full of challenges but it is the approach to these challenges that would make you win or otherwise. In our case, we have been using tactical communication to build our brand. It is just like the popular saying where you don't expect to get different results when you do the same things. We realized that we needed to change from a functional approach to more of an emotional approach to our communication which is what has done the trick for us

RESEARCHER: How have you connected with your customer base for feedback on your services

RMM: Research is a key tool in any brand building activity and it depends on the kind of research tool you want to use at the end of the day. Lets look at a couple of research tools that we have used here to get an understanding of our consumers changing tastes and needs. We do what we call the Brand check. Its a huge and a comprehensive research which gives an insight into consumer behaviour and towards our brand and product and how they percieve the brand so you get an understanding of what they are thinking,how they are feeling,how they are responding to the brand and the product and it comes on a quarterly basis. We draw deductions from those reports and make inferences which feeds back into our plans. Then we do what we call the voice of the customer on a weekly basis. We speak to customers to get a sense of how they are doing in terms of the product whether the product is meeting their needs or otherwise. So for us, research is a key part of our activities either than that you have a disconnect with your customers. Beyond just the usual formal researches, as brand builders, it is very key to connect back to the customer or consumer, So we typically have to do what we call consumer immersions. Every now and then, we need to go out there and talk to our customers to really get a sense of how they are feeling to the extent that people go and stay with consumers to get a sense of how their days go

and understand their consumption patterns and the product they use. In that vein, you get to know and plan how to design a product which fits into the lifestyle of your consumers

RESEARCHER: Has the customer profile of Airtel changed that much which has caused you to rebrand?

B&MCM : Typically, any product offering or any brand have what's called the core targets, So if you have a core target, you would definitely have a secondary target. The core target is normally put within a range so that you capture the similarity between age groups or Living Standard Measures(LSM'S) or even their spend habits but typically in any market approach, you would want to use lifestyles which is why you have the LSM offerings. What i am trying to say is that, the target is given within a range so that the similarities within these ranges are covered which is your core target. You may have secondary targets which may not necessarily be your focus. So in essence, your product offering targeting LSM's 3-5 can be consumed by LSM 5 so that becomes a spill over into the targeted LSM which may not necessarily be your focus. The point here is that, when you define your target, it restricts you, it guides you, it ensures that you are on course and you are on target with your offering. So if it so happens that a certain segment or a certain LSM still accepts your offering, it is an added advantage for you which you wouldn't necessarily consider as a failure in terms of strategy.

RESEARCHER: Why should existing or potential customers care about your decision to rebrand?

M&CO: You do not just stand up and rebrand. You would want to rebrand because of a feedback that you have taken from a research as a matter of fact and that feedback in most instances should be a consumer feedback. So you are not rebranding because you feel like rebranding. You are rebranding because there is the need for it. And that need should be a consumer need. So to answer your question if they should care, yes they surely have to care because they have given us feedback in the first place which has led to the decision to rebrand

RESEARCHER: Do you have a team that was and is still primarily responsible for your rebranding activities?

AB&MCM: Building a brand is not necessarily the duty of the Brand Managers alone and for a brand like an Airtel, every employee is a brand manager and the Chief Brand Manager is the Chief Executive Officer of the company. Our core job is to ensure the sanctity of the brand and that all the strategies are developed, conceived and implemented. The thing though is that if you need a strong brand, everyone needs to buy into the brand. The brand is an asset which is what most people do not understand and every asset has people behind it and the people behind this asset are its employees. That is why if you get involved in any negative act or misfortune out there and you work in a particular company, most of the time, they would say "X person who is an employee of the company". This is because you are part of the brand and that is why people need to be careful when they go out there because what you represent is seen by the consumer. Typically if i live in a community and everyone knows that i work at Airtel, how i carry myself is a reflection of the brand Airtel. That the Managing Director or Chief Executive Officer who is the first person of this business is the most notable person. He/She is the Chief Brand Manager of the business. What she says carries power and does out there carries a lot of impression and power about the brand. So everyone is a brand manager just that the key people who are at the Marketing & Communications Department are the Chief Drivers of the process.

RESEARCHER: What should we make out of this decision to rebrand in the years to come?

B&MCM : I am absolutely convinced about that and i am very certain that this brand would reach the heights that we expect it to be especially on the global front. A brand that you can see in multiple countries with the same message, which is, **A SMART PHONE NETWORK.**

RESEARCHER: What is special about this theme?

B&MCM: The future of the Telecoms industry is hinged on the devices that are used in transaction and the world is gradually gravitating towards Smartphones. This mobile device to a large extent has replaced the typical computers that we know off. We are saying that all the offerings that you need with the Smartphone networks be it your digital needs or what have you is within this network, that is the Smartphone network.

RESEARCHER: What recommendations would you make that you would want carried out in the foreseeable future?

AB&MCM : My recommendations would be around three things:

- **Consistency**-You need to be consistent. We just started. We are gaining and gathering momentum. The results are coming in. We just have to stick to that game plan and we would get to the promised land.
- **Measurement**-We need to continue to measure progress which is where research is key. If you don't know what your consumers are thinking and you keep bombarding them with information overload, then you are on a wrong path. You need to know feedback from your consumers which come as a result of measurement.
- **Innovative**-This is very key. This is a bedrock to sustain you into the future. If you do not innovate, you are killing your business. So within the same rebranding framework that we have come out with. We have to innovate in terms of our product offerings, other than that, we would be static.

Allied to all these three points is that we need to be flexible and adapt to a situation which you could relate to consistency. Adapting also means that you need to go back to the consumer and come out with new ways of doing things. The fact that we have rebranded and after a year the feedback is not what we expected, it doesn't mean that because we want to be consistent, we would still do the same things. You probably need to look at your strategy again and agree to rebrand if that is the best way to go but anyone who understands the core of brands knows that, even if you rebrand things about the brand do not necessarily change. Either than that, you are introducing an entirely new brand altogether.

Every business ought to realise that the biggest asset they have is the brand. Most people don't know that. The brand actually sits in the mind of the consumer and which is what you need to manage. The big brands of this world, what they have been able to do is that they have been able to connect with their customers because they understand that power that a brand sits in the mind of consumers

Also, most people have a parochial view about branding. People think that branding is about a logo or some communication out there. Far from that. A brand has a personality which is made up of values. What sits in the minds of consumers is not necessarily the logo. The logo just brings to mind what the brand is about. It is the values of the brand that matter and I will cite you an example. If I mention BMW, something comes up in your mind. If I mention Mercedes Benz, something comes to mind and has to do with perhaps the values and functionality these brand offers. So you may have not driven or be owning a Mercedes Benz but because of what you probably have heard and it has created a perception and a mindset, perhaps the value of that brand is sitting in your mind and that is what people need to manage. People will pick your product when they buy into your brand. They do not pick up the product before the brand. They pick the brand before the product so it is very key that we need to manage brands.

KEY

B&MCM.....Brands & Marketing Communications Manager

AB&MCM.....Assistant Brands & Marketing Communications Manager

RMM.....Regional Marketing Manager

M&CO.....Marketing & Communications Officer