



**SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH (SoGSaR)
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**DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK FOR NATION
BRANDING TO PROMOTE TOURISM IN GHANA.**

BY

CARLENE ABENA AMEYAA AFFRAM

MAPRM24039

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SUPERVISOR: DR. ALBERT ANANI-BOSSMAN

DECEMBER, 2025

DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own original work. No part of it has been submitted for another degree in this university or any other higher educational institute. I further declare that all references and sources used in this study have been appropriately cited and acknowledged.



15/12/2025

.....
Carlene Abena Ameyaa Affram

(MAPRM24039)

.....
SIGNATURE

.....
DATE

CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision, according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of the thesis laid down by The University of Media, Arts and Communication - Institute of Journalism (UniMAC-IJ).

Certified by:



.....
15/12/2025

.....
Dr. Albert Anani-Bossman

SUPERVISOR

.....
SIGNATURE

.....
DATE

Dedication

I dedicate this entire work to Charles Appiah, my husband, and Dr. Albert Anani-Bossman, my supervisor.

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I acknowledge the grace of the Almighty God in helping me to complete this research work. I also thank my husband for all the support he gave me throughout my study. I acknowledge the guidance, support and supervision given by my supervisor, Dr. Albert Anani-Bossman. His attention to detail and commitment to excellence contributed immensely to the successful completion of the research.

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Abstract

In an increasingly competitive global tourism environment, countries are compelled to strategically manage their international images to attract visitors, investment, and global goodwill. Although Ghana has launched several high-profile tourism initiatives, such as the Year of Return and Beyond the Return, these efforts have mostly been event-driven and seem to lack a consistent, coordinated strategic communication approach to nation branding. This study examines how strategic communication is currently practiced in Ghana's tourism-focused nation branding efforts and evaluates whether these practices are coherent, coordinated, and effective. Using a qualitative research approach, the study gathered data through semi-structured interviews with ten purposively selected participants involved in strategic communication, nation branding, and tourism promotion. The findings show that while Ghana's tourism events and diaspora-focused campaigns have positively enhanced international visibility and image, ongoing challenges—such as political interference, weak inter-agency coordination, inconsistent messaging, and service delivery gaps—undermine the sustainability of these branding efforts. Based on these findings, the study proposes an evidence-based strategic communication framework for Ghana's nation branding, including governance, identity development, strategic communication, implementation and performance, and monitoring and evaluation. The framework emphasizes the need for an integrated, cyclical approach to nation branding that moves beyond episodic campaigns toward long-term strategic consistency. The study adds to the fields of nation branding and strategic communication by providing a context-specific framework that can guide tourism-focused nation branding in Ghana and other emerging economies.

Keywords: nation branding, strategic communication, tourism, framework, Ghana

Table of Content

DECLARATION BY STUDENT	i
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
List of Figures and Tables.....	viii
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	ix
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Chapter Introduction	1
1.2 Background of the study.....	1
1.3 Problem Statement.....	4
1.4 Research Objectives.....	5
1.5 Research Questions	6
1.6 Significance of the Study.....	6
1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study.....	7
1.8 Justification of the Study.....	7
1.9 Organisation of the Study	8
1.10 Operational Definitions.....	9
1.11 Chapter Summary	10
CHAPTER TWO	11
LITERATURE REVIEW	11
2.1 Chapter Introduction	11
2.2 Theoretical Framework.....	11
2.2.1 Stakeholder theory	11
2.2.2 Relevance of the Stakeholder theory	13
2.2.3 Customer-based brand equity theory.....	14
2.2.4 Relevance of the CBBE theory to the study	15
2.3 Conceptual review	16
2.3.1 Nation branding	16
2.3.2 Nation Branding in Africa	19
2.3.3 Nation Branding and Tourism	22
2.3.4 Tourism in Ghana.....	24

2.3.5 Strategic Communication.....	26
2.4 Chapter Summary	29
CHAPTER THREE	30
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	30
3.1 Chapter Introduction	30
3.2 Research Paradigm and Philosophical Assumptions.....	30
3.3 Research Approach	31
3.4 Research Design	32
3.5 Study Population.....	32
3.6 Sampling.....	33
3.7 Sample Size	34
3.8 Sources of Data	34
3.9 Data Collection Method	35
3.10 Data Analysis.....	36
3.11 Ensuring Trustworthiness	36
3.12 Ethical Considerations.....	37
3.13 Chapter Summary	37
CHAPTER FOUR	39
DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	39
4.1 Chapter Introduction	39
4.2 Demography of Participants	39
4.2.1 Table 1.....	39
4.3 Definition and Relevance of Nation Branding.....	41
4.4 RQ1: Strategic communication practices employed by Ghana to build a strong brand in tourism promotion	42
4.4.1 Event-led branding dominance.....	42
4.4.2 Inter-personal and Direct engagement.....	43
4.4.3 Digital storytelling and Influencer Partnership.....	43
4.4.4 Use of cultural symbols and creative arts.....	44
4.5 RQ2: Effectiveness of Ghana’s efforts in building a coherent national brand.....	45
4.5.1 Strong Diaspora Resonance and Global Appeal.....	45
4.5.2 Event Campaigns driving tourism growth.....	46
4.5.3 Fragmented Brand architecture weakens coherence.....	47

4.5.4 Limited Global Media Visibility	48
4.5.5 Hospitality and safety reinforce positive perceptions	49
4.6 RQ3: Elements and strategies required to strengthen Ghana’s national brand through strategic communication	50
4.6.1 Centralized brand governance and depoliticized coordination	50
4.6.2 Development of a national brand manual	51
4.6.3 Enhancing service quality and visitor experience	51
4.6.4 Broadening and segmenting target audiences	52
4.6.5 Integrated multi-channel communication	54
4.6.6 Research-based brand strategy	55
4.6.7 Monitoring and evaluation	55
4.7 The Proposed Strategic Communication Framework	57
4.8 Explanation of the framework	58
4.8.1 Governance	58
4.8.2 Identity Foundation	59
4.8.3 Strategic Communication.....	60
4.8.4 Implementation and Performance	61
4.8.5 Monitoring and Evaluation	61
4.9 Chapter Summary	62
CHAPTER FIVE	63
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	63
5.1 Chapter Introduction	63
5.2 Summary of Key Findings.....	63
5.3 Framework justification and implications for theory, policy, and practice	65
5.4 Conclusion.....	65
5.5 Recommendations	67
5.6 Areas for Future Research	68
5.7 Chapter Summary	68
References	70
Appendix	80

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 1- Strategic Communication Framework

Table 1: Demographics of Participants

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

CBBE- Customer-Based Brand Equity

CEO- Chief Executive Officer

FDI- Foreign Direct Investment

GDP- Gross Domestic Product

GEPA- Ghana Export Promotion Authority

GIPC- Ghana Investment Promotion Centre

GTA- Ghana Tourism Authority

GTDC- Ghana Tourism Development Company

KPIs- Key Performance Indicators

MOTAC- Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture

MOTCCA- Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts

UK- United Kingdom

UniMAC- University of Media, Arts and Communication

UNWTO- United Nations World Tourism Organization

USA- United States of America

USP- Unique Selling Proposition

YOR- Year of Return

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter Introduction

The chapter introduces the research on strategic communication for nation branding to promote tourism in Ghana. It captures the problem the research seeks to solve, along with the objectives and questions that guide the study. Key in this chapter is the justification of the study and the definition of key terms used in the research.

1.2 Background of the study

Tourism is a competitive industry today due to the revenue it generates for nations. Nations have devised innovative strategies to gain a competitive advantage. The tourism industry is one of the key beneficiaries of a well-established nation brand (Papadopoulos & Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015). Ghana, like many nations, including Nigeria and Senegal, derives significant benefits from the tourism industry and its affiliated sectors, including the hospitality and entertainment industry (Braithwaite et al., 2024).

Mensah et al. (2025) stated that, though Africa attracts 5% of global tourists annually, which is the lowest among continents, tourism is still one of the largest contributors to the economies of African countries, bringing them significant foreign exchange. Despite these economic benefits, the persistently low percentage of global tourist arrivals to Africa is attributed to insufficient prioritisation of the tourism sector across the continent (Papadopoulos & Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015).

Nevertheless, there remains considerable potential for Africa's tourism sector, provided that appropriate strategies are implemented. The continent possesses a rich diversity of tourist

attractions, alongside other factors that could position it as a desirable destination on the global stage. As noted by Mensah (2021), several countries, including Jamaica, Senegal, Nigeria, and Ghana, have recognised the benefits of organising homecoming events to engage their diaspora communities. For instance, Jamaica hosted an initiative under the theme *"One Nation: Jamaica and its Diaspora in Partnership"*, while Ghana launched the *"Year of Return"*, both of which exemplify strategic efforts to harness diaspora engagement for national development and tourism promotion.

Ghana, one of Africa's notable countries, is known for its tourist sites and hospitable people. Like other African countries, Ghana has benefited economically from the tourism industry by leveraging its heritage sites, such as the Cape Coast Castle, to organise events related to the slave trade that occurred over 400 years ago (Adu-Ampong & Mensah, 2021). These events have primarily targeted people of African descent who want to connect with their ancestral roots (Adu-Ampong & Dilette, 2023).

Several factors account for Ghana's competitive advantage over other tourism destinations, including political stability and strategic initiatives to promote tourism in Ghana (Amoako et al., 2021). Despite these advantages, Adu-Ampong and Dilette (2023) identified challenges faced by the tourism industry, including a lack of infrastructural development, financial challenges, poor customer service, a high illiteracy rate, and a poor maintenance culture.

Even though Ghana continues to face these challenges, the government, through the Ghana Tourism Authority, successfully implemented tourism initiatives such as the 'Year of Return' (YOR), 'Beyond the Return', and 'Visit Ghana'. Literature (Mensah, 2021; myjoyonline.com, 2025) suggests that the YOR was one of the most successful tourism initiatives in Ghana.

The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MoTAC) indicated that the YOR generated US\$1.9 billion in revenue and recorded an increase of more than 200,000 in tourist arrivals (Mensah, 2021). The YOR initiative in 2019 brought 1.13 million visitors to the country, an 18% increase over the previous year. These statistics indicate that the successful implementation of YOR put Ghana in the global media spotlight, enhancing the country's image and reputation (Adu-Ampong & Mensah, 2021).

An assessment of Ghana's tourism initiatives suggests that cultural campaigns are increasingly playing a role in Ghana's branding. However, the varied level of success or otherwise of the country's different tourism initiatives reveals a gap in the effectiveness of the strategies used. As noted by Nobre and Sousa (2022), a nation's brand is instrumental to the success of its tourism efforts, and nation brand building involves strategic communication to build that strong image and reputation.

Despite the positive effect of nation branding on tourism efforts, building it involves a long-term and continuous process (Ahmed et al., 2022). According to Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis (2022), the need for nations to stand out, driven by factors such as globalisation, necessitated extending branding to nations (Papadopoulos & Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015). A strong brand, built through communication, creates a shared perception among various stakeholders, which becomes the brand's image (Kusraeva, 2023). Therefore, countries should adopt conscious protection of their national image.

According to Kusraeva (2023), the world has limited resources, and every nation is striving to extract as much as possible from them. Therefore, a country's ability to position itself as it is perceived requires strategic communication (Anholt, 2024). Chea (2024) similarly noted that a vital aspect of branding is raising brand awareness and emphasising the unique attributes that

differentiate the nation from others. However, differences in perceptions and expectations among stakeholders suggest the need for specialised messages for different target audiences (Leiserowitz et al., 2021).

1.3 Problem Statement

Nation branding is an emerging area of interest for researchers. Therefore, previous studies (Rojas-Méndez & Khoshnevis, 2022; Anholt, 2011; Nobre & Sousa, 2022) defined the concept and differentiated it from related concepts such as product branding, destination branding, and place branding. The conceptualisation of nation branding led to significant attention to the impact of tourism on nation branding efforts. While Nobre and Sousa (2022), Stipriaan et al. (2023) and Kwarteng-Amaniampong et al. (2025) analysed cultural heritage and its significance to nation branding, Li and Feng (2022b) explored the role of sports in nation branding. These studies highlighted the effect of nation branding on tourism.

Also, research (e.g. Hallahan et al., 2007; Gordeladze & Molodini, 2021; Leiserowitz et al., 2021) has indicated what strategic approach to communication entails, while other studies (Kusraeva, 2023; Li & Feng, 2022a; Pöyry et al., 2021) focused on specific media and their effectiveness in nation brand building.

In the context of a rapidly globalising tourism economy, effective nation branding has emerged as a critical strategy for enhancing a country's competitiveness and visibility on the world stage (Hassan & Mahrous, 2019; Loo & Davies, 2006). Ghana has undertaken several notable nation branding efforts, including the Year of Return (2019), Beyond the Return, and various tourism campaigns aimed at repositioning itself as a prime cultural and heritage tourism destination. However, while these initiatives have garnered international attention, they often appear sporadic and event-driven, lacking a sustained strategic communication practices.

The current literature in tourism branding and strategic communication affirms the pivotal roles of consistent messaging, stakeholder coordination, and long-term brand architecture in shaping national images (e.g., McCartney et al., 2008; Sartori et al., 2012; Thekelsen & Halkier, 2008). However, despite global scholarship on nation branding and destination branding, and the recognised importance of coherent brand strategy and stakeholder coordination, there is a paucity of empirical research examining whether a deliberate, sustained strategic communication practices underpins Ghana's tourism-oriented branding efforts. It remains unclear how current campaigns are coordinated, whether messaging is consistent across stakeholders, how outcomes are evaluated, and if branding efforts are sustained beyond sporadic campaigns. This study aims to fill the gap by exploring these issues to determine the extent of strategic coherence and, where necessary, to propose an integrated communication framework.

Given this, the purpose of this study is to critically evaluate the strategic communication practices Ghana employs in the tourism-oriented nation branding efforts. It seeks to analyse the extent to which these practices are coherent, coordinated, and aligned with long-term national branding goals. By examining the effectiveness of existing communication strategies and identifying key areas of fragmentation, the research aims to develop evidence-based recommendations to enhance Ghana's national brand through a more integrated, strategic communication framework that promotes sustainable tourism development.

1.4 Research Objectives

The research aims to explore how strategic communication can be used to promote tourism in Ghana through nation branding. The specific objectives of the study are:

- i. To examine the current strategic communication practices employed by Ghana to build a strong brand in tourism promotion.

- ii. To assess the effectiveness of these practices in building a coherent national brand.
- iii. To provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening Ghana's national brand through strategic communication.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the research objectives, the following research questions (RQ) will guide the study:

- i. What are the current strategic communication practices employed by Ghana to build a strong brand in tourism promotion?
- ii. How effective are these practices in building a coherent national brand?
- iii. What are the essential elements and strategies required to strengthen Ghana's national brand through strategic communication?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The study is important to the tourism sector in Ghana because the findings will help the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts (MoTCCA), formerly known as the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MoTAC), and its subsidiary agencies such as the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), to develop strategies that will help the nation position itself as the preferred tourism destination by creating and communicating a strong brand in the minds of potential tourists. The findings will help these government agencies make such decisions based on the information provided by this research. By this, Ghana would be able to accrue the benefits of a positive nation brand and remain competitive in the global environment.

Moreover, a strong nation brand has benefits beyond the tourism sector. If the government and its agencies understand how to build a positive image of Ghana through communication, that image will also impact other areas, such as trade and foreign investment.

Also, the research is significant because it contributes to the body of knowledge on nation branding by exploring how strategic communication can be used to build a strong national brand. The importance of building a strong nation brand has received considerable attention, and this research fills the gap by providing insights into how this can be achieved through strategic communication. The findings of this research will also serve as the basis for further research into the phenomenon.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

Strategic communication is a vital aspect of shaping people's perceptions to create a positive image and reputation. However, the concept of nation branding cannot be achieved solely through strategic communication. Nevertheless, this research examines nation branding from a strategic communication perspective. This is because a nation that does not communicate its brand to its stakeholders will not benefit much from it.

Also, the research limits the study of nation branding to tourism promotion. This is because the tourism industry has become very competitive, and potential tourists' perceptions of a nation determine their choice.

The study is limited to Ghana, and its strategic communication targets building a strong national image in the minds of international tourists, whose visits to Ghana contribute massively to the nation's finances.

1.8 Justification of the Study

The study of how strategic communication can be used to promote nation branding and tourism in Ghana is relevant at this time. The National Medium-Term Development Policy Framework (NMTDPM), aimed at improving the tourism industry by providing opportunities and creating prosperity for all, was developed to guide MOTAC's activities from 2018 to 2021 (MOTAC,

2019). Some objectives of the policy were to expand the tourism industry, boost Ghana's local and international image, and create a competitive industry (MOTAC, 2019, pg.7).

The election of a new government may lead to the formulation of a new policy framework or a revision of the existing one. Therefore, a key justification for this study is that the new or revised policy would incorporate the study's findings and develop a more effective strategy to promote Ghana's tourism industry.

Also, in terms of budget allocation for the tourism industry, based on the policy direction, the study would ensure significant funding for building Ghana's image and reputation through strategic communication. This justifies the need for the study at this time.

1.9 Organisation of the Study

The research will be organised in five (5) chapters. The first chapter will introduce the study by providing background and outlining the problem the research seeks to solve. The chapter will also present the research objectives and questions that will guide the study. The chapter will further demonstrate the importance and justification of the study, alongside other sections.

The second chapter will review the relevant literature and discuss the perspectives of other scholars. The chapter will also discuss theories related to the research and its significance.

Chapter three (3) will explain the research's methodological approach. The chapter will explain the research approach and design to be used. The population, sampling technique, sample size, and data collection techniques will also be captured in this chapter.

The fourth chapter will present the findings from the data collected from research participants. These findings will be discussed in relation to the questions the research seeks to answer.

Chapter five (5) is the final chapter, which concludes the research and discusses the study's limitations. Based on the findings, this chapter will also make recommendations for further research and practice.

1.10 Operational Definitions

Key Terms: nation branding, strategic communication, tourism, and framework.

Corporate/ Product Branding: Corporate branding is the process of using a name, term, symbol, design, or a combination of these to influence people's perceptions of a brand and differentiate it from competitors (Chea, 2024).

Nation branding: The study adopts the definition provided by Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis (2022) which stated that nation branding is "a systematic process of involving public and private sectors to design a branding strategy for the nation, communicate the nation's core values and national identity, and apply branding tactics to promote a nation's image, improve the country's reputation among all different audiences, differentiate a nation from other nations and reach economic, social, political, business and international gains."

Strategic communication: Strategic communication is a continuous process of carefully identifying and segmenting audiences, through research and purposefully tailoring communication efforts to each segment to achieve a specific goal, in this case, the goal of nation branding (Leiserowitz et al. 2021; Hallahan et al., 2007).

Tourism: According to UNWTO (2008), "tourism is a social, cultural and economic phenomenon which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes."

Framework: A framework is a well-structured presentation of unambiguous concepts and insights, based on which a problem can be addressed, and it serves as a foundation or blueprint for further enquiries and explanations (Luck, 2001).

1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the research background, outlined the research problem, objectives, and questions and highlighted the significance, scope and justification for the study. Key terms relevant to the study were also defined to guide understanding in subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Introduction

The chapter discusses the theoretical framework and its relevance to the study. The chapter also reviews literature primarily focused on nation branding, tourism, and strategic communication. By synthesising perspectives from the existing literature, the chapter provides a conceptual and theoretical foundation for the research.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework discusses the theory that supports the research. Discussed in this section are the stakeholder theory and the customer-based brand equity theory (CBBE). This section also demonstrates the relevance of each theory to the research.

2.2.1 Stakeholder theory

Changes in the organisational environment prompted Edward Freeman and subsequent scholars to advance the stakeholder theory as a means of sustaining organisational relevance amid shifting external conditions (Freeman et al., 2010). Developed as both a managerial and ethical framework, the stakeholder theory sought to promote value creation for organisations and their stakeholders while addressing moral concerns associated with the prevailing capitalist system (Freeman et al., 2010).

Stakeholder theory holds that every organisation engages parties who affect or are affected by its decisions and activities (Mahajan et al., 2023). Accordingly, the theory argues that managerial decisions must account for the interests and potential impacts on diverse stakeholder groups. This orientation underscores the need to evaluate strategic choices from stakeholders' viewpoints while

simultaneously advancing organisational value, thereby facilitating the co-creation of value among customers, shareholders, employees, and various interest groups.

The theory further recognises that stakeholder interests are heterogeneous and dynamic (Mahajan et al., 2023). Organisations are therefore expected to identify, interpret, and manage evolving stakeholder expectations (Harrison, 2019). When conflicts arise among major stakeholder groups, stakeholder theory emphasises the importance of prioritisation to reconcile competing claims and address the concerns of the most influential or affected constituencies (Harrison, 2019).

Given the diversity of stakeholder groups, the theory distinguishes between primary and secondary stakeholders (Freeman et al., 2010). Primary stakeholders possess strong legitimacy due to their direct influence on organisational survival, while secondary stakeholders—though less central—warrant continuous monitoring because their legitimacy and influence may shift over time (Friedman & Miles, 2002; Mahajan et al., 2023).

As a normative theory concerned with how organisations ought to conduct ethical and inclusive stakeholder relations, stakeholder theory has been widely applied across disciplines (Freeman et al., 2010). It also provides a conceptual foundation for nation branding research, as nations similarly function as complex organisations comprising diverse stakeholder groups (Nobre & Sousa, 2022; Stipriaan et al., 2023). This alignment situates stakeholder theory as a relevant framework for understanding nation brand building.

Stakeholder theory explains how nations can manage the expectations of internal and external audiences through processes of value co-creation (Friedman & Miles, 2002). Kusraeva (2023) argues that nation branding fundamentally involves shaping and managing perceptions among key

stakeholder groups, which accords with the theory's principle that prioritising stakeholders can strengthen national image.

Furthermore, stakeholder theory underscores the need to monitor shifting perceptions among internal and external stakeholders (Li & Feng, 2022b). Because such perceptions are fluid rather than static, continuous assessment is essential for effective nation brand building (Anholt, 2011). Consequently, changes in stakeholder expectations or evaluations should prompt strategic adjustments to preserve or enhance a nation's image, or to mitigate negative perceptions (Yana Mbeni et al., 2025).

2.2.2 Relevance of the Stakeholder theory

The stakeholder theory is relevant to this study because the concept of nation branding requires dealing with various stakeholders, as indicated by Kusraeva et al. (2023). The expectations and interests of these stakeholders should be considered in building a strong brand for Ghana (Ahmed et al., 2022). As suggested by stakeholder theory, these stakeholders contribute to the success or otherwise of nation branding efforts, and Ghana's ability to identify its primary and secondary stakeholders will go a long way toward supporting these efforts.

Also, stakeholder theory is relevant to this study because it explains that stakeholders have varied, often opposed interests. Even though nation branding requires attention to the varied interests of these stakeholders, stakeholder theory suggests that countries should manage them and focus on those stakeholders who are key to the nation's branding efforts. In effect, some stakeholders need to be prioritised in Ghana's nation branding efforts over others.

The stakeholder theory is also relevant to the study because the theory posits that the effective management of stakeholders requires that countries analyse things from the stakeholder's point of

view, which is termed ‘stakeholder thinking’ (Mahajan et al., 2023). This explains that strategic communication to build a positive reputation must be addressed, not from the nation's viewpoint but from the stakeholder’s perspective. As such, communication messages should be crafted with the stakeholder in mind, understanding what will appeal to them. Hence, the stakeholder theory provides guidance on how stakeholders should be identified, managed, and communicated with in nation branding efforts.

2.2.3 Customer-based brand equity theory

According to Keller (1993), customer-based brand equity (CBBE) is defined as “the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand.” This implies that a customer’s response to a brand’s activities is based on what they know about the brand. As such, customers react positively when they have a strong, unique, and positive perception of the brand (Keller, 1993). The CBBE theory also suggests that the sustained success of a brand’s initiative depends on brand knowledge, comprising two elements: brand awareness and brand image (Nguyen Viet & Nguyen Anh, 2021).

The CBBE theory holds that, though two brands may share similarities, a brand's ability to communicate its unique attributes contributes to its success (Keller, 1993). The communication of these unique attributes creates certain positive perceptions of the brand in customers' minds, leading them to prefer one brand over others (Nguyen Viet & Nguyen Anh, 2021).

According to the CBBE theory, responses to the brand's marketing activities, either favourable or otherwise, depend on brand knowledge (Keller, 1993). In other words, there is a correlation between brand knowledge and customer response. Therefore, the more favourable the knowledge the more effective the marketing efforts.

Empirical research indicates a clear relationship between the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) theory and nation branding, particularly in how nation brand awareness motivates potential audiences to seek information, develop perceptions, and ultimately engage with the nation's cultural, economic, or tourism-related offerings (Liu et al., 2017). Awareness of a nation's identity functions as an initial cue that shapes how external audiences interpret the nation's relevance and influence (Chea, 2024). Consistent with the CBBE framework, a nation's capacity to communicate distinctive brand associations enables stakeholders to recognise the nation more readily and form favourable, meaningful, and salient associations (Keller, 1993). These associations, in turn, enhance the likelihood that the nation will be included in target audiences' consideration sets, thereby strengthening overall nation brand equity (Liu et al., 2017).

2.2.4 Relevance of the CBBE theory to the study

The customer-based brand equity (CBBE) theory is pertinent to this study as it elucidates the link between brand awareness generated through strategic communication and its consequent influence on tourism promotion. According to the CBBE framework, the development of nation brand equity requires that target audiences recognise the nation, associate it with distinctive and favourable attributes, form coherent perceptions, and ultimately include it in their consideration set when selecting a tourism destination. In this context, the theory provides a solid conceptual foundation for examining how strategic communication can shape Ghana's nation brand and enhance its attractiveness as a tourism destination, thereby grounding the study's focus on nation branding for tourism promotion.

2.3 Conceptual review

This section examines scholarly literature on nation branding and strategic communication for promoting tourism in Ghana. The different perspectives presented by scholars help clarify the problem and explore it further.

2.3.1 Nation branding

Branding, traditionally associated with the corporate sector, refers to the use of intangible assets, such as names, symbols, designs, or combinations of them, to differentiate one product or organisation from another (Chea, 2024). In corporate settings, branding leverages visual and aesthetic elements, such as colour and symbolism, to influence consumer perceptions and behaviour. Through this process, products and services become identifiable, enhancing market differentiation and customer loyalty.

Branding, as a strategic tool, is widely adopted by organisations to establish a unique identity and competitive advantage. According to Chea (2024), corporate branding serves as an intangible asset that enables organisations to stand out in increasingly saturated markets. Observation of market trends reveals that organisations have successfully captured a significant market share by differentiating their products or services from existing competitors through branding. Although Keller (1993) stated that corporate organisations use aesthetics such as colour, symbols, and text styles to influence consumer behaviour and purchase decisions, Anholt (2011) stated that manipulation is sometimes used to gain such an advantage.

In recent decades, the principles of branding have been extended beyond corporate entities to include nations, ushering in the concept of "nation branding." The term "nation branding" is widely attributed to Simon Anholt, who first conceptualised it in 1996 (Anholt, 2011). Nation branding refers to the intentional and strategic application of branding techniques by a country to enhance

its international image and reputation (Kusraeva, 2023). In effect, the central goal of nation branding is to manage how a country is perceived by global audiences, thereby improving its standing and influence on the world stage.

Li and Feng (2022a) define nation branding as a collaborative effort among governments, public relations firms, and other stakeholders aimed at creating and projecting a favourable international reputation, often to boost a country's global competitiveness. Similarly, Ahmed et al. (2022) conceptualise nation branding as the strategic application of branding and marketing communications to reshape or enhance a country's global image. The need for such efforts has intensified due to globalisation, which has blurred national boundaries and intensified competition for resources, investment, and influence (Kusraeva, 2023; Nobre & Sousa, 2022).

Academic attention to nation branding has evolved in response to efforts to distinguish it from related concepts such as product branding, place branding, and destination branding (Anholt, 2011; Ahmed et al., 2022; Li & Feng, 2022a). While product branding focuses on differentiating goods and services in the marketplace, nation branding aims to shape and improve a country's international reputation. Nonetheless, both forms of branding ultimately seek to gain a competitive edge, whether in commerce or global diplomacy.

Anholt (2011) indicated that a clear definition of nation branding became necessary due to efforts to impose corporate branding principles onto nation branding, without fully considering the broader social, political, and cultural dimensions involved. While both share the objective of reputation enhancement, the mechanisms and stakeholders involved in each differ significantly. One key distinction between nation branding and corporate branding lies in the flexibility and control associated with corporate branding. Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis (2022) note that corporations can reposition, modify, or withdraw products and services, pointing to the relative

ease of corporate branding or rebranding. In contrast, nation branding is inherently more complex because a nation cannot be 'rebranded' in the same straightforward manner.

Kusraeva (2023) highlights another point of difference: the diversity and large number of stakeholders involved in nation branding. Unlike corporations, which typically operate under centralised leadership, nation branding involves a wide array of key players, including government agencies, private institutions, citizens, and international bodies. This complexity requires a nuanced and strategic approach to nation branding. Anholt (2011) argues that analysing a country's current global position and aspirations is key to effective branding. A thorough assessment of a country's status and goals is essential in nation branding efforts.

The emphasis on reputation management in nation branding suggests that negative perceptions of a country can have far-reaching, damaging consequences for its image and international relations. Oluwafunmilayo et al. (2022) argued that the foundation of any nation branding effort must be a clearly articulated policy framework that signals the country's commitment to enhancing its reputation. In this regard, the government plays a managerial and enabling role by setting policy directions, coordinating stakeholder involvement, and allocating resources (Kusraeva, 2023).

Moreover, Ahmed et al. (2022) emphasise the importance of long-term strategic planning in nation branding. They advocate establishing a dedicated board composed of experts in reputation management and strategic communication to oversee the formulation and execution of branding initiatives. Such a body would ensure continuity and coherence in branding efforts, beyond the scope of political cycles. However, Li and Feng (2022a) cautioned that excessive government control may marginalise other key stakeholders, such as private sector actors and civil society, whose contributions are equally essential to the authenticity and success of the nation brand. A

collaborative approach that incorporates diverse perspectives and expertise is therefore critical to ensuring that nation branding efforts are both inclusive and sustainable.

2.3.2 Nation Branding in Africa

Despite the growing body of literature on nation branding, a systematic review by Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis (2022) underscores the limited scholarly attention to Africa in this field. This gap is particularly significant given the potential implications of nation branding for emerging economies. As Olusegun and Olaniyi (2022) argued, increased academic attention to nation branding in African contexts could yield substantial benefits, particularly in areas such as tourism development, economic growth, and sustainable nation-building.

Nobre and Sousa (2022) further reinforced the strategic role nation branding can play in enhancing a country's global competitiveness and shaping its long-term developmental trajectory. The case of Africa is particularly relevant in discussions on nation branding, given the continent's longstanding struggle with negative global perceptions rooted in its complex historical trajectory. These perceptions, often shaped by colonial legacies, socio-political instability, and generalised narratives, continue to influence how African countries are viewed internationally.

As Oluwafunmilayo et al. (2022) noted, such stereotypes lack uniformity but manifest in different forms across different African countries. For instance, Nigeria is frequently associated with cybercrime and corruption, while South Africa's international image remains partially shadowed by the legacy of apartheid. Nevertheless, the latter has demonstrated progress in repositioning its global reputation through targeted branding efforts (Oluwafunmilayo et al., 2022).

For instance, South Africa's successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the first for the continent, is frequently cited as a pivotal achievement that contributed to repositioning the

country's image globally (Olusegun & Olaniyi, 2022). Similarly, Ghana's 2019 'Year of Return' campaign served as a culturally resonant initiative that engaged the African diaspora while enhancing the country's global visibility (Adu-Ampong & Dilette, 2023).

Despite these isolated successes, the challenge of nation branding across Africa is compounded by fragmented efforts. Olusegun and Olaniyi (2022) argue that many African countries operate in isolation, seeking to construct distinct national brands rather than collaborating to foster a cohesive continental image. This lack of collective identity points to the need for 'continent branding', which depicts a unified strategic framework that projects Africa's strengths while accounting for its diversity. Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essoussi (2015) contend that negative stereotypes often associated with Africa, such as poverty, war, and corruption, have a spill-over effect, impacting the reputations of individual nations irrespective of their actual performance.

Importantly, not all external perceptions of Africa are negative. Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essoussi (2015) observed that Africa is increasingly viewed as an emerging outsourcing hub, largely due to its young and dynamic population. Ghana, in particular, is often recognised for its political stability and the warmth and hospitality of its people (Mensah, 2021). More broadly, the continent is celebrated for its rich cultural heritage, historical depth, and untapped economic potential (Olusegun & Olaniyi, 2022). These positive associations provide fertile ground for reshaping Africa's image through deliberate branding strategies.

The coexistence of both positive and negative perceptions creates a complex branding environment. As Wijaya et al. (2023) note, the image of a nation is both shaped by and reflective of the larger continental narrative. Therefore, the reputation of individual countries contributes to and is influenced by the broader perception of Africa as a whole (Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015). This is compounded by the widespread misconception among global audiences

that Africa is a monolithic entity rather than a continent of diverse and sovereign states. This underscores the necessity for national branding strategies that are sensitive to and informed by continental-level narratives.

A core challenge lies in reconciling the image that a nation seeks to project with how it is actually perceived. Li and Feng (2022a) argued that this disjunction can only be addressed through approaches that move beyond image management to include sustained relationship-building with key publics. Similarly, Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis (2022) emphasised the role of strategic engagement in shaping external perceptions. Anholt (2024) added that effective nation branding requires public education initiatives that inform global audiences about a country's history, people, and values, thereby enabling more nuanced and informed understandings.

Africa's historical and cultural narratives, while rich and multifaceted, are often underrepresented or misrepresented in international discourse. Wijaya et al. (2023) highlighted that political and cultural perceptions significantly influence the success or failure of branding efforts. For countries with historically negative reputations, rebranding is an essential step toward perception management (Anholt, 2024). Ghana, for example, has leveraged its longstanding political stability as a competitive advantage within the region (Braumah et al., 2024), suggesting that reputation-building can be grounded in tangible governance outcomes.

Ultimately, strategic communication emerges as a critical tool in the nation branding efforts of African countries (Yana Mbena et al., 2025). The coexistence of both favourable and unfavourable perceptions presents both opportunities and challenges. As such, Africa's branding efforts require a context-specific, strategic approach and one that simultaneously addresses prevailing stereotypes while amplifying positive narratives (Oluwafunmilayo et al., 2022). A nuanced, collaborative, and

communication-driven branding strategy is thus essential to reshape how Africa and its nations are perceived on the global stage.

2.3.3 Nation Branding and Tourism

Tourism, as defined by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2008), is a multifaceted phenomenon encompassing social, cultural, and economic dimensions and involves the movement of people to locations outside their usual environments for leisure or business purposes. Within this context, nation branding plays a pivotal role in enhancing tourism by shaping the perceptions that influence tourist behaviour and destination choice. A strong and coherent nation brand can significantly contribute to the growth of the tourism industry and its affiliated sectors.

According to Wijaya et al. (2023), tourists are often driven by the desire to experience different cultures, and their perceptions of a country's cultural identity directly influence nation branding outcomes. Consequently, it is essential for countries such as Ghana to continuously monitor and manage their external image. Nobre and Sousa (2022) argue that a country's image is a critical factor in tourists' destination selection. They further argue that cultural heritage serves as a strategic asset for cultivating a compelling national image, reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between nation branding and tourism promotion.

Nation branding enables the synthesis of various marketing and communication strategies into a unified narrative that differentiates a country from its competitors (Wijaya et al., 2023). Ghana, for example, has derived substantial economic benefits from tourism, particularly through foreign exchange earnings (Dineri et al., 2024). The international perception of Ghanaians as hospitable people has contributed to the country's desirability as a tourist destination (Mensah et al., 2025). However, Ahmed et al. (2022) cautioned that these perceptions must be continually assessed and

adapted to sustain a competitive and credible brand. Over time, a well-established nation brand not only attracts more visitors but can also serve as a benchmark for branding practices across the region (Chea, 2024).

While the state and its agencies are instrumental in steering nation branding efforts, Nobre and Sousa (2022) highlight potential challenges, including the tension between top-down branding strategies and the authenticity of local communities. Sustainable tourism development must involve key stakeholders, particularly local communities, to ensure that tourism initiatives enhance, rather than erode, cultural integrity and ecological sustainability. Ahmed et al. (2022) emphasised that internal systems must be deliberately developed to support local engagement, which, in turn, fosters a more resilient and reputable national brand.

Moreover, the ethics of nation branding in tourism require careful consideration. As Li and Feng (2022a) argued, disingenuous or propagandist strategies may yield short-term gains but ultimately damage a country's credibility and long-term reputation. Effective nation branding must therefore be grounded in truthfulness and authenticity. Anholt (2011) underscores that nations gain international respect not merely through self-promotion but by making meaningful contributions to global issues.

Sustainability, now a central concern in tourism, has become a defining factor in reputation building. For countries like Ghana, rich in heritage sites, adopting and communicating sustainable tourism practices is essential. Ahmed et al. (2022) noted that countries demonstrating commitment to sustainability are more likely to enhance their international image and reputation.

In addition, sports tourism has emerged as a powerful tool for brand-building. Li and Feng (2022b) document how nations such as China and South Africa have strategically leveraged international

sporting events to shape global perceptions. The 2008 Africa Cup of Nations, hosted in Ghana, serves as a regional example of how tourism and cultural exchange were effectively combined. Countries now actively seek to host international sporting events to reinforce their brand narratives and increase international visibility.

Similarly, nations like the United Arab Emirates have successfully positioned themselves as global hubs for both business and leisure tourism through deliberate branding strategies (Ahmed et al., 2022). These examples illustrate the reciprocal relationship between tourism and nation branding, each reinforcing the other. However, Kusraeva (2023) cautioned against adopting a one-size-fits-all approach; nation branding strategies must be context-specific, evidence-based, and aligned with national visions and capacities. Overall, nation branding in the tourism context must involve the development and implementation of tailored, research-informed strategies that reflect a country's unique attributes and aspirations.

2.3.4 Tourism in Ghana

Tourism has significantly benefited different countries. According to Yana Mbena et al. (2025), the tourism industry brings significant economic benefits by creating jobs, increasing employment, and boosting exports. For example, Ghana's tourism sector created 550,000 jobs, which increased to 602,425 in 2018 (MOTAC, 2019). Emerging economies like Ghana have benefited from tourism due to these advantages. According to Adu-Ampong and Mensah (2021), tourism is the fourth-largest generator of foreign exchange, after gold, cocoa, and remittances.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected the tourism industry in Ghana and the rest of the world. Consequently, Ghana experienced an 87.81% decline in tourist arrivals in 2020 as compared to 2019 (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2024). The percentage indicates the extent of the pandemic's adverse impact on Ghana's tourism industry. Despite the pandemic's negative effects,

Mohammed et al. (2021) asserted that Ghana's tourism industry was projected to attract approximately 4 million international visitors, generating an estimated annual revenue of \$8 billion.

Ghana has, over the years, positioned itself as a desired tourism destination in West Africa (Mensah, 2024), with international tourist arrivals projected to increase by 3% to 5% in 2025. According to Statista (2024), the United States of America (USA), Nigeria, and the United Kingdom (UK) constitute the highest number of tourist arrivals in Ghana. Ghana's tourism data further indicates that in 2024 alone, approximately 1.4 billion international tourists visited Ghana, depicting the country's recovery from the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on its tourism industry (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2024).

Ghana has rolled out tourism initiatives, such as the See Ghana, Eat Ghana, Wear Ghana and Feel Ghana (MOTAC, 2019); Year of Return, Beyond the Return, and December in Gh (Mensah, 2021). According to Adu-Ampong and Dillette (2023), Ghana's Year of Return in 2019 (YOR'19) was one of the country's most successful tourism initiatives, attracting 1.3 million international visitors into the country. Also, the December in Gh initiative currently positions Ghana as the preferred destination in December due to the variety of programs held in the month, such as Afrochella and Detty December (Ghana Tourism Authority, 2024).

The success of Ghana's tourism industry can be attributed to a number of factors, including the country's rich cultural heritage (Kwarteng-Amaniampong et al., 2025), the consistent political stability, and the strategic engagement of the diaspora community (Mensah, 2021). Mensah et al. (2025) postulate that Ghana's positive reviews on various online sites depict the perception people have of Ghana, which has also contributed to the success of its tourism industry.

Despite these contributing factors to Ghana's tourism sector, existing literature also highlights some challenges that have impeded the realisation of Ghana's full tourism potential. For example, Amoako et al. (2021) highlighted the lack of infrastructural development, minimal attention to domestic tourism, and poor customer service as challenges to Ghana's tourism industry. Adu-Ampong and Dillette (2023) further noted that Ghana's poor maintenance culture, high illiteracy rate, and inability to address misinformation constitute a barrier to Ghana's tourism industry. Therefore, Ghana's ability to address these challenges will enhance the country's brand and create a positive global image.

2.3.5 Strategic Communication

Strategic communication is an essential component of nation branding, particularly in tourism promotion. Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis (2022) argued that strategic communication is central to shaping public perceptions, aligning brand messaging, and engaging diverse stakeholders. According to Hallahan et al. (2007), strategic communication is the purposeful conveyance of a message to achieve a specific goal. Sandhu (2009) similarly defined strategic communication as an organisation's decision to communicate purposefully to achieve a specific goal.

Zerfass et al. (2018) also defined strategic communication as "the purposeful use of communication by an organisation or other entity to engage in conversations of strategic significance to its goals." Though Hallahan et al. (2007) and Sandhu (2009) described strategic communication as purposeful communication, Zerfass et al. (2018) argued that purposeful communication is not necessarily strategic, as everyday conversations can be aimed at achieving a specific purpose. Therefore, countries that aim to build a strong national brand need to communicate strategically to achieve that purpose (Rojas-Méndez & Khoshnevis, 2022).

Despite the varied definitions of strategic communication, these scholars agree that it is tailored messaging to specific audiences to achieve a goal. These scholars (Hallahan et al., 2007; Zerfass et al., 2018; Sandhu, 2009) also contend that communication should be dialogic, fostering shared meaning between the sender and recipient of the message. Technological advancements, such as digital and social media tools and platforms, have made two-way communication easier (Mohammed et al., 2024).

The proliferation of these digital media tools and platforms offers countries an effective way to build a strong brand internally and externally (Kusraeva, 2023). The use of digital channels enables nations to effectively reach different external audiences, with messages tailored to each segment (Gordeladze & Molodini, 2021). However, Li and Feng (2022a) noted that selecting a communication channel should be based on the nation branding goal and an analysis of the target audience.

Similarly, Pöyry et al. (2021) explained that when used purposefully, social media can effectively target segmented audiences. For instance, Rwanda's strategic use of digital platforms to live-stream its "Kwita Izina", a gorilla naming ceremony, positioned the country within global sustainability conversations, thereby enhancing its national brand (Mustafa et al., 2024; Anholt, 2011).

The digitalisation of global communication has amplified the role of strategic communication in nation branding. The proliferation of digital and social media has intensified competition between countries due to the reach these channels offer (Mustafa et al., 2024). As Hallahan et al. (2007) observed, the rapid circulation of information significantly shapes how nations are perceived. Social media platforms, in particular, offer an accessible and cost-effective tool for real-time engagement and perception management (Mensah, 2024).

Beyond digital media, broader technological advancements also influence how countries project their image. While African nations have made strides in digital innovation (Papadopoulos & Hamzaoui-Essousi, 2015), challenges such as limited internet access continue to disadvantage them (Mustafa et al., 2024). Emerging technologies such as virtual and augmented reality are increasingly used by developed nations to create immersive branding experiences, a trend African countries are yet to fully leverage (Mustafa et al., 2024).

Yet, the strategic use of digital media is not without ethical considerations. Pöyry et al. (2021) cautioned against the dissemination of misinformation or exaggerated narratives, as such narratives can backfire and harm a country's credibility. Also, content posted by citizens can bolster or undermine official branding efforts. Furthermore, the inconsistent impact of Ghana's tourism campaigns, such as "Beyond the Return," "Visit Ghana," and "December in Gh", suggests the absence of a clearly defined communication framework. As Braimah et al. (2024) noted, tourist return rates are often influenced by the original motivations and experiences, emphasising the need for sustained, strategic communication.

Strategic communication, therefore, must be grounded in audience-specific insights. Hallahan et al. (2017) argued that successful communication hinges on intentionality and clarity of purpose. Countries like South Africa have employed such strategies effectively to recover from historically negative reputations (Oluwafunmilayo et al., 2022). Kusraeva (2023) added that communication strategies should align with branding objectives, underscoring the importance of understanding the target audience and the desired brand positioning (Leiserowitz et al., 2021).

Stipriaan et al. (2023) also argued that African countries such as Ghana can leverage their historical and cultural assets to build distinctive brands. Cultural symbols such as 'Adinkra' and 'Gye Nyame', according to Kwarteng-Amaniampong et al. (2025), can serve as communicative tools that embody

Ghanaian values and identity. However, Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essousi (2015) cautioned that cultural communication must be approached with sensitivity, as effective messaging requires shared meaning between sender and receiver.

Ultimately, developing a national brand, particularly in tourism, requires a strategic communication framework tailored to a country's specific context. Despite its many strengths, Ghana's inconsistent tourism outcomes reflect a gap in strategic communication. This study, therefore, aims to address this gap by proposing a structured communication model to enhance nation branding and tourism promotion in Ghana.

2.4 Chapter Summary

The chapter discussed stakeholder theory and customer-based brand equity theory, and their relevance to the study. The chapter also analysed literature related to strategic communication, nation branding, and tourism. The literature review highlights diverse arguments from other scholars related to the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter Introduction

The chapter discusses the research methodology used for the study. The goal of the study is to analyse the effectiveness of Ghana's communication strategy and develop a strategic communication framework to build Ghana's national brand for tourism promotion. The chapter discusses the approach and design used. The chapter also provides an overview of the sampling strategy, data collection technique, and the analysis procedures used in the study. It also offers insights into the ethical considerations employed in conducting the qualitative research.

3.2 Research Paradigm and Philosophical Assumptions

The study's aim is to analyse the effectiveness of Ghana's communication strategy in building its national brand for tourism promotion. The nature of the study, therefore, aligns with the social constructivist paradigm.

The social constructivism paradigm is deemed appropriate for the study because it aligns with the belief that reality is socially constructed through human experiences, interactions, and interpretations (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Unlike positivism, which assumes a single objective reality, the social constructivist paradigm is employed because it effectively answers research questions that require responses from branding professionals and tourism industry players in Ghana, among others, needed to achieve the research objectives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Based on the constructivist paradigm that underpins the study, the ontology guiding the research is grounded in the existence of multiple realities (Rashid & Al-Bargi, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These multiple realities will be solicited from the research participants detailed in the report.

Also, the epistemological philosophy indicates the nature of knowledge acquisition. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the constructivist paradigm holds that knowledge derived from research participants is interpreted subjectively by both the researcher and the participants. Therefore, the knowledge gained will be co-created through dialogue.

According to Creswell (2014), axiology indicates the influence of values in a study. Underpinned by the constructivist paradigm, the study's axiology indicates that the researcher's values and biases will impact the interpretation of the research findings. Though steps will be taken to ensure the study's trustworthiness and credibility, the researcher's values will influence how the findings are interpreted and presented.

3.3 Research Approach

The research employed a qualitative approach aligned with the study's aim to develop a strategic communication framework for nation branding to promote tourism in Ghana. The development of a communication framework was informed by answers to the research questions, which sought to explore and analyse Ghana's current communication strategies in its nation branding efforts. This indicates the appropriateness of the qualitative research approach due to the study's nature.

Also, the qualitative approach employed by the study is deemed suitable because the depth of information needed to achieve the study's goal requires a qualitative enquiry, which a quantitative approach would not adequately explore (Creswell, 2014). To adequately answer the research questions, it is necessary to solicit insights and perspectives from people involved in nation brand building, strategic communicators, and key tourism industry players (Anani-Bossman & Bruce, 2022). Therefore, a qualitative inquiry allowed the researcher to gather rich descriptive insights into how communication and branding professionals perceive and practice nation branding.

3.4 Research Design

The study employed the case study design. The case study design is a qualitative research strategy that allows the investigation of a phenomenon within a certain boundary (Creswell & Báez, 2020). The case study design explores the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of a phenomenon within its natural context to have a detailed understanding (Creswell & Báez, 2020).

The case study design was suitable for the study because the study’s purpose to analyse the effectiveness of Ghana’s communication in nation brand building was situated within Ghana’s tourism industry. This ensured that multiple perspectives were sourced from different participants. The appropriateness of the case study design was also premised on synthesising the findings into a strategic communication framework, which required an in-depth understanding of Ghana’s current communication practices.

3.5 Study Population

Population indicates the individuals or groups from which information is collected to answer the research questions and achieve the study’s objectives (Creswell, 2014). Clearly defining a study’s population helps to select the most appropriate participants to provide relevant information on strategic communication for nation branding to promote tourism in Ghana.

Therefore, the participants in this study comprised communication professionals operating in the tourism industry, nation-brand communication experts within key government agencies, private-sector tourism operators, brand scholars in the academic field, and industry brand professionals. This population was critical to the study because nation branding involves a collaboration between the government and other stakeholders (Li & Feng, 2022a; Rojas-Méndez & Khoshnevis, 2022; Oluwafunmilayo et al., 2022).

Also, these professionals were primary actors responsible for strategic communication in nation branding, while the others were experts in strategic brand building. This best positioned them to offer insights into current practices, effectiveness, challenges, and how Ghana could apply branding principles to enhance its image and reputation.

3.6 Sampling

The study employed the purposive sampling technique. Sampling involves the deliberate selection of participants who met predefined criteria aligned with the research's objectives (Creswell & Báez, 2020). This approach was well-suited to the study because it ensured that participants understood and could meaningfully explain Ghana's current nation branding efforts and its brand communication strategies within the tourism industry, analysed its strengths and shortcomings, and provided actionable recommendations on how Ghana can build a strong national brand for tourism promotion.

To supplement this, snowball sampling was used to identify additional participants recommended by initial participants involved in Ghana's nation-brand building efforts (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The combined sampling strategy broadened access to experts knowledgeable in Ghana's nation branding activities, as well as other professionals whose insights were pivotal to the study but were not initially targeted.

The study, situated within the tourism industry, required data collection from the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Creative Arts (MOTCCA), which has 13 implementing agencies. Among these 13 agencies, the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) and Ghana Tourism Development Company (GTDC) directly contribute to enhancing Ghana's national image and reputation because they play a vital role in policy formulation and implement tourism-promotion strategies. Also, the

Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) was sampled due to its involvement in nation branding efforts. The depth of information required to answer the research questions necessitated sampling private sector tourism operators, brand scholars in the academic field, and industry professionals.

Their insights and expertise in various fields ensured a detailed strategic communication framework for nation branding to promote the tourism industry. Therefore, the purposive and snowball sampling employed ensured a fair representation of these agencies and experts, enabling comprehensive insights into how Ghana's national brand can be built to promote the tourism industry (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

3.7 Sample Size

Sample size refers to a subset of a larger population selected for a study and should be sufficiently adequate to address the research objectives and achieve the study's purpose (Qu & Dumay, 2011). The study purposefully sampled ten (10) participants across different agencies and academic disciplines. The sample size was deemed adequate because Creswell and Poth (2018) noted that a minimum of 5 participants would yield in-depth information research. The snowball strategy yielded divergent perspectives from participants, but the study reached data saturation by the tenth participant, indicating that no new insights were gained from their responses (Kallio et al., 2016).

3.8 Sources of Data

The research utilised both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from research participants to obtain in-depth information needed to achieve the research objectives. Despite the different methods of primary data collection, such as focus group discussions, interviews, and observations, the study employed the interview method.

Secondary data was also sourced from academic publications, books and news articles. Also, some statistics and information were sourced from the official websites of recognised bodies, including the UNWTO and the MoTCCA. The secondary data provided the context on Ghana's tourism and branding policies. Furthermore, the secondary data strengthened the research's credibility by comparing primary data with official records and existing studies.

3.9 Data Collection Method

Data collection methods are strategies for soliciting information about a phenomenon, and the study employed a semi-structured interview method because of its qualitative approach (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). Semi-structured interviews ensured a one-on-one discussion devoid of other participants' influence, which is the case in focus group discussions (Anani-Bossman & Bruce, 2022). Also, semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to comprehensively explore Ghana's nation branding activities and their effectiveness by asking follow-up questions without deviating from the research's objectives (Qu & Dumay, 2011). This, therefore, allowed for both consistency and flexibility (Nutsugah & Senanu, 2024).

The researcher developed an interview guide to guide discussions with research participants. An interview guide contains a number of questions an interviewer uses to collect information from research participants (Kallio et al., 2016). It consisted of open and closed-ended questions to maintain the study's direction while allowing for flexibility (Daymon & Holloway, 2010). The interview guide was categorised into a preliminary information section, followed by questions for each research objective (Kallio et al., 2016). However, participants were further probed to clarify and explain their responses where necessary.

3.10 Data Analysis

The recorded data were transcribed, after which they were thematically analysed using MAXQDA 24. Thematic analysis is a flexible data analysis approach which involves identifying, analysing and interpreting themes within qualitatively collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The thematic analysis began with familiarisation with the data, followed by code assignment. (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Initial themes were created and reviewed (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The next phase involved defining and naming the reviewed themes (Willig & Rogers, 2017). However, each theme was discussed in relation to the research questions.

3.11 Ensuring Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility of the research findings, the strategy of triangulation and member checking was employed. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), triangulation involves collecting data from multiple sources to provide corroborating evidence. The study's aim required collecting data from multiple sources to develop effective communication strategies that will help Ghana build a strong national brand to benefit the tourism industry. Member checking was also utilised to ensure that the findings tally with the information collected from the research participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Also, a thick description of the research participants ensured the transferability of the findings to similar cases (Nowell et al., 2017). The dependability of the research findings was upheld by documenting vital information, including the transcripts and field notes (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The literature reviewed showed how some countries built their national brands through specific strategies. Based on insights from the existing literature, the researcher had expectations

about what to find. However, to ensure the study's trustworthiness, discrepant data were reported (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

3.12 Ethical Considerations

According to Creswell and Poth (2018), ethical considerations should be followed throughout the research process, not only at the point of collecting data from participants. Therefore, research approval was obtained from the research directorate of the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC). Also, the sources of information were cited in the research report, duly acknowledging their contributions.

To meet the ethical standards required for research, the research participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, and only interested participants were recruited. Participants, who at any point in the research did not wish to continue participating in the study, were allowed to withdraw. The research participants were also fully informed of how the information provided would be utilised in the presentation of the findings. To protect the data collected from participants, the data was stored on a password-protected device.

Based on the type of sample used in the study, the confidentiality of participants was maintained. As such, pseudonyms were used in the presentation of the findings, in place of their actual names. By following these ethical guidelines, the study demonstrated adherence to both institutional and broader societal expectations.

3.13 Chapter Summary

The methodology chapter explains how the constructivist paradigm underpins the study. The case study design aligns with the nature of the study. The chapter also discusses the appropriateness of collecting information through interviews from purposively sampled participants. Data were

analysed thematically, and the ethical principles of privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality guided the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis and presentation of the information collected from research participants on how strategic communication can be used to build Ghana's national brand for tourism promotion. These insights were derived from 10 voluntary participants with varied experiences. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, participants were identified by pseudonyms ranging from P1 to P10. The analysis addresses the research questions and integrates relevant literature to ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of the collected data.

4.2 Demography of Participants

The research participants comprised 9 males and 1 female with varied professional and educational backgrounds across the tourism, academia, and branding industries. In the tourism industry, some participants work in the government sector, while others are private tourism operators, industry experts, and academic scholars.

The participants also possess different years of experience in their respective fields. The diverse experience and professional and educational backgrounds of the research participants depict the depth of the findings on how strategic communication can be used for nation branding to promote tourism in Ghana. Below is a breakdown of the participants' demographics:

4.2.1 Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Participant	Gender	Educational Background	Years of experience	Sector	Position level
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P1	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate in tourism and hospitality. • Postgraduate in marketing strategy. 	20+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Sector (Government) 	Deputy C.E.O
P2	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBA- Marketing • Postgraduate in Tourism Management 	30+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Sector (Government) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deputy Executive Director
P3	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PhD in Communication 	25+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Sector (Government) • Tourism Marketing Academic Scholar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C.E.O
P4	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate in Marketing • Certificate in communication strategy 	18+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government Sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head, Marketing and Communications
P5	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Postgraduate in Marketing 	20+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic Scholar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Department-Advertising
P6	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bachelors in PR • MBA- Marketing • PhD in Tourism and Aviation Marketing 	9+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Tourism Agency • Academic Scholar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism Consultant • Lecturer
P7	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MBA- Marketing 	16+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banking Sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of Marketing Department
P8	F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree in Communication Studies • 2nd Degree in PR with Marketing 	4+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising Agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising and Branding Department
P9	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Degree in Akan and Music • 2nd Degree in Marketing Strategy 	8+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Tourism Agency • Musician 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C.E.O of Tourism Agency • Ghana's Tourism and Creative Arts Ambassador
P10	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree in Philosophy • Certificate Courses in Tourism and Hospitality 	8+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private Tourism Agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel Consultant • Administrative Staff

4.3 Definition and Relevance of Nation Branding

The data depicted the underlying definition of nation branding as a country's self-definition and the way it projects or communicates a certain identity or image to its target audiences, with the aim of managing those audiences' perceptions of the country. P1 stated:

Nation branding is essentially how a country defines, projects and manages its identity to the world. Using communication, culture, and experience to shape perceptions and transform the country's image into a living story that attracts visitors, investors, and even citizens.

P5 also noted that “Nation branding is how we position our country to the international world with purpose”, while P8 similarly conceptualized nation branding as “the systems or the communication or the things you put in place concerning the nation to create a perception about the nation.” This definition resonates with that of Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis (2022), who described the concept as the process of communicating a nation’s identity and applying branding strategies to project its image and reputation among different audiences.

P1 and P2 explained that a nation’s brand is more than the creation of taglines or slogans, thereby distinguishing corporate branding from nation branding, as explained by Anholt (2011). Anholt (2011) explained that the strategies used in branding a product or organization differ from those required for nation branding. However, Oluwafunmilayo et al. (2022) believed that corporate branding principles can be applied to nation branding, though the approach may differ.

The findings also demonstrated that nation branding would help Ghana in diverse ways, ultimately improving the country's economic situation. P9 indicated that Ghana’s ability to build a strong national brand would positively affect tourism, international relations and investment opportunities, echoing Kusraeva’s (2023) explanation that a strong and positive national brand benefits multiple sectors and industries.

Although the data established the importance of nation branding across industries, the tourism industry was considered a major beneficiary of a strong, positive nation brand. This is because the success of tourism initiatives depends on Ghana's external image, which determines the number of tourist arrivals Ghana receives and the corresponding forex it brings to the country. Researchers (Nobre & Sousa, 2022; Wijaya et al., 2023; Stipriaan et al., 2023) have noted the relevance of nation branding to the tourism industry, as it attracts visitors and generates revenue for the country.

4.4 RQ1: Strategic communication practices employed by Ghana to build a strong brand in tourism promotion

4.4.1 Event-led branding dominance

The findings depict communication practices as mostly event-driven, with Ghana's over-reliance on tourism events such as Year of Return, Beyond the Return, See Ghana, Eat Ghana, and Wear Ghana, PanaFest, and December in Gh in its nation branding efforts. P9 noted:

The See Ghana, Wear Ghana stands out... PanaFest was a great tool for branding Ghana as the hub for the diaspora... the diaspora thing they did- December in Gh.

P1 similarly stated:

And over the years, we have positioned Ghana as a preferred tourism destination through marketing initiatives such as See Ghana, Eat Ghana, Wear Ghana, Feel Ghana, and December in Gh.

P2 also explained that "events like PanaFest" have helped Ghana find "resonance with a certain market." However, P2 established that these events were not curated with nation branding in mind, but these events have "contributed to Ghana's brand," resonating with Nobre and Sousa's (2022) assertion that tourism initiatives have a significant effect on nation branding efforts, just as a strong national brand ensures the success of the tourism industry.

These insights also align with Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essoussi's (2015) assertion that events are effective nation branding strategies. Mensah (2021) further stated that countries like Ghana and Jamaica have recognized the benefits of events for nation branding and have used them strategically.

4.4.2 Inter-personal and Direct engagement

The data indicated a multifaceted approach to communicating Ghana's brand through direct marketing and personal selling at events, conferences, forums, and exhibitions. The findings also demonstrate that Ghana's involvement in international events and expos has helped build a strong, positive national brand. According to P2, "direct interactions, face-to-face engagement with stakeholders and all of that" is a key strategy used by Ghana. P1 similarly noted:

Ghana uses "public relations and event marketing, strategic marketing, participation in global expos. Every year, we attend international tourism events, including the Sea Trade in Miami, USA; the Africa Summit in Cape Town, South Africa; the Indaba in Durban, South Africa; and the ITB, an international travel trade expo in Berlin. And the Futur in Spain. We attend the World Travel Markets in the UK in November. So there are a number of strategies that we do.

This aligns with Hallahan et al.'s (2007) assertion that strategic communication should be an integrated approach to achieve the desired goal.

4.4.3 Digital storytelling and Influencer Partnership

The findings reveal that Ghana uses digital storytelling and partners with influencers and celebrities to project its image and reputation globally. P1 explained how Ghana strategically leverages these key elements to build the nation's brand:

For communication strategies, we have digital marketing, storytelling, social media, social media influencers, and so on. Creating content to engage global audiences. And recently, under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration, five big

influencers have been issued diplomatic passports to also engage. So that is another marketing strategy: to use their influence or leverage on their influences to engage the diaspora community.

P9 similarly observed Ghana's use of digital media and influencers to build the country's image but noted the approach was used only occasionally. He mentioned:

Once in a while, they bring in Wodemaya and pay him to do things for Ghana. Wodemaya is one of the biggest YouTubers in Africa. He has a lot of subscribers, so they use that as part of their digital strategy.

P8 also noted the effectiveness of digital media by indicating that, "for social media, you are reaching a very large group of people." This underscores the relevance of digital media in nation branding efforts and aligns with research by Pöyry et al. (2021), who explained that brands can use social media influencers to manage perceptions of the brand. Additionally, P8 highlighted the effectiveness of Ghana's direct engagement strategy but called for a more collaborative approach in the country's nation branding efforts. P8 illustrated:

A collaboration would work. I think personal selling works, but it works for a specific group of people. Because if you go to a conference and the conference is, for example, for minors, you will reach just minors. But on social media, you are reaching a very large audience. So a collaboration would really help.

4.4.4 Use of cultural symbols and creative arts

Another strategy Ghana uses in its nation branding efforts is to leverage Ghana's culture and creative arts to project a certain image. Kwarteng-Amaniampong et al. (2025) demonstrated the power of culture and cultural symbols to shape others' perceptions. Therefore, Ghana's infusion of culture creates a certain perception about the country. P10 noted:

...right from our airport, there is a shop where you have these local portraits, kente beads and stuff, just to let people know that this is Ghana. When you arrive, these are the things they try to educate you with, in terms of what we wear and eat.

P1 explained that Ghana's nation branding is "about aligning the culture, the people and experiences that you create for that emotional connection." P9 added that the core mandate of the tourism industry is "selling spirit and selling culture." P9 further explained how Ghana's culture is showcased by explaining that:

Every time a president or a high-profile dignitary from another country visits, they bring their cultural icons. And then, because my art form is culture and postmodern fusion, we will also show them our culture. So through culture, we also get the opportunity to sell Ghana.

P5 outlined another aspect of the culture Ghana uses by explaining that:

One of the things we did was to create more cultural dances as part of a lot of our itineraries. And we made it look African heritage. So apart from seeing the castles, we even created a cultural setting like festivals. So if we know a festival is coming, we seek permission from the tribe and take people there to experience it. For those who wanted to really connect with African culture, we created a path as part of an itinerary so they could connect with it. So we created that branded product, heritage. And it helped us sell.

The use of cultural symbolism and creative arts resonates with Anholt (2024), who noted the need for other countries to have a deep and rich understanding of the country, its citizens, and its way of doing things to build a strong national brand.

4.5 RQ2: Effectiveness of Ghana's efforts in building a coherent national brand.

4.5.1 Strong Diaspora Resonance and Global Appeal

Some participants stated that Ghana has effectively communicated a positive brand image to the African Diaspora community and countries such as the United States of America (USA), the United Kingdom (UK), and other European countries. By utilizing face-to-face or in-person channels and digital media, the communication channel has been deemed effective in reaching Ghana's diaspora audience, as explained by P3, that:

There's a sense why personal selling is working. When GTA attends exhibitions, many people visit the Ghana booth. They take photos. So you don't even need to hear it, that Ghanaian hospitality, because you're actually feeling it.

P5 also stated:

It has been advertising and personal selling. Government delegations go to the various states, churches, communities, and unions there, tell them about the programmes, and people follow up and come.

The findings align with Leiserowitz et al. (2021), who noted that strategic communication is more effective when the target audience is engaged rather than merely informed. However, P9 posited that Ghana's use of events and conferences to communicate the nation's brand has reduced effectiveness because Ghana does not organize them but only participates in both local and international events.

4.5.2 Event Campaigns driving tourism growth

The findings depict that Ghana's tourism events and participation in global events have effectively positioned the country in a positive light. Participants highlighted tourism numbers as evidence of Ghana's strategy's effectiveness. For instance, P1 noted that:

If you look at the tourism satellite account, the numbers from 2016 to today, we are 1 point something million. Post-COVID, to see if you have fully recovered, check your numbers. Currently, we are doing 1.3 million, and that is the number we were doing before COVID. So the strategies we are using are working. The numbers show that.

Similarly, P2 stated:

The tourism numbers are growing when we do a survey. The last report tells you the tourists' perceptions about Ghana, their intention to come again, and what they think about the destination. And generally, it's positive.

4.5.3 Fragmented Brand architecture weakens coherence

The data demonstrated that several agencies, including the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA), the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC), the Ghana Tourism Development Company (GTDC), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Creative Arts Agencies, collaborate to project Ghana's brand. P1 stated:

We align with other corporate agencies like the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, GIPC, Ghana Export Promotion Authority, our sister company, Ghana Tourism Development Company, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, to synchronize our tourism branding, trade and investment campaign and promotion.

P2 also mentioned:

Ideally, structurally, it's the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that is responsible for creating the image of Ghana that they want to put out there. But other agencies also feed into what the outside world thinks about us. Key agencies are the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre, the Ghana Export Promotion Authority and the Ghana Tourism Authority.

P1, P2 and P7 noted that there is no concerted approach for these agencies to collaborate effectively, affecting nation branding efforts. Therefore, 7 participants emphasized the need to create a brand committee to lead Ghana's branding efforts. P7 noted:

I don't think it should be led by any one unit because if it's fashioned out properly by an independent structure, every entity would find relevance in it.

P1 also mentioned:

I think we should form an inter-ministerial brand council. During Prof. Atta Mills' time, we had 'Brand Ghana'. It was a centrally coordinated agency for destination branding. They developed the brand theme, brand essence, and everything, and shared it with all government agencies. So, we all align.

The participants' perspective corroborates that of Anholt (2011), Olusegun and Olaniyi (2022), and Rojas-Méndez and Khoshnevis (2022), who emphasized the need for the government to

collaborate with skilled professionals in nation branding efforts. This collaboration suggests the need to establish a national brand committee.

Though P5 also indicated that nation branding efforts require the creation of a committee, he emphasized that this committee should not be government-led to ensure its sustainability, irrespective of a change in government. However, government involvement is required to ensure effective engagement and alignment across all government ministries and sectors.

4.5.4 Limited Global Media Visibility

The findings reveal that Ghana's over-reliance on direct engagement, coupled with its sparse use of mass and digital media channels, reduces the country's global visibility. According to the data, Ghana uses these channels sparingly, though research (Rojas-Méndez & Khoshnevis, 2022) emphasizes the need to coordinate multiple strategies to reach the diverse audiences a nation targets. P3 explained:

We haven't been big in terms of mass media- global mass media. You see Angola on TV, CNN, et cetera. We barely do that. Some people say, you see Angola on CNN, but where is Ghana? We barely do that. So the majority of the time we've been interpersonal. We've been personal selling as opposed to mass media.

P7 also indicated:

In today's world, where do most people spend their time? Social media. Digital. So you will need a lot of presence on digital. However, beyond digital, there's a lot of TV viewership. You will need some TV viewership.

According to P1, P2, and P3, Ghana uses digital channels in its nation branding efforts, even though P3 further explained that the country relied heavily on direct engagement in the past. P9 reiterated the minimal use of digital channels, stating that Ghana's use of digital channels is “not

very strong.” P3, however, contends that, “in the past, Ghana has been using a lot of personal selling, but now we are using digital media.”

4.5.5 Hospitality and safety reinforce positive perceptions

Interview findings revealed some positive perceptions of Ghana, which add to its brand image and reputation. Participants perceived Ghana as a safe and welcoming place with hospitable people. P2 indicated that people perceive Ghana as a place of “culture, warmth, and rhythm.” P1 similarly stated:

For Ghana, nation branding through tourism tells the story of our heritage, our freedom, our creativity, our hospitality and the values that make us a unique country.

P8 also indicated:

I know a good number of people who have relocated to Ghana, just based on how we've been able to sell the nation. And out there, Ghana looks extremely safe. Ghana looks extremely fun. Ghana has the reputation of being an easy country to live in.

She stated further:

And one thing I know makes Ghana desirable is that people say we are hospitable all the time. So let's just say that's one of our USPs. We should be selling that message to a target market, like the Black Americans, and tell them that Ghana is safe and has hospitable people.

According to Ahmed et al. (2022), the key to building a strong national brand is to be attentive to external perceptions. Ghana, as a desirable tourist destination in Africa, as established by Mensah (2024), could be attributed to the external perceptions highlighted by the findings.

4.6 RQ3: Elements and strategies required to strengthen Ghana’s national brand through strategic communication

4.6.1 Centralized brand governance and depoliticized coordination

The findings demonstrate that, to effectively build a strong national brand, Ghana needs an apolitical, centralized brand institution comprising key players from the government and private sectors. However, this institution’s work should not be affected by Ghana’s political cycles.

According to P5:

It should be multi-stakeholder. It should work like the Chamber of Commerce. It's not particularly owned by the government, but there's significant private involvement. Now, if we leave it in the hands of the government, every successive government will perhaps create a different image, create something else.

P5 added that in creating the brand agency, “the president or chairman must be private,” but, “if the government appoints the leader, it will be a government-infused direction.”

P3 also stated:

We have to be deliberate and put structures in place so people feel welcome when they come into contact with us and see that we're nice. But what if they don't come in touch? And that's where the structures are important. That's where systems are important. So that you can deliberately get people to be in touch with us and feel our warmth.

P4 further mentioned:

There should be a national strategy to build Ghana's brand. There should be a national strategy that's well coordinated, that influences every facet of our national life. That will coordinate to help build a certain image.

The findings resonate with the literature (e.g. Rojas-Méndez & Khoshnevis, 2022; Nobre & Sousa, 2022; Li & Feng, 2022b), which indicates that nation branding requires a centralized, coordinated approach. This ensures coherent and sustainable nation branding efforts.

4.6.2 Development of a national brand manual

One of the key findings from the interviews establishes the need for a brand manual to guide Ghana's nation branding efforts. For example, P7 associated the unintentionality of nation branding efforts with the absence of a brand manual or guide that identifies what the Ghana brand is, spells out the brand elements, and is available to key players to guide their actions and operations. P7 explained:

The critical thing is to identify what the Ghana brand is. The South African brand was properly defined in a brand book, a brand manual that was available to every high commission. I don't think we have put in much effort, or I haven't seen any strategies or documents that give that direction across the country. Because once you have a document that gives direction across the country and is supervised, and everybody's asked to toe the line, it becomes the guiding principle. That directs us as a country. And as a country, we have policy documents, but they are not necessarily brand documents.

P1 suggested the need for a nation branding institution to:

Develop the brand theme, brand essence, and everything, and share it with all government agencies. So, we all align. And also have a shared KPI and a national brand calendar.

The relevance of a brand manual is to ensure a cohesive, coordinated and strategically approached nation branding efforts (Kusraeva, 2023). This is important to unify the image projected by Ghana, as highlighted by Anholt (2011).

4.6.3 Enhancing service quality and visitor experience

The findings also emphasize Ghana's need to enhance service delivery and the overall tourist experience for visitors. Participants such as P1, P2 and P9 explained how the behaviour of Ghanaians and internal systems affect the nation's brand. P1 stated:

For a nation to be a tourism destination, you need to train your people, your indigenes, in multiple languages so that they'll be able to assist and offer the experiences to diverse

audiences. So, human resource capacity building, continuous training. I think that these are some of the challenges. Then, the infrastructure, access to tourism sites and attractions.

P9 added:

Sanitation issues. When people come to Ghana for tourism, we take them to Cape Coast, and immediately, as they drive three kilometres off the main road, they enter a Zongo community. It is despicable.

Ghana's nation branding challenges, such as a lack of infrastructural development, customer service issues, and a bad maintenance culture, highlighted by various participants, were similarly outlined by Adu-Ampong and Dillette (2023) and Amoako et al. (2021), demonstrating the prevalence of these issues and their effect on nation branding efforts. This resonates with the findings of Ahmed et al. (2022), who found that a country's internal systems, such as infrastructure development, not only benefit citizens but also affect nation branding efforts.

4.6.4 Broadening and segmenting target audiences

This section discusses the target audience and the stakeholders involved in Ghana's nation branding efforts and how effectively they are engaged. An analysis of the findings showed that Ghana has diverse target audiences for nation branding efforts, including the United States of America (USA), Europe, Africans in the diaspora, leisure travellers, foreigners with disposable income, and influential people living abroad. P1 noted:

Our key stakeholders are leisure travellers who come here, especially from neighbouring countries like Nigeria. Then, the African Diaspora travellers in America. Then our investment trade partners.

P9 postulated:

So we target the diaspora, Ghanaians abroad who have disposable income. Then we target Africans abroad who want to reconnect to Africa. So first, you are looking at people who used to be here, and then they are there. And the second is people who are

there, but they trace their roots to Ghana. And then we target businesses, business owners, and CEOs.

P6 also indicated:

Ghana's number one market is North America, the USA, and Canada. Because that's where we have a lot of people who are of African descent. We are trying to get them to come to Ghana to reconnect with their roots.

However, responses from some participants (P3, P4, and P10) suggest that Ghana lacks a clearly defined target audience for its branding efforts. For example, P10 indicated that “anybody who is new to Ghana is our target.” P3 stated:

When you pitch it at the level of nation-states, then you would say that it is where the foreign power is. You want to look at America, because it's a big player. So, how do we present ourselves in the best possible way to America? How do we present in a very good way to Britain, to Germany, to Asia, and to China, etc?

P4 also stated that, “in all our efforts, our focus has always been on those who are outside.”

The absence of a clearly defined target audience negatively affects nation branding efforts, as posited by Leiserowitz et al. (2021), who state that effectively segmenting and analyzing each segment is crucial to effective communication. The stakeholder theory similarly establishes the need to identify and prioritize key stakeholders among the various stakeholders a country has.

Another key insight from the data is that Ghana has made minimal efforts to build a strong, positive image internally, though Li and Feng (2022b) emphasized the importance of targeting nation branding efforts at both domestic and international audiences. P4 noted:

We should let the Ghanaians believe in Ghana. We need to change the psyche of the average Ghanaian anywhere in the country. In all our efforts, our focus has always been on those who are outside. Yes, it's good, but we need to create that national identity and let Ghanaians be proud to be Ghanaians. We can then dovetail into the global world, and it will be sustainable.

Furthermore, the findings depict that Ghana's nation branding efforts have not been targeted at other African countries. According to P6, "Nigerians are number two in terms of the tourism statistics who come here," but the country needs to "get hold of that market properly." Similarly, P8 indicated:

We can also target people in Africa because I've noticed that certain things, like waterfalls, aren't as common in other countries. Some countries have them, but Ghana has a good number of waterfalls. So things like that, we can market to people around us, like in Côte d'Ivoire and Benin. We can make money from people just nearby who come around. It doesn't have to be people in the diaspora. But I think that our communication mostly appeals to people in the diaspora rather than our neighbouring countries.

4.6.5 Integrated multi-channel communication

The data analysis indicates that Ghana's communication channels will be effective if multiple channels are used, with particular emphasis on mass and digital media, while maintaining in-person channels. As noted by P8:

A collaboration would work. I do think personal selling works, right? But I think it works for a specific group of people if you want to reach the masses. Because if you go to a conference and you do it, let's just say maybe the conference is for, say, example, minors. So now you are reaching just minors. But on social media, you are reaching a very large audience. So a collaboration would really help.

P7 also stated:

The issue is how to bring all the channels together. So this is where you actually implement what you call the integrated, a full-through-and-through integrated marketing communication.

Participants' emphasis on multiple channels is necessary because Kusraeva (2023) explained that nation branding deals with diverse audiences. Therefore, an integrated communication channel aligns with the diversity of audiences targeted in building a strong Ghana brand.

4.6.6 Research-based brand strategy

The data depicts that strategic communication of Ghana's national brand should be backed by research. According to P4, P5, and P7, the research should include an analysis of Ghana and its competitors. For instance, P4 explained that, "we need to do an analysis of where we are as a country." P5 similarly noted:

So it has to be something we have researched internationally. What is the gap? And then, can we sustainably fit in there? We have not done well in researching before we attempt to brand.

According to Chea (2024), branding requires an analysis of key competitors to differentiate the brand image from theirs. P8 similarly explained that research will enable Ghana to define its unique selling proposition (USP), which will determine the image(s) the country should project. This finding aligns with the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) theory, which holds that a brand's ability to communicate its unique attributes contributes to its success (Keller, 1993).

4.6.7 Monitoring and evaluation

One significant research finding is the importance of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of Ghana's national branding strategies. Participants enumerated various measurement metrics that Ghana can use, such as economic indicators, tourism statistics, and sentiment analysis. The data depicts that economic indicators such as the number of foreign direct investments, exports and GDP growth can be used to measure the effectiveness of nation branding efforts. P8 explained:

One good way to look at it is the income we've made at the end of the year, specifically from tourism, after our communication. That could help measure the success.

P7 similarly stated:

What was the growth trajectory of your foreign direct investments? What's the growth trajectory of your tourism industry? What's the growth trajectory of your airport traffic? Everything measures back into it.

Economic indicators gauge the effectiveness of nation branding efforts because, as Dineri et al. (2024) explained, nation branding positively affects a country's economic viability.

Also, tourism numbers, comprising visitor arrivals and expenditure, are key indicators. P2 noted:

Last year, we made 1,288,000 and something. So if in two years we are making 2 million from people coming to Ghana, and they still say Ghana is a nice place to come, then we're probably doing something right.

P9 similarly mentioned that to measure the effectiveness of Ghana's branding efforts, "we need to look at how many people are coming to Ghana now."

Based on the established effect of nation branding activities on the tourism industry by Wijaya et al. (2023) and Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essoussi (2015), tourism statistics effectively depict the success or otherwise of nation branding efforts as shown by the research findings.

Furthermore, internal and external perception surveys and sentiment analysis are important measurement metrics. According to P5, Ghana needs to "check the external sentiments on Ghana." He further emphasized that the need for internal branding also requires Ghana to ask: "How eager are we to die for Ghana?" Similarly, P7 explained that, "people's love for the country should be a metric," while P6 mentioned that, "sentiment analysis of online messages" can gauge the effectiveness of nation branding efforts.

Anholt (2024) noted that countries need to monitor public perceptions of them to strategize. Perception surveys and sentiment analysis also align with the stakeholder theory, which emphasizes the need for Ghana to see things from the stakeholder's viewpoint for effective engagement.

Other measurement metrics mentioned by P7 included brand awareness surveys and analysis of social media engagement levels. P7 contends that, “you can’t treat a country any different from how you would treat an organization.” Therefore, he emphasized the need to analyze “the recognition in terms of brand exposure, brand awareness, and the affinity levels or engagement levels” in measuring the effectiveness of Ghana’s nation branding efforts.

Chea (2024) described brand awareness as people’s ability to recognize the brand. This aligns with the CBBE theory, which posits that a brand's sustainability depends on two variables: brand awareness and brand image, which reflect how well people know the brand. (Keller, 1993).

4.7 The Proposed Strategic Communication Framework

The goal of the study is to develop a strategic communication framework for nation branding to promote Ghana’s tourism industry. The framework is based on empirical data and the insights gained from the research findings.

The existing literature suggests that nation branding is a continuous process that should be approached strategically. Therefore, the framework should be considered an integrated, continuous process. The framework consists of five main dimensions: governance, identity foundation, strategic communication, implementation and performance, and monitoring and evaluation.

Given the framework's integrated nature, it should be viewed as a holistic entity, with every dimension of equal importance. Therefore, the implementation of one dimension affects the other. It is posited that the strategic communication framework will enable Ghana to build a strong national brand in a strategic, integrated, and sustainable manner, thereby enhancing the country’s tourism industry.



Figure 1: A conceptual framework for Ghana’s Nation branding

4.8 Explanation of the framework

This section discusses the five dimensions that make up the framework. Figure 1 shows the main dimensions and the sub-elements under each of them based on the study’s findings.

4.8.1 Governance

The ‘Governance’ dimension highlights the importance of establishing a central brand authority, a national brand manual, and collaboration among various government and private stakeholders. The findings indicate that Ghana lacks an institution responsible for branding the nation, which has contributed to a fragmented approach to its branding efforts. Ghana should therefore have a central brand authority devoid of political interference, responsible for coordinating nation branding strategies and communication to ensure the sustainability of Ghana’s nation branding efforts, unaffected by political cycles, and a brand manual that is essential to guide all stakeholders for uniformity and cohesiveness of nation branding strategies.

The brand manual should outline the brand essence, core values, communication strategies, and brand elements, among others. This will serve as a blueprint and ensure that Ghana's national brand building is documented for easy reference. Under the stakeholder coordination, the data indicated that various government agencies, such as GTA, GIPC, and GTDC, have a role to play in building Ghana's national brand, as well as private tourism operators and skilled brand experts. Therefore, it is important for all these agencies to collaborate to project Ghana's image externally by adhering to the brand elements, Ghana's core values, and other guidelines outlined by the central brand authority or the brand manual.

4.8.2 Identity Foundation

This section discusses Ghana's unique image and reputation abroad. Ghana's positioning as a heritage and Pan-African hub constitutes an important image held among the diaspora community. Ghana has effectively projected this image through its history of slavery, castles, and spiritual connections, highlighted through various tourism initiatives such as YOR and Beyond the Return. Therefore, the country can continue to leverage it as its USP by incorporating these perceptions into Ghana's communication messages.

The 'Akwaaba Hospitality' is another image that fits Ghana's identity. The word 'Akwaaba' means 'welcome' in Ghana's local language. Therefore, the 'Akwaaba Hospitality' aligns with the nation's identity, as reflected in external perceptions of Ghana as a warm, safe, and peaceful country with hospitable people. Ghana can reinforce this identity in its nation branding efforts by improving service delivery and the overall tourism experience in accordance with the 'Akwaaba' identity.

The data further highlights the importance of using Ghana's culture and creative arts to brand itself. The culture represents the country's unique fashion, such as kente, food, and artefacts, to build its image. Also, Ghana's creative arts, comprising its music, dance, and festivals, reflect Ghana's identity. As such, these constitute a national identity that Ghana can project globally. Therefore, Ghana can project its culture and creative arts globally by marketing its infusion into Ghana's tourism initiatives.

The 'urban experience' section was established by the study's findings, illustrating Ghana's unique positioning as a place of fun and excitement through tourism initiatives such as December in Gh. It is suggested that Ghana position itself as a place of relaxation and excitement to attract more youthful tourists. This can be achieved by creating and communicating leisure and fun-based experiences to attract the youthful population through appropriate channels such as social media platforms.

4.8.3 Strategic Communication

The findings showed that an integrated communication approach should be adopted to build Ghana's brand. This means that Ghana should continue to use event-led communication, such as YOR and PanaFest, and direct or interpersonal engagements, such as meetings, exhibitions, and forums, while strengthening influencer collaborations, digital media channels, and mass media channels to communicate the country's image globally. An integrated approach will result in increased brand knowledge, wider reach, and more targeted communication, leading to improved tourism outcomes.

Under the 'target market strategy', the data indicated that Ghana mainly targets the diaspora community and countries such as the USA and the UK. However, minimal attention has been paid

to other African countries, especially Nigeria and Ghana's resident citizens. As a result, the target market strategy posits that Ghana should clearly define and segment its target market for its nation branding activities. The target market can be segmented into primary, secondary, and tertiary targets to ensure the effectiveness of the nation branding efforts.

Closely related to the target market strategy is the 'thematic messaging' strategy. The data revealed that Ghana should develop a central message theme with sub-themes. The sub-themes will enable Ghana to tailor messaging to various target markets based on expectations and preferences, while the central theme will provide an overarching umbrella that signifies a unified approach to nation branding.

4.8.4 Implementation and Performance

This dimension highlights that Ghana should invest in its human resource capital to ensure quality service delivery. Based on the findings, Ghana needs to train its tourism service providers and other key industry stakeholders. Their services should align with the 'Akwaaba' image the country holds.

To ensure 'experiential quality', Ghana should improve internal systems, such as roads and sanitation, and maintain a safe environment for tourists. Poor infrastructure and security concerns negatively affect nation branding efforts because they signal a misalignment between the brand's identity and brand promise and the actual tourism experience.

4.8.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

The findings highlight the importance of monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of nation branding efforts. To do this, Ghana should clearly define its KPIs based on which the strategies

will be assessed. These KPIs can include tourism statistics, perception surveys, sentiment analysis, and engagement metrics.

Also, Ghana's nation branding should be underpinned by research. Research will show the image gap that Ghana can effectively use as its competitive positioning. This will ensure that Ghana's USP is not an image held strongly by another country.

Research indicates that nation branding is a long and continuous process. The findings similarly highlighted Ghana's need to make adjustments based on the research and its evaluations. This will lead to continuous learning to improve Ghana's image and reputation.

4.9 Chapter Summary

The chapter discussed the data collected from the interviewed research participants. Participants' academic and professional background is provided to contextualise their perspectives. The discussion analysed the effectiveness of Ghana's current nation branding efforts and the challenges it faces in building a strong brand. The data provided key elements Ghana can use to communicate its brand, and discussed the metrics for measuring and evaluating nation branding efforts. The analysis addressed the research questions while integrating relevant literature and theories.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Chapter Introduction

The chapter summarises the study's key findings by providing an overview of how strategic communication can be used to build Ghana's national tourism brand. The study's findings are presented in relation to the research questions, with reference to relevant literature and theory. The conclusion consolidates the findings by providing implications for both theory and practice. The chapter also presents the study's limitations and recommendations for future researchers.

5.2 Summary of Key Findings

The study explored how strategic communication can be used for nation branding to promote the tourism industry in Ghana. The study was underpinned by three objectives: to examine the current strategic communication practices Ghana employs to build a strong brand in tourism promotion; to assess the effectiveness of these practices in building a coherent national brand; and to provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening Ghana's national brand through strategic communication.

The findings revealed that Ghana's nation branding efforts are heavily characterized by event-led communication but weakened by institutional fragmentation and inconsistent message coordination. This suggests that Ghana's nation branding environment is not merely a communication challenge but a systemic governance issue, in which the absence of a unified structure undermines the effectiveness of otherwise strong brand elements.

The findings also reveal that Ghana possesses positive external perceptions that form part of its image and identity. These identities, comprising the hospitality and warmth of its people and the country's security, should form a core aspect of Ghana's nation-brand communication.

The data also shows that, given the diversity of Ghana's target market, effective nation branding efforts should not be based on a single message strategy. This suggests that Ghana should craft an overarching message for its tourism initiatives while developing sub-themes based on its assessment of its target market's expectations.

Though the interpersonal communication strategies utilised in Ghana were deemed effective by the research, the need for more mass-reaching channels of communication, such as television and digital media platforms, was emphasised. Therefore, Ghana's national brand communication through various channels would enhance the country's overall visibility and global competitiveness.

Beyond communicating Ghana's unique identities, the findings showed that Ghana needs to bridge the gap between its identity and the actual tourism experience, highlighting the importance of aligning Ghana's image with the services provided to tourists. This is relevant because the actual tourism experience influences external perceptions, thereby leading to sustained nation branding efforts and more effective communication.

Despite Ghana's attempts to project a positive image globally, the findings indicate that the fragmented effectiveness of these strategies could be attributed to a lack of research and continuous learning. This suggests the need for Ghana to continuously monitor its external image and brand communication to gauge the effectiveness of its strategies. This will ensure continuous adjustments and improvements in the nation's brand communication.

5.3 Framework justification and implications for theory, policy, and practice

The significance of research lies in a country's ability to understand and apply it. Ghana's implementation of the framework will enable it to build a strong and positive national brand to promote its tourism industry.

The study depicts that Ghana's national branding efforts through strategic communication for tourism promotion face significant challenges. This has resulted in a fragmented and unsustainable national brand, contributing to the fragmented success of its tourism initiatives. For Ghana to build and communicate its national brand, these challenges should be addressed. Therefore, the framework provides an evidence-based solution to Ghana's nation branding efforts.

Existing research emphasises a strategic approach to nation brand building, and nation brand communication also establishes the relevance of the framework. Therefore, the developed framework outlines how nation branding and communication can be navigated effectively.

Also, there is limited knowledge on nation branding within the African continent. Some researchers have argued for the need to understand nation branding in the African context. The current study, therefore, contributes significantly to the body of knowledge on nation branding and tourism promotion in the under-researched cultural setting of Ghana, Africa.

5.4 Conclusion

The study's objective was to develop a strategic communication framework to enable Ghana to build its national brand for tourism development. To achieve this objective, Ghana's current nation branding strategies were analysed to determine their effectiveness in building Ghana's brand. By synthesising insights from the research participants, this section enumerates strategies that have

given Ghana a positive external image while addressing the country's unique nation-branding barriers.

The data shows that participation in global events, forums, and exhibitions has contributed to Ghana's positive image abroad. Also, tourism events have significantly shaped how Ghana is perceived in countries like the USA and the UK. These strategies should be maintained and strengthened to maintain a positive image in other countries. Additionally, Ghana's establishment of a brand office and development of a brand manual are key elements missing in Ghana's nation branding strategies. The study notes that Ghana's ability to mitigate its challenges, such as infrastructural development, customer service issues, and overall bad tourist experience, will significantly boost its global reputation and ensure a sustained national brand.

Overall, the principles of targeted communication, coordinated messaging, stakeholder engagement, and consistent brand meanings across platforms provide deeper insights into the stakeholder theory from the nation branding perspective. This is because, though the stakeholder theory emphasises the need to segment and understand a nation's target audience to tailor communication to each segment, the findings show that applying the stakeholder theory to nation brand building requires a tailored yet cohesive communication strategy.

The findings also resonate with the customer-based brand equity (CBBE) theory, which holds that the level of brand awareness and brand image dictates how the target audience responds to the brand's activities and initiatives. This underscores the importance of awareness creation through strategic communication and Ghana's need to influence its external image. The CBBE theory, therefore, explains how strategic communication of Ghana's brand would lead to improved success of the tourism industry.

5.5 Recommendations

The study's findings demonstrate the importance of building a nation's brand for tourism promotion through strategic communication. The study also outlines the strategic communication elements needed to build and strategically communicate its national brand to promote the country's tourism industry. Based on the gaps identified from the research findings, this section provides some recommendations to improve Ghana's brand-building efforts.

Based on the study's insights, Ghana needs to establish a centralized brand authority mandated to coordinate messaging, oversee identity guidelines, draft and implement a comprehensive national brand communication, and establish a comprehensive monitoring system linked to KPIs, including sentiment analysis, perception surveys, and digital media engagement levels.

Also, Ghana should draft a 'Brand Manual' that encapsulates the nation's branding goals, objectives, strategies, KPIs, and brand elements, among other things. The brand manual would serve as a guide to ensure that all agencies involved in Ghana's nation branding initiatives, such as GTA, GIPC, and GTDC, have a document that helps them to align in projecting a unified image.

Also, Ghana needs to segment its target audience into primary, secondary, and tertiary categories. While Ghana targets the diaspora market in its nation branding, it is also important to target resident Ghanaians and other African countries. The diversity and uniqueness of Ghana's nation branding target audience require the use of multiple channels, including mass media, digital media, and interpersonal channels. The data emphasises Ghana's need to use more mass media and digital channels while maintaining the interpersonal ones.

Furthermore, it is recommended that Ghana use a thematic message strategy with sub-themes tailored to each target market. In Ghana's national brand communication, the country should

continue to prioritise stakeholder engagement and utilize dialogic platforms rather than one-way channels. Finally, Ghana's nation branding should be based on extensive research, constant monitoring, and evaluation. This is essential for determining its unique selling proposition and for continued improvement.

5.6 Areas for Future Research

The study explored how strategic communication can be used to build a nation's brand for tourism promotion. Despite the rigour employed in conducting the study, some aspects remained uncovered. This section highlights where further research is needed. This will help to gain a holistic picture of the phenomenon.

First, future research should explore how internal nation branding can be built through strategic communication. Though this study highlighted Ghana's need to build a positive image internally, research is needed to determine how this can be achieved. The study collected data from Ghanaians who posited that Ghana has a relatively positive image and reputation externally. However, future studies should investigate Ghana's external image and the reasons for it.

The study found that digital media is a vital channel for nation branding. Given the diverse types of digital media channels, further research is needed to assess the effectiveness of each channel in building an authentic national brand. Finally, future studies should explore the role of culture in nation branding.

5.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter summarised the study's key findings, based on which some recommendations were made. The findings captured the absence of a Brand Ghana office to oversee nation branding efforts, minimal effort to influence perceptions of Ghanaians and other African countries, and

limited use of digital and mass media channels in nation branding. The chapter further discussed the process Ghana needs to follow to communicate a strong, positive national brand. The chapter emphasised the need for further research into how internal branding can be built through strategic communication, as well as the role of culture in nation branding efforts.

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Appendix

Interview Guide Draft

Section A: Demographic Information

1. What is your current role/position?
2. Which organisation/agency or institution do you work with?
3. How many years of experience do you have?
4. What is your educational or professional background?
5. Gender?
6. How long have you been involved in communication or branding activities in the tourism industry?
7. What is your organisation's role in Ghana's tourism promotion and branding?

Section B: Research Objective 1- Current Practices

(To examine the current strategic communication practices employed by Ghana to build a strong brand in tourism promotion.)

1. How would you describe the concept of nation branding in your own words?
 - Probe: What does it mean in relation to tourism?
2. How relevant is a strong national brand to the success of Ghana's tourism?
 - Probe: Can you share examples where branding has helped tourism?
3. From your experience, has Ghana consciously taken steps to build a strong and positive national brand?
 - Probe: Which campaigns or initiatives stand out to you?

4. What communication strategies are you aware of that Ghana currently uses for nation branding?

- Probe: Which agencies are responsible? How are these strategies coordinated?

Section C: Research Objective 2- Effectiveness of Practices

(To assess the effectiveness of these practices in building a coherent national brand.)

5. Who do you identify as the key stakeholders Ghana targets in its nation branding efforts?

- Probe: How are these stakeholders engaged? Are there gaps?

6. Does Ghana use a central message for all stakeholders or are messages tailored to different groups?

- Probe: Which approach seems to work better and why?

7. Are Ghana's nation branding efforts led by the tourism industry, or broader government institutions?

- Probe: How well integrated are these efforts across sectors?

8. What are communication channels (e.g. media, digital platforms, and events) are used to reach various target audiences?

- Probe: Which seem most effective? Which are underutilised?

9. Based on your experience, how effective are Ghana's current strategies, channels, and messaging styles in nation branding?

- Probe: What evidence supports your assessment (tourist arrivals, media visibility, and stakeholder response)?

Section D: Research Objective 3- Framework Development and Recommendations

(To provide evidence-based recommendations for strengthening Ghana's national brand through strategic communication.)

10. What are the main barriers or challenges to effective nation branding communication in Ghana?
 - Probe: Are these institutional, financial, or technical?
11. What key elements should be included in a comprehensive strategic communication framework for nation branding?
 - Probe: Should it include coordination mechanisms, centralized messaging, and evaluation metrics?
12. How should different stakeholders (government, private sector, diaspora, and media) coordinate their communication efforts?
13. Which international models, best practices, or lessons from other countries could inform Ghana's nation branding?
 - Probe: Can you cite examples that Ghana can adopt?
14. How should the effectiveness of a nation branding framework be measured?
 - Probe: What metrics or indicators should be used (perception surveys, tourist arrivals, investment levels, reputation indices, FDI flows, and tourism numbers)?
15. If you were tasked with designing Ghana's nation branding communication framework from scratch, what would be your blueprint?
 - Scenario Probe: Suppose Ghana wants to double tourist arrivals in 5 years, what communication framework would make that possible?
16. What recommendations would you personally make to strengthen Ghana's nation brand through strategic communication?

Closing

17. Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't discussed?

Thank you.

Fafa Duse

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