

Ghana: The lesser-known marketing treasure of West Africa

 By [David Blyth](#)

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When judged on market size, Ghana is often overlooked by brands looking to expand across Africa. At 26 million people, it is dwarfed by its almost-neighbour and giant of West Africa, Nigeria. But Ghana is an attractive market in which to grow brands.



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It was the world's 10th fastest growing economy in 2013. It is politically stable, with a mature and entrenched democracy. It has natural and mineral resources, and a large working population - only about 11% of Ghanaians are unemployed, which is less than half the unemployment rate of South Africa. Ghana ranks highly for ease of doing business, has enjoyed decades of good economic management and is an upper-middle-income market relative to the African average. It has the fastest internet speeds on the continent, although internet penetration remains low. And it provides a spring-board to neighbouring West African markets.

These facts are the reason that foreign investment is high and competition is increasing. But opportunities remain for brands to build meaningful and profitable relationships with consumers in this rising star of Africa.

Relevant marketing

As with any country, relevant marketing is impossible without a decent understanding of the commonalities and differences between different groups of consumers. Generalised traits are useful only so far as they give a flavour to the whole market.

The general picture of Ghanaians is that they are friendly and laid-back people, giving the country a much more relaxed atmosphere than bustling Nigeria. Ghanaians are extremely optimistic, with 97% of them believing they will be better off in two years. The country is linguistically diverse, but English is universally understood and Akan, widely spoken.

Ghana is an outgoing and sociable country, with many of the most common need-states located in the social space.

Prominent segments include those who are driven by new experiences and a desire to get the most out of life, as well as those that are motivated by recognition for personal success. Church is important to many consumers. Young, aspirational and connected Ghanaians are positive about Africa, and like to feel that they are contributing to their country's success. Ghanaians are generally more receptive to Western brands than South African brands, and they remain proud of the local culture, tradition and aesthetics.

Brands getting it right

- Intel used ethnography to understand the drivers of status and influence, and discovered that to win in the tech category in Ghana you need to build relationships with Ghanaians in London - who influence the market back home.
- South African retailer Shoprite is growing rapidly in Nigeria, Ghana and Angola - proving that 'access to better value' is a powerful driver of consumer behaviour in these markets

We have illustrated a few brand-building tips with examples from two archetypal Ghanaians, each drawn from prominent segments in the country:

- *Kwame is a 26-year-old researcher in Accra. He is SEC C+, has every tech gadget available, loves watching football and spends weekends with his friends as his family lives out of town.*
- *Eunice is a single mother juggling work and family life in Tamale. She is SEC B and does quite well financially.*

Brand-building tips: What to do:

- Ghana still has a way to go in developing human capital, so invest in people. Attract, retain and train the best local talent. Eunice, for example, is serious about self-improvement and would be fiercely loyal to a company that encouraged her to further her studies.
- Understand what local pride means to your customers. Kwame's favourite sports team is Chelsea, and he reads British and American blogs to keep up to date with tech trends, but he is proud of Ghana and wouldn't use a global brand that speaks arrogantly about its provenance being somewhere other than Ghana.
- Segment your customers with needs-based research. Listen to what's important to your customers and don't assume anything. Eunice is a mother, but she works hard and gets frustrated by businesses that don't stay open after office hours.
- Build platforms to allow customers to get together and contribute to the success of the country in sociable ways. Kwame sends money home to his family every week and would love the opportunity to help build a school in the community they live in.
- Partner with the country's budding tech industry for local innovations. Kwame's friends have some great ideas for mobile sports competitions that would be ideal for sponsorship.

Brand success in Ghana opens up a rapidly-growing market and access to the wider West African region for your business. It requires an insightful understanding of the needs and aspirations of Ghanaian consumers, as well as the right attitude and respect towards local culture and social dynamics. It's hard work to get right, but the rewards are well worth the effort.

ABOUT DAVID BLYTH

David Blyth is CEO at Yellowwood. His focus at Yellowwood to date has been on building thought leadership and a pan-African client footprint. David is a prior chairman of 'think' (South African Communication Design Council), the Digital Interactive Media Association and is a current director of the Brand Council of South Africa (BCSA). Follow @dvblyth on Twitter.

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