

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

**BRAND-BUILDING AND ITS CHALLENGES IN THE NON-
TRADITIONAL EXPORTS (NTEs) SECTOR: A STUDY OF SOME
SELECTED FIRMS IN GHANA**

The crest of the University of Ghana is a shield-shaped emblem. The top section is purple and contains three golden, downward-pointing arrowheads. Below this is a horizontal golden line. The middle section is white and contains the word 'BY' in black. Below that is another horizontal golden line. The bottom section is purple and contains a golden, stylized floral or scrollwork design. At the base of the shield is a golden banner with the Latin motto 'INTEGRI PROCEDEMUS' in purple.

BY

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**THIS THESIS IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF
GHANA, LEGON IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF MPhil
MARKETING DEGREE**

JUNE, 2016

DECLARATION

I do, hereby, declare that this thesis is the result of my own research work conducted during the 2015/2016 academic year, under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Quaye and Dr. Adelaide Kastner of the University of Ghana Business School (UGBS), University of Ghana, Legon.

This study has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this university or any other university elsewhere. All references used in the work have been duly acknowledged.

I therefore, bear sole responsibility for any limitations.

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INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

CERTIFICATION

I, hereby, certify that this thesis was supervised in accordance with procedures laid down by the University of Ghana Business School, Legon.

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.....
DATE

INTEGRI PROCEDAMUS

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my brother Prof. Avea with pride for his love for people's education.

This work is also dedicated to my aunt Agonngo-mah and uncle Atorta (of late memories) for taking me to school and taking care of me respectively.



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As my principal supervisor, Dr. Daniel. M. Quaye demonstrated his commitment in ensuring that this thesis is successfully completed. He was often frank and practical with his inputs, stood by his words which enable me to have a better understanding and appreciation of the writing of this thesis.

I wish further, to acknowledge all the faculty members of the Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, University of Ghana Business School for their tremendous support and contribution towards the shaping of this thesis. My special thanks also go to Dr. Samuel Buame for his encouragement, support and diplomacy that spurred me on to finish this academic work.

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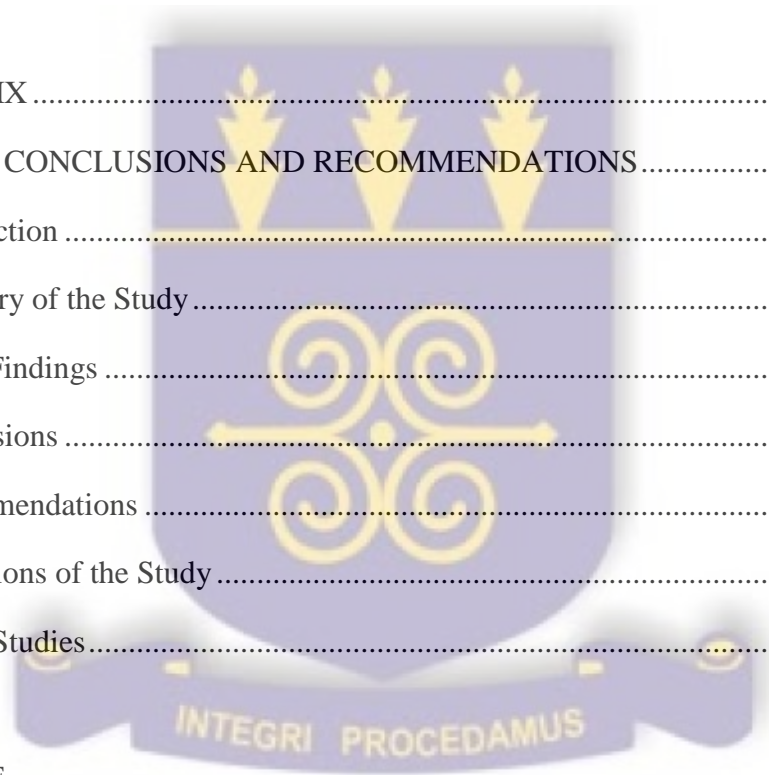
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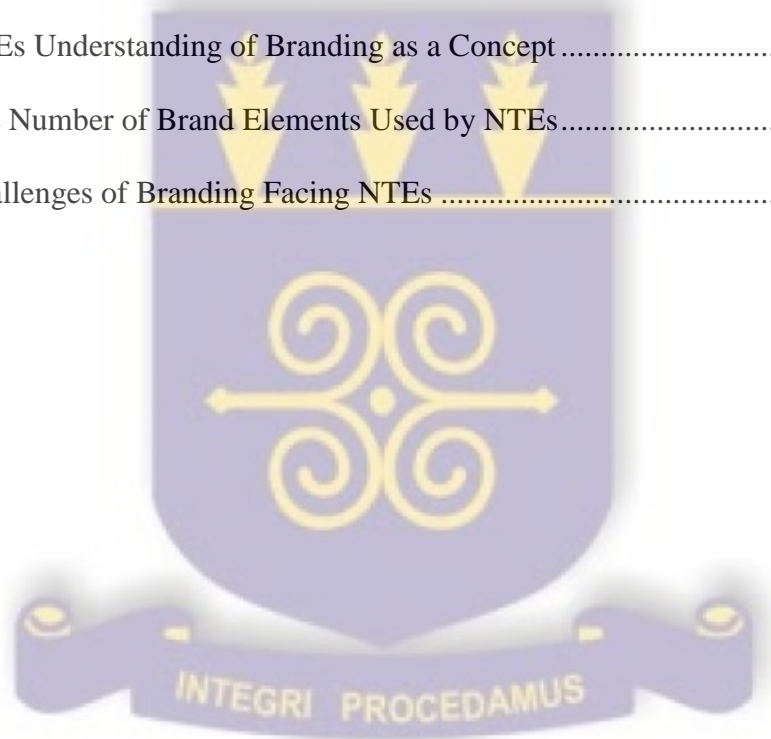
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LIST OF ACRONYMS



| | |
|-------------|---|
| AGI----- | Association of Ghana Industries |
| AMA----- | American Marketing Association |
| B2B----- | Business to Business |
| BOG----- | Bank of Ghana |
| CBBE----- | Customer Based Brand Equity |
| CNC----- | Centre for National Culture |
| EBE----- | Enusah's Baskets Exporting |
| ECOWAS----- | Economic Communities of West African States |
| EDIF----- | Exports Development and Investment Fund |
| ERP----- | Economic Recovery Programme |
| GDP----- | Gross Domestic Product |
| GEA----- | Ghana Employers Association |
| GEPA----- | Ghana Exports Promotion Authority |
| GRATIS----- | Ghana Regional Appropriate Technology and Industrial Services |
| GSS----- | Ghana Statistical Service |
| MOTI----- | Ministry of Trade and Industry |
| NAFAC----- | National Festival for Art and Culture |
| NBSSI----- | National Board for Small Scale Industries |
| NTEs----- | Non-Traditional Exports or exporters |
| RGD----- | Registrar-General Department |
| SMEs----- | Small and Medium Enterprises |
| SPSS----- | Statistical Package for Social Sciences |
| USPS----- | Unique Selling Proposition Strategy |
| WTO ----- | World Trade Organization |

ABSTRACT

This study investigated how SMEs build their brands and the possible challenges that they face with regard to brand-building. The study sought to find answers to the questions and that is; SMEs understanding of branding as a concept, brand elements being used by these SMEs in Ghana and the possible challenges or difficulties that SMEs encounter in branding? In order to answer these proposed questions, a qualitative research approach was adopted and both unstructured and semi-structured interview guide was used. The analysis was based on six (6) SMEs with one respondent each. The respondents were top-management personnel comprising of CEOs, Executive Directors, presidents and general managers who make corporate decisions of their respective firms. The representatives were purposively selected from within the Upper East Region of Ghana. The Findings of the study indicate that the SMEs have a shallow understanding of brand-building and hence do not really embrace branding as a marketing concept. The findings also discovered that SMEs used at least two brand elements and the predominant brand elements were the brand name, logo and symbol. In addition, the study revealed a number of possible challenges of branding confronting SMEs in Ghana which are consistent to those proposed by literature. The challenges of branding facing SMEs are: limited understanding of branding; difficulty in securing sufficient funds; general slowness and time related challenges; operational level challenges in marketing communications campaigns and the increasing costs of new products introductions. However, lack of technical expertise among SMEs; difficulty in obtaining a patent or copyright and/or having a trademark registered and the proliferation of brands in the market place were the challenges emerged to the study. The study recommend that all the regulatory institutions should voluntarily organize seminar sessions for SMEs and educate them on branding needs in order to improve upon their business performance, and that SMEs should stick to only one brand element to create consistency in branding practices. The study also recommended that the government should make available EDIF all the times to SMEs so as to boast their productions.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief background to the study followed by a problem statement which leads to the overall purpose of the research, the research gaps in literature, the research objectives and questions of the study, the significance of the study, an overview of the proposed methodology, limitations and the chapter disposition of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The contributions of export activities are central to the economic development of nations and firms at large (Lages and Montgomery, 2004). These export activities influence the amount of foreign exchange reserves, the level of imports a country can afford, shape public perceptions of national competitiveness, enhance societal prosperity and help national development (Hinson and Sorensen, 2006). Thus, it has led to the dramatic increase in international export activities, technology advancement and liberation of trade and capital markets worldwide (WTO, 2008). Moreover, language similarities and improvement in technology has aided in the growth of international businesses by making exporting easier (Ibeh, 2003); 4.7 % growth in export volume in developing economies in 2011 (WTO, 2011). Therefore, for firms or nations to grow and enhance their competitiveness, it has become imperative for them to improve upon their exporting activities (Adu – Gyamfi & Korneliussen, 2013; O ‘Cass & Julian, 2003).

According to Hinson and Sorensen (2006), Ghana is heavily dependent on its export sector as an engine of growth within an increasingly competitive global economy. The notable feature of external trade in Ghana is dominated by traditional exports such as cocoa, gold

and timber, which accounts for about 70 percent of total exports (MOTI, 2012). In 2012, the Bank of Ghana (BOG) reported that incomes received from exports stood at US\$ 13.5 billion. For instance, the traditional exports commodities such as gold and cocoa beans accounted for US\$5. 6 billion and US\$2. 8 billion dollars respectively. In spite of all this contribution, Ghana is still facing a trade deficit account of US\$4. 9 billion dollars as of 2012 (Bank of Ghana, 2013). This has led to key government and private officials enunciating on the importance of an export-led economy (Hinson and Sorensen, 2006) since the sector is seen as the engine of economic growth. Hence, traditional export earners alone are not enough to bring in foreign exchange to solve the Balance of payment problems that Ghana is facing. In view of this, diversification of exports from traditional export to Non-traditional exports has been targeted through a structural transformations process by Ghana Exports Promotion Authority (GEPA) to improve the export sector.

As stated earlier, the export sector in Ghana is usually a combination of the traditional and non-traditional exports (NTEs). While the former dominates the sector with 70 percent of export comprising of cocoa beans, minerals, unprocessed timber and electricity, the latter consist of handicrafts, garments, horticulture and many others, which contribute over 85% to employment in the manufacturing sector and 70% to the GDP (MOTI, 2012). The non-traditional export consist of all other exports apart from the traditional exports, which comprises of handicrafts, garments, food crops, horticulture, furniture, among others (Hinson and Sorensen (2006). Statistics from GEPA show that the sector has been experiencing a steady increase in real values: \$459 million in 2001, \$504 million in 2002, and \$589 million in 2003.

Against this context, the government of Ghana developed a policy framework and has put in strategies to revamp export performance by investing and diversifying into non-traditional exports through the Economic Recovery Programme in 1993 (Hinson et al , 2006). Subsequently, in 2012, the government of Ghana has step out a modality to assist in the development of the non-traditional export sector, known as the Non-traditional Export Strategy (MOTI, 2012). Also, in the context of Vision 2020, the Government expects that total revenue by the year 2020 should be in the region of about US\$60 billion, and non-traditional exports alone should be contributing about US\$12 billion of the total amount in that year. It is important to note that most of these NTEs in Ghana are made up of Small and Medium-size Enterprises (SMEs) (MOTI, 2012) and hence SMEs are used in place of firms in NTEs.

However, global developments characterized by the growing internationalization of small firms and competitive environmental forces, is increasingly driving these NTEs in adopting new based strategies and business practices in other to survive. According to Davis and Spekman (2004) one important way to sustain and maintain the competitiveness of firms is to adopt the concept of branding. Branding provides a differentiating statement and a competitive advantage for NTEs if used appropriately (Spence and Essoussi, 2008). Thus, to be able to make a product unique and convey its distinctiveness, branding has been recommended (Srivastava and Shocker, 1991). Even though, in Ghana, evidence shows that there have been an increasing number of small and medium-size businesses expanding into foreign markets, they do not meet the international standard due to their poorly branded nature (Akushika, 2013). This is attributed to their lack of understanding the concept of branding and hence, their competition level internationally is not encouraging (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994; Jones, 1999; Torre`s and Julian, 2005). This

according to McCartan-Quinn and Carson (2003) is attributed to their limited resources and the influence of the owner- manager on decision making, thereby small firms' behavioral patterns with respect to marketing activities differs from larger firms.

Inferring from the above scholars, Gabrielsson (2005) and Ojasalo et al. (2008) have posited that SMEs in NTEs have so far put little emphasis on the concept of branding. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines branding as “a term, name, sign, symbol, or design or a combination of them, purposely to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and also to differentiate them from their competitors”. Therefore, whenever a marketer creates a new name, logo or symbol for a new product, then, he/she has created a brand. Nonetheless, Keller (2008) posited branding as something that has actually created a certain amount of awareness, reputation, prominence, and so on in the marketplace. According to McQuiston (2004), branding helps firms to establish some kind of distinctiveness to prevent their products from being perceived as commodities. Again, it also helps in the generation of competitive advantage for firms (Davis 2007).

While the concept of branding from the perspective of SMEs has emerged as a growing area of academic interest (Abimbola & Kocak, 2007; Berthon, Ewing, & Napoli, 2008; Krake, 2005; Spence & Essoussi, 2010), knowledge about how SMEs build their brands and some challenges they face is still evolving, subsequently intensifying the need for more studies into SMEs branding in Ghana (Berthon et al., 2008). This will help increase exports and also contribute to the national strategy of improving the performance of the export sector. The study will therefore seek to explore how these SMEs in the NTEs in Ghana build their brands and the challenges they face in their attempt to brand.

1.2 The Problem Statement

In the above paragraph, it is evident that Ghana's imports surpass its exports. This can perhaps be attributed to low exports of NTEs in Ghana. An anecdotal evidence in the sector shows that SMEs in Ghana do not meet the international standard due to quality issues and poorly branded nature of their products (Abimbola, 2001; Douglas et al, 2001; Krake, 2005; and Xie, 2012). In accordance to this, the government of Ghana has been offering support to the sector since the 1980s (Frimpong and Mmieh, 2007). Moreover, Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA) has placed measures to increase earnings from the country's non-traditional exports thus projecting NTEs to contribute US \$ 5 billion as export revenue annually (GTV Business News Bulletin, Oct, 2015). This move is intended to not only help the country increase its exports which in-turn will close its gaping current account deficit but also to improve the quality and branding standard of Ghanaian product internationally.

However, despite the support of the government and other stakeholders, the sector at large has not still seen a significant development in this direction (MOTI, 2012). Also, a cursory look at the sector indicates that most of these SMEs have the capacity to grow and brand but seems to be encountering some challenges (GEPA, annual review of exports, 2010 (2011). Hence, this study seeks to explore brand building among NTEs and the possible challenges they face in this regard. To this end, an empirical study, exploring the understanding of the concept of brand-building among NTEs in Ghana and some possible challenges that they face with regard to branding is the main focus of the study.

1.3 The Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study is to explore the understanding of branding practices among NTEs and the possible challenges they face in their attempt to brand in this competitive marketing environment.

1.4 Research Gap in Literature

Looking at extant literature from Ghana, studies conducted on NTEs are mainly focused on issues such as E-business and small Ghanaian exporters (Hinson and Sorensen, 2006); Market orientation and business performance among NTEs in Ghana (Mahmoud, 2011), Basket weaving and social weaving: Young Ghanaian artisans' mobilization of resources (Olwig & Gough, 2013); Boosting the Bolgatanga basketry industry: inputs from the India-Africa (Wemegah, 2014); Weaving a way out of poverty (Ljunggren, 2007). Again, studies on branding concentrated on issues such as key drivers of automobile brand choice in Sub-Saharan Africa (Narteh, Odoom, Braimah & Buame, 2012); The branding as a component of country branding in Ghana (William, Osei and Omar, 2012); Branding the white horse negativity (Berko, Nkuah and Nangpiire, 2014); Branding for international market: evidence from the Non-Traditional Exporters in Ghana (Akushika, 2013) among others. There are little or no studies on how SMEs build their brands and the challenges they face in doing so. Though these gaps in literature are addressed in the literature review section of this study, a summary of taxonomy of empirical literature on branding and NTEs in Ghana and other countries are contained in tables 1.1 and 1.2 below.

Table1.1 Empirical Literature on Branding and NTEs in Ghana

| Name | Title of paper | Research Method | Country of Research | Size of firm | Year of publication |
|-------------------------|---|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Beko, Nkuah & Nangpiire | Branding the white horse negatively | Qualitative | Ghana | Small | 2014 |
| William, Osei & Omar | Branding as the component of country branding in Ghana | Qualitative | Ghana | Large | 2012 |
| Wenegah Rolland | Boasting the Bolgatanga basketry industry: inputs from the Indian African Craft Design Initiatives | Qualitative | Ghana | Small | 2014 |
| Akushika A. J. | Branding for the international market: Evidence from the Non-Traditional exporters in Ghana | Quantitative | Ghana | Small | 2013 |
| Olwig & Gough | Basket weaving and social weaving: young Ghanaian artisans' mobilization of resources | Qualitative | Ghana | Small | 2013 |
| Mahmoud M. A. | Market orientation and business performance among NTEs in Ghana | Quantitative | Ghana | Small | 2011 |
| Ljunggren Ida | Weaving a way out of poverty | Qualitative | Ghana | Small | 2007 |
| Hinson & Sorensen | E-business and small Ghanaian exporters: a preliminary micro firm explorations in the light of digital divide | Quantitative | Ghana | Small | 2006 |

Source: the researcher's own conceptualization

Again, a careful look at existing literature in branding (see table below) shows that, quite a number of studies have been conducted on the concept of branding. For instance, B2B branding in emerging markets: a sustainability perspective and the recommendation for B2B brand-building in such developing markets (Sheth & Sinha,2015); Challenges of city branding: a comparative study of ten (10) European cities (Moilanen,2015); rethinking brand architecture: a study on industries, companies and product-level drivers of branding

strategy (Strebinger,2014); Conceptualization of branding: strategy based on the Indian pharmaceutical sector (Nath et al, 2013). According to them branding create a competitive advantage for firms and should be actively patronized by all managers. Revitalizing the corporate brand from customers' perspectives: a case of Donghai security company saw brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty as the three dimensions of a brand revitalization (Jin, 2013); branding advantage in export ventures from foreign customer's point of view in the United Kingdom (UK) has been recommended (Spryropoulou et al, 2011; among others.

Notably, most of these studies (see table 1.2) have been conducted in large and multinational corporations. However, only a few can be said to have been done in the area of SME branding. For instance, Abimbola (2001), looked at branding as a comparative strategy for demand management in SMEs. He recommended future studies to tackle the challenges (pricing, accessibility to channels of distribution) that managers face with respect to branding in SMEs. Some authors have also stressed on the issue of brand building. For instance, (Krake, 2005, pp. 228-229), identifies a gap in the field by stating that brand-building for SMEs is “something that rarely exist in business literature” and that there had been practically nothing published. Similar to this, Wong and Merrilees (2005), also identified that there was no literature on the subject matter and in fact quoted that they indeed amazed not to have been able to” discern one research study dedicated to SME branding” (Wong & Merrilees, 2005).

However, Moilanen (2015) is of the view that the question facing managers is not whether to brand, but how to brand and hence a clear understanding of the challenges branding practitioners face in their attempt to brand is central to the development of a theoretical

concepts and framework in the field. Again, better still, Lassen, Kunde & Gioia (2008) posited the importance of brand building as a differentiating factor for small firms. Inferring from the views of the above scholars, it can be observed that, these studies on branding are conducted mostly on large and multinational corporations. Also, the issue of brand- building among NTEs has become vital in building a theoretical framework in the field of branding. For this reason, this study tries to fill these issue and contextual gaps in literature, by exploring how NTEs in Ghana build their brands and the challenges they encounter. Below is a conceptual and empirical literature on branding across different contexts and countries.



Table 1.2 Conceptual and Empirical Literature on Branding

| Names of Authors | Title of paper | Research Method used | Size of Firm | Country of research | Year of publication |
|---|---|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Jagdish. N. Sheth and Mona Sinha | B2B branding in emerging markets: a sustainability perspective | Qualitative | Small | USA | 2015 |
| Teemu Moilanen | Challenges of city branding: A comparative study of 10 European cities. | Quantitative | Large | Finland | 2015 |
| Nicolas Papadopoulos & Leila Hamzaoui-Essoussi | Place images and nation branding in African context: Challenges, Opportunities and Questions for policy research. | Qualitative | Large | Canada | 2015 |
| Adreas Strebinger | Rethinking brand architecture: a study on industries, companies and product-level drivers of branding strategy. | Quantitative | Large | Canada | 2014 |
| Jin He | Revitalizing the corporate brand from customer perspectives: a case of Donghai security in China. | Mixed | Large | France | 2013 |
| Narth Sanyal. S, Saroj Kumar. D & Banerjee Kumar. A | Conceptualization of branding: Strategy based on India pharmaceutical sector. | Qualitative | Small | India | 2013 |
| Narteh, Odoom, Braimah & Buame | Key drivers of automobile brand choice in sub-Sahara Africa: a case of Ghana. | Quantitative | Large | Ghana | 2012 |
| Lauren, Markos & Milne | Online personal branding: processes, challenges and implications in a web 2.0 context in USA. | Mixed | Large | USA | 2010 |
| Lassen, Kunde and Gioia. | Creating a clearly differentiated SME brand profile: the case of Montana A/S. | Quantitative | Small | Dermark | 2008 |
| Wong & Merrilees | The performance benefits of being brand-oriented. | Quantitative | Large | Australia | 2008 |
| Abimbola Temi | Branding as a comparative strategy for demand management in SMEs. | Mixed | Small | Central England | 2001 |

Source: The researcher's own conceptualization.

1.5 Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to explore the challenges that SMEs in the NTEs encounter in branding their products. Explicitly, the objectives of this study are:

- To explore the understanding of branding practices undertaken by the selected NTEs in Ghana.
- To examine the brand elements used by these NTEs in Ghana.
- To identify the possible challenges or difficulties involved in branding these NTEs in Ghana.

1.6 Research Questions

From the above stated objectives and relevant literature, the following research questions are investigated;

- What are the NTEs' understanding of branding as a concept?
- What are the brand elements used by NTEs in Ghana?
- What are the challenges or difficulties that NTEs encounter in branding?

1.7 Significance of the study

This study examines the challenges that NTEs face with respect to branding in Ghana and hence, its importance to the export sector and also from a developing country's perspective. Existing literature on branding focus mostly on the developed countries and therefore there is little or no literature on the subject matter in developing countries such as Ghana and also among the NTEs. Therefore, the significance of the study can be characterized beneath:

First, the study seeks to supplement existing literature and knowledge on the challenges of branding from the perspective of a developing country. It also seeks to fill the gaps in

literature and knowledge by providing in depth information on the challenges that NTEs encounter in branding their product in the Upper East Region in Ghana. Additional knowledge is added to academic research since gaps for future research were also identified.

Secondly, the study informs governmental organizations such as the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI), the Registrar General Department (RGD), the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre (GIPC) and the Non – governmental organizations such as, the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI) and the Ghana Employers Association (GEA) among others about the challenges of branding facing these NTEs. It also helps the NTEs to come out with possible solution and effective ways to brand their products and services. It is therefore, serving as a guideline for NTEs, in manufacturing sector and local firms in general. Finally, it also serves as a basis for further studies into the area of branding in other sectors in Ghana.

1.8 Overview of Research Methodology

The study employs an inductive (qualitative) research approach on six (6) firms (NTEs) located in the Upper East Region of Ghana. A case-study, exploratory and cross sectional research design was adopted in maximizing the exploration of the contextual richness and complexities of branding in NTEs. Primary data was collected using a self-developed interview guide with interviews being scheduled with top-level employees such as the marketing managers, the chief executive officers (CEOs), and general managers. Non-probability sampling technique was adopted under which the study employs purposive sampling technique due to the following reasons;

- Firms must be registered with either the Registered- General Department, AGI, NBSSI or GEPA
- Firms should have been in operations for 5 years
- The size of the firm, thus in conformity to the SMEs definition in Ghana and its independence, with the objective of remaining so, thereby bearing the sole responsibility of its decision-making process and focusing on sustainability.

The data collected from the selected firms was then analyzed qualitatively using Thematic Analysis Technique.

1.9 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on the brand-building and its challenges in the Non-traditional exports firms within the Upper East Region of Ghana. The concentration and selection of this region was due to the fact that the region has been reputed to be a breeding ground for most NTEs firms in Ghana who are into the production of shea-butter, baskets weaving, smock sewing, leather works among others. Though the findings of the study is limited to Upper East Region, it can be applied to other NTEs in other regions

1.10 Limitations of the Study

In carrying out a study of this nature, there is the probability of facing certain limitations. Respondent's reluctance to give sincere and intimate information for fear of exposing the secret information to competitors was a main constraint for the study. This served as a limiting factor to the researcher's potential to investigate many firms as possible, thereby, stifling the study. Apart from that, getting top-level management to interview was also another constraint to the study due to their busy schedules. Again, the researcher was

greatly constrained by time and the limitation of funds in his attempt to go round the research area for data collection and also to offer as a motivation to respondents who are in the position to respond. This limitation was overcome by persuading the respondents to respond to the questions voluntarily and free of charge.

Nonetheless, in the face of all these limitations, assurance was given to respondents that the study is mainly for academic purpose and any information granted was going to be treated with utmost confidentiality while appointments with respondents were booked in advanced. All the same, the study is as much as possible present findings that are valid with a high degree of confidence.

1.11 Disposition of the Study

The study comprises of six (6) main chapters as follows:

The chapter one which entails the background of the study, research problem, exploration of the gaps in literature, outlined research objectives and research questions, significance of the study, scope of the study, proposed methodology and organization of the study.

The chapter two which looks at the relevant empirical and theoretical literature on branding is reviewed. Where definitions, concepts, the role and importance of branding, branding strategies, challenges or barriers in branding, branding in NTEs are discussed thoroughly in this chapter. Additionally, the conceptual framework of the study is also introduced and fully discussed.

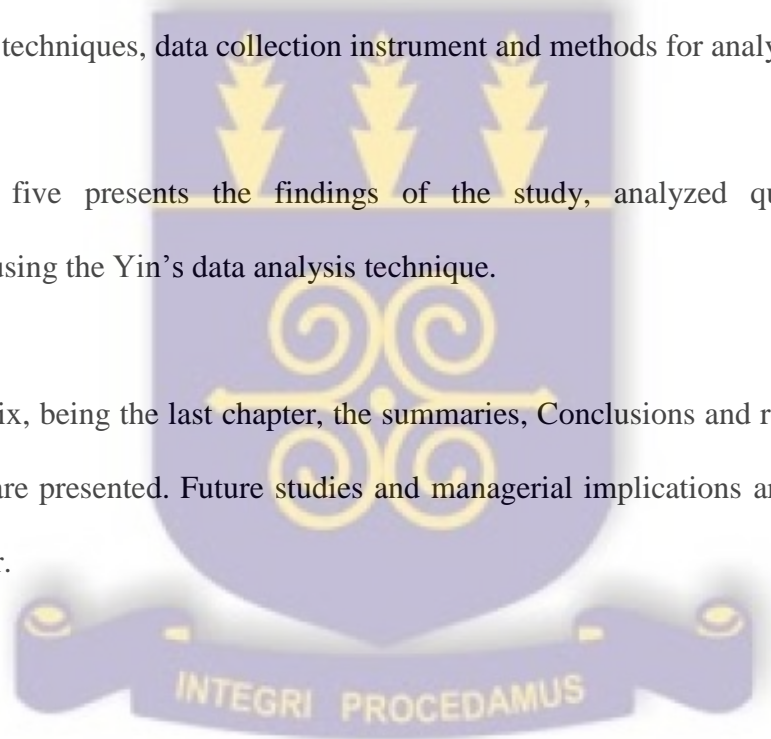
The chapter three takes a critical look at the context of the study. That is, the historical background of exports in Ghana, the Traditional and Non-Traditional exports (NTEs), the

various institutions involved in improving exports performance such as the Ghana Exports Promotions Authority, the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI), the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI), the Ghana Investment Promotions Centre (GIPC) and an overview of the selected firms will be discussed thoroughly in this chapter. The export performance statistics from the Non-Traditional sector will also be highlighted.

The chapter four examines the research methodology for the study. Topical issues include research design, research approach, target population of the study, sample frame and size and sampling techniques, data collection instrument and methods for analysis.

The chapter five presents the findings of the study, analyzed qualitatively, and thematically using the Yin's data analysis technique.

The chapter six, being the last chapter, the summaries, Conclusions and recommendations of the study are presented. Future studies and managerial implications are also presented in this chapter.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this very chapter, the researcher reviewed literature on the evolution and concept of branding, the definition of branding, the branding objectives, the brand elements, the role and importance of branding, branding in SMEs, the brand-building process, the brand-building issues face in SMEs, the importance of brand-building, as well as branding challenges. The Conceptual framework of the study also discussed thoroughly and addressed in this chapter.

2.1 The Evolution and Concepts of Branding

The concept of branding has since time immemorial been a way of distinguishing one product or service provider from that of competitors for centuries. The word "brand" is originally derived from the old Norse word "brander" which means to "burn" as it was practiced by producers on to the products that they made to identify them (Hong, 2014). Although it has always played a central role in the trading business, the contemporary meaning of a brand has witnessed a significant shift and increase of importance for many companies, hence, become one of the main pillars in marketing (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2008; Abimbola and Kocak, 2007).

Centuries ago, when people owned animals like cattle, sheep and horse; trademarks, symbols, signs, posters or pictorial signs were used as an identifier or differentiator. Craftsmen imprinted trademarks on these creations to indicate the owner and origin (Levy, 2012). In so doing, paint or pine tar was then used to brand these animals. Further on

down the line, hot iron was introduced as a way of branding these animals. This technique was later extended to Humans. For instance, slaves were branded to mark ownership while criminals were marked to brand disgrace (Levy, 2012; Kozinets and Sherry, 2004). Therefore, the idea of branding can therefore be posited as originating from this assertion.

According to Stern (2006), branding emerged as a central part of marketing in the twentieth century and that the word 'brand' entered marketing precisely in 1922 as a compound expression; translating trade or proprietary name. The concept was further developed and more firmly reputable in the 1970s and 1980s (Hampf and Lindberg-Repo, 2011). It became an important research area within the realm of marketing where interest and debate on the theories behind marketing blowup (Hunt & Burnett, 1982; Moore & Reid, 2008). Before this era (1970s), firms mainly used brand commercials to distinguish their products only by quality and performance, thus associating branding with mass production and mass communication (Hampf and Lindberg-Repo, 2011).

However, brands in the 1970 and 1990 were created to have meanings for consumers and urbanized to become story- telling brands (Roper and Parker, 2006). This was brought about by emergence of service sector where firms decided to communicate what immaterial value their products could offer in relation to their competitors (Hampf and Lindberg-Repo, 2011).

During the early 1970s, the idea behind the concept of positioning became yet another significant landmark in the evolution of branding (Hampf and Lindberg-Repo, 2011). Al Ries and Jack Trout was the first proponent of the word positioning, they introduced the word in their 1972 series of articles "The Positioning Era" which was published in a

business magazine (The Advertising Age). The foremost authors posited positioning as being mostly about the target audience rather than the product. According to Hampf and Lindberg-Repo (2011) the main objective of marketers then was to situate the product in the minds of consumers. Inferring from these scholars, positioning has now become a popular strategy, particularly among advertising agencies.

The beginning of 1980s, also saw the emergence of a new concept in the field of marketing, this concept became the most researchable area in the study of marketing: namely, brand equity (Hampf and Lindberg-Repo, 2011). This concept has hitherto, holds the sole most central aspect of marketing. To this end, the concept of brand equity has witness a number of publications and probe critical interest in the area of branding, thus, it popularization in both academia and industry (Brodie, Glynn, & Van Durme, 2002). In this vein, extant literature have emerged with various definition of brand equity, but some scholars have identify essentially three different perspective for considering brand equity; the financial perspective (Permits businesses to source the financial brand value from the overall value of the firm), the consumer-based perspective (Evaluating how customers respond to a particular brand) and the combined perspective (Simon & Sullivan, 1993; Keller, 1993; Shocker, Srivastava, & Ruekert, 1994; Kim, Kim & Ann, 2003).

Even though branding has been practiced for over two thousand years, it can be predominantly viewed as a twentieth century phenomenon (Lury, 1998; Schultz et al, 2002; Tokarczyk & Hansen, 2006; Keller, 2008). Currently, brand managers have now been propelled to deliver something that goes far beyond functional benefits in order to make their brands exceptional (Hong, 2014). This trend has been attributed to the circumstances of financial down turn, narrow market situation, permanent growth of

brands launched and the decisive changes in our present civilization which is characterized by globalization, economic growth as well as highly advanced and widely spread technologies (Hong, 2014). For instance, Schultz et al, (2002) described the connection that the individual makes with the brand as a unique and amazing feature of today.

According to Hong (2014), branding has now become an indispensable tool that needs to be prudently managed to secure and maintain market share. This is as a result of the sophisticated and demanding buying behavior of consumers (Hong, 2014). It is therefore sagacious to state that, branding has now developed into a modern concept that is applicable to products, services, companies, people and countries (Chifton et al, 2013). A brand is therefore, different from branding since the branded item is viewed as a brand.

2.2 Defining a Brand

The word “brand” refers to a name, symbol, sign, design, term or any other characteristic or combination of them that identify the goods of one seller or group of sellers from the rest of the competition (AMA, 1960; Aaker, 1991; Angus, 2004; Kotler, 1988 & Keller, 2008). Some scholars also define a brand as an identifiable product, service, person or place and can be increased when the customer or user perceives relevant, unique, sustainable added values that match their needs most closely (Brown, 1992; Ambler, 1992 and Simeon, 2006). Similarly, Bertilsson, (2009) also view a brand as a name or trademark that is connected with a product or producer which works as a symbol that helps consumers to identify it and separate one maker or producer from another; strengthening them (consumers) while holding them responsible for their quality. In this sense, brands are perceived as whatever attributes or benefits and images of a product or service that are

in the minds of the consumers and makes them identify a product or service from another (Spence & Essoussi, 2008; Keller, 2008).

Therefore, branding can be perceived as the process of assigning a name, term, symbol, trademark, package or design to a product or service (Saxena, 2012) in order to make it identifiable among the midst of products in the market place. In essence, branding is not meant for only tangible products but also intangible products such as services (Berry, 2000; Papadopoulos & Harmzaous-Essoussi, 2015). It represents one of the core marketing practices and concepts that emphasizes on the continuity and connectedness (Abimbola and Kocak, 2007) of the firm with its external environment of which customers are important constituents and serve as a key differentiating factor to help organizations survive in a highly saturated and demanding environment (GSS 2006, report). As such, a brand denotes a physical product or service that is being produced tangibly or intangibly, with a name, by a firm while branding refers to the act of making the product identifiable and remembrance by the consumer.

Inferring from the above definitions, a study definition of a brand can therefore be defined as a product, service, organization, country, place or even a person with a specific, traceable and memorable characteristics such as name, logo, symbol, package or a mixture of them, which make them (product, service, town/country, place or person) unique in the midst of other brands in the market place, for easy identification and memorial purposes among consumers or users. In this regard, branding is said to have two main purposes and that is the identification and differentiation of products from one another and hence, has a clear objectives from the marketer and consumer perspectives.

2.3 The Objectives of Branding.

Extant literature have argued that branding facilitate relationship building among organizations in a business context (Brodie, 2005; Cretu and Brodie, 2007; and Bendixen et al, 2004). It focuses on establishing a company's image and reputation for enhance business customers' perception of product and service quality, value and loyalty, and consequently, plays a crucial role in B2B customers' and business to consumer decision making processes (Roy and Banerjee, 2012). Apart from the above, branding has an objective of achieving tangible and intangible customer superior value when it is successful (Roy and Banerjee, 2012). This according to above mentioned authors, branding provides a competitive advantage by bringing many customers into the firm, increase market share, and as a result, make manufacturers' profit margins increasing appreciably over the period of time.

In this ever increasing competitive marketing environment branding has emerged as a prime marketing management practice that can transform and enhance the operations of SMEs and large organizations at large (Krake, 2005; Inskip, 2004; Boyle, 2003). In supporting this assertion, Calabro (2005) underscored the main objective of branding in organizations as something that drastically reduces the cost of sales and customer acquisition among businesses and increasing their return margins rather systematically. Additionally, some scholars are of the view that branding if applied appropriately, is the only route, to create, maintain and sustain the competitiveness of firms and also gives the distinguishing statement and competitive urge for businesses (Davis, 2007; Spence & Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2008).

In conclusion, branding when positioned well, has the ability to create the identity of the brand and make it part of customers through the appropriate use of brand element and marketing mix programme (Kotler, 1991; Keller, 2008), thus, propelling SMEs to survive both in domestic and international markets without depending heavily on sales promotions (Wong and Merrilees, 2005).

2.4 Brand Elements

These are the key factors that create room for a brand to be established. Brand elements also refer to as brand identities, are those trademarkable devices which serve to recognize and differentiate a brand (Keller, 2008; Kotler, 1991). Abimbola and Kocak, (2007), also defines it as any special aspect of the brand that is in the awareness of the brand and facilitate the creation of strong, favorable and unique brand associations or obtains positive brand judgments or feelings. In this vein, brand elements consist of brand name, logo, symbol, package/design or an integration of them that help the consumers to distinguish it from other Products (Abimbola, 2001; Spence & Essonssi, 2008; Kotler, 1991 and Keller, 2008). These brand elements, according to academic scholars must be memorable, meaningful, likeable, transferable, adaptable and protectable as a criterion for selection (Aaker, 1997, Kotler, 1991; Keller, 2003). There are several kinds of brand elements reported in extant literature as follows.

Types of Brand Elements

Brand name: This is the core component of the brand since it often captures the central theme or key associations of a product in a very simple and economic fashion (Kapferer, 1997, Keller, 2008). According to Kotler (1991) and Keller (2008), a brand name must be simple to spell and easy to pronounce in order to register its meaning and memory in consumers' minds. This must be carefully chosen since it is the most difficult element

marketers cannot change like any other brand element (Aaker, 1997; Benent, 1988; Angus, 2004; Kotler, 1991; Keller, 2008).

The logos and symbols: These are visual elements that also play a critical role in creating brand identity, despite the fact that the brand name is basically the central element of the brand (De Charnatony, 2001; Krake, 2005; and Keller, 2008). Unlike brand names, logos and symbols can easily be changed overtime to realize a more contemporary look and have a strong history as a means to show origin, ownership or association (Abimbola, 2001). Kotler, (1991), opine that when the meanings of logos and symbols are explained through an integrated marketing communication, it compels customers to think about the organization anytime they see these logos and/or symbols, be they on a vehicle, television or magazine, hence, making the company and its products recognizable (Kotler, 1991; Ambler, 1992).

The Uniform Resource Locations (URLs): These are websites and are popularly known as domain names (Kotler, 1991; Keller, 2008). They are usually registered and paid for as companies are clamoring for space on the web, and the number of registered URLs is increasing significantly (Kotler, 1991; Keller, 2008). Companies wishing to create a web site for their brands are often advise to make it more attractive and compelling (Papadopoulos & Hamzaousi – Essoussi, 2015).

Characters: These are special types of brand symbol that take the form of a human face or real – life characteristics (Kotler, 1991; Keller, 2008). Brand characters play a crucial role through advertising campaigns and packages or designs of a brand (Berthol et. al, 2008; Keller, 2003). Brand character is often colorful and rich in imagery and tend to draw the attention of consumers and create awareness (Kotler, 1991; Keller, 2008) Krake, 2005). The likability aspect of the brand can be enhanced through the element of brand

character (Kotler, 1991; Keller, 2008) and can help create perceptions of the brand as fun and interesting (Rein, Kotler and Shields, 2007).

Slogans: These are usually short phrases that communicate the descriptive and persuasive information about the brand and usually reflect in advertising, which plays a vital role in packaging of the brand and other elements of the marketing programme (Abimbola and Kocak, 2007; Spence, Harnzaous and Essoussi, 2008; and Keller, 2008). Slogans are perceived as powerful branding elements because they are efficient, short hand ways to build brand equity, and can function as useful looks or handles to assist consumer understand the meaning of a brand, what is it and what makes it special (Keller, 2003). As a result of this, branding plays a crucial role in the marketing of goods and services in a competitive market place (Rein, Kotler and Shields, 2007).

2.5 The Role of Branding

While an egg is a delicate commodity to a poultry farmer, so is branding to a marketing firm. Branding is used to create a point of difference among companies in the market place and is seen as an important management practice in all forms of businesses since brands are tangible or intangible assets to them and can represent their business professionally, help them to stay in memory of their target audiences and inspire customer confidence.

The Role

It is admitted that the development of marketing and customer behavioral theories stem out of the customer-brand relationship (Miller, 1995). Branding with a successful customer value proposition provides customer confidence on functional and emotional benefits of the brand, and that brands are the heart of all marketing strategies (Krake, 2005; Spence and Essoussi, 2010). Arguably, a brand is considered as an integrated marketing idea (Mosmans, 1996) driving a business and a brand dominated marketing

strategies which involve a more symbolic communication process between the business and its customers (Ringberg and Gupta, 2003; Delgado-Ballester and Luis, 2001).

Branding is to communicate a powerful and relevant product identity in the minds of consumers so as to encourage them to create and sustain an on-going marketing relationship between the marketer and the end-users (Shocker et al, 1994; Keller, Parameswaran and Jacob, 2011). Essentially, branding really is seen as a beneficial tool in marketing management according to Keller (2008); for it helps customers to identify the source of the manufacturer of the product and assigns a responsibility towards an organization for branded products. In this regard, branding has therefore become a critical marketing function for all firms (Shepherd, 2005); firms have the power to own and manage a brand and that a firm's inability to manage its brand creditably will then lose to the competition (Peters 1997).

Branding really, have become the focal point of marketing efforts of many companies and are seen as a source of market power, competitive leverage and higher returns. It also promotes recognition and helps set the firm apart from the competition. According to Keller (2008), a well establish brands add up to the overall value of the firm while computing its net worth and also tell people more about the business. For instance, in B2B set-ups, branding does not only reach the end-users, but also stakeholders as well (Pandey, 2007), thus, contributing to loyalty in both product and company branding (Van-Riel et al, 2005). It also serves as a major value contributor in the selection criteria of B2B transaction (Bendixen et al, 2004).

Hitherto branding was being practice by large organizations with the requisite available resources. But the last two decade has seen a change in this trend with SMEs now practicing the concept of branding. SMEs are now investing in brand-building so as to become more conspicuous in the crowd and thus enhance sales and high performance (Berthon et al, 2008; Calabro, 2005). This assertion has been confirmed by Ashmore (2016), who stated that strong brand plays a crucial role in small businesses. That is to say, it improves recognition of a product through Unique Selling Proposition Strategy (USPS), creates trust with the customers and other important stakeholders. In addition, it supports advertising to create a definable impression of the company in the minds of future customers, builds financial value for the firm in stock exchange market, transpires employees to work harder than before and generates new customers to the firm (Ashmore, 2016).

Also, like the consumers, branding is helpful to the business entity by providing legal protection to firms towards the unique features of the brand. Contrary to the above, strong brands help the firm to get premium prices and the potential generation of future cash flow (Shocker et al, 1994; Holt, 2002), while, emphasizing on the passion and creative role of an entrepreneur behind brand-building (Krake, 2005). For instance, firms can charge premium prices for owning a brand and boost profit on every scale (Kotler, 1991). This according to Kotler (1991) can perhaps be attributed to brands being viewed as invaluable asset of a firm which cannot be easily copied.

Again, experience of customers with products of same brands helps them to decide quickly whether to purchase the product or not and that, brands bring with them a certain level of quality assurance from the maker (Keller, 2003). To this end, brands helps

organizations to retain their existing customers, provides security of demand and create barriers for other manufacturers to easily tap existing customers (Ashmore, 2016; Keller, Parameswaran and Jacob, 2011). Branding therefore, facilitate product-line extension; the identification of products, services and businesses and differentiate them from the competition (Anderson and Narus, 2004). Can anything be branded? Firms like Non-Traditional Exports (NTEs), which have the potential to grow and transform the lives of Ghanaians as engine of growth need to adopt the practice of branding.

2.6 Brand-building

For Huang and Lai (2012), brand-building has been defined differently by different scholars. These scholars saw brand-building as something solid and deeper than a simple transaction between the firm and its customers (Simmons et al, 2010). In this light, brand-building is defined as the day- to-day execution of a brand strategy and how it is being run by the firm as a function of its marketing strategy (Kapferer, 1995; Keller, 1998). It can also be viewed as the development of a promise, making that promise and sustaining it by defining, positioning and delivering the brand to the customers (Junneja & Junneja, 2008).

According to Krake, (2005) and Keller, (2008), strategic brand-building consists of the design and implementation of marketing programmes and activities that are used to build, measure and manage brand equity. While perceiving branding as integration into daily performance of the firm, Keller, (1999) posited that, a brand strategy and its building implementation is not a one day activity but demands a continuous marketing strategy and development of the firm. This process has been known to help differentiate the product or service from the competition and gives a unique and quality name to the business (Junneja & junneja, 2008).

2.7 The Importance of Brand-building

The results of brand-building yielded positive dividends from long-run brand strategy and are usually far exceeded the costs of achieving the brand, with special emphasis on financial, strategic and managerial aspects of management (Shocker & Weitz, 1988; Krake, 2005). Essentially, companies with strong brands usually enjoy a number of advantages over those with weak ones (Kohle and Stephens, 1997; Randall, 1997). Moreover, the promises that a brand makes are usually seen as a function of a brand (Blackett, 2004) and the brand name is always worth more than the sum total value of the firm itself.

Brand-building serves as a strategic reference point and supports business development by realizing an alignment between the strengths of the firm and its external environment (Wong and Merrilees, 2007). The firm involves is being offered some kind of legal protection, retains its intellectual property rights and the owner obtains legal title to the brand, and hence, the firm earns and sustains extra profits from its brands and create greater superior value for shareholders (Kotler, 2012; Keller, 2008). For Murphy, (1992), brand-building “leads to the development and maintenance of a set of product attributes, values, which are coherent, appropriate, distinctive, protectable and appealing to customers”. It therefore makes customers committed to one’s business, once they can clearly differentiate one’s products from the competition (Junneje and Junneja, 2008).

Literature in branding indicates that strong brands can generate loyal customers, improve in revenue generation in the long –run, permit higher price premiums and increase market share of the firm (Court, Narasimban, Gordon, Elzinga, 2002; Keller, 2003; Simmons et al, 2010). Adding to that, a successful brand has been reputed to differentiate a company

or product from the competition as well as gaining the needed reputation and attention of the target market (Keller, 2003). Extant literature shows that brand-building is not only important or beneficial to organization but to customers as well. Thus, customers are able to identify the source of a producer or maker, gain confidence from them while allowing consumers to reduce searching costs for products and the risks involved to the barest minimum (Abimbola & Kocak, 2007; Keller, 2008; Kotler, 2012).

2.8 Brand-building Issues Faced in NTEs

Despite the importance of brand-building to both organizations (marketing processes) and its consumers, it is still not been given the needed attention, support, and recognition in SMEs (Abimbola, 2007). This could perhaps be attributed to the narrow interpretation by SMEs management that organizations adopt different strategies to manage their brands (Wong and Merrilees, 2005). Recognizing this, (Krake, 2005) agreed that, most of the managers in SMEs in the NTEs do not really understand the meaning of brand-building. Some academic scholars also argued that the owners or directors of SMEs, who are supposed to take a lead in brand-building, are not even aware of branding as a concept themselves (Krake, 2005; Wong and Merrilees, 2007). Presumably, if the owners/directors do not actually focus on brand-building, how then would their employees pay attention to it (Krake, 2005)? These scholars have demonstrated that SMEs in the NTEs are not mature in the market place (Boyle, 2003; Krake, 2005; Spence and Essoussi, 2008), due to lack of understanding of the real meaning of branding, emphasizing that small businesses may not even be able to identify and acknowledge the existence of brands (Merrilees, 2007).

More importantly, Krake (2005) had stressed that the names of most SMEs are usually not the same as their brand names and that it is difficult to gain people's attention and support,

thereby, loosing vast opportunities in their businesses. Even if their brand name is the same as their firms' name, with some little knowledge about the brand, they still do not see the brand-building as the most crucial aspect of their business(Wong and Merrilees, 2005; Krake, 2005; Abimbola and Kocak, 2007). It has been stated from the owners' point of view that, brand-building is restricted to only advertising, brand name and the logo, where advertising devices like television and promotional leaflets were all necessary to branding, but do not seem to be critical in SMEs rather than personal selling (Wong and Merrilees, 2005).

Furthermore, another common issue confronted by SMEs is their limited time, resources, structures and processes to carry out branding exercises (Wong and Merrilees, 2005; Spence and Essoussi, 2008). It is also conceived that the employees of SMEs (De Chernatony, 2001) should be identified as brand “ambassadors” since they are the point of contact between the brand’s internal and external environments and can impact positively on consumers’ perceptions of both the brand and the firm. Firms are therefore called upon to adopt the concept of corporate branding and combine their strategic vision and culture throughout the entire organization to be explicitly employed as part of it specialty (Balmer, 2001).

Also, according to Krake (2005), most of the SMEs pay less or no attention to brand - building as their daily activities. This is because brand-building decisions and policies rest with the owner or director as a key person, for its implementation and changing the brand elements such as names and logos (Krake, 2005). Also, brand identity strategy directs brand decisions and warrant the coherence of marketing plans through time (Madvaharam, Badrinarayanan, McDonald, 2005; Cegarra and Michel, 2000) and should be in turn

associated with specific and limited core values that are complementary to the organizational values and cultures (De Chernatony, 2001; Urde, 2003). The entrepreneurs are the visionary leaders in their respective firms who are the resource persons for brand-building and identity creation, suggesting that there should be a clear link between the entrepreneur's character and the brand as he/she is the personification of the brand (Krake, 2005).

For Abimbola and Kocak, 2007; Krake, 2005; Wong & Merrilees, 2007), 50% of the SMEs have their company name the same as their brand name, because they usually used one or two brand names and this can lead to a reduction of their chances to gaining people's attention and hence their businesses (Krake, 2005). Most of the SMEs do not co-brand or cooperate with other businesses to gain more brand value and make their business a plus through brand-building. (Srivastava, 2004). Though, the features of a brand and the product or the company are entirely different, there are some connections among them, only certain few characteristics can distinguish them (Krake, 2005).

2.9 Definition of SMEs

Despite their anticipated numerous advantages, it is somewhat uneasy to define SMEs in the NTEs. A prime factor attributing to this lack of clarity is that few of these studies have employed an informed definition of the 'SMEs'. These inconsistencies according to Kayanula and Quartey (2000), can be attributed to the variables use in the description of SMEs and the differences in economic system worldwide. Gibson & Van der Vaart (2008), is also of the view that SMEs are the cornerstone of every economy and have become the actual boiler plate for papers, presentations, and popular articles on the growth

and development of private sector thus defining SMEs are crucial in better understanding its dynamism. Below is a table showing the World Bank classification of SMEs.

Table 2.1 Definition of SMEs

| Firm Size | Employees | Assets | Annual Sales | Loan Size Proxies |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------------|---|
| Micro | < 10 | < \$ 100,000 | < \$ 100,000 | < \$ 10,000 |
| Small | < 50 | < \$ 3 million | < \$ 3 million | < \$ 100,000 |
| Medium | < 300 | < \$ 15 million | < \$ 15 million | < \$ 1 million (< \$ 2 million for some advanced countries) |

Source: IMF (2012)

According to the World Bank, for a firm to be classified as an SME, it must meet a minimum of two and a maximum of three of the above requirements and that is employees, assets and annual sales. They defined SMEs as businesses that are three times larger by employees and five times larger by assets turnover. Countries like the United States have also defined SMEs as firms/organization which are autonomously owned and operated that are not prevailing in its field of operations while the European Commission (2000), defined SMEs according to their maximum sales turnover, indicating that turnover should be less than £25 million pound sterling.

In Ghana, there are some operational definitions for SMEs by governing bodies like National Board for Small Scale Industry, Local Government and Rural Development Ghana and Ghana Statistical services (GSS). For instance; NBSSI classifies any business which employs up to twenty-nine people as an SME. They have two categories of small businesses. These are the micro and small enterprises.

1. The Micro Enterprise

This is any enterprise which employs up to five people and/or has a total fixed assets (excluding land and building), not exceeding \$100,000.

2. *The Small Enterprise*

Similar to NBSSI, the GSS views businesses with less than ten personnel's as small scale while businesses with more than ten personnel's are considered as either medium or large enterprise. In that same light, Local Government and Rural Development (Ghana) also opines any firm with a workforce of one to nine as small scale, ten to twenty medium and above twenty as large scale enterprise.

Thus, it is obvious why various policy papers are actually out of sync with each other. Apparently, we are far from an international consensus on what constitutes an SME. These differences among SME definitions complicate the SME one-on-one interaction and open doors to misdirection of donor resources.

2.10 The SMEs Brand-building

Conceivably, SMEs typically are challenged with numerous restraints ranging from limited resources and budget, lack of expertise and time, structure, and processes compared to large firms (Abimbola, 2001). The consequence of these, however, can be reduced to the barest minimum with careful planning, cohesive understanding of what branding is all about and also by involving the entire organization in branding a consistent brands, and the major brands that often have more resources at their disposal (Abimbola and Kocak, 2007). SMEs must design and implement branding policy more carefully (Abimbola, 2001).

A strategic brand-building process involves the systematic design and implementation of marketing programmes and activities to build, measure, and manage brand equity (Keller, 2008). Essentially, the application of branding policy in SMEs involves the same

principles as in large organizations (Abimbola, 2001). However, the fundamental criteria, the discipline of putting in place, and severe monitoring throughout its implementation stage and beyond, are all required and an appropriate focus on scale and level of complexity suitable for the individual SMEs (Abimbola, 2001).

2.11 Criteria for Brand-building Process in SMEs

A strategic brand-building process in large firms are identified as identification and development of brand plans, designing and implementing brand marketing programmes, measuring and interpreting brand performance and growing and sustaining brand equity (Keller, 2008). Also, the guidelines for building SME brands are focus on: only one or two brand elements, creatively designing marketing programme on specific brand association, creating a well-integrated set of brand elements that enhance awareness and brand image, designing an appropriate campaign for specific audiences, and leveraging as possible the secondary associations (Abimbola, 2001).

First, consider corporate branding or stress on only one or two brands at a time, especially at the initial stage of the brand (Abimbola, 2001). Since it is important to have a singular focus on the complementary elements of the brand like names, logos and symbols to support other marketing activities center around a singular brand/company name and provides a clear knowledge and understanding of what the brand is to represent (Keller, 2003) and how it should be positioned with regards to competition (Abimbola, 2001). The brand-builders should always make sure that maximum attention is tailored to a single source to avoid confusion with other equally competing brands from the same category (Ojasalo, Natti & Olkkonen, 2008).

Second, focus on a creatively designed marketing programme on specific brand association (Abimbola, 2001) and design and implement a brand marketing programme (Keller, 2008). For it is crucial to consider the role of a brand name and its potential use for order of communication such as advertising, media and packaging (Murphy, 1992). Creativity can also influence future marketing programme for the brand and its extension (Abimbola, 2001). Building a brand requires properly positioning the brand in the minds of consumers and achieving as much as brand resonance as possible (Keller, 2008) and building a strong brand, needs a brand and product concept as a distinctive, relevant and appealing to customers and emphasizing on the role of brand values (North et al, 2003).

Third, create a well-integrated set of brand elements that enhance both awareness and brand image (Abimbola, 2001). Remember this should be memorable, simple, recognizable, credible and deliverable (Blackette and Denton, 1992). Measure and interpret the brand performance in order to manage brands profitably (Keller, 2008). The brand equity measurement system can provide timely, accurate and actionable information for marketers for them to make the best strategic decisions in the long-run (Keller, 2008).

Fourth, design an appropriate campaign for a specific audience, so that the brand-building campaign stresses and convinces the business customers of the strength of the brand (Abimbola, 2001) and captures end-users imagination and attention (Abimbola and Vallaster, 2010). The small businesses must be often depended on networking and word of mouth communication to create strong, unique and favourable associations (Keller, 1998). The opportunities such as public relation through existing network like in house-publications, charity events, low cost-productions and sponsorship can be a very effective and less costly way of brand enhancement (Abimbola, 2001). Usually, doing business,

thinking logically and keeping the entrepreneur's behavior consistent with the policy of the firm (Krake, 2005), making sure, there is a strong relationship between the character of the entrepreneur and the brand, insisting that the entrepreneur should have the passion for branding within the firm (Krake, 2005).

The fifth criterion for brand building is, leveraging the brand elements as many as possible on the secondary associations (Abimbola 2001; Keller, 2008). The firm should endeavor to link the brand with other companies such as those the firm has business dealings with, spokespeople or other endorsers and events that reinforces and augment the general theme of the brand (Abimbola, 2001) and country of origin, channel of distributions or another brand (Keller, 2008).

While a systematic approach to formulating and implementing branding strategy may improve, its effectiveness, and the success of a brand is not guaranteed (Abimbola and Vallaster, 2010). The high failure rate of brands launched by large firms is a testimony to the influence of customer as a dynamic and independent buyer. However, the long-term projection for most brands (Ojasalo, Natti & Olkkonen, 2008) is better than the short-term measure of success or failure. This may even be more important for SMEs as they have to build extensive networks for new brand introduction over a relative longer-term, compare to large firms with large budgets to create "remarkable" launching for brands (Abimbola, 2001).

Strategic Brand-building Process

This involves the systematic design and implementation of marketing programmes and activities to build, measure and manage brand equity (Keller, 2003). A strategic brand-building process consists of four (4) main steps namely

- Identifying and developing brand plans
- Designing and implementing brand marketing programmes
- Measuring and interpreting brand performance
- Growing and sustaining brand equity

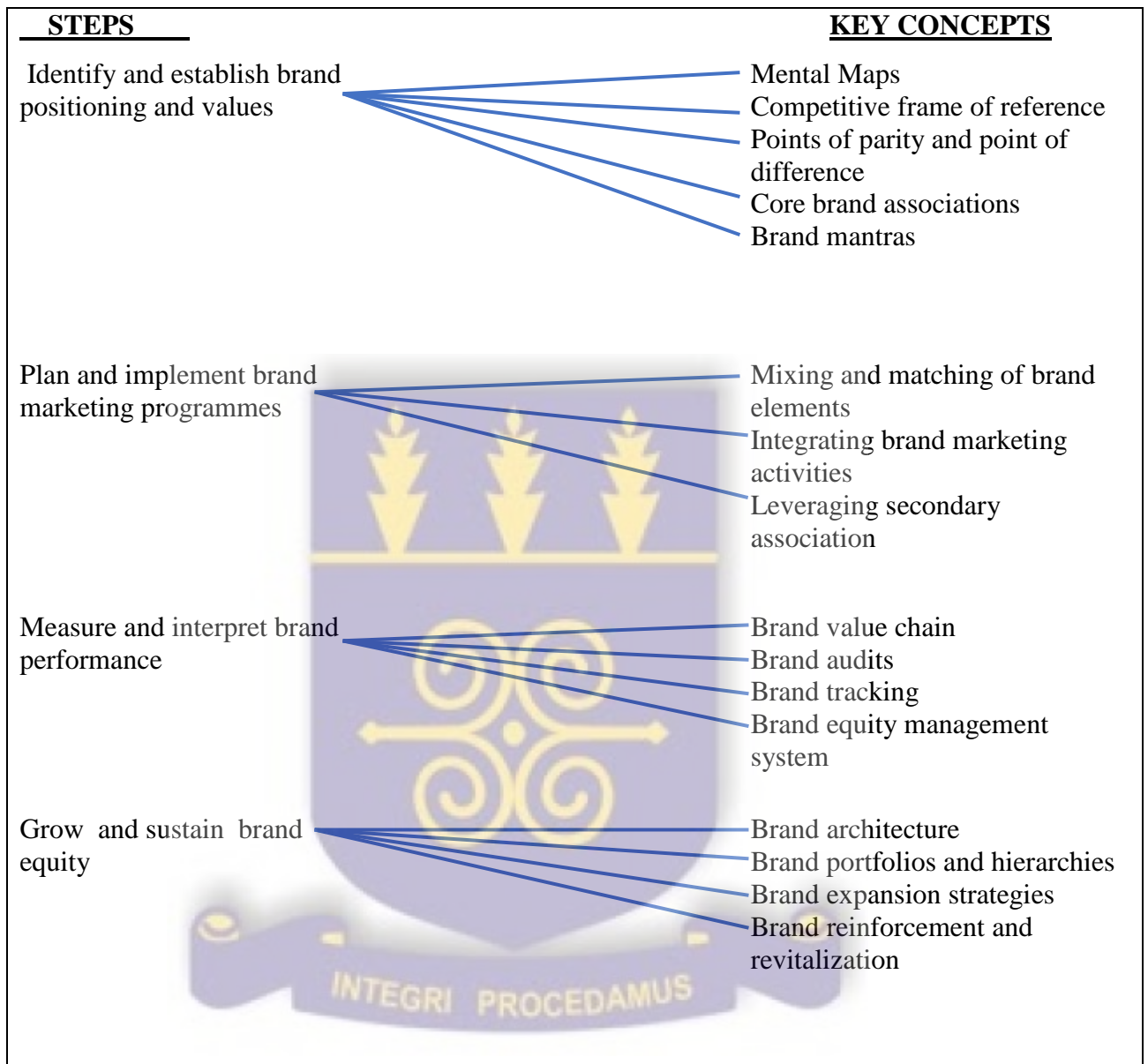
First, the identification and development of brand plans. This is the beginning of a strategic brand-building process with a clear knowledge and understanding of what the brand is to represent and how it should be positioned with regards to competition (Keller, 2003). For SMEs branding, consider corporate branding first or stress on only one or two brands at a time especially at the initial stage of the brand (Abimbola, 2001). It is important to have a singular focus on the complementary elements of the brand like symbols, names and logos to support other marketing activities. These activities centre on a singular brand/company name making sure that maximum attention is tailored to single source so as to avoid confusion with other equally competing brands from the same category (Abimbola, 2001).

The second step of a strategic brand-building process is the designation and implementation of brand marketing programmes; building a brand requires properly positioning the brand in the minds of customers and achieving as much as resonance as possible (Keller, 2003). Also focus on a creatively designed marketing programme on specific brand association for it is crucial to consider the role of brand name and its potential usage for order of communication such as advertising, media coverage and packaging (Murphy, 1992). Creativity can also influence the future marketing programme for the brand and its future extension (Abimbola, 2001).

Third, the measurement and interpretation of brand performance; in order to build and manage brands profitably, brand builders and managers must successfully design and implement a brand equity measurement system (Keller, 2003). A brand equity measurement system is a set of research procedures designed to provide timely, accurate and actionable information for marketers so that they can make the best possible tactics decisions in the short run (Keller, 2008). For NTEs, create a well-integrated set of brand elements that enhances both awareness and brand image (Abimbola, 2001). This should be memorable, simple, recognizable by the customer, credible, and deliverable (Blackett and Denton, 1992).

The fourth and final step of strategic brand-building process is the growth and sustainability of brand equity. Maintaining and expanding brand equity can be quite challenging. Brand equity management activities take a broader and more diverse perspective of the brand's equity thus understanding how branding strategy should reflect corporate concerns and be adjusted, if at all, overtime or over geographical boundaries or multiple market segments (Keller, 2003). For NTEs, design an appropriate campaign for a specific audience so that the brand-building campaign stresses and convinces the business customers of the strength of the brand and captures end-users imagination and attention (Abimbola and Vallaster, 2010). Small businesses must be often relying on networkings and word of mouth communications to create strong, unique and favorable associations (Keller, 1998). The four steps of strategic brand-building process outlined by Keller can be described as below.

Figure 2.1 Strategic Brand-building Process



Source: Keller, (2008)

2.12 Branding Strategies

There are organizational policies for establishing and developing sustainable competitive advantage (Abimbola, 2001) and comprises of the development and maintenance of the sets of product characteristics and values which are comprehensible, suitable, distinctive, protectable and attractive to customers (Murphy, 1992). The SMEs can successfully build

on these and strive for new challenges (Abimbola, 2001). Building upon inherent silent knowledge, product, service and process inside the firm, brands may serve as policies for innovative practices and enhancing the firm's assets- based like reputation and trust from prospective customers (Abimbola and Vallaster, 2007; Kotler and Gertner, 2002).

The multinational companies often follow the practice of having multiples brands in a single market and the deepness of their branding strategy is the main function managers stress on, anytime they are designing their ideal brand portfolio, to make good use of market coverage and minimize brand overlap (Keller, 2008).

Brand Awareness

This has to do with brand recognition. According to Kotler (1991) and Keller (2008), brand names which are usually simply to pronounce and easy to spell; familiar and meaningful; different and distinctive can promote awareness of the brand. Simplicity and ease of pronunciation and spelling reduce the efforts of consumers in trying to understand and process the brand name, and short names usually facilitate recall and memory than long and complex names (Abimbola, 2001; Keller, 2008).

Brand Association

The visible and invisible meaning consumers attach to the brand name is of paramount important (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010; Angus, 2004). A brand name is always selected to reinforce an important attribute or association that makes up its product positioning (Keller, 2003). Linking the brand to other companies, country of origin, spokespeople, the company's name, and sporting events can create more meaning in customers minds (Keller, 2008).

Brand Architecture

This provides the general guidelines about the firm's branding strategy and which particular brand element(s) to use across all the different products sold by the firm. There are two concepts used in defining brand architecture. These are brand portfolio and brand hierarchy. The brand portfolio is the set of different brands that a particular firm offers for sale to buyers in a particular product category. On the other hand, the brand hierarchy displays the number and nature of common and distinctive brand components across the firm's set of brands (Keller, 2003).

Brand Equity

This represents the strength of the brand in an organization. It has to do with the value, power and position of the brand in relation to other competitive brands in the market (Keller, 2003). A high brand equity means that a product's value is enhanced when it is associated with a brand's name meaning attached to it (Kapferer, 1997; Keller, 2003). The sources of brand equity include consumers' awareness of the brand and a strong, favorable and unique association that the brand can be leveraged on. The Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) has to do with the "differential effects" in the minds of the consumers or customers (Keller, 2008). That is how the brand is being positioned in the customer's mind. The first step in creating brand equity is to develop or establish a brand identity that is achieved through a unique set of associations that a firm aspires to create or maintain (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 2003).

2.13 Challenges of Branding

There are quite a number of possible challenges confronting brand-builders in their attempt to build or manage their brands (Keller, 2003; Aaker, 1997; De Chernatony, 2001). This refers to brand barriers or obstacles that prevent SMEs to particularly

undertake business activities regarding branding their products (Saxena, 2012). The obstacles are the major limitations on financial and human resources and time management (Wong and Merrilees, 2005). The absence of these resources force firms to concentrate on what they can comparatively do best in their daily performance and this short-term focus becomes a challenge for them developing a long-term branding strategy (Wong and Merrilees, 2005).

The possible challenges of branding encountering SMEs are well-documented and traditionally centers around time and money (Parrot et al, 2010) and has explained the role branding plays as a comparative strategy (Abimbola, 2001). This is because SMEs have limited resources and technical know-how, requiring greater focus and effectiveness (Rode and Vallaster, 2005). Branding strategies require large amount of investments in media communications, media coverage, eroding traditional media effectiveness (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2003). The costs of which may even grow higher as a result of the absence of established identity and reputation, increased competition, economic downturn, brand proliferation, media transformation, and greater accountability (Abimbola and Vallaster, 2007; Saxena, 2012; Petkova et al, 2008).

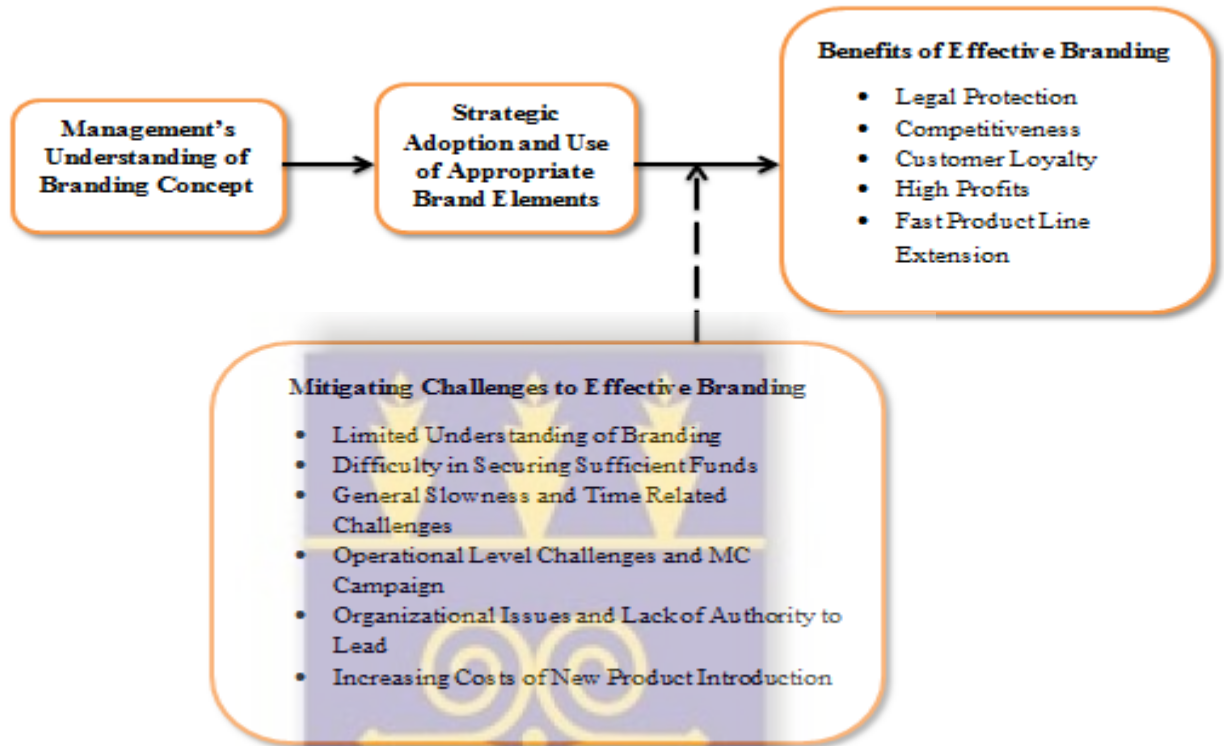
Moreover, SMEs lack the financial resources and “share of voice” to share much of an impact in their attempt to brand (Wong and Merrilees, 2005). The growth of private labels, more complex brand families and portfolios, difficulty in differentiating, operating in mature markets, decreasing brand loyalty in many categories and increasing trade powers are some of the major constraints confronting SMEs hence, suggesting a limited role of branding for them (Wong and Merrilees, 2005; Keller, 2008).

According to Sullivan and Bauerschmidt (1989), small businesses regardless to their geographical locations, have similar perspectives to their larger counterparts, and a study on eight (8) Australian firms revealed that SMEs have a narrow interpretations of what branding entails (Sullivan and Bauerschmidt, 1989). The extant literature argued that branding is meant for large corporations because of their access to plenty resources (Krake, 2005; Wong and Merrilees, 2005; Sullivan and Bauerschmidt, 1989). The perceptions of branding are limited to advertising, the brand name and the logo and advertising activities are seen as important to branding but not regarded critical in SMEs (Keller, 2003). This is attributed to increasing advertising expenditures, cost of new product introduction and support, short-term performance orientation, increasing job turnover and pronounced economic cycles as challenges facing brand-builders as far as branding is concerned (Keller, 2008; Abimbola, 2001; Wong and Merrilees, 2005; Krake, 2005).

For Peterson (1989), most of the small businesses adopt a production orientation and are usually focusing on sales. Literature also report that SMEs challenges are related in several occasions to the bad image of their products in the international market and insufficient foreign demand (Cardoso, 1980; Gereffi, 1992). The internal barriers such as informational, functional and marketing are critical behind a successful operation of SMEs globally (Leonidou Theodosious, 2004).

2.13 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.2 Conceptual Framework



Source: Co-developed by Researcher and Dr. Adelaide Kastner from Literature

For this study, a conceptual framework was developed based on three (3) constructs namely: the NTEs' understanding of branding as a concept; the usage or application of brand elements by these NTEs; and the possible branding challenges confronting brand builders in these NTEs. The selection of these constructs is based on the suggestions in literature that these three (3) constructs among others are paramount to organizations' adoption and repetition of branding as marketing management concept. Abimbola (2001) is of the view that before an organization can undertake branding it must understand the meaning of branding in the first place and also has an insight of what brand elements entails while Moilanen (2015) and Keller (2008) admitted that an organization undertaking branding is bound to face a number of possible challenges coming from a

dynamic marketing environment and the organization's own actions and inactions in its decision-making and management process.(Keller, 2003; Abimbola, 2015).

Understanding of Brand-building as a Concept

According to Abimbola (2001), organizations' understanding of brand-building process is paramount to the adoption of branding as a concept. She is of the view that an organization cannot undertake branding practices without knowing the insight of brand-building strategies and implementation (Abimbola, 2001). According to this scholar, though, there is quite a number of branding challenges facing firms, they occur at the time the firm is undertaking branding and is fully aware of what it entails as organizational framework. Most of these SMEs in the NTEs do not really understand the meaning of branding as an organizational concept and hence, their inability to practice branding (Abimbola, 2001). The SMEs management's understanding the meaning of brand-building and recognizing the crucial role it plays in marketing management of their firms and each stage of the strategic brand-building process proposed by Keller is the first step of its readiness to adopting the concept of branding (Abimbola, 2001; Keller, 2003).

The Adoption and usage of Brand Elements

Having understood what branding is, the next thing is to use the brand elements to modify existing products and package new ones for purposes of brand identity and differentiation (Abimbola, 2001). According to Abimbola (2001), it is not possible for one to use brand elements effectively without a thorough understanding of branding as a marketing management function. The brand elements are the keys creating brand awareness and leveraging the brand on secondary associations and therefore need a clear understanding by management before they can be applied appropriately (Abimbola, 2001). In this view, having known what branding is, one must also know what brand elements are, in order to

undertake effective branding. The usage of brand elements is therefore, paramount to the firm's marketing creativity and its branding process (Keller, 2003).

The Challenges of Branding

Despite the firm's level of understanding of branding and brand elements alike, it bounds to face a number of possible challenges in its branding process (Abimbola, 2001). The firm is surrounded by a number of challenges coming from the macro and micro marketing environment which are dynamic to the firm and its products. These challenges may also arise out of the firm's own actions or inaction in its decision-making process (Moilanen, 2015). As a result, the limited understanding of branding, difficulty in securing sufficient funds, general slowness and time related challenges, organizational issues and lack of authority to lead and the operational level challenges in marketing communications campaigns are the challenges of branding proposed by Moilanen (2015) while Keller (2008) is of the view that increasing costs of new products introductions is a challenge of branding confronting brand-builders. The study therefore seeks to find out whether SMEs in the NTEs in Ghana really understand branding as a marketing concept and the brand elements they are using. It also seeks to find out whether these challenges of branding also affect SMEs in Ghana. According to Moilanen (2015) and Keller (2008), the challenges of branding confronting organizations are discuss below:

1. Limited understanding of branding among organizations' brand-builders.

A product is known to be multidimensional in nature and highly complex identity and hence not an easy focal object for branding once but needs a subsequent improvements and/or upgradement (Pike, 2005; Govers and Go, 2009). The marketing of a place is totally different from the marketing of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) and most services (Ritchie, 1998). "A firm is a strategic business unit, typically with clearly defined

boundaries through ownership or control structures, whereas a place may have vague boundaries rather” (Flagstad and Hope, 2001, pp. 450), and in the same way, products and services offered in most other contexts are well defined entities that are marketed and delivered by a single firm or group of firms with shared interest. For branding, however, not only is the product to be marketed very diverse and complex, but it is one that is delivered by many firms that have quite different objectives and capabilities (Moilanen, 2015; Varhies and Morgan, 2005). Some of the brand builders in their respective organizations do not have an in-depth knowledge in the concept of branding (Krake, 2005).

According to (Wong and Merrilees, 2005), brand-building plays a very important role in marketing processes both in NTEs and large organizations, however, they use different approaches. It is obvious that most managers do not actually understand what brand-building is all about. Krake (2005) state that the owners or directors who supposed to take the lead in brand-building, are not even conscious of branding as a concept themselves, adding that if the owners / directors do not pay attention to brand-building themselves, how can they then ask their employees to pay attention to it (Abimbola, 2001) .Some academic scholars show that NTEs are really immature in the market (Boyle, 2003; Krake, 2005). This is attributed to their lack of understanding of the real meaning of branding. Factually, small businesses like local corner shops and grocery stores, may even fail to recognize that they are brands. Merrilees (2007) pointed out further that the fact that the names of the SMEs are not always the same as their brand name, it is hard indeed to gain people’s attention and therefore stand to lose their many chances in their business (Merrilees, 2007). However, considering the fact that they have the brand name and also know what the brand is, they still do not see the brand as the most critical part of their

business (Krake, 2005). This therefore becomes a challenge to brand-builders in their attempt to build strong brands for their respective firms (Moilanen, 2015).

2. Difficulty in Securing Sufficient Funds.

The need to convince public sector decision makers that branding is an investment with positive returns still remains a challenge to brand-builders (Moilanen, 2015). Limited funding leads to other difficulties, which include the need to make compromise, need to improvise, eliminate fundamental activities and limited or non-existent market research. To a lesser extent, getting funding from private sector stakeholders is also problematic (Moilanen, 2015). It is evident that SMEs in the NTEs have a much smaller or limited budget as compared with the larger companies, which will surely restrict their marketing creativity level. As a result, to build a strong brand it costs a lot of money to SMEs, and the budget is the determining factor to varying degrees, particularly advertising (Krake, 2005). Difficulty in obtaining enough funds for advertising in order to create awareness remains a challenge to brand-builders in their branding process (Moilanen, 2015).

3. General Slowness and Time Related Challenges.

Large numbers of stakeholders during the time for internal communication and decision-making can generally slow down several phases of brand-building process. Funding related decision made in the public sector are usually delayed (Moilanen, 2015). The private sector actors are generally faster than public sector stakeholders when it comes to the issue of funding NTEs, which leads to frustration on one end and feelings of haste on the other end. The SMEs inability to receive credit facilities, grants or any other financial assistance at the right time is one of the challenges confronting brand-builders (Moilanen, 2015).

4. *Organizational Issues and Lack of Authority to Lead.*

This challenge is said to be a composite of two prime features: conflicting opinions of key stakeholders, together with lack of clear leadership (Abimbola and Kocak, 2001; Krake, 2005; Moilanen, 2015). These are exacerbated by an under decision-making structure, limited coordination among stakeholders, stakeholders fear of losing power when engaging in a cooperative branding process and the challenge of building an effective system for internal communication within a loosely structured network organization (Moilanen, 2015) . The lack of linkage appears to be the main difficulty in finding individuals or organizations to take charge of the process (Moilanen, 2015). The company structure can influence the role of brand-building in SMEs. The company structure according to (Krake, 2005) has three (3) aspects that can impact on the role of brand-building like marketing personnel, objectives and awareness of branding. These factors also determine the role of brand-building within SMEs (Krake, 2005). The entrepreneurs' inability to lead their employees into marketing creativity and innovation can seriously affect their branding process and hence a challenge facing brand-builders (Moilanen, 2015).

5. *Increasing Costs of New-product Introductions.*

The time of increasing competition and increasing cost of introducing new product occur at the same time (Keller, 2003). According to (Keller, 2008), the cost of introducing a new product or supporting an existing product has seen a tremendous increased making it difficult for small businesses to match their investments and level of support that brands were able to receive in previous years. In 2008, alone, about 123,000 new consumer products were introduced in the United States. However, the failure rates of these new products were projected at over 90%. Given the millions of dollars spend on developing

and marketing a new product, the total failure cost was conventionally estimated by one group to exceed billions of dollars (Keller, 2008). This is one of the challenges brand-builders face in their branding process (Keller, 2008).

6. Operational-level Challenges in Marketing Communication Campaigns.

According to Krake (2005), marketing creativity, innovation and available budget can have a positive or negative impact on marketing activities and communication messages. For SMEs, the creativity can substantiate how many marketing activities they have and the budget can also be the influential factor on how much they can invest in marketing activities and what kind of messages they can send or receive from the customers (Krake, 2005). According to (Moilanen, 2015), the difficulties caused by day-to day management of the external marketing communication campaign related-problems are among other things include: difficulties in combining branding activities with the activities of a single stakeholders; limited understanding of branding among key stakeholders; limited internal buy-in amongst stakeholders; difficulty in securing sufficient funds; general slowness and time related challenges; organizational issues and lack of authority to lead; and in transferring the brand identity to product experiences; and finally poor situational awareness and poor monitoring (Moilanen, 2015). According to Huang and Lai (2012), both marketing creativity and the available budget directly affect the marketing activities and messages communicated and hence is a possible challenge of branding in brand-builders' tool box (Moilanen, 2015).

Benefits of Effective Branding

All things being equal, if NTEs are able to strategically and effectively address the three constructs in the conceptual framework as suggested by Moilanen (2015), certain benefits should accrue, namely: legal protection especially of intellectual property, competitiveness in international markets, customer loyalty, higher profits and fast product-line extension internationally (Kotler, 2012; Keller, 2013). In other words, these benefits are often missed by NTEs should they fail to brand as a result of these attended possible challenges.



CHAPTER THREE

THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses intensively the nature and performance of traditional and non-traditional exports sectors in Ghana, stating their contribution to Ghana's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in economic development. The chapter highlights data collected from secondary sources on the performance and features of NTEs, characteristics, branding opportunities and challenges face by NTEs and the institutions that support the NTEs and sector such as the Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA), the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI), the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI), the National Board for Small Scale Industries (NBSSI) and the overview of the case study firms selected for this study.

3.1 Background of the NTEs Sector

Ghana is heavily dependent on its export sector as an engine of growth within an increasingly competitive global market. The notable feature of external trade in Ghana is dominated by traditional exports (MOTI, 2012), which over the years has been the primary source of revenue for the nation. Traditional exports in Ghana consist of cocoa beans, logs and timber, unprocessed gold and other minerals as well as electricity (Buatsi, 2002), but in 2010, Ghana discovered oil which has been added to the traditional export sector. Since colonial time, the export sector has been dominated by cocoa beans, gold and timber. These three commodities accounted for an average of 75.2% of the total exports from 2006 to 2009. Within the same period, cocoa contributed averagely 31.3%, gold 35.5% and timber 8.4%. The bulk of the cocoa is exported in its raw state as beans. In recent

times, however, the execution of government policy to add value to the commodity has led to increased processing of the commodity domestically. Again, decades of several debt crises and severe economic recession has compelled the nation to look for radical new treatments for their economic downturns by shifting towards non-traditional exports.

According to the World Bank (2002) report on African's traditional exports revealed that Africa must diversify from its traditional products or continue to face negative trade effects including declining or relatively low growth in global demand for these commodities, falling real prices for traditional export, very unstable prices and export earnings, a continued marginalization in world trade and diminishing growth and industrialization. Buatsi (2002) also spoke for the diversification from traditional exports in order to realize the objectives of export of the country, hence, the emergence of the Non-traditional sector.

Non-traditional exports have gained considerable degree of attention not only among scholar but also key private and government officials in Ghana (Eitner et al, 1996; Buatsi, 2002). It has been observed that the non-traditional exports describe three distinct phenomena (Barham, Clark katz and Schurman, 1992) which include:

- An export that has not been produced in a particular country before. An example of such traditional exports in Ghana is crude oil.
- A product that was traditionally produced for domestic consumption but is now being exported, for instance, fruits, vegetables (cassava and yam).
- The development of new market for a traditional product.

These studies have shown that the Ghanaian export research must be directed towards Ghanaian Small and Medium Enterprises. It is prudent to note that most of these NTEs are regarded as small and medium scale enterprises (Abban et al, 2013; Buatsi, 2002; Gumede & Rasmussen, 2002; Hinson and Abor, 2005), thus, a called for further research into the export behavior of non-traditional SMEs. Below is an overview of NTEs in Ghana.

3.2 An Overview of the Non-Traditional Exports Sector (NTEs) in Ghana

NTEs are defined by the Ghana Export Promotion Authority as all products that include horticultural products, fish and seafood, prepared food and beverages, handicrafts and other manufactured items (Buatsi, 2002). The post-independence era in Ghana saw fluctuations in the world producer prices for traditional exports such as cocoa, gold, manganese and diamonds leading to a short fall of export revenues (Abban et al, 2013). Therefore, government of Ghana focused on the diversification of exports products to include non-traditional exports (NTEs). This accounted for an impressive growth rate of NTE exports particularly in the area of Agriculture exports of 33% from 2005 to 2006, 12% from 2006 - 2007 and 22% from 2007 to 2008 (Bank of Ghana, 2005, 2006 and 2008, reports). Again, in 2012, exports of non-traditional goods and services increased from 25.1% i.e. US\$2,468.1 million from US\$1,973.4 million in 2011 (BOG, 2013).

The enhancement of Ghana's international trade has been a central focus to key governments and other important stakeholders to revamp the economy in 1993. As envisaged under the ERP in 1993, export-producing firms in Ghana received the most direct and indirect supports via the upgradation of their immediate infrastructure (Kuada, 2004). In order to promote exports particularly NTEs, the government of Ghana was committed to obtaining foreign exchange rate critical to repay debts and to reduce

restrictions on imports in the country. Since the beginning of the ERP in 1993, the government of Ghana has put in place several policy frameworks so as to adjust the pattern of Ghana's trade structure. These policy frameworks include the devaluation of currency and increasing of producer prices for important traditional exports such as cocoa to revitalize the advantages of smuggling such goods across borders.

Again, the government announced an inter-bank foreign exchange market to fast track currency exchange in the country. In order to make the importation of major capital goods easier, rather than consumer goods, the government of Ghana modified and reduced tremendously the numerous import duties and trade taxes (Annual Review of Exports 2010, 2011; Kuada, 2004). Between 1990 and 1993, the government's efforts has led to the restoration of many Ghanaian historical trade relationships. In 1993, exports were again dominated by cocoa, which earned Ghana US\$280 million. Other important goods in 1993 were gold (US\$416 million), timber (US\$140 million) and the rest of electricity, diamond and bauxite.

Ghana's NTEs like furniture, cola nuts and pineapples had also gone up tremendously within the same period. On the other hand, the world bank had also reported that the importation of important goods such as fuel and energy particularly oil, recorded for 16% of the 1990 total exports, followed by capital goods, 43%, intermediate goods, 28% and consumer goods 10%. Also, in addition to supporting traditional export industries like cocoa and gold, the government of Ghana had also tried to diversify the content of Ghana's exports by bringing on board Non-Traditional Exports. In order to entice NTEs in the fishing and agriculture sectors, the government offered to repay 95% of import duties on goods ordained for re-export and even cancel sales taxes on manufactured goods sold

in foreign markets. Moreover, the government also formulated a scale of tax rebates ranging between 20% - 50% determined by the volume of total production that was exported and these incentive resulted considerable feedback (Annual Review of Exports 2010, 2011).

In 1992, GEPA came out with a modality to increase NTEs to the tune of US\$335 million by the end of 1997 via increased market research, trade missions, trade fairs, exhibitions and training. It most traceable, clear specific targets include the increases in tuna and shrimp sales to US\$45 million and US\$32 million respectively by the end of 1995 and the increased in pineapple sales to US\$12.5 million. Again, wood products, aluminum goods and processed rubber were targeted to harvest US\$44 million, US\$42 million and US\$23 million respectively in the manufacturing sector of Ghana. This has led to the advocacy and the declaration of an export-led economy with a strong believe and anticipation that the growth of exports should come from the NTE sector (Buatsi, 2002).

In 2010, there was a dramatic increase in NTE earnings in Ghana. This increment was mainly as a result of processed and semi-processed products. This good performance of NTEs was attributed largely to good macro-economic environment and prudent economic policies for the year 2010. The activities of GEPA and other regulatory bodies also contributed to the good performance in 2010. Those activities of GEPA among others were market improvement and divergence; provision of trade information to the export community; export related human resource development for exporters and the backing and expedition of the participation of selected companies in buyer and seller meetings all contributed to the good performance (Annual Review of exports 2010, 2011). The good performance of the country's macro-economic indicators such as stability in exchange

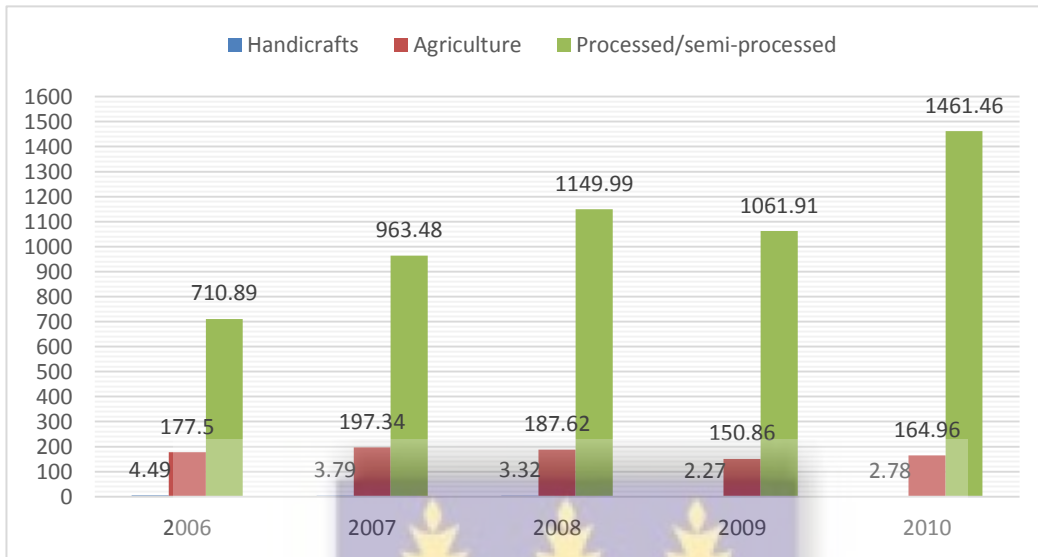
rate, reduction in interest rates and inflation rate supported export growth in 2010 (Annual Review of Exports 2010, 2011). These prudent economic measures alongside with the activities of GEPA provided a favorable atmosphere and enabling environment for the growth of export in Ghana.

Despite the sectors impressive growth, Non-traditional exports contribution to export earnings is considered to be low. This can perhaps be attributed to most earnings from the sector coming from processed and semi-processed products. Also, NTEs inability to meet the international standards and compete favorably in the global markets could perhaps be the reason why even though the growth rate is impressive it is considered to be low. Nonetheless, it is relevant to discuss the performance of NTEs in Ghana.

3.3 Performance and Features of Ghana NTE Sector

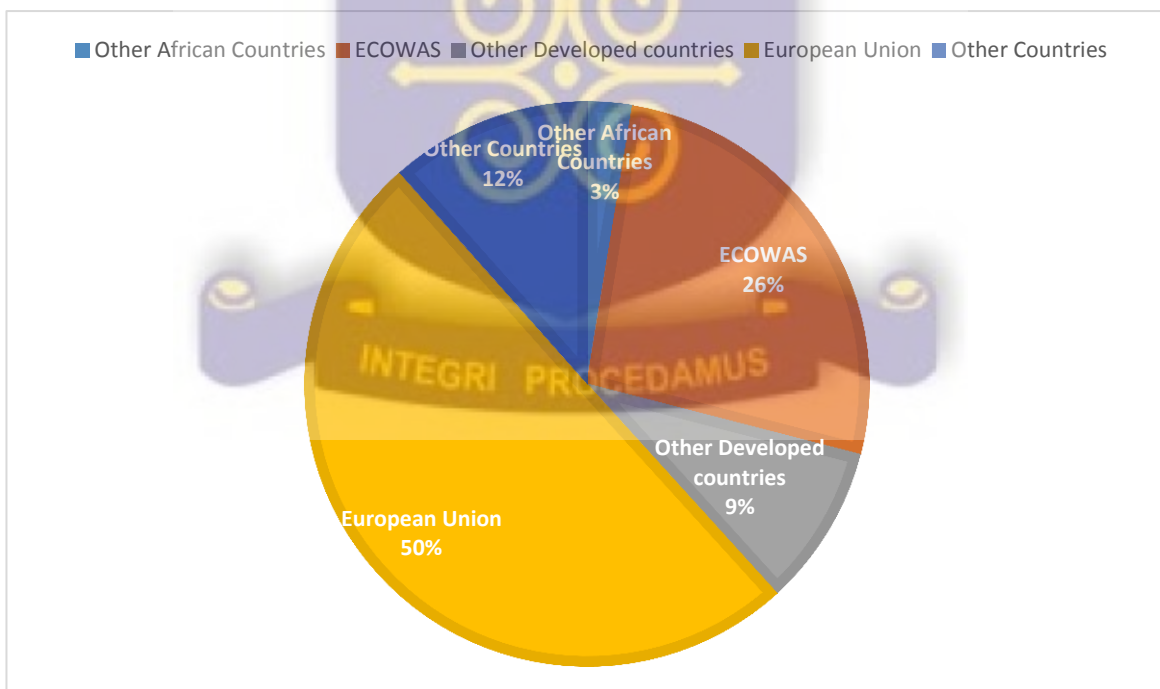
This seeks to give an overview assessment of the current status of the economy and the performance of our non-traditional exports, specifically the performance portfolio of Ghana's leading NTE products. Ghana has attained the middle-level income status now. In the 2009 report Ghana was recognized among the five African countries considered to be 'systemic reformers' for the year under review. In the global competitiveness report, Ghana slipped from its 102 out of 134 countries position in 2008/2009 to 114 out of 133 countries in the 2009/2010 report. In order to expand on the average rate of 8% per annum in the medium term and undertake economic and export transformation, Ghana's competitiveness rating should not be below 51, which is the average of emerging markets, or else competing emerging economies will out-perform Ghana. Below is a figure showing the sub-sectors performance of NTEs in Ghana.

Figure 3.1 Multiple Bar Chart Showing NTEs Performance by Sub-Sectors from 2006-2010 (in Million \$)



Source: Ghana Exports Promotion Authority

Figure 3.2 Performance of NTEs Sector by Markets (Destinations)



Source: Ghana Exports Promotion Authority

3.4 Route/market of NTEs

Ghana's non-traditional products are exported to one hundred and forty (140) countries which GEPA has categorized into five broad geographical areas as follows:

- The European Union (EU)
- Other developed Countries
- ECOWAS Community
- Other African Countries
- All other countries

Non-traditional exports to destination market indicate that the European Union and ECOWAS markets absorbed 50.18% and 26.41% respectively or both of them together absorbed 76.6% of total NTEs in 2010. These two major destinations continue to be the leading markets for Ghana's NTEs products. Other countries accounted for Ghana's NTEs destinations are as follows: other African countries (2.5%), other developed countries (9.26%) and all other countries (11.55%) making a grand total of 23.4%.

In this vein, the ECOWAS market has been characterized by variations while the European Union market has shown strong growth rate yearly since 2006 for Ghanaian NTEs. The policy framework or implication is that the EU and ECOWAS markets show greater absorptive capacity, hence, the need to expand and direct export production to these markets. The Netherlands, France, Togo, UK, USA, Nigeria were the main importing countries of NTEs and together import more than 50% of the total value of NTEs in Ghana. The performance, composition and projection of major products in the NTE sector are presented in table 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 below:

Table 3.1 Performance of Ghana's Ten Leading NTE Products

| No | Product | 2009 (US\$) | 2008 (US\$) | % Growth | % Contribution to NTE in 2009 |
|----|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Cocoa Paste | 285,725,061 | 198,432,396 | 43.99% | 23.52 |
| 2 | Canned Tuna | 110,456,915 | 120,104,383 | -8.03% | 9.09 |
| 3 | Articles of Plastics (NES) | 93,821,523 | 82,473,683 | 13.76% | 7.72 |
| 4 | Cocoa Butter | 90,297,425 | 93,258,053 | -3.17% | 7.43 |
| 5 | Veneers | 39,006,475 | 65,847,954 | -40.76% | 3.21 |
| 6 | Plywood | 31,505,307 | 61,444,267 | -48.73% | 2.59 |
| 7 | Fresh or Chilled Tunas | 27,667,412 | 40,666,027 | -31.96% | 2.28 |
| 8 | Sheanuts | 26,853,367 | 24,939,825 | 7.67% | 2.21 |
| 9 | Natural Rubber Sheets | 24,834,381 | 30,915,982 | -19.67% | 2.04 |
| 10 | Cashewnuts | 20,154,095 | 20,423,393 | -1.32% | 1.66 |
| | TOTAL | 750,321,961 | 738,506,509 | -1.35% | 61.75 |

Source: GEPA

As indicated in (table 3.1), the performance of Ghana's ten leading NTEs, cocoa paste took a lead in the export revenue of 198,432,396 in 2008 to 285,725,061 in 2009, resulted in 23.52% increased in export revenue in 2009. This was followed by canned tuna of 9.09%, articles of plastics 7.72% and cocoa butter 7.43% simultaneously. The cashewnuts contributed the least of 1.66%, followed by natural rubber sheets 2.04%, sheanuts 2.21% and fresh or chilled tuna 2.28%. This is an indication that NTEs, when branded have the potential of increasing revenues in the exports sector in Ghana.

Table 3.2 Composition of Exports by Major Groups from 2006 - 2009

| Product/year | 2006 | %share | 2007 | %share | 2008 | %share | 2009 | %share |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Cocoa Beans | 994.4m | 28.40 | 866.4m | 24.90 | 918.2m | 25.20 | 1087.5m | 46.80 |
| Timber | 284.2m | 8.10 | 298.2m | 8.60 | 271.7m | 7.50 | 220.8m | 9.50 |
| Gold (including monetary gold) | 1,205.0m | 34.40 | 1,622.4m | 46.70 | 1,854.4m | 50.90 | 234.1m | 10.10 |
| Non-traditional | 1,020.7m | 29.10 | 688.2m | 19.80 | 595.9m | 16.40 | 781.0m | 33.60 |
| TOTAL | 3,504.3m | 100.00 | 3,475.2m | 100.00 | 3,640.1m | 100.00 | 2323.5 | 100.00 |

Source: Ghana Statistical Service

The (table 3.2) compared the percentage share of contributions of the three major groups of traditional exports; cocoa beans, timber and gold with the Non-traditional exports. Apart from the cocoa beans which has highest percentage share continuously from 2006 to 2009, the rest of the traditional exports (gold and timber) fell far below Non-traditional exports which contributed 29.10% share in 2006; 19.80% share in 2007; 16.40% share in 2008; and 33.60% share in 2009 simultaneously. The non-traditional exports placed second in terms of percentage share contribution of exports revenue in Ghana.

All things being equal, the performance and projection of major product group in (the three sub-sectors) of NTEs are being compared in million US\$ (see table 3.3). The agricultural sub-sector exports are leading continuously from 2009 through to 2015. That is from 150,860 in 2009 up to 1,027,337 in 2015. This is followed by the processed and semi-processed sub-sector had performed little with 106,910 in 2009 and 5,747,902 in 2015. The handicraft sub-sector had the little exports within the period with only 2,270 in 2009 and 9,593 in 2015. These three major sub-sectors together contributed an amount

of 1,215,040 and 6,784,832 in 2009 and 2015 respectively. The performance and projection of these three major sub-sectors (processed and semi-processed, agricultural exports and handicrafts) are contained in table 3.3 as follows: branding therefore, remains the only tool that can shake and transform NTEs particularly the handicrafts to capture and gain international recognition and hence, increase exports in that direction.

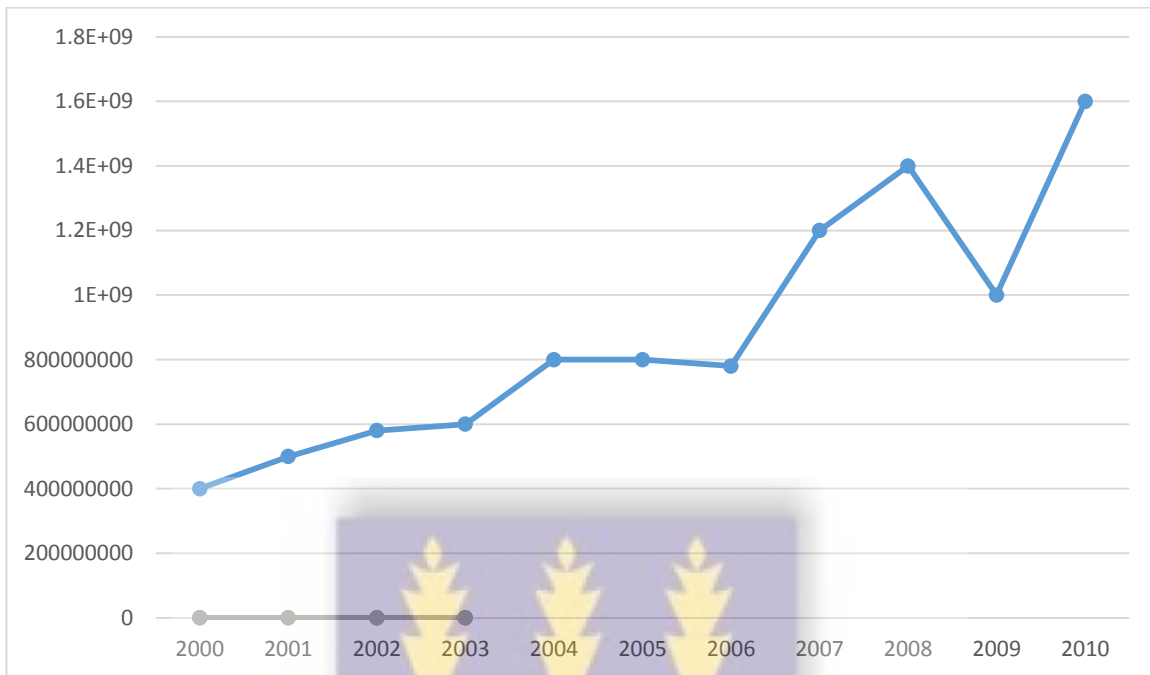
Table 3.3 Performance and Projection of Major Product Group (in US \$'000000)

| | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total NTE | 1,215,040 | 1,628,920 | 2,718,666 | 3,416,086 | 4,293,211 | 5,396,575 | 6,784,832 |
| Exports | | | | | | | |
| Processed and semi-processed exports | 106,910 | 1,461,260 | 2,354,341 | 2,942,926 | 3,678,657 | 4,598,322 | 5,747,902 |
| Agricultural Exports | 150,860 | 164,960 | 359,699 | 467,609 | 607,892 | 790,259 | 1,027,337 |
| Handicrafts | 2,270 | 2,700 | 4,626 | 5,552 | 6,662 | 7,994 | 9,593 |

Source: GEPA

The general trend of the NTE earnings indicates that there is a consistent increased of exports of NTEs from the year 2000 to 2010. Branding of NTEs will further boast exports to raise enough foreign exchange for economic development. This is because branding remains the only route of gaining international recognition as far as the image and reputation of these NTEs are concerned. The figure 3.3 below shows the general trend in total NTE earnings from 2000 to 2010.

Figure 3.3 Trend in Total NTE Earnings from 2000-2010



Source: Ghana Exports Promotion Authority

The figure 3.3 shows that the exports of NTEs are increasing consistently from the year 2000 to 2010 except 2009 which experienced a significant fall in NTEs exports due to global economic down turn in that year.

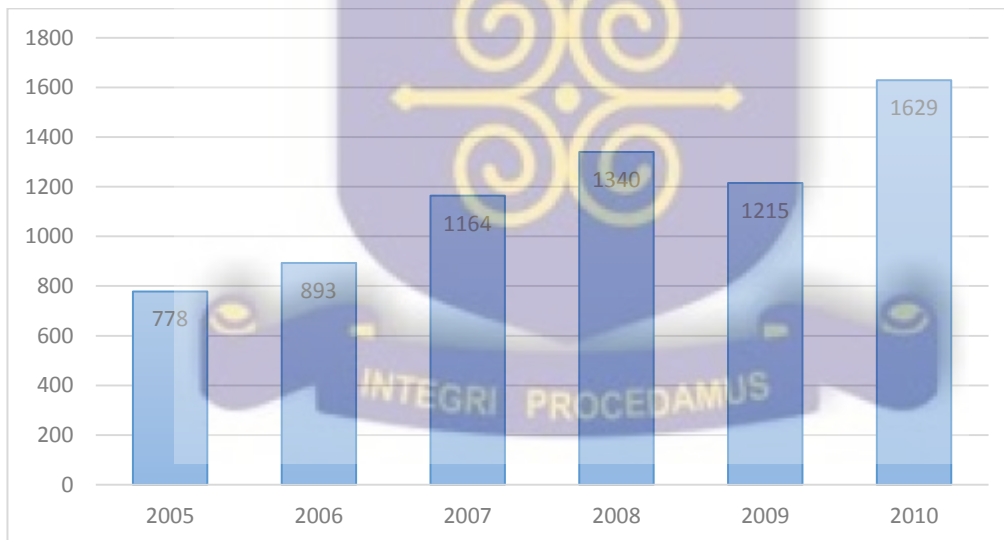
3.5 Non-Traditional Export (NTE) Performance by Sub-Sector

Total earnings of the non-traditional export sector in 2010 are made up of earnings from three main sub-sectors, Agriculture, Processed and Semi-processed and Handicrafts as indicated in Table 3.3 above.

As stated earlier, the Non-traditional Export (NTE) sector is an important contributor to Ghana's general exports (MOTI, 2012). The sector averagely account for almost 25% of total exports (GEPA, 2011). The sector has recorded a tremendous growth rates continuously in the last five years, with the exception of 2009, when there was a slight

drop mainly due to the global economic downturn witnessed in that year. In 2010 NTEs commenced their growth to the highest level ever recorded (MOTI, 2012). The ability for future growth in NTEs is very high as Ghana look forward to add more value especially to its Agricultural products. The figure already showed that a very high proportion of total NTE revenue (87.40%) is obtained from export of manufactured products (MOTI, 2012). Seven out of the ten leading NTEs are semi-processed or processed products. This opportunity is likely to sustain, given the recent efforts by the Ghana Investment Promotion Centre and Ghana Export Promotion Authority to attract more investments into the agro-processing and light industrial sectors of the economy. The graphs below show the general trend of NTE performance in United States Dollars.

Figure 3.4 General Trends of Non-Traditional Exports from 2000-2010 in US Dollars



Source: Ghana Exports Promotion Authority

Figure 3.4 indicates that the NTEs have the capacity to grow in the international markets if they are branded. Again, from 2005 to 2010 saw a consistent increased in non-traditional exports with the exception of 2009. The trends could be further strengthened and developed by improving upon these NTEs to enhance their acceptability in the global markets and to do this branding is the only key.

3.6 Institutions Responsible for Export Promotion in Ghana

Export activities in Ghana are a collective effort of a number of institutions which play key roles in developing the sector. MOTI (2012) has identified these ministries, authorities, and councils as part of a holistic export strategy to improve export performance.

The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOTI)

The ministry has the responsibility for the formulation, implementation and monitoring of Ghana's internal and external trade and policy direction for Ghana's export and industrial trade. The ministry is currently pursuing an export-led industrialization agenda with strong emphasis on regional trade. The ministry is also responsible for leading Ghana's multilateral trade negotiations at the WTO and with the EU on behalf of the country.

The Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA)

This authority has the responsibility of providing leadership in implementation of policies and measures which are aimed at coordinating various export promotion activities. The authority basically works with exporters and potential exporters who form major part of the authority's service portfolio. The authority helps in providing relevant and timely trade information, dissemination of research findings, and related training, capacity building in export related issues, networking for exporters and consulting services on export management. Finally, the authority is playing a crucial role in advocating for increase in government budgetary support particularly through the Export Development and Investment Fund (EDIF).

The Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MOFA)

This ministry has the responsibility for formulating agricultural policy which leads to increase in agricultural related exports. The ministry ensures that there are sufficient agricultural products required for export and industrial processing. This ministry is

currently implementing a program in horticultural export development to ensure that adequate agro-based raw materials are available to the industries for processing.

The Ghana Standard Authority (GSA)

This authority operates under the Ministry of Trade and Industry with the responsibility of ensuring the quality of products through testing, certification and accreditation. The authority is mandated to perform product assessment through inspection and issuance of a certificate. Ghanaian exporters benefit from the authority in the sense that, the authority uses its infrastructure, particularly testing facilities, to help exporters gain the recognition and certification to export their products to foreign countries.

Food and Drug Authority (FDA)

This national regulatory body is under the Ministry of Health and responsible for regulating the manufacture, importation, exportation, distribution, use and advertisement of food, drugs, cosmetics, medical devices and household chemicals in order to ensure their safe for consumption.

Customs, Excise and Preventive Services (CEPS)

This department apart from the collections of revenues from firms also plays a major role in determining what goods and services are imported and exported out of the country. They direct trade rules, compliance with standards and laws governing entry of commercial goods into Ghana. A major contribution this authority can provide is to reduce the turnaround time for exported goods.

National Board for Small-scale Industries (NBSSI)

The board plays a major role in export development through the promotion and development of the Micro Non-Traditional Exports (NTEs) in Ghana. The board is established by an act of parliament in 1985 to help create jobs, and develop the private

sector in order to grow the national economy. The board plays a major role in financing NTEs through loan schemes, and also providing technical and financial training to clients.

3.7 Brief History of the Selected Case-Study Firms

Gratis foundation

GRATIS stands for Ghana Regional Appropriate Technology and Industrial Services. The Foundation is a leader in the designing, manufacturing, training and selling of precision agro, food processing and sanitation equipment, including palm oil processing, fruit juice extractors, palm oil extractors, cassava graters, feed mixers, grinding mills, cattle and donkey ploughs and many other food processing machines. GRATIS food processing equipment is used by every major food processing manufacturer in Ghana and in over 20 African countries. With over 20 years' experience, a multitude of high technology designs, and a nationwide factory-trained network comprised of service, sales, and support staff, GRATIS remains dedicated to producing the highest quality agro and food processing equipment for industries. GRATIS remains the only government's SME among the six selected SMEs.

Ojoba Women's Shea Butter Cooperative

The Ojoba Women's Shea Butter Cooperative is made up of 40 rural village women. The firm was established in 1999 through the assistance of World Vision International, an international NGO, as a domestic shea nuts processing firm and later started exporting Shea butter in 2003 until now. These women live under difficult circumstances as subsistence farmers in the arid Northern Region of Ghana, West Africa. They must cope with poor, rocky soil, unreliable rains, and little public infrastructure such as affordable transportation, communications, health care or education. Ojoba Collective is a fair trade company based in Portland, Oregon. Started in 1999, they worked directly with women's

cooperatives in rural Ghana, West Africa to produce Shea butter, baobab oil, and are in the process of developing other plant derived natural body care ingredients. The first cooperative, formed in 1999 by the World Vision International, is the Ojoba Women's Shea Cooperative, purposely for Shea nuts processing. The development of this group from "the bottom up" has created a strong foundation for women's empowerment and sustainable development to take hold and now into Shea butter processing for exporting as its core business. The Shea butter processing business actually commenced in 2003 with the white man Ojoba, the sole purchaser of Ojoba's products in the international market. It has grown from 30 women to 40 women today. They are now applying the same successful framework to their newer groups, and are proud to have created a unique business model which is transparent and fair trade.

Bolgatanga Craft Village

Bolgatanga Craft Village is an exporting firm, where the CNC is expected to play advisory role to private persons operating in the village is located at NAFAC grounds near the Ministries. The village, which serves as a Regional Crafts Village, was acquired in 1988 and aimed at bringing together craftsmen in the region to produce local products to feed the craft village in order to promote the craft industry through export sales. The craft village has five hundred (500) members outside its outfits who serve as the main source of raw materials for the village. The Bolgatanga craft village manufacture products such as: baskets, smocks, leather items (bags, sandals, belts and many more), beads and wood caves. It serves both domestic and international markets.

Sirigu Women Organization for Pottery and Art (SWOPA)

Sirigu Pottery and Art firm can be located in the Eastern part of the Kasena-Nankana district of the Upper East Region in Ghana. It was established in 1996 mainly for pottery business and now it is into wall decoration. The village is well known for its traditional

architecture, pottery and wall designing. The people of this area are mostly farmers but over the past thirty years, due to poor rainfall and degrading farmland, the farming activities are mainly for subsistence. In the area, the traditional arts of architecture and wall decoration are at the risk of disappearing. Their aim is to preserve and develop their traditional culture and to provide tourist services and produce high quality art that has its roots in the village culture. This way, they earn some money to supplement the farming activities and improve their social position. The women received intensive training to produce high quality pottery and paintings. Tourists' guides have been trained to show visitors the cultural and natural beauties of the village. A well designed and decorated visitors' center with an art gallery and guest house has been built. Sirigu women have painted a wall in the Golden Tulip hotel in Accra and the restaurant in Bolgatanga on the road to Navrongo.

Enusah's Baskets Exporting Firm

Enusah is an international businessman who is a native of Zaare, a suburb of Bolgatanga in the Upper East Region. He lives in Kasoa near Accra while operating in the two branches in both Accra and Bolgatanga. He started the business in 1996 with no employee. He currently has more than ten employees working with him. He deals mainly with the international markets in USA, China, Japan, Portland, London and other African countries, where he exports baskets and hats woven from straws in Ghana. He has several manufacturing centres in Bolgatanga and Accra, where he gives orders for his baskets and hats to be woven and also buys some from the open market to supplement the woven stock. The head office of the business can be located at the Art centre in Accra.

Yabco Focus Company Ltd

Yabco Focus Company was established in April, 2007 as a private enterprise to produce natural fruit juices. The Star Fresh Natural Juices (Yabco products) are being processed

from the fruits of a baobab tree. A baobab tree is a tree which fruits are ready in the long dry season in the Northern regions. The firm is providing boreholes to the rural communities as part of its corporate social responsibilities (CSR). As a young dynamic manufacturing firm, Yabco is committed to empowering the youth to further their education by sponsoring the needy but brilliant students to at least have access to a senior secondary school education. Yabco, currently has 36 employees working in the firm with the potential of recruiting more hands to expand its operations.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

In order to realize the objectives of this study, there is the need to look at the general approach the researcher will use in undertaking this research work. This general research approach is referred to as research methodology. It can also be viewed as the procedural research frame work within which the research is carried out. (Amaratunga et al, 2002).The chapter therefore, will explicitly look at, in detail the research paradigm underpinning or surrounding the study, research design, research strategy sampling frame and size, data collection instruments, data analysis techniques as well as ethical issues.

4.1 The Philosophical Assumptions of the Study

It is necessary in all research to discuss the research paradigms underpinning the research. According to Buame (2012), individual values, philosophical assumptions, theoretical support and research methods should all be related to each other and the objectives of the study. The concept of paradigm in this regard, is crucial to a research process in all areas of study. A research paradigm is “a set of beliefs, values and techniques that is shared by all members of a scientific community of the research which serves as a road map, dictating the sorts of problems scientists should address and the kinds of explanations that are accepted to them” (Boateng, 2014) .According to Rubin and Rubin (1995; 2011), a research paradigm or philosophy shapes how people study their world .That is , it constitutes a way of looking at the world; interpreting what is seen; and deciding which of the things seen by the researcher are real, valid and important to document.

To add to that, it also indicates how a research needs to be carried out, by whom and with what level of involvement or dispassion (Rubin and Rubin, 1995; 2011; Lecompte and Schensul, 1999). Similarly, Myers (2013) proposed that every research work is based on certain philosophical assumptions about the nature of every world and how knowledge about the world can be obtained. These assumptions most often, are taken for granted and are implicit in researcher's mind. Myers (2013) believes that every qualitative researcher should take their philosophical assumptions explicitly. Those assumptions provide the foundation of everything that follows. Therefore, different kinds of research paradigms that are peculiar to researchers are discussed below:

Positivist Research

Positivists generally assume that the reality is objectively given and can be described by measurable properties which are independent of the observer (researcher) and his/her instruments. A positivist generally studies the attempt to test theory, attempt to increase the predictive understanding of the phenomena” (Myers, 2013). As for Remenyi et al (1998), the fundamental principle of a positivist research is the assumption that “the researcher is independent of and either affects or affected by the subject of the research” Moreover, Gill and Johnson (1997) argue that “the positivist research stresses on highly structured methodology to facilitate replication and quantifiable observations that lead to statistical analysis”

Interpretive Research

“ The interpretive research is generally concerned with understanding the social context of an information systems; the social process by which it is developed and constructed by people and through which it influences, and is influenced by its social setting” (Oates, 2006) . Interpretive research is all about discovering the details of the situation to comprehend the reality and explore the subjective meaning, motivating people's actions

(Remenyi et al, 1998). In a similar vein, Rubin and Rubin (2011) explained that: interpretive research is all about how people view an object or event, and the meaning that attribute to it is what matters.

Interpretive research does not attempt to test a hypothesis, but rather seeks to discover and describe the interaction between the various independent social factors or variables. In addition, the interpretive research is concerned mainly with deriving meaningful information from social interaction (Braa and Vidgen, 1999).

Critical Realist

According to extant literature “a critical realist or researcher usually attempt to critically evaluate and transform the social reality under investigation (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991; Bernstein, 1978). Where the other two research perspectives (that is positivist and interpretive research) are content to predict or explain the status quo, the critical realist is concerned with critiquing existing social systems and revealing any contradictions and disagreements that may inhere within their structures. It is through fostering of this existing social condition that critical researchers believe they can help to overcome “oppressive and social relations”.

Realism

“The realist believes that whatever happens is “real “but can only improperly, probabilistically and apprehensibly be described (Boateng, 2014). As a result, a realist tries to triangulate from many sources as possible, as it is required of him/her trying to know what happens. Social phenomenon is often understood through hypothesis testing to establish patterns of association and therefore, the most possible explanation. Outcomes are probably true thus the researcher needs to triangulate any perceptions collected from the field (Boateng, 2014).

Relativist

A relativist believes that there are numerous realities existing in the world (Boateng, 2014). Reality as truth is not “absolute” but relative rather. It depends heavily on “something and therefore exists. The understanding of the world requires some form of human processing. The construction of Knowledge is predisposed by the world view and philosophical assumption of the researcher (Boateng, 2014). Researchers therefore should focus more on creating and developing new “meaningful” theories – useful solutions to specific phenomena.

Justification for a Research Paradigm for the Study

In considering the dos and don'ts of the four research paradigms, an interpretive research seems relevant and appropriate to this study because the interpretive study attempts to understand the social phenomena through the meanings that human beings (researchers) attach to them. Besides, several researchers have also stated that the interpretive research highly emphasizes on the role of researcher as an interpreter of the data and an individual who represents information (Creswell, 2007). Therefore in order to study and analyze the research problem, an interpretive approach seems appropriate and is chosen for this study, as the approach is more focused towards the understanding of social context with multiple sources of brand-building and its challenges and gives more freedom to a researcher to interpret and analyze the data based on his or her own understanding to the actual problem under investigation.

4.2 Research Approaches

Research approach traditionally, in social sciences research, consists of two main kinds of methods available to researchers. That is qualitative research and quantitative research approaches. However, mixed method approach (i.e. the suitable combination of both

qualitative and quantitative research approaches) is treated as a third research approach that is accepted and used by several scholars and researchers in their works.

Quantitative Research

According to Creswell (2007) a quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. In turn, these variables can be typically measured on instruments, such that number data can be analyzed employing statistical procedures. The final written report has a set of structure which consists of introductions, literature and theory, methods, results and discussion. In a similar situation, Straub et al (2004) and Myers (2013) demonstrated that the quantitative research approach was originally developed in the area of natural sciences to study the natural phenomena. However, quantitative research approach is well accepted and used in social sciences presently. Some of the well-known quantitative approaches are survey and laboratory experiment.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research approach has been used by numerous researchers for a very long time now. Flick (2007) in his recent work indicated that qualitative research approach is a distinctive way to describe an alternative to the quantitative research. This was coined against the background of a critique of the latter and particularly the development it had gone through in the 1960s and 1970s. However, qualitative research has a long history in many disciplines, where social science research in general began with approaches that would be summarized under qualitative research. In these days, the label “qualitative research” is used as an umbrella term for a number of approaches to research in social sciences.

In the same vein, Myres (2013) in his book underscored that: “the qualitative research approach was developed and/or designed in the social sciences to enable researchers and academicians to study social and cultural phenomena. Some of the well-known qualitative approaches are: case study, grounded theory, action research and ethnography. The qualitative data sources include interviews and questionnaires, documents and texts, observation and participant observation (field work) and the researcher’s impressions and reactions. In general, the qualitative research methodology is designed to assist researchers understand people, social and cultural contexts within which they live; whereas, the qualitative data are mostly a record of what people have “said”. A detail of these qualitative research strategies are discussed in this chapter.

Mixed Method Approach

As Creswell (2007) puts it, a mixed method approach concerns with the use of both methods (qualitative and quantitative methods). Previously, Creswell and Plano-Clark (2007) explained mixed method approach as “a research approach that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and mixing of both approaches in a study. That is, it is more than simply collecting and analyzing both kinds of data. It also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the general strength of a study is greater than either quantitative or qualitative research.

Justification for Research Approach for the Study

The selection of research approach is heavily depended on the type of research that is to be undertaken. If the requirement of research is to gather statistical data and to analyze such data using some mathematical modeling tools (such as SPSS) then, quantitative research approach would be more appropriate to that particular research. On the other hand, where the gathering and analyzing of data covers the social aspects of the research, and the

research does not, in any way, require any statistical results, a qualitative research approach would be much more suitable and supportive in that case. As this study does not require any quantitative data such as calculations, exact results, numbers and anything worth measuring; it is highly focused on studying and analyzing the current brand-building and its possible challenges in the Ghanaian NTEs sector in Ghana. This research also intends to know the insight of brand builders in SMEs in order to identify the possible brand-building challenges confronting SMEs in the NTEs. The study also seeks to provide solution to these challenges when identified. Therefore, a qualitative research approach is suitable for the nature of this research. Moreover, the qualitative research approach is selected because this thesis intends to cover a lot of social and cultural aspects of the brand-builders and their organizations who are the respondents to this research questions. These cultural differences among them need a qualitative research approach to understand them.

4.3 Research Strategy

Several research strategies are available which can be applied to conduct interpretive research. Among them, four research strategies (i.e. case study research, grounded theory, action research and ethnography) are most commonly used for Information Systems (IS) and business and Management related research (Myers, 2013; Oates, 2005). These scholars also mentioned that each research strategy can be used with any of the research/philosophical Paradigms. For example, a case study research strategy can be positivist, interpretivist or critical realist. A detail explanation of these research strategies is discussed below:

4.4 Qualitative Research Strategies

Case Study

According to Benbasat et al (1987), a case study examines a phenomenon in its natural setting, using single or multiple methods of data collection to gather information from one or a few entities (people, groups, organizations). The boundaries of the phenomenon are not clearly evident at the outset of the research and no experimental control or manipulation is used. Yin (2009) saw a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in-depth and within its real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009).

Grounded Theory

Martin and Turner (1986) define grounded theory as: an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data.

Action Research

Rapoport (1970) defines action research as a kind of research that aims to contribute to both the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually accepted ethical framework.

Ethnography

Creswell (2013) defines ethnography as a strategy of enquiry in which the researcher studies an intact cultural group in a natural setting over a period of time by collecting primary data, using observation and interview. The research procedure is flexible and typically evolves contextually in response to the lived realities encountered in the field setting (Creswell, 2007; LeCompte and Schensul, 1999).

Justification for Research Strategy

In consideration of several qualitative research strategies, a case study approach is chosen for this study as it permits researchers to carry out an extensive and in-depth research of an organization (i.e. SMEs in the Manufacturing Sector in this case). Benbasat et al (1987) believes that in information system and social sciences research, an interpretive case study research strategy is considered as a well-established qualitative research method that allows the researcher to “examine phenomenon in its natural setting, using a primary source of data collection to gather information from one or few entities such as people, groups or organizations”. Similarly, Hartley (2004) describe that: a case study research strategy consist of a detailed investigation, usually with data collected over a period of time, of phenomena, within their context. “It is especially suited to research questions which required detailed understanding of the rich data collected in context”. In the context of this study, understanding of organizational processes can be instrumental in knowing the insight of brand-building challenges among SMEs in Ghana, where social processes can be referred to as how SMEs management go by branding their products and the possible challenges confronting them in their branding process in the manufacturing sector.

4.5 Data Collection Instrument for the Study

There are series of data collection techniques that can be used to conduct a qualitative research. For a case study in particular, multiple data collection techniques are used to support the research findings (Benbasat et al, 1987). According to Yin (2003), for conducting a case study research, the preparation for data collection can be complex and difficult if they are not handled well, the entire case study investigation can be jeopardized and all of the earlier work. According to the author, there are six sources of evidence available that are most commonly used in doing a case research. These are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation and physical artifacts (Yin, 2003; Oates, 2005; Myers, 2013). McNamara (1999) proposed another two techniques as sources of evidence for a case study data collection. These are questionnaires and focus groups discussions.

Interviews

Interview technique is one of the most important and useful techniques for qualitative case study research in social sciences and information systems research. An interview can be defined as an exchange of words between two or more people. It can also be viewed as a planned interaction between two or more people characterized by objectives (Yin, 2003). Interviews are social encounters between the interviewer and the interviewee where one of them (the interviewee) is often under pressure in the process of responding to the questions (Yin, 2009; Miles and Huberman, 2009). As stated above, the interviewer schedules the interview in a planned manner with the anticipation of gaining useful and critical information about a phenomenon under investigation from the respondent or interviewee.

Interviews are useful instruments for a number of reasons; they are concerned with obtaining information on a special topic getting answers, about complex issues, as well as emotions, and probing sensitive information (Oates, 2005). According to Yin (2003), while conducting an interview, the interviewer has two crucial roles to play:

- First, to follow own line of inquiry, as reflected by researcher's case study protocol.
- Second, asking actual (conservational) questions in an unbiased manner that also serves the needs of researcher's own line of inquiry (Yin, 2003).

There are five main types of interview techniques proposed by Myers (2013), which comprises: the structured interview, semi-structured interview, unstructured interview, partially structured interview and totally structured interview. These can be further elaborated as follows:

- **Structured Interviews;** these involved the use of pre-formulated questions or questions that demand yes or no answers. In other words, they referred to as closed-ended questions, which are usually asked in a specific order, and sometimes within a stipulated time limit. The respondent or the interviewee cannot express himself/herself freely when responding to these kinds of questions.
- **Semi-structured Interviews;** these also involve the use of some closed-ended questions but there is no restriction or strict adherence to closed questions alone. New questions might emerge during the interview and the improvisation is encountered.
- **Unstructured Interviews;** these involve the use of a very few closed-ended questions. There may or may not be a time bound and the respondent(s) have a free restraint to say "what they want". That is, the respondents usually answered the questions in their own words in order to express their feelings rather than being restricted to only yes or no answers as in the case of the structured interviews.

- ***Partially Structured Interviews***; these are when a topic is chosen, open ended questions and responses are recorded word by word and if possible taped the discussion. Questions are framed, but the order is up to the interviewer as a moderator to decide.
- ***Totally Structured Interviews***; that is questions, orders and coding are prearranged and the respondent is presented with alternatives for each question so that, wording of responses is systematically structured. These questions are self-coding in the sense that each choice is pre-assigned a code.

Moreover, Shenton (2007) conceptualized the interview process as a drama. They build their dramaturgical model on Goffman's theory of face-to-face interaction, which views the interview process as a social interaction. Their dramaturgical model's concepts are summarized as follows: drama, stage, actor, audience, script, entry, exit and performance. The writers further explained that the dramaturgical model can help information systems researchers to solve some of the potential drawbacks and challenges of the qualitative interview. The model also focuses on conceptualizing the interview as a drama and aims to discover the participants' experiences in their own words (Shenton, 2007). Other qualitative data collection instruments are direct observation and participant observation, physical artifacts, focus group discussion and questionnaires.

Justification for Data Collection Technique

Having mentioned the available data collection techniques above that can equally be used for an interpretive case study research; an unstructured interview technique is considered as the main source of data collection for the study. This is in line with (Yin, 2003) guidelines of a case study research for allowing the respondents some time to express themselves, for an in-depth, deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Moreover, a semi-structured interview style is adopted because it provides more insights into the research topic enabling the researcher to gather answers to the specific interview questions on one hand and some additional information from the respondents that could be relevant and use the write-up at the later stage, on the other hand. Semi-structured interview style is also useful when comparing it with the structured interview style in this regard because it allows the researcher to ask both probing and leading questions, which are closed in nature, when the need arises (the structured and unstructured interviews). Again, semi-structured questions limit the respondent to only one particular response and the researcher to a straightforward, direct question hence, saves time for both the interviewer and the respondent. A semi-structured interview also enable the researcher to test the understanding of the respondent in the process of the interview.

4.6 Sampling Method

Sampling is defined as a process of selecting or choosing samples from a group or population to become the foundation for studying a total or mass population in order to attain data capable and reliable enough to solve or address the research problem (Boateng, 2014). A sample is a subset of a larger population. A population is a complete group of entities within which the researcher wants to explore, understand or project a social phenomenon. Researchers often make conclusions on a total population by studying or investigating a sample. In a qualitative research the objective of the researcher is to study a phenomenon from the perspective of a sample that has experienced the phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Qualitative research is much more focused on samples which improve understanding rather than representativeness (Boateng, 2014). Qualitative researchers often use a non-probability sampling approach in which the probability of selecting a particular member or respondent is unknown. Qualitative sampling approach is often non-

random and sample size is generally small. Because of this, it is necessary for qualitative researchers to provide detailed information on how respondents or participants in a study were selected as well as the detailed descriptions of the participants, sample size and other relevant features in terms of the study (Boateng, 2014).

A major constraint in qualitative research sampling is determining the sampling size: that is how many respondents/cases are enough? The answer to this question often depends on, first, the respondents. In order to ensure diversity in perspectives in data collected especially when the researcher reaches a point of data saturation, the same information is repeated from different respondents. Therefore, there is no need to engage any new respondents in the study. Again, the research purpose and resources available (e.g. money and time) may influence participants accessibility and hence, constrain the sample size.

4.7 Types of Qualitative Sampling

The qualitative sampling technique discussed by Zimund (2003), Neuman (2011) and Sorensen (2009) are outlined as follows:

- **Convenience Sampling;** this is a sampling procedure of attaining the people or units that are most conveniently available. Cases are often obtained in any manner that is convenient to the researcher. However, there is a high probability of the sample being ineffective and unrepresentative; and therefore, this sampling method is not always recommended for researchers (Zikmund, 2003; Neuman, 2011).
- **Purposive Sampling;** this is where an experienced individual selects the sample based on the researcher's judgment about some suitable features required of the sample. It is often applied in exploratory study for selecting particular cases for in-depth investigation or for selecting members which are usually difficult to reach (Zikmund, 2003; Neuman 2011).

- ***Purposeful Random Sampling;*** using this method, a sample is first selected within the purposive sample. This happens when the purposive sample contains too many members to be included all in the study (Sorensen, 2009).
- ***Stratified purposeful Sampling;*** that is selection of samples is based on subgroups; several cases at each of the several levels of variation of the phenomenon (Sorensen, 2009).
- ***Theory-based Sampling;*** this is where participants are sampled by choosing or selecting units to suit the theoretical constructs (Sorensen, 2009).
- ***Snowball Sampling;*** this is also called a chain sampling. It is a multistage sampling technique, thus, beginning with a few people and growing through referral. The first respondents are selected based on the information provided by the initial respondents (Zikmund, 2003; Neuman, 2011).
- ***Extreme case Sampling;*** this is also known as a deviant case sampling. This sampling method searches for cases that are different from the dominant pattern. Researchers often use various techniques to identify cases with specific characteristics that differ from the dominant ones (Zikmund, 2003; Neuman, 2011).

Other qualitative sampling approaches also discussed by Sorensen (2009) are; opportunistic sampling; that is selecting respondents based on taking advantage of unexpected situation, politically important sampling; selecting respondents who are well known and would create wide interest in the study, confirming or disconfirming case sampling selecting respondents to look for variation or exceptions; confirming cases are selected to confirm patterns, themes or meanings found in previous cases; disconfirming cases are selected because they are believed to be probably to disconfirm previous

findings. Criterion sampling and homogenous sampling are also applied in qualitative research.

Justification for Sampling Technique

For the purpose of this study, a purposive sampling technique is selected to sample the respondents. The study adopts a purposive sampling technique in order to select top-management officials who make key management decisions of their firms and hence know the insight of the operations of their respective firms. The purposive sample is seen as an appropriate sampling technique because, it is often used in exploratory research, for selecting particular cases for an in-depth investigation and/ or for selecting participants who are often difficult to reach (Zikmund, 2003; Neuman, 2011). This will help the researcher obtain information that is peculiar to SMEs in the manufacturing sector in Ghana. Therefore, for a firm to be selected it must be registered with the Registrar-General's Department, AGI, NBSSI or GEPA; this is because these institutions are the main institutional bodies governing and regulating SMEs/ NTEs activities in Ghana. Lastly, the firm must have been in operations for 5 years and its size must be conformed to the definition of SMEs in Ghana. The purposive sampling is needed in order to purposefully select respondents who are key personnel of SMEs in the NTEs sector of Ghana so that the information regarding branding and its challenges among SMEs can be discovered.

4.8 Sampling Frame

A sampling frame constitutes a particular area or sector of the population which have the legitimate rights to represent the entire population (Yin, 2009). A sampling frame is a geographical, sectorial or organizational selection within which the respondents or research participants live and can exclusively represent all other characteristics of the

entire population (Yin, 2003; Miles and Huberman, 2009). Sampling frame in this research is the SMEs in the manufacturing sector in Ghana.

4.9 Sampling Size

Sampling size refers to the number of respondents or participants selected to respond to the research questions. It also refers to the number of cases that the researcher will interview. For this study, a sampling size is six respondent firms. This sample size of six is selected out of the sample frame (SMEs in the manufacturing sector) in Ghana with each firm being a representative firm of all the three major sub-sectors of Agricultural exports, Handicrafts and Processed and Semi-Processed of the NTE sector at large. The Gratis Foundation manufactures agricultural equipment and food processing machines, representing Agricultural -sub-sector; the Bolgatanga craft village which produces carves, smocks, garments, leather products; the Sirigu Pottery and Art which is into clay products and painting and decoration; and Enusah's baskets exporting firm represent the Handicrafts sub-sector whiles Yabco Focus Company, the manufacturer of food and beverages and the Ojoba women Shea butter cooperatives, the processors of Shea butter represent processed and semi-processed sub-sector.

Justification for Sampling Size

The sample size of six firms is selected to represent all other SMEs in the manufacturing sector. This number is selected based on contextual richness that transcends the sector and process of branding complexities (Yin, 1994; Abimola and Kocak, 2007). Every firm selected represent a sector each of Agricultural, Processed and Semi-Processed, and Handicrafts comprising of art and gallery, creative and craftsmanship, food and beverages, extractive, garment and horticultural businesses of Non-traditional Exports (NTEs) in the manufacturing sector in Ghana. One respondent each is interviewed in all the six firms.

This is because the researcher is targeting the people at the top-management level, who make decisions at the corporate level and could provide information about the challenges of branding confronting their respective firms. The six firms are selected based on extant literature. Abimbola (2001) and Moilanen (2015) used seven and nine firms respectively in their studies.

4.10 Qualitative Data Analysis

According to Yin (2014) five data analytic technique suitable and appropriate to case study research are presented as: pattern-matching, explanation-building, cross-case synthesis, logic and time series analysis. Only the first three techniques will be discussed in this study. To start with, the analysis of a case study relies so much on the analytical framework. This can exist in two forms. First the researcher can use the theoretical proposition that led to the case study (Boateng, 2014). If the theoretical propositions are not present, then, second, the researcher could consider creating a descriptive framework around which the case study is organized. The researcher would therefore design a case description which would become a framework for organizing the case study. The first three analysis techniques of Yin's five analytical techniques mentioned above are discussed as follows.

- **Pattern-matching;** the objective of this technique is to link data to propositions. It employs comparison to explore or determine the relationship between empirically based patterns and predicted ones (propositions) (Trochim, 1989). If the pattern matches, the internal reliability of the study is improved. Researchers carrying out descriptive case studies are expected to propose the predicted patterns prior to the development of the case study. However in explanatory case studies, the pattern may be related to either dependent or independent variables of the study (or both of them)

(Yin, 2014; Schutt, 2014). Yin (2014) also gives an exhaustive discussion on how to identify and create patterns in different scenarios including single and multiple case studies for further references.

- ***Explanation-building***; this technique is debatably a form of pattern-matching. The explanation requires the stipulations of a bundle of casual links about a phenomenon of interest, or ‘how’ or ‘why’ something happened (Yin, 2014). It is often “ an iterative process that starts with a theoretical statement refines it, revises the provision, and repeats this process over and over again from the initial stage” (Tellis, 1997). This iteration may entail (Yin, 2014) as;
 - Making an initial theoretical proposition about a policy or social behaviour;
 - Evaluating the results of the maiden case against such a statement or proposition.
 - Revising the statement or proposition;
 - Evaluating or measuring other details of the case against the revision;
 - Comparing the revision to the facts of a second, third or more cases; and
 - Finally, repeating this process as many times as necessary.

The process may continue until the researcher builds an explanation of the case. It is argued that this is most useful in explanatory case studies, though it is possible to be used for exploratory cases to create hypotheses (Schutt, 2014; Yin, 2014). Arguably researchers often lose focus or drift away from the research purpose in the iterative efforts for explanation. Yin (2014), therefore, advises that the researcher should have a consistent focus on the original purpose of the inquiry and the possible alternative explanations that may assist to reduce this potential problem.

- ***Cross-case Synthesis***; A cross-case synthesis is an analytical technique for multiple case studies. The first two technique discussed can be applied with either single or multiple case studies. Multiple case studies tend to strengthen explanations or

conclusions made by the case study research (Yin, 2014). The multiple case studies can be compared through the development of word table to display the data from the individual cases according to certain uniform framework. Cross-case patterns will normally depend strongly on the argumentative interpretative, not numeric tallies. The researcher can probe similarities and differences between the cases to develop naturalistic generalizations from analyzing the data; generalizations that can be drawn from the case for usage by the subjects under investigation or to be used for a population of cases.

Justification for Data Analysis Technique

For the purpose of this study, pattern-matching technique was selected to analyze the data. This method was chosen because responses of each case are compared to other patterns or cases in order to understand the relationship between the empirically based patterns and the predicted ones. Data was analyzed thematically, matching the credibility, reliability and validity of the responses to the study. This method is much more suitable for the study because it helps the researcher to match data according to its relevance to the study, therefore, ignoring the unimportant ones and also relating the responses to the dependent or independent variables or both to the study (Yin, 2014; Schutt, 2014).

4.11 Reliability

According to academic scholars and researchers, the research data collected should not be tampered with or adulterated by adding or subtracting anything in order to maintain the credibility and neutrality of the data and for its reliability and validity (Yin, 2009; Chisnal, 1997). Reliability refers to the stability and consistency of result derived from the research (Yin, 2003). This is aimed at reducing errors and biases to the barest minimum (Yin, 2009). A pilot case study was conducted and tested based on the criteria of accessibility

and diversity in terms of the size of the firms. The interview questions were also tested on a small sample selected, which helps the researcher to reformulate research instruments, refine data collection plans, in terms of content and procedures, development of vital lines of questioning, note taking and use of tape recorders.

4.12 Validity

Chisnal (1997) argue that validity is the extent to which the research is free from both random and systematic errors and measures what is supposed to be measured. Validity of a test depends heavily on suitable extend criterion and it can be determined by the following method: construct validity which is the identification of correct operational measures for the concepts being studied (Yin, 2009); internal validity which involves seeking to establish a causal relationship, where certain conditions are believed to lead to other conditions (Yin, 2009); and external validity which has to do with defining the domain to which a study's findings can be generalized. Data was collected through face-to-face interviews with the top-management of the seven selected firms. In order to enhance validity of those interviews, the respondents were earlier on informed before the interviews dates. During the interviews, notes were taken. The case study interviews were also recorded on tape, edited, transcribed by the researcher and some transcriptions were cross-checked by a few participants. The notes were compared to the recorded interviews for any discrepancies.

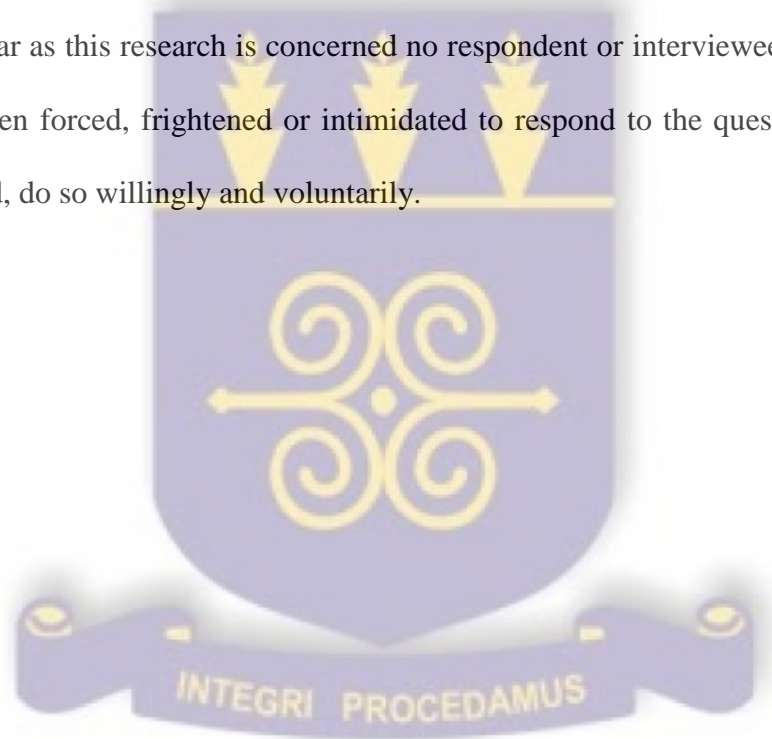
4.13 Ethical Issue

In every research, the researcher must always be careful, not to offend or take the rights of respondents for granted, in his/her attempt to collect data from the field. This is because forcing respondents to answer research questions is unacceptable and against the moral,

social code of conduct or behaviour and hence unethical. As a result of this, in order not to flout this principle, the researcher had undertaken the following;

- By explaining the meaning of the research to the respondents at the initial stage before the commencement of the interview.
- Asking for the approval or acceptance from the respondents during the process of the interview.
- Assuring the respondents of the utmost confidentiality of any information provided by informing them that, the study is purely for academic purpose.

However as far as this research is concerned no respondent or interviewee had in one way or another been forced, frightened or intimidated to respond to the questions. Therefore, those who did, do so willingly and voluntarily.



CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter deals with the output of the analysis of data collected for the study. Here, an empirical data was collected through face-to-face interviews using both unstructured and semi-structured questions designed from a self-interview guide. This chapter will present the analysis grouped into three major sections: the first section will present and discuss the profit of the respondents, the second section focuses on the discussions of the three research questions posed in chapter one of the study and finally, the third section will discuss the findings in relation to literature.

5.1 Profile of the firms

The selected firms for the study have been profiled according to the type of industry, number of employees, number of years in business, type of business and the position of respondents. In all, Six (6) firms were used in the analysis. The table below shows the demographic profile of respondents in their respective firms. It contains the number of employees of each firm, the number of years of operations and the position/rank of the respondents of the selected firms.

Table 5.1 Profile of firms

| | Bolga Craft Village | SWOPA | Gratis foundation | Ojoba | EBE | Yabco |
|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-------------------|-----------|-----|-------|
| No of employees | 20 | 14 | 09 | 40 | 10 | 36 |
| No of years in business | 18 | 11 | 15 | 16 | 10 | 09 |
| Position of respondent | President | Executive Director | Regional manager | President | CEO | CEO |

Source: Field data, 2016

With respect to the number of employees Ojoba has the highest number of 40 followed by Yabco and Bolgatanga craft village with 36 and 20 employees respectively. SWOPA and Enusah's baskets exporting firm followed with 14 and 10 employees respectively while Gratis Foundation had the least number of employees of 9.

For the number of years of operation in business, the Bolgatanga craft village is the oldest among them with 18 years of operation in business followed by Ojoba with 16 years of existence. Gratis Foundation was next in line with 15 years' experience followed by SWOPA and Enusah's Baskets Exporting firm with 11 and 10 years respectively. Yabco Focus Company remains the youngest firm with 9 years old in operations.

The profile of respondents in the study consists of top-management personnel of the NTEs sector. From the researcher's view point, the respondents comprises people who occupy senior management positions, responsible for making decisions at the corporate and marketing levels of their respective firms. They include: general managers, executive

directors, presidents, and chief executive officers. These key respondents have an in-depth knowledge in their various field based on their numerous experience and number of years of service in their respective firms. The key respondents have worked in their firms for not less than ten years.

Summary

In summary, though the firms did not commence business in the same year, they are equally competing firms striving for growth, focusing on sustainability and bearing the sole responsibility of the decision making process. Though the firms do not have equal number of employees, the many years of working experience of the respondents have demonstrated that they know much about their firms including the prospects, opportunities and challenges of their firms.

5.2 Data Analysis

Research Question One: What are the NTEs understandings of branding as a concept?

The table 5.2 below shows the NTEs understanding of branding practices in their various firms. It demonstrates the scores of the respondents to the questions regarding the meaning of a brand and branding, how it is being practiced and the strategies they used to brand. The score 1 denotes a response in favour of NTEs understanding of the meaning of branding whiles the 0 denotes the NTEs lack of understanding the meaning of a brand and branding.

Table 5.2 NTEs Understanding of Branding as a Concept

| Branding Practices | Knowledge Possessed by NTEs | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| | Bolga Craft Village | SWOPA | Gratis Foundation | Ojoba | EBE | Yabco | Total |
| The meaning of a brand | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 5 |
| The meaning of branding | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| The difference between a brand and branding | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Undertaking branding practices with ease | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Branding to create awareness | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Branding to position the brand in the minds of consumers | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Branding to sustain brand equity | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

Source: From fieldwork (2016).

With the above research question, five out of the six firms, representing eighty-three percent (83%) understood what a brand is while one firm, representing 16.6% did not. Below are the responses of the firms with respect to their understanding of a brand and branding.

Case 1 is of the view that *“A brand is a style of basket woven and sold to customers such as V-shape, oval shape and round shape. So these are the brands that we have already shown to our users and they identified them while branding is the act of making the product identifiable by the customers (the president, Bolgatanga craft village)*

Case 2 *“A brand is a name of a product that is known to the customers or users and makes it identifiable by them (the customers) while branding is the act of giving a name to the product so that it can be called a brand” (the executive director, SWOPA).*

Case 3 *“A brand is a name, symbol, package or design of a product in order to make it different from the competition and identifiable by the customers. Gratis products are identified by its name plate on the product and its blue colour. Branding is the process of assigning a name , symbol, logo, package or design to a product in order to make it unique from the midst of products and for customer to identify it whenever it is seen”* (the regional manager, Gratis Foundation).

Case 4 *“The brand deals with the packaging and the shea nut tree that we kept on it that when you see it, you will know that it is from Bongo Soe and we always put our logo on it that is the shea nut tree and the Ojoba women shea co-operative is always written on it”* (the president, Ojoba).

Case 5 *“A brand is a style of weaving a basket for customers and branding is a kind of weaving or packaging a particular basket to meet the special needs of customers. A brand is like when we want to do the basket at the end of the day you have to get the materials, after getting the materials, you have to weave the basket and after weaving the basket you have to differentiate them like this is the style of this, that’s how we weave it, that’s how we weave a basket, and that is my understanding”* (the CEO, EBE firm).

Case 6 *“My brother I do not actually know what a brand is let alone to differentiate it from branding. I must admit that I am a lay man in the field and that is why I always contract out people to assist me. For the meaning of a brand and branding, I cannot give you an answer”* (the **CEO, Yabco Focus Company**). Having studied the various definitions given by the NTEs regarding the meaning of a brand and branding, it is clear that the NTEs have a shallow understanding of branding. Though they have a fair idea of what a brand is, they do not have an in-depth knowledge of branding and hence, do not know how branding is being practiced.

Research Question Two (2): What are the brand elements used by these NTEs in Ghana?

Again, table 5.3 below shows the number of brand elements used by the NTEs in Ghana. These brand elements ranges from brand name to the color. Also, the mark 1 indicates that the brand element is being used by the firm while 0 means that the brand element is not being used by the firm.

Table 5.3 The Number of Brand Elements Used by NTEs

| Brand Elements | Bolga Gratis Village | SWOPA | Gratis Foundation | Ojoba | EBE | Yabco | Total |
|----------------|----------------------|-------|-------------------|-------|-----|-------|-------|
| Brand name | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| Logo/symbol | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 4 |
| Color | 0 | 1 | 1 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Jingle/Slogan | 1 | 0 | 0 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Package/Design | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Term | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 4 |

Source: From Field work (2016)

The brand elements used by the NTEs consist of brand name, logo, symbol, package or design, jingle, and color. From the table above, it can be observed that NTEs in Ghana use at least two brand elements and at most three brand elements. The dominant elements are the brand name, logo, symbol and package. Only two NTEs used color and one of them used a jingle. For instance, when respondents were asked about the brand elements, these were their responses;

Case 1 *“The brand elements we used are the brand name, logo package and symbol. These are the main elements that we used to differentiate our products from the competition and for our customers to identify them in the midst of other brands”* (the president, Bolgatanga Craft Village).

Case 2 *“We used the name and color as our brand elements. We however, have a problem with the name we used since it belongs to the community. The name Sirigu is a community name. So for now the color remains our brand element until we get an independent name for our firm and its products”* (the Executive Director, SWOPA).

Case 3 *“The brand name and color have been our brand elements for long time. The name plate in Gratis Foundation “and the color “blue” are our main elements used to brand our products and our customers are aware of these elements. We also used jingle to make our products popular in the market place”* (the regional, Gratis Foundation).

Case 4 *“The brand name Ojoba and the symbol of a shea nuts tree (Designed as logo) are our main elements of branding. These elements are known to our customers everywhere and are used to differentiate our shea butter from others”* (the president, Ojoba).

Case 5 *“I used brand name, symbol, package and logo as differentiating elements. When my customers see the baskets the symbol on them together with the package of the baskets will make them identify them. These are the brand elements I have been using for years now”* (the CEO, Enusah’s Basket Firm).

Case 6 *“The main brand elements used are the name and logo. Yabco Focus Company is the name of the brand and the logo being designed with a baobab tree in the middle. Anytime customers see these elements they identify them as product of Yabco Focus Company”* (the CEO, Yabeo Focus, Company)

Brand elements are the keys to creating a brand and are those trademarkable devices that serve to identify and differentiate a brand. The study has revealed that SMEs/NTEs are using at least two brand elements as proposed by literature. In order to enhance brand awareness; facilitate the formation of strong, favorable, and unique brand associations or elicit positive brand judgment and feelings in both domestic and international markets, brand elements must be carefully selected. The SMEs/NTEs should therefore, remember the criteria for selecting brand elements such as memorability, meaningfulness, likability, transferability, adaptability and of course protectability.

Research questions three: What are the possible challenges or difficulties of branding these NTEs in Ghana?

In addressing this question, the respondents discussed a number of branding challenges facing their firms. The challenges discussed include: limited understanding of branding, difficulty in securing sufficient funds, general slowness and time related challenges, operational-level challenges in marketing communication campaigns and the increasing costs of new product introductions. The rests are lack of technical expertise among NTEs, difficulty in obtaining a patent/copyright and/or having a trademark registered and the proliferation of brands in the market place. These challenges of branding discussed are contained in table 5.4 below.

The table 5.4 below indicates the number of branding challenges discovered after the study. It also shows the response of each firm to each challenge in question. The score 1 in the table shows that the firm had discussed that particular challenge as a challenge of branding confronting it whiles the score 0 means that the firm did not discuss it as a challenge of branding. In other words, 1 stands for a challenge to the firm whiles 0 stands for not a challenge to the firm.

Table 5.4 Challenges of Branding Facing NTEs

| Challenges of branding | Bolga craft Village | SWOPA | GRATIS Foundation | Ojoba Shea Butter | Enusah Baskets | Yabco | Total score |
|--|---------------------|-------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------|-------|-------------|
| Limited understanding of branding | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Difficulty in securing sufficient funds | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 6 |
| General slowness and time-related Challenges | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Organisational issues and lack of authority | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Operational level challenges in marketing communication | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Increasing Costs of new products introduction | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Lack of technical expertise | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Difficulty of getting a trade mark and/or patent rights registered | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 |
| Proliferation of brands in the market place | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |

Source: Field Data. 2016

5.3 Limited Understanding of Branding among Organizations ‘Brand – builders’

Five out of the six NTEs, representing eighty-three percent (83%) have discussed this as a challenge of branding confronting their firms. These NTEs mentioned and explained that their inadequate knowledge of branding is affecting their branding potential. For instance, Case 1 “*You know we are lay people on the ground. Our knowledge of branding is very small and this is affecting our branding practices. Unless we get people like you to help us we wouldn’t be able to do any effective branding*” (the president, Bolgatanga craft village).

Case 2 “*Hmm it is because we do not actually know what branding is that is why we are facing all these problems. The name of our organization – Sirigu is a community name*

which is giving us problems. We are looking for an independent name for our firm but it is not easy getting the name. This is because our knowledge in branding is very little” (The Executive Director SWOPA).

Case 4 “For branding we have not done it ourselves because we do not know how to go by it. It was our customer from UK called Ojoba who used his own name to register in Accra as our brand name for us. It is only the symbol of the shea nut tree that belong to us but the name Ojoba belongs to our customer in UK. He had done it on our behalf, because we do not understand how branding is being done” (the president, Ojoba).

Case 5 “I don’t really understand how branding is being done. I am only aware of a brand and the elements but how to use these elements to brand a product is always a problem” (the CEO, EBE, firm).

5.4 Difficulty in Securing Sufficient Funds

This particular challenge of branding had the highest score among all the challenges discussed. All the six NTEs interviewed, representing one hundred percent (100%) discussed that their inability to brand is as a result of their limited resources in terms of acquisition of funds. They explained that lack of funds to procure branding materials such as registration of brand elements, acquisition of proprietary product technology and advertising their brands remains a challenge. For instance; the executive director of SWOPA stated that *“You know branding goes with a cost. Apart from registering the brand element, you need money for advertising. If you do not advertise your brands, nobody will be aware of them, let alone to like them. That is why we depend on trade shows and exhibitions to create awareness rather than advertising. We find it difficult to get money for branding purpose”*. The CEO of Yabco Focus Company also said that, *“It is difficult to secure sufficient funds for branding because of the economic challenges*

facing the country. The increase of working capital becomes necessary as a result of these economic hardships. Borrowing cost is too high as a result of high interest rates”. Again, the president of Ojoba also stated that and i quote “You know everything goes with money. Before you brand, you need to always have logos and the rests and that one when you get the logo on the things that you package in like a container or carton you need to use and those things need money to purchase”. EBE’s CEO also stated that; “There is no money to register the brand elements with the Registrar – General Department because it is very expensive for we, the small business people”.

5.5 The General Slowness and Time Related Challenges

For this particular challenge as indicated in table 5.3 above, three (3) out of the six (6) NTEs interviewed, representing 49.8% had discussed it as one of the challenges they face when it comes to branding. For instance; **Case 1** *“The money we normally get in terms of support from the government does not usually come on time. You know government’s institutions and their problem of bureaucracy this person has to write, another person has to sign before it is finally released. It is because of that slowness in responding to our needs, we find it very difficult to buy certain things at peak times including advertising”* (the president, Bolgatanga Craft Village).

Case 3 “Yeah! We do get support from the government and other NGOs but it does not normally come at the right time. You know branding is a kind of institutionalized kind of thing. It is something that you depend on other institutions to help you. For instance, patenting right, you have to go to this place, you have to write to this organization and if they do not respond to you on time including the granting of credit facility, it can affect your branding” (the regional manager, Gratis Foundation).

Case 4 *“You know, another problem is the time we get the money from donor agencies. It does not often come on time –the time we need it. Because of our great numbers, control is our main problem should any financial assistance delays. This is affecting our business including branding. The public sector actors are usually slow as compared to private sector actors such as NGOs. Assistance coming from the government side usually delays more than the one coming from the private sector”* (the president, Ojoba).

5.6 Operational- Level Challenges in Marketing Communication Campaigns

As indicated from table 5.3 above, four (4) out of the six (6) NTEs, representing 66.4% have discussed this as one of their key challenges in branding. They explained that controlling employees especially those in the production centers is always a challenge to them. For instance, Case 1 *“Most of our weavers are illiterates so they find it difficult to put a particular logo or symbol on the product. This is the major challenge we face at the operational level”* (the president, Bolgatanga craft village).

Case 2 *“The operational level challenge in marketing communication campaigns we face is that the production staff sometimes deliberately refuse to use our colors thereby making it difficult for the firm to create awareness of its products”* (the executive director, SWOPA).

Case 3 *“My main challenge is that the people in the production centers are often refuse to use the name plate on the product. Before you realize it the product is gone out of the production room without a name plate or identity”* (the regional manager, Gratis Foundation).

Case 6 *“Yeah, we have some problems at the operational level in the sense that we don’t get the raw materials at peak times and the electricity problem is affecting our operations and productions”* (the CEO, Yabco Focus Company).

5.7 Organizational Issues and Lack and of Authority to Lead.

None of the six NTEs interviewed, representing zero percent (0%) saw this as a challenge of branding though literature has proposed that organizational issues and lack of the proprietor's authority to lead is one of the challenges facing organizations. However, the study revealed that the operational level challenges facing the SMEs/NTEs are as result of the organization's leaders' lack of authority to lead. Having some of their employees in the production centers refusing to use the name plates and colors of the firm deliberately means that the organization has no capacity to lead it employees in that direction. In the view of the researcher regarding this challenge, it is opined that the organizational issues and lack of authority to lead is a challenge that the firms (SMEs) themselves are not even aware of, following issues discussed as operational-level challenges facing the SMEs/NTEs. This is because if the owners or directors of NTEs themselves do not understand the meaning of branding as a concept how then would they influence their employees to adopt the concept of branding?

5.8 Increasing Costs of New-Product Introductions

As indicated in (table 5.3 above), five out of all the six (6) cases, representing eighty-three percent (83%) have discussed this particular challenge as one of their branding challenges facing them. They mentioned and discussed that the increasing costs of doing business is a problem pertaining to their operations including branding of their products. For instance;

Case 1 *“The cost of doing business has increased significantly and introducing a new product is not an easy task”* (the president, Bolgatanga Craft Village).

Case 2 *“ There is an increased cost of everything you want to do in Ghana and for that matter the cost of introducing a new product is not easy because everything you will need in your business is also increased ”* (the Executive director, SWOPA) .

Case 5 *“Because of the competition, there is an increasing cost of introducing something new in the market. If you do not really have money, you cannot do that because the cost is high”* (the CEO, EBE firm).

Case 6 *“Because of the economic hardships, the price of everything is gone up and as such it is not easy to introduce a new product in the market even if you have the idea to do so”* (the CEO, Yabco Focus Company).

5.9 Lack of Technical Expertise among NTEs.

Five out of the six NTEs interviewed, representing eighty-three percent (83%) said lack of technical experts in their firms is seriously hampering their branding potential. They explained that sometime they have the money but the technical know-how is not there and hence, their inability to brand their products. For instance;

Case 1 *“Most of our staff are illiterates and hence always find it difficult to factor the appropriate label on the product. They do not have the skills of putting the logo or symbol on the product”* (the president, Bolgatanga Craft Village).

Case 2 *“Our problem is that we do not have the requisite human resources management with the appropriate technical know – how to do the branding”* (the executive Director, SWOPA).

Case 4 *“Lack of technical expertise is one of our key problems affecting our ability to brand. We do not have the people with branding knowledge amongst us. We need to get someone to help us brand our products”* (the president, Ojoba).

Case 6 *“I do not have the expertise to do branding so I always contract out people with the skills to help me out. I am a layman who has no knowledge in branding and likewise my employees”* (the CEO, Yabco Focus Company).

5.10 Difficulty of Obtaining a Patent/copyright and/or having the Trademark

Registered.

Three out of the six cases, representing 49.8% discussed this as a challenge facing them as far as branding is concerned. The respondents have discussed that it is not easy for them to obtain a copyright or patenting (the intellectual property rights) anytime they invent. They explained that this serves as a discouragement to them particularly those who are creative and innovative enough to come out with something new. They also discussed that even the registration of trademark or brand name with the registrar-general is very cumbersome and expensive. For instance;

Case 2 *“Our main problem is getting a brand name for our organization and its products since the name Sirigu” is a community name and does not belong to us alone. Getting a trademark or brand name registered is difficult for us too, considering the stresses involved* “(the Executive Director, SWOPA).

Case 3 *“My main challenge in branding is getting a patent right or copyright. Inventing without a patent right or copyright means that your ideas can be copied by someone and this could serve as discouragement to us* “(the regional manager, Gratis Foundation).

Case 5 *“The registration of a trademark is a major problem. The time one takes to go through the registration successfully is time consuming and also very expensive”* (the CEO, EBE firm).

5.11 The Proliferation of Brands in the Market Place

Two out of the six NTEs interviewed, representing 33.2% thoroughly discussed this as a challenge confronting them in their branding process. They explained that the market is saturated with firms producing the exact same thing. This alone always affects the

selection of brand elements since firms resort to imitations rather than innovations or coming up with something new. For instance;

Case 1 “*The greater number of brands in the market makes it difficult for us to get a brand name or symbol for our products. It is like the name or symbol you are going to use is already used by someone else*” (the president, Bolgatanga Craft Village).

Case 2 “*We have so many competitors in the market and whatever we going to do in terms of branding is already captured by some of our competitors already. That is our main challenge. I do not know. Is it because we are lay persons that is making this very difficult for us to do or what?*” (the Executive Director, SWOPA) .

5.12 Discussions of Findings

The First Objective: the NTEs’ Understanding of Branding Practices as a Concept

For this objective, the NTEs seem to have a surface understanding of branding. Some of the firms could not define a brand properly let alone differentiating it from branding. Though they have the idea regarding branding, they do not have an in-depth knowledge of branding that will enable them to practice branding without any problem. Some of the respondents acknowledged that they are lay people and do not know how branding is being done. This is consistent to extant literature which proposed that most of the SMEs/NTEs do not really understand the meaning of branding as a concept (Krake, 2005; Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2008).

The Second Objective: the Brand Elements Used by these NTEs in Ghana

Following the second objective, all the six NTEs interviewed were using more than one brand element. Each firm uses at least two brand elements and at most three. Some of them even have two brand names. That is different names for their firms and products. Predominantly, brand name, logo, symbol or term and a package or design were identified

as brand elements used by these NTEs/SMEs. Only two out of the six used color as one of their brand elements while one firm uses jingle as one of its brand elements. This confirmed Abimbola (2001) submission that SMEs are using more than one brand element. It is prudent for them (SMEs) to focus on only one brand element due to their limited physical and human resources in order to create efficiency and effectiveness (Abimbola, 2001). According to him, SMEs are immature in the market place and hence their lack of understanding of branding practices as a marketing management concept. As a result, using multiple brand elements can create inconsistencies and challenges in their branding process.

The Third Objective: Identifying the Possible Challenges or Difficulties Involved in Branding these NTEs in Ghana

For this objective, a number of eight (8) challenges were identified after the study. Five (5) of them were proposed by literature while the other three emerged as an addition to literature from the study. The challenges of branding identified in the study include: limited understanding of branding, difficulty in securing sufficient funds, general slowness and time related challenges, operational level challenges in marketing communication campaigns and the increasing costs of new product introductions. The rest of the three (3) challenges emerged during the interviews were lack of technical expertise among SMEs/NTEs, difficulty in obtaining a patent right and/or having a trademark registered and the proliferation of brands in the market place.

Limited Understanding of Branding

For this very challenge, five out of the six SMEs/NTEs interviewed, have discussed that their inadequate knowledge in branding is a major challenge affecting their businesses. They explained that sometimes they have the materials and resources for branding but how to go by it is their main challenge. This is consistent to literature that SMEs/ NTEs have a

limited understanding of brand-building and hence are not even conscious of branding as a concept (Krake, 2005). Some academic scholars indicated that SMEs are really not mature in the market and this is attributed to their lack of understanding of the real meaning of branding (Boyle, 2003; Krake, 2005).

Difficulty in Securing Sufficient Funds

All the six NTEs interviewed, have actually discussed this particular challenge as their main challenge of branding. They explained that their inability to brand is as a result of insufficient funding. They said it is difficult for them to secure funds for improvement of their businesses. They attributed the problem to the current economic crises, with high interest rates, which makes the cost of borrowing high and unaffordable. They also explained that the public institutions remain reluctant to grant them financial assistance and likewise the private sector, therefore, limiting their budget. This challenge is also consistent with Moilanen (2015) that the need to convince public sector decision-makers that branding is an investment with positive returns remains a challenge to brand-builders. It is evident that SMEs have limited budget as compared to large companies which will surely restrict their marketing creativity level. As a result, to build a strong brand will cost a lot of money to SMEs since the budget is the determining factor to a varying degree, especially advertising (Krake, 2005).

The General Slowness and Time Related Challenges

The three firms which discussed this challenge as a challenge of branding confronting them agreed that funding that they normally get from public and private institutions comes to them at the wrong time. They said this does not help them to buy materials at peak times and also advertise their brands to position them in consumers' minds. This is consistent with Moilanen (2015) who is of the view that funding related decisions made in public sector are usually delayed due to large number of stakeholders during the time for

internal communication and decision-making and can generally slow down several phases of brand-building process.

Operational-level Challenges in Marketing Communication Campaigns

The four (4) SMEs/NTEs that discussed this as a challenge confronting them are of the view that their employees in the production centers are deliberately refusing to use their organizations name plates and colors on their products during manufacturing. This makes it difficult for them to create awareness and for their customers to identify those products as their products. They agreed that they do not have money to advertise rather they rely on the word of mouth and the brand element to deliver their marketing communication message. This is consistent to Moilanen (2015) who is of the view that SMEs are relying on the word of mouth product features communications as their marketing creativity messages rather than advertising.

Increasing Costs of New-product Introductions

As five of the NTEs really discussed this as one of their main challenges of branding, they were of the view that the cost of doing everything in Ghana is increased and hence the cost of introducing a new product on to the market has also increased tremendously. This is consistent with Keller (2008) that the cost of introducing a new product or supporting an existing product has seen a tremendous increase, making it difficult for small businesses to match their investments and level of support that brands were able to receive in the past.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Introduction

This study explores how SMEs build their brands and some possible challenges that they face in their attempt to brand. This last chapter summarizes key findings of the study. It also highlights critical lessons drawn from the study and draws conclusions based on the interpretation of data generated by the research and related literature reviewed. The chapter concludes with limitations as well as recommendations for studies.

6.1 Summary of the Study

This study investigated how SMEs build their brands and the possible challenges that they face with regard to brand-building. The study sought to find answers to the questions asked in this study that is; NTEs understanding of branding as a concept, brand elements being used by these NTEs in Ghana and the possible challenges or difficulties that NTEs encounter in branding? In order to answer these questions posed in chapter one, the researcher reviewed the extant literature where a conceptual framework was then developed to address the three questions set. An interview guide was adopted and both unstructured and semi-structured questions were used. The analysis was based on six (6) NTEs with one respondent each in all the six (6) cases. The respondents were top-management personnel of these NTEs who make corporate decisions of their respective firms such as CEOs, Executive Directors, presidents and general managers. The representatives were purposively selected from within the Upper East Region of Ghana. The suitability of using the case-study strategy in this study was to enable the researcher explore the understanding of NTEs brand-building and its possible challenges by using in-depth interviews.

6.2 Major Findings

Addressing the Research Objective One

To begin with, research objective one was to explore the understanding of branding practices undertaken by the selected SMEs in Ghana. It was discovered that the SMEs have shallow understanding of branding. Some of them only understand the first step of a strategic brand management process proposed by Kelvin Lane Keller. That is the identification and establishment of brand positioning and values. Some of the firms interviewed could not define a brand very well and could not differentiate it from branding either. This is a clear indication that the SMEs do not actually understand what branding really is all about, though they have some knowledge of what a brand is, what it stands for and can do for them as a marketing management concept.

Research Objective Two

The brand elements used by these SMEs are brand name, logo, symbol, colour and package or design. The brand name, symbol and logo seem to be the dominant brand elements used by these SMEs in Ghana. It was discovered that no SME uses only one brand element. The NTEs used at least two brand elements such as name and logo, name and symbol, or name and design. Only two out of the six NTEs used three brand elements and these NTEs are in the handicrafts sub-sector of Non-Traditional Exports industry. Some of the NTEs used two brand names. For instance, Bolgatanga craft village. This confirmed Abimbola (2001) submission that SMEs are using more than one brand element. It is prudent for NTEs (SMEs) to focus on only one brand element due to their limited physical and human resources in order to create efficiency and effectiveness (Abimbola, 2001). As a result, using multiple brand elements can create inconsistencies and challenges in their branding process (Abimbola, 2001).

Research Objective Three:

Addressing the third objective; identifying the possible challenges or difficulties involved in branding these NTEs in Ghana, there was a number of possible challenges confirmed and discovered from the study. For the firms interviewed, five (5) of the branding challenges proposed by Moilanen (2015) and Keller (2008) were identified as challenges confronting NTEs in Ghana. These challenges are limited understanding of branding, general slowness and time related challenges, operational level challenges in marketing communication campaigns, difficulty in securing sufficient funds and increasing costs of new product introductions.

However, three new challenges were emerged out of the interviews. These challenges include: lack of technical expertise among NTEs, difficulty in obtaining a patent right and/or having a trademark registered and the proliferation of brands in the market place. First, lack of technical expertise or know-how is affecting their ability to brand. The firms agreed that they do not have the requisite human resource personnel who can bring their skills or expertise to bear the activities of their firms as far as branding and marketing of their products are concerned. This is in line with Abimbola (2001) and Rode & Vallaster (2005) assertion that SMEs/NTEs have limited human resources and technical know-how and hence, require greater focus and effectiveness in their operations

Second, it is very difficult for NTEs to have their trade mark registered or obtain a patent right, anytime they invent or come out with a new idea for a product. Related to that, they also find the registration of trademark with the Registrar-General Department (RGD) very cumbersome and expensive to them (NTEs). They said this time consuming and expensive nature of registration process does not encourage them to adopt the concept of branding in their firms. This is consistent to Keller (2008) submission that cumbersome registration process can demotivate and scare away businesses especially small entrants.

The last challenge discovered is that there is a proliferation of brands in the market place making it difficult for NTEs to come out with new brand elements, thus, leading to firms copying other firms blindly in the market. This makes the selection of brand elements very difficult for NTEs, considering the large number of businesses in the market. This also serves as discouragement for NTEs to really practice branding since it is not easy designing or crafting own or independent brand element that has no bearing with any existing brand in the market. This is in conformity to Keller (2008) suggestion that the proliferation of brands in the market place is making people to imitate and copy each other easily, particularly those without the proprietary product technology (the intellectual property rights).

Following the three key objectives of the study, conclusions are drawn below:

6.3 Conclusions

With respect to objective one of the study, though NTEs have some understanding of what brand-building is, they do not have a deep understanding of branding as a concept. They have a very shallow understanding of brand-building.

As regard to the choice and use of appropriate brand elements, the study also affirmed that NTEs used more than one brand element to brand their products. All the six firms interviewed indicated that the NTEs used more than one brand element and these brand elements consist of brand name, logo, symbol, colour, package or design.

With respect to the challenges NTEs face in branding, five out of the six challenges proposed in literature were confirmed by the study except the organizational issues and lack of authority to lead which was a challenge that these NTEs were not even aware of.

There were also other notable findings that emerged as a challenge for NTEs with regard to branding. These were: lack of technical expertise among NTEs, difficulty of obtaining a patent or copyright and/or having a trademark registered and the proliferation of brands in the market place.

6.4 Recommendations

After having analysed the findings thoroughly and conclusion drawn, the following steps have been recommended;

- The important regulatory institutions such as GEPA, NBSSI, AGI and GIPC should voluntarily assist NTEs on brand building issues so as to enable them understand and appreciate the crucial role of branding in their businesses.
- For the choice and use of brand elements, the NTEs should focus on only one brand element for now, considering their financial strength to recruit people with technical expertise. Emphasizing on a single brand element will enable them have absolute command and control of their brands regarding their financial position and human resource management capability. NTEs should also desist from using two brand names since this can lead to a reduction of their chances to gaining people's attention thereby impeding loyalty and hence, competitiveness and profitability.
- The Registrar-General's Department (RGD) should see to it that the registration procedure is simplified and/or modified in order to fast track the registration process of NTEs and their businesses.
- The government of Ghana should endeavour to make available the Export Development and Investment Fund (EDIF) to NTEs all the times to enable them

improves upon the performance of their business and to assist them brand their products.

- The government of Ghana should also come out with prudent fiscal and monetary policies in order to create an enabling business environment for NTEs by ensuring that prudence measures are put in place to enhance the macro-economic stability in the country. The macro-economic indicators such as interest rates, inflation rate and exchange rates should be at the level affordable by businesses. Tax holidays or exemptions should be given to NTEs so as to boost their production.

6.5 Limitations of the Study

In Ghana, there are more than three thousand 3000 SMEs across all the ten regions. However, this study examined respondents only within the Upper East Region in the sense that the region is endowed with NTEs. The results of the study may not necessarily be transferred to other regions of Ghana. Also the findings of the study is limited to only NTEs in the manufacturing sector in Ghana and may not be necessarily projected on to NTEs in other sectors of the Non-Traditional Exports in Ghana and hence the sample size is relatively small. The study therefore is geographically limited to Upper East Region and sectorially limited to the manufacturing NTEs in Ghana.

6.6 Future Studies

The study recommended that future studies should look at the importance of SMEs brand-building, its branding strategies and performance. Future research should also consider branding challenges in the service SMEs and consider adopting larger sample size by using quantitative approach in order to quantify the effects of branding challenges on SMEs performance and for the generalization of the results.

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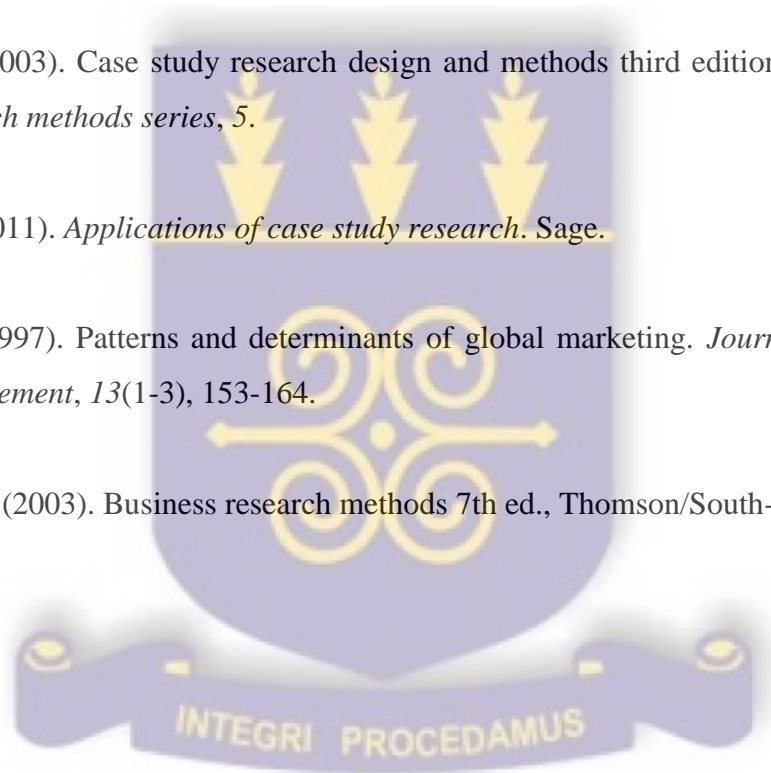
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide

- Name of the organization
- Name of the businessf
- Address of the business
- Year of establishment
- Number of employees
- Brief description of the business
- Position/rank of respondent
- Exploring the understanding of branding
- ✓ The meaning of a brand
- ✓ The meaning of branding
- ✓ Number and types of brand elements used e.g brand name, logo, symbol, color, term trademark etc.
- ✓ Branding strategies e.g leveraging brand elements on secondary sources or associations; using other companies brands (co-branding); sponsorships; personality/character etc.
- ✓ How the brands are leveraged on secondary associations e.g other companies, distribution channels, sponsorships of events, spokes persons etc.
- Branding strategies
- ✓ Limited understanding of branding among SMEs
- ✓ General slowness and time related challenges
- ✓ Difficulty in securing sufficient funds
- ✓ Organizational issues and lack of authority to lead
- ✓ Operational level challenges in marketing communications campaigns
- ✓ Increasing costs of new products introductions

- ✓ Any other challenges

Appendix 2: Interview Questions

1. In your own understanding, what is meant by a brand?
2. What is your understanding of branding as a marketing management concept?
3. What is the difference between a brand and branding?
4. Does your firm brand?
5. What brand elements is your firm using?
6. What branding strategies is your firm using?
7. Does your firm create awareness?
8. If yes, what promotional mix elements do they use to create awareness?
9. What challenges does your firm often encounter in its attempt to build its brands?
10. How will those challenges be overcome?
11. Are there any other challenges you can think of?

Thank you very much for your time.

