

My heritage matters: Building a strong brand, awareness and image



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Purpose: This article aims to investigate the role of Ghanaian culture in building a strong footwear brand identity to enhance brand awareness and image within the Ghanaian footwear industry. The study also investigated how gender affects perceptions and acceptance of a new footwear brand that uses Ghanaian Adinkra symbols in its branding.

Design/methodology/approach: Convenience and cluster sampling methods were used in a quantitative study design. A total of 400 shoe buyers were selected from Ghana's Kumasi City, Accra City, and Achimota Malls. Three footwear brands, designated A, B, and C were given logos based on three culturally significant Adinkra symbols: Atumpan drums, Akofena, and Sankofa. Quantitative techniques were used to evaluate the correlations between the variables.

Findings/results: The results revealed a weak correlation between logo A (Atumpan) and logo B (Akofena) with brand identity, while logo C (Sankofa) exhibited a strong correlation. Medium correlations were observed between culture symbols and all logos and brand identity. Logo C (Sankofa) was identified as the best logo for building brand identity, awareness, and image. Significant gender differences emerged, with logo C showing the largest statistically significant difference in both brand identity and brand awareness.

Practical implications: The study provides valuable insights into how cultural symbols can influence brand identity, awareness and image.

Originality/value: This study is original in its exploration of integrating Ghanaian cultural symbols into brand identity using Adinkra symbols in logo design. This article contributes to the understanding of cultural branding within the Ghanaian context and its implications for brand strategy and consumer engagement.

Keywords: brand identity; brand awareness; brand image; cultural and traditional symbols; Ghana.

Introduction

The concept of brand identity encompasses a spectrum of elements such as logos, brand names, colours and slogans, extending beyond mere visual representations to embody the broader personality, values and positioning of a brand (Keller, 2016). Visual identity components thus assume a pivotal role in shaping brand identity, as organisations strategically utilise these elements to enhance the overall perception, image and reputation of their products among consumers (Padubidri & Thapa, 2023). Consequently, brand identity serves as the cornerstone for fostering brand awareness, distinctiveness and forging enduring emotional connections with consumers, facilitating the delivery of comprehensive sensory and emotional experiences to achieve brand objectives (Alnsour & Subbah, 2018; Appiah & Ozuem, 2019; Dissanayake & Amarasuriya, 2015; Kapferer, 2012; Keller, 2013; Ukaj, 2016).

Brand awareness, as delineated by Keller (1993), signifies the degree to which consumers are acquainted with and capable of recognising a brand. Logos, serving as integral visual cues within a brand's identity, exert a substantial influence on brand recognition and recall, thus playing a pivotal role in crafting memorable and distinctive brand encounters (Labrecque et al., 2013).

Drawing upon Social Identity Theory (Harwood, 2020; Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), individuals possess both personal identities, reflecting unique attributes and social identities, predicated on group affiliations. When individuals perceive a brand as aligned with their culture and heritage, they are more inclined to view it as an extension of their social identity, consequently, fostering a favourable attitude towards it. This alignment often engenders

heightened brand loyalty and preference. Furthermore, individuals may utilise their brand choices as a means of expressing their culture and heritage identity, thereby communicating their cultural affiliations within a social milieu. Brands that integrate elements of an individual's heritage and cultural background often resonate more deeply with those seeking to assert their identity within a social framework (Hakala et al., 2011).

A large number of studies have delved into the significance and interplay of various visual identity elements in cultivating robust brands (Adebayo et al., 2019; Kwarteng-Amaniampong et al., 2024). These elements include the brand name (Alamgir et al., 2014; Alnsour & Subbah, 2018; Cheema et al., 2016; Dimitrieska et al., 2018; Eskiev, 2021; Kapferer, 2012), logo and symbol (Dolah et al., 2021; Erjansola et al., 2021; Gyambrah & Hammond, 2017; Nassereldin et al., 2019; Pop, 2020; Williams et al., 2021), design of visual elements (Machado et al., 2015; Miketić et al., 2018), a symbol (Zhirenov et al., 2016; Van Niekerk, 2018), the use of colour (Chang & Lin, 2010; Anica & Silvija, 2017; Ataniyazova et al., 2022), various typographies (Choi & Aizawa, 2018; Brako-Hiapa & Nkrumah, 2020; Santo & José, 2019), the importance of a slogan (Chang & Lin, 2010; Cheema et al., 2016; Nwankwo-Ojionu et al., 2022; Padrakali & Chellam 2017; Rybaczevska et al., 2020) and trademarks (Alnsour & Subbah, 2018; Keller & Swaminathan, 2020).

Scholars such as Foroudi et al. (2017), Gyambrah and Hammond (2017) and Jakšić-Stojanović and Šerić (2019) underscore the pivotal role of comprehending logo design in crafting and solidifying an organisation's visual brand identity, cognitive image and personality. Veloutsou and Delgado-Ballester (2019) advocate for the incorporation of culture and traditions in the brand-building process. Adom et al. (2018) posit that cultural and traditional symbols should reflect the ideals, philosophies, history, beliefs, norms and values of societies for effective communication. Moreover, organisations must utilise these symbols in logo creation to bolster brand awareness, image and key associations, subsequently employing them across various brand communication platforms to convey brand meaning (Aaker, 1991; Išoraitė, 2018; Keller & Swaminathan, 2020; Van Niekerk, 2018). Nevertheless, there remains a dearth of research exploring the impact of cultural and traditional symbols on robust brand-building, which could enhance brand awareness, brand image and performance.

The Ghanaian footwear manufacturing sector has witnessed a notable downturn in its overall performance, attributed to the proliferation of international footwear brands. Concurrently, the domestic footwear industry has struggled to establish compelling brands that resonate with Ghanaian consumers, thus failing to position themselves as preferable alternatives to international counterparts. This challenge underscores the importance of cultivating brand resonance and awareness within the local market (Agyeman, 2013; Vidal, 2022).

This study aimed to investigate the role of Ghanaian culture and traditions in shaping a strong footwear brand identity to enhance brand awareness and image within the Ghanaian footwear manufacturing industry. Additionally, it sought to examine the influence of gender on the perception and acceptance of a new footwear brand in Ghana and to offer a distinct footwear brand that integrates local cultural elements. To achieve these objectives, three culturally significant Adinkra symbols – Atumpan drums ('the talking drums'), Akofena ('sword of war') and Sankofa ('return' or 'take') – were utilised to design three footwear brand logos A, B and C. Employing such symbols was anticipated to not only enable consumers to decode the meaning, history and semantic interpretations of the symbols within the brand's content but also to impact the overall cognitive processes of organisations (Ostashchuk, 2017), potentially fostering and enhancing brand awareness.

Literature review

Effective branding stands as a cornerstone in the competitive business arena, signifying a brand's unique, differentiated and valuable identity (De Chernatony, 2009; Souri, 2021). Brand awareness, a multifaceted construct, hinges on various sub-factors shaping a brand's visibility and recognition. It encompasses consumers' capacity to recognise and recall a brand within its product category, profoundly influencing purchase decisions (Kahn et al., 2016; Khurram et al., 2018; Shwastika & Keni, 2021). Important sub-factors include recall, recognition and top-of-mind awareness, all facilitated by memorable logos, slogans and visual cues (Keller, 1993; Pancaningrum & Ulani, 2020; Pauly & Selvakumar, 2018). Jian and Yazdanifard (2014) identified six determinants influencing perceived quality, including price, brand image, familiarity, package size, brand origin and self-image. Their study revealed that familiarity, brand image and brand origin strongly influence perceived quality, highlighting their significant impact on consumer perceptions.

Keller (1993) defines brand image as the perceptions about a brand reflected by the brand associations held in consumers' memories. This definition underscores the significance of perceptions and brand associations, indicating that these aspects should be reflected to establish strong associations in consumers' memories over time (Aaker, 1996; Dada, 2021; De Chernatony, 2006; De Chernatony et al., 2011; Keller, 1993, 2013). These associations, activated in consumers' memories, generate superior brand messages compared to competing brands, influencing their perceptions (Andrews & Shimp, 2018; Sallam, 2016:99). Thus, structured brand information should be provided to consumers to enhance brand association, shaping and improving the visual and cognitive brand image (Aaker, 1996; Išoraitė, 2018).

Brand image is closely linked to brand identity, which is formed by expressing an organisation's unique mission, history, culture, values and personality, along with visual identity elements, creating an image in consumers' memories (Alnsour & Subbah, 2018; Išoraitė, 2018; Keller et al., 2015;

Kim & Lim, 2019; Świtła et al., 2018). Furthermore, brand familiarity, association strength, market penetration, distribution reach and visibility amplify consumer perceptions of brand awareness (Kapferer, 2012; Keller, 1993). Effective management of these sub-factors is imperative for organisations crafting enduring brand awareness strategies, with consistency across touchpoints reinforcing brand visibility and recognition (Kapferer, 2012; Kotler et al., 2009), underscoring the centrality of a strong brand identity.

Brand identity comprises a distinctive amalgamation of visual, verbal and symbolic elements that collectively embody a brand to consumers and stakeholders (Kapferer, 2012), delineating its personality, values and market positioning (Keller, 2016). At its core lies visual identity, encompassing logos, colours, typography and imagery, pivotal in crafting a cohesive and recognisable brand image that activates consumer trust and familiarity (Aaker, 1996). Strategically crafted and consistently implemented, these visual identity elements serve as the outward face of the brand, pivotal in fortifying brand identity and augmenting brand awareness (Buil et al., 2016; Coman et al., 2021; Ianenko et al., 2022).

Visual identity elements

Visual identity elements are pivotal components of brand identity, facilitating the creation of memorable and distinct brand interactions that enhance consumers' ability to recall the brand (Alnsour & Subbah, 2018; Kapferer, 2012; Labrecque et al., 2013). Through consistent exposure to a brand's visual identity across various platforms and contexts, its presence in consumers' consciousness is fortified, consequently elevating levels of brand awareness (Kapferer, 2012; Kotler et al., 2009). Essentially, brand identity serves as the linchpin for cultivating brand awareness, forging a symbiotic relationship between these concepts in shaping consumer perceptions and preferences within the fiercely competitive market landscape. This study specifically focussed on leveraging the logo as a visual identity element to build a new footwear brand identity with the potential to enhance brand awareness and brand image.

Logo and geometrical shapes

The logo serves as a fundamental component of brand recognition, offering immediate visibility and awareness to bolster brand equity (Rafiq et al., 2020; Williams et al., 2021). Acting as the brand's 'signature', it fulfils dual roles of identification and differentiation, profoundly shaping attitude formation and image generation (Alnsour & Subbah, 2018; Dolah et al., 2021; Farhana, 2012; Hao et al., 2021).

In logo design, cultural and traditional symbols, often intertwined with geometric shapes, hold significant sway (Alawode et al., 2018; Dolah et al., 2021; Kwarteng-Amaniampong et al., 2024; Veloutsou & Delgado-Ballester, 2019). These symbols, as official visual representations,

convey brand essence to consumers, laying the groundwork for brand identity (Gyambrah & Hammond, 2017; Sapa'at & Kurniasih, 2018; Uncu & Calisir, 2019).

The complexities of graphic design, colour theory and geometric symbolism are paramount in crafting compelling logo designs. Logo designers' grasp of these elements shapes and conveys meanings that influence consumer recognition and choices, ultimately enhancing impressions and confidence (Adir et al., 2014; Dolah et al., 2021; He, 2022; Meng, 2022; Miketić et al., 2018; Zhu & Yue, 2018). Geometric shapes, classified as either geometric or organic, play a pivotal role in emotively conveying messages through logo design, influencing consumer perceptions (Alawode et al., 2018; Dolah et al., 2021; Hao et al., 2021; Kuwornu-Adjaoter et al., 2016; Miketić et al., 2018; Zhu & Yue, 2018).

Lines, the fundamental design elements, lend structure to geometric shapes, dictating the logo's strength, professionalism, efficiency and personality (Bharadwaj, 2021; Christie & Carson, 2021; Miketić et al., 2018). Triangles evoke stability and strength, conveying a soothing presence, while squares suggest stability, strength and balance (Miketić et al., 2018; Christie & Carson, 2021), while it is pronounced that circles universally recognised geometric shapes, hold symbolic weight across cultures, reinforcing consumer perceptions towards the brand (He, 2022; Yaro, 2015). These shapes find frequent application in logo design, with brands incorporating them in product graphics and text (He, 2022; Kaejon, 2020).

Footwear brand logos in Ghana frequently integrate geometric shapes such as circles, squares and triangles. Examples such as Horseman Shoes, Adepa Shoes and Dihoc Footwear showcase the prevalence of these shapes in logo design (Adir et al., 2014; Dalgo, 2021; Liang, 2021). Figure 1 provides samples of logos with geometric shapes in Ghana.

Cultural and traditional symbols

Traditionally, symbols have been revered as indigenous cultural expressions, serving as vehicles to convey thoughts and articulate the values and beliefs of a community (Kuwornu-Adjaoter et al., 2016; Muhlenbeck & Jacobsen, 2020). To effectively capture and sway the attention of both current and prospective consumers, Oladumiye (2018), Parmentier (2015) and Van Niekerk (2018) advocate for the utilisation of signs and symbols familiar to consumers, emphasising their persuasive potential. Symbols, as noticed by Hospkins (2015), possess a distinct communicative prowess, characterised by their innate ability to represent or evoke something through analogous qualities or associations in thought. Thus, symbols serve as potent communicators for brands, capable of attracting, persuading or dissuading individuals (Meis & Kashima, 2017; Sodikin, 2018).

Ghana boasts a rich tapestry of cultural and modern symbols, including the National Flag, the Coat of Arms, Adinkra

symbols such as 'Akofena' and 'Sankofa', and traditional drums such as the 'Atumpan', all of which encapsulate the nation's cultural and national identity (Adom et al., 2018; Akotia, 2010; Annuku & Mireku-Gyimah, 2009; Chunfa et al., 2021; Jecty, 2022; Kemevor, 2014; Owusu, 2019; Smith, 2013; Zhe & Bawuah, 2013). The Coat of Arms, amalgamating symbols such as the Black Star, cattle, Akofena, Eagles and the Cocoa tree, symbolises Ghana's security and its enduring ties with Great Britain (Akotia, 2010; Shahid et al., 2012). Notably, the Atumpan drums, also known as 'talking drums', serve as symbols employed for communication, notification and entertainment during ceremonies, embodying announcements, praises and ceremonial welcomes while simultaneously evoking local music traditions (Kemevor, 2014) (see Figure 2).

The Akofena symbol, commonly known as the 'sword of war', embodies attributes of courage, legality and the authority vested in the legitimate ruler. This symbol underscores the importance of honouring and showing respect and loyalty to elders, while also encouraging the values of statesmanship and heroism (Adom et al., 2018; Annuku & Mireku-Gyimah, 2009; Chunfa et al., 2021; Jecty, 2022) (see Figure 3 for visual representation).

The Sankofa symbol, which translates to 'return', 'go', or 'take', embodies the concept of continuous learning and growth by acknowledging past experiences to rectify mistakes and enhance the future (Adom et al., 2016, 2018; Jecty, 2022; Owusu, 2019; Zhe & Bawuah, 2013). This symbol emphasises the importance of integrating past knowledge while progressing in life, underscoring the notion that learning from the past is essential for a prosperous future (see Figure 4 for visual reference).

As per Kuwornu-Adjaoter et al. (2016) and Oladumiye (2018), symbols epitomise universally accepted signs, representing societal values, aspirations, historical narratives and cultural attributes. Incorporating cultural and traditional symbols in branding endeavours to visually, verbally and iconically unite communities, effectively communicating cultural heritage and traditional values (Adom et al., 2018). Many footwear manufacturers leverage cultural, traditional and national symbols in their logo designs, exemplified by brands such as Gihoc Footwear, Della Shoes and Adepa Shoes. Notably, these logos incorporate symbols such as the eagle, 'Nyame Biribi Wo Soro' [God something is in the heavens] and 'Denkem' [Crocodile], each emblematic of the beliefs, essence and identity of the people (dan Kurniasih, 2018). This signifies that the logos of Dihoc Footwear and Adepa Shoes convey emotional messages encapsulating the beliefs, essence and identity of both the people and the organisation, influencing consumers' purchase decisions. Figure 5 indicates footwear brands in Ghana with cultural and traditional symbols.



Source: Menz, K. (2014). *Ghanaian shoe entrepreneur makes giants strides*. Retrieved from <https://newsghana.com.gh/ghanaian-shoe-entrepreneur-makes-giant-strides/>

FIGURE 1: Sample of logos designed with geometric shapes in Ghana.



Source: Kemevor, A.K. (2014). *Traditional ingenuity in Ghanaian Atumpan drum construction* (from locally obtainable 'Cordia Millenii'). *Art and Design Studies*, 22, 59–69

FIGURE 2: Atumpan drums.



Source: Chunfa, S., Donkor, E.K., & Peng, Y. (2021). *Perception difference analysis using digital technology: Case study of Ghanaian Adinkra symbols and Chinese traditional symbols*. *Webs Conference*, 236, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/202123605016>

FIGURE 3: Akofena.

Nevertheless, footwear labels such as Horseman Shoes and Barimah Shoes employ symbols such as 'shoe' and 'human head' in addition to cultural and traditional symbols (see Figure 6 for illustration).

Research conducted by Işoraitè (2018) and Keller and Swaminathan (2020) suggests that a symbol representing a brand should be closely linked to the brand itself, fostering a clear image in consumers' minds to bolster brand awareness and key associations. Therefore, by incorporating cultural and traditional symbols such as the Atumpan drums, Akofena and Sankofa, alongside geometric shapes such as triangles, squares and circles, respectively, the study proposed three logos A, B and C, aimed at strengthening the new Ghana footwear brand identity and reinforcing brand awareness (see Figure 7 for visual representation).

Atumpan drums and a triangle served as the foundation for designing logo A, while Akofena and a square were integrated into logo B and Sankofa paired with a circle for logo C. Logo B was crafted around the Akofena symbol, nestled within a square alongside the brand name, NFJ Footwear. This amalgamation conveys emotional messages of courage, statesmanship, respect, loyalty to elders and stability and strength, emanating from both the Akofena and the geometric shape of the square. Similarly, logo C featured the Sankofa symbol encased within a circle, alongside its brand name, Sankofa Footwear. Here, the design encapsulates a message urging people not to forsake

their identity, culture and history while embracing modern knowledge, symbolised by Sankofa, within the universally shared symbol of a circle, reinforcing a strong consumer perspective towards the brand.

In crafting logo A, two Atumpan drums were nestled within the triangle, with the brand name, Atumpan Footwear, adorning the right side. This design harnesses emotional messages evoked by the Atumpan drums, traditionally used for praising and welcoming people and the gods, regarded as sacred entities providing guidance and protection. The stability, strength and soothing qualities of the geometric shape, the triangle, further reinforce the brand's identity. The selection of these cultural symbols and geometric shapes in designing the logos was driven by the desire to convey a combination of messages that foster uniqueness, distinctiveness and differentiation, influencing consumers' acceptance of the new footwear brand. In addition, respondents were invited to choose the option they believed would best establish the new footwear brand identity in Ghana.

Perceptions of cultural and traditional symbols, as well as various geometric shapes in the design of brand logos, are intricate matters influenced by the interplay of cultural, social, community and individual factors. Hence, it is essential to acknowledge and understand the diverse cognitive processes, perceptions and preferences of individuals, cautioning against oversimplifying the viewpoints of individuals – specifically, males and females – in relation to symbolic aesthetic elements.

Gender difference in cognitive processing and aesthetic preferences

Bonnardel et al.'s (2017) research within marketing delved into gender-specific cognitive processing and aesthetic preferences regarding symbolic aesthetic elements, within the context illuminated by Social Identity Theory (Harwood, 2020; Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Generally, males and females demonstrated gender-specific patterns of controlled attention, with this effect being more pronounced among males (Dawson & Chivers, 2016). Studies indicate the existence of gender-specific perceptions and preferences, particularly concerning colour, shape and design elements (Bonnardel et al., 2017).

For instance, it has been suggested that individuals who favour certain colours tend to also prefer specific shapes and these preferences may stem from individual inclinations towards semantic information conveyed by colours, shapes and design elements (Chen et al., 2015). Furthermore, researchers such as Fischer et al. (2004) and Lieven et al. (2015) propose that females often lean towards rounded shapes and softer colours, whereas males may exhibit a preference for angular shapes and bold, contrasting colours. However, it is vital to acknowledge that these observations are generalisations, and significant individual variations exist within these trends.



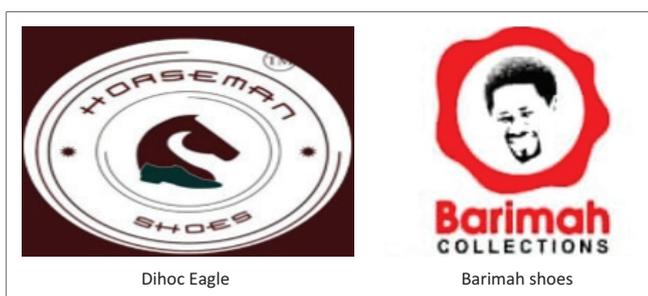
Source: Kuwornu-Adjaoter, J.E.T., Appiah, G., & Nartey, M. (2016). The philosophy behind some Adinkra symbols and their communicative values in Akan. *Philosophical Papers and Review*, 7(3), 22–33. <https://doi.org/10.5897/PPR2015.0117>

FIGURE 4: Sankofa.



Source: Menz, K. (2014). *Ghanaian shoe entrepreneur makes giants strides*. Retrieved from <https://newsghana.com.gh/ghanaian-shoe-entrepreneur-makes-giant-strides/>

FIGURE 5: Footwear logos with cultural and traditional symbols.



Source: Menz, K. (2014). *Ghanaian shoe entrepreneur makes giants strides*. Retrieved from <https://newsghana.com.gh/ghanaian-shoe-entrepreneur-makes-giant-strides/>

FIGURE 6: Footwear logos without cultural and traditional symbols in Ghana.

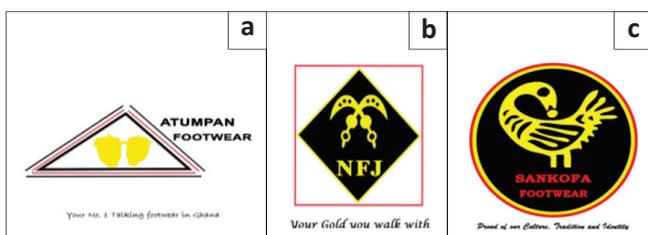


FIGURE 7: Proposed logos and their interactions with cultural symbols and geometric shapes.

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning, intersex, asexual and others (LGBTQIA+) community was excluded from a survey with Ghanaian respondents for a number of reasons, including social and cultural considerations. Like many other nations, Ghana has cultural customs and norms that could make it difficult to include the LGBTQIA+ population in research projects or have an open conversation about it.

The conceptual model and formulated hypotheses employed in the study were derived from a thorough review of the literature, incorporating insights from Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) (see Figure 8 for visual representation):

- H1:** Logo A statistically influences the new footwear brand identity building.
- H2:** Logo B statistically influence the new footwear brand identity building.
- H3:** Logo C statistically influences the new footwear brand identity building.
- H4:** The individual gender perception and preferences statistically influence the new footwear brand identity.
- H5:** The new footwear brand identity statistically influences footwear brand awareness.
- H6:** The new footwear brand identity statistically influences the footwear brand image.

Research methods

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of Ghanaian culture and traditions in building a strong footwear brand identity to enhance brand awareness and image. To contribute to the existing body of knowledge, a pool of respondents consisting of footwear consumers residing in Ghana was considered. Employing a quantitative research approach, data collection was facilitated through the administration of questionnaires (Creswell, 2014; Saunders et al., 2016). Cluster and convenience sampling methodologies were employed to establish a sample size of 400 individuals, sourced from three distinct locations: Kumasi City Mall ($n = 176$), Accra City Mall ($n = 131$) and Achimota Mall ($n = 93$). The questionnaire was meticulously structured, incorporating statements rated on a 5-point Likert scale. Permission was duly obtained from the shopping mall

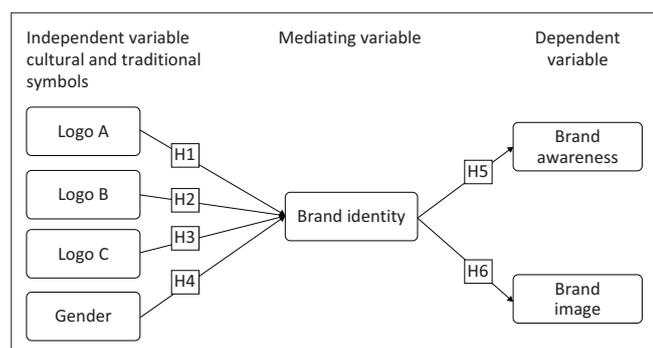


FIGURE 8: Conceptual framework of the study.

management and non-probability convenience sampling techniques were deployed to recruit participants. A commendable response rate of 84% (336 out of a possible 400) was achieved, indicating satisfactory engagement.

For this study, a survey approach was deemed most suitable, employing a questionnaire as the primary tool for data collection. The questionnaire comprised multiple sections, encompassing a demographic profile segment and dedicated sections focussing on logos labelled A, B and C. Predominantly, the questionnaire featured queries assessed on a 5-point Likert scale. After data collection, analysis was conducted utilising Pearson's correlation, confirmatory factor analysis, linear regression analysis and independent *t*-tests, aimed at scrutinising the primary dataset. Specifically, Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to evaluate the hypotheses posited within the scope of this study.

Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance to conduct this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee (Human), Nelson Mandela University (reference no.: H22-BES-BMA-037).

Results

The results of the study are presented in this article.

Demographic characteristics

The demographic information of respondents was gathered through a series of closed-ended questions, focussing on gender and age. Respondents were provided with predetermined response options, allowing them to select a single answer. The summarised outcomes are presented in Table 1.

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that among the 336 respondents, 59% identified as female, while 41% identified as male. Moreover, the analysis indicated that the age group between 41 years and 50 years represented the highest proportion of respondents, accounting for 38% of the total, whereas the age group between 18 years and 20 years constituted the lowest proportion, at 2%.

TABLE 1: Demographics profiles of respondents.

Variable	Frequency	%
Gender		
Male	138	41
Female	198	59
Total	336	100
Age (years)		
18–20	7	2
21–30	50	15
31–40	71	21
41–50	128	38
51–60	80	24
Total	336	100

Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to validate factors such as culture and symbol, brand identity, brand awareness and logos A, B and C. Mishra (2016) argues that CFA allows researchers to correct measurement errors while estimating various dependent relationships. The CFA approach was applied individually to each factor to assess their unidimensionality and reliability in the measurement models. Using a path diagram, all latent constructs were amalgamated into a single measurement model (Baharum et al., 2023). The Cronbach's alpha values were computed for all variables, yielding a range between 0.73 and 0.87. These values were deemed satisfactory based on Wegner's (2013) and Taber's (2018) criteria.

To assess model fit, the CFA results were analysed alongside relevant goodness-of-fit indices including CMIN/degrees of freedom (*df*), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), in accordance with the criteria outlined by Baharum et al. (2023) and Mishra (2016). The study utilised common fitness indices employed by researchers: CMIN/*df* (< 0.05 or < 0.08), GFI (> 0.90 or > 0.95), SRMR (< 0.05 or < 0.08), RMSEA (< 0.08 or < 0.10) and CFI (> 0.95 or > 0.90).

The results for the goodness-of-fit indices for the factor symbol and logo indicated that both the cut-off for good model fit (CMIN/*df* = 3.00, GFI = > 0.95, CFI = 0.95, SRMR = 0.05 and RMSEA = 0.08) and the cut-off for satisfactory model fit (CMIN/*df* = 5.00, GFI = 0.90, CFI = 0.90, SRMR = 0.08 and RMSEA = 0.10) were acceptable.

The goodness-of-fit results for culture and tradition indicate that CMIN/*df* indicated 1.095, which was within the necessary level. The GFI displayed a number of 0.997. Results exceeded the cut-off point of $pf > 0.90$. This demonstrated that the model fit was good. The CFI also revealed 1.00. This indicated a satisfactory model fit because the result was above the advised cut-off point of > 0.90. The result of 0.0096 that SRMR reported was below the threshold of 0.05 and demonstrated a strong model fit. Moreover, RMSEA showed a value of 0.017, which was below the threshold of 0.08 and was deemed to be a good fit for the model. Based on the findings, there is enough data to support the inclusion of culture and tradition.

The goodness-of-fit results for brand identity and brand awareness indicate that CMIN/*df* received a score of 3.064, which was acceptable. Goodness-of-fit index displayed a value of 0.962, which was better than > 0.90 and provided a sufficient goodness-of-fit. Comparative fit index revealed a result of 0.927 that exceeded the goodness-of-fit indexes' advised thresholds. It was nevertheless regarded as a model fit for the investigation. A good model fit for the study was obtained for SRMR, which showed a value of 0.063 which is within the acceptable threshold, and for RMSEA, which showed a value of 0.079 which is also within the needed threshold.

Pearson's correlation analysis

Logo and symbol – Logos A (Atumpan), B (Akofena) and C (Sankofa), culture and tradition, and brand identity and brand awareness were subjected to a correlation analysis. Pearson's correlation analysis values were calculated to determine the strength and the direction of relationships between variables for item 1 (logo A's influence on brand identity), item 2 (logo B's influence on brand identity), item 3 (logo C's influence on brand identity) and item 4 (brand identity's influence on brand awareness) in this study. The correlation values varied between -1.00 and +1.00 where high absolute values are an indication of strong relationships, and values close to zero are an indication of weak relationships, according to McNabb (2015) and Obilor and Amadi (2018). The outliers found in raw data were further excluded to ensure the highest possible association between the variables. Table 2 presents the summary of results.

The results observed in Table 2 reported a weak correlation between logo A (Atumpan drums) and brand identity (0.11). A weak correlation was also found between logo B (Akofena) and brand identity (0.22). Table 2 further reported a strong correlation between logo C (Sankofa) and brand identity (0.51), while a weak correlation between brand identity, and brand awareness (0.13) and brand image (0.18) was reported from the results. Medium correlations were found between culture and tradition and all the logos, A – Atumpan drums (0.35), B – Akofena (0.31) and C – Sankofa (0.39), as well as brand identity (0.30), brand awareness (0.44) and brand image (0.41). The high medium correlation values between culture and tradition and brand awareness (0.44), as well as brand image (0.41), are testimony of the importance of culture and tradition in creating brand awareness and image in logos.

TABLE 2: Results of the correlation matrix.

Variable	Culture and tradition	Logo A	Logo B	Logo C	Brand identity	Brand awareness	Brand image
Culture and tradition	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Logo A	0.35	1.00	-	-	-	-	-
Logo B	0.31	0.04	1.00	-	-	-	-
Logo C	0.39	0.07	0.37	1.00	-	-	-
Brand identity	0.30	0.11	0.22	0.51	1.00	-	-
Brand awareness	0.44	0.22	0.10	0.35	0.13	1.00	-
Brand image	0.41	0.21	0.18	0.31	0.18	-0.04	1.00

Note: Weak = 0–0.30; medium = 0.30–0.50; strong = 0.50–1.00.

Regression analysis

In this study, SEM was helpful in evaluating the model fit by examining the areas where the factor structure was imposed and determining whether it fit the data and structural path. The SEM model analysis gave the researcher the chance to assess and confirm the statistically significant relationships. Table 3 indicates the summary of the results.

The results in Table 3 indicate that brand identity is significantly correlated with culture and traditions, logos A, B and C. The results further report a substantial relationship between brand identity, and brand awareness and brand image. These results confirm that culture and tradition, incorporated in logos A, B and C will influence the new footwear brand identity building in Ghana.

Linear regression analysis

The linear regression analysis was performed to determine statistically significant relationships between logos A – Atumpan drums, B – Akofena and C – Sankofa and brand identity. Based on the regression analysis the R^2 , regression coefficient, t -values and p -values, indicating the significant level ($p < 0.05$) were all calculated.

Drawing from the results of the regression analysis in Table 4, logos A and C recorded ($b = 0.20$, standard error [S.E] = 0.07, $t = 3.04$, $p < 0.00$) and ($b = 0.19$, S.E. = 0.07, $t = 2.90$, $p < 0.00$), respectively, were found to be statistically significant predictors of brand identity building (overall). However, logo B ($b = 0.10$, S.E. = 0.06, $t = 1.67$, $p < 0.09$) on the other hand was found not to be a predictor of brand identity building (overall). The results confirm the results in Table 1 that logos A and C were found to have a positive correlation with brand identity. The summary of the results of linear regression is provided in Table 4.

The results from Table 4 indicate that the R -value was 0.53, indicating that logos A (Atumpan drums) and C (Sankofa) strongly predict brand identity. Additionally, the R^2 value of 0.28 indicates that 28% of the variance in brand identity can be explained by predictors of logo A and logo C.

For the model on the factors for creating a brand identity, the regression equation for brand identity can be stated as follows:

$$\hat{y} = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4$$

$$\text{Brand identity} = 1.31 + 0.20 + 0.19 \quad [\text{Eqn 1}]$$

TABLE 3: Structural equation modelling regression weights results between independent, mediating and dependent variables.

Item	Relationship	Factor	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
Brand identity	≤	Culture and tradition	-0.31	0.10	-3.18	0.00
Brand identity	≤	Logo A	0.43	0.08	5.41	***
Brand identity	≤	Logo B	0.63	0.13	4.71	***
Brand identity	≤	Logo C	0.75	0.21	6.66	***
Brand awareness	≤	Brand identity	0.55	0.15	4.44	***
Brand image	≤	Brand identity	0.64	0.12	5.52	***

C.R., composite reliability; S.E., standard error.

Each individual coefficient is the average increase in the response variable for each one-unit increase in a given predictor variable, assuming all other variables are constant. Assuming that all the other factors for creating the new Ghana footwear brand identity are held constant, each additional use of logo A will increase the new footwear brand identity by 0.20 points. The additional use of logo C will also influence the new footwear brand identity and increase it by 0.19 points.

The results suggest that logos A and C will play an important role in building the new footwear brand; however, the results further suggest that logo C recorded the highest correlation value in terms of brand identity, implying that logo C will be more favourable accepted in building the new brand identity that will improve and enhance brand awareness and brand image.

Independent sample t -test

The independent sample t -test was calculated to discover a significant difference between the study's variables and gender. Cohen's d test was also calculated to determine whether a statistically significant difference existed. Furthermore, the mean test scores regarding Ghana's culture and traditional symbols – logos A, B and C and gender, as well as brand identity and brand awareness and gender were also calculated, and the calculated mean test scores were compared (see Table 5).

The results in Table 5 indicate a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) difference between means scores of males ($M = 3.39$) and females ($M = 3.36$) regarding logo A and gender. A statistically significant ($p < 0.03$) difference between males ($M = 3.61$) and females (3.65) regarding logo C and gender was also established based on the results. The results further reveal a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.05$) between the mean score of males ($M = 3.79$) and females ($M = 3.88$) regarding the new footwear brand identity and gender. Furthermore, there was a statistically significant difference ($p < 0.09$) between gender and footwear brand awareness with the mean scores of males ($M = 3.66$) and females

TABLE 4: A summary of linear regression analysis results for the variable brand identity.

Parameter	B	Standard error	Beta	t -value	p
Constant	1.31	0.42	-	3.137	0.00
Logo A	0.20	0.07	0.21	3.04	0.00*
Logo B	0.10	0.06	0.11	1.67	0.09
Logo C	0.19	0.07	0.21	2.90	0.00*

Note: $R^2 = 0.28$; R -value = 0.53.

*, $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 5: Independent sample tests (*t*-test) for gender.

Variable	Mean		<i>T</i> value	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Male	Female			
Logo A	3.39	3.36	-0.90	0.05*	0.47
Logo B	3.60	3.58	0.22	0.43*	0.40
Logo C	3.61	3.65	0.19	0.03*	0.81
Brand identity	3.79	3.88	-1.19	0.05*	0.83
Brand awareness	3.66	3.75	-1.89	0.09	0.54
Brand image	3.62	3.89	-1.43	0.91	0.56

Note: Small effect where $d \leq 0.2$; medium effect where $d \leq 0.5$; large effect where $d \leq 0.8$.
*, statistically significant at $p < 0.05$.

($M = 3.75$). The Cohen's *d* results indicate all the variables achieved a practical significant difference. The largest statistically significant difference ($d \leq 0.8$) was found between logo C ($d = 0.81$), brand identity ($d = 0.83$) and gender. Logo A ($d = 0.40$) and logo B ($d = 0.47$) achieved a small statistically significant difference ($d \leq 0.2$) between genders, while a medium statistically significant difference ($d \leq 0.5$) was also established between brand awareness ($d = 0.54$) and gender. The results confirm studies by Bonnardel et al. (2017) and Chen et al. (2015).

Managerial implications

The article suggested managerial implications for footwear manufacturers, businesses and marketers to enhance their brand identity and market presence:

Integrate heritage and cultural symbols

Integrate Ghanaian heritage and cultural symbols such as Atumpan drums, Akofena and Sankofa into logo designs. These symbols resonate with local consumers and evoke a sense of pride and cultural identity.

Focus on geometric shapes: Experiment with geometric shapes such as circles, triangles and squares in logo designs. These shapes can convey different meanings and associations, contributing to brand recognition and recall.

Tailor branding strategies

Consider gender-specific perceptions and preferences when designing brand identity elements. For example, incorporate rounded shapes and softer colours to appeal to female consumers, while using angular shapes and bold colours for male-oriented branding.

Build emotional connections

Create brand stories and narratives that resonate with Ghanaian culture, traditions and values. Emphasise themes of tradition, heritage and community to foster emotional connections with consumers.

Engage in local partnerships

Collaborate with local artisans, designers and cultural institutions to infuse authentic Ghanaian craftsmanship and storytelling into brand identity elements.

Invest in consumer education

Educate consumers about the cultural significance of brand symbols and colours through marketing campaigns and brand communications. This can deepen consumer understanding and appreciation for the brand.

Monitor and adapt

Continuously monitor consumer feedback and market trends to adapt branding strategies accordingly. Stay agile and responsive to changes in consumer preferences and market dynamics.

Ultimately, aligning branding strategies with Ghanaian culture and values can drive brand loyalty and long-term success.

Limitations and future research

While this study contributes valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge its limitations and consider avenues for future research. Firstly, the sample size was limited to three shopping malls in Ghana, which may restrict the generalisability of the findings. Future studies could expand the sample size and include a more diverse range of shopping malls to ensure broader representation and validity of the results.

Additionally, the use of Ghanaian traditional and cultural symbols to create a strong footwear brand identity and brand awareness was the exclusive focus of this study. To further enrich the understanding of branding strategies in diverse cultural contexts, future research could explore similar studies in other countries. By examining how cultural and traditional symbols are leveraged in branding across different cultures, researchers can gain deeper insights into the universal and culture-specific aspects of brand identity formation.

Despite these limitations, this study has provided valuable insights for footwear manufacturers, highlighting the significance of Ghanaian culture and traditions in shaping brand identity. Future research endeavours can build upon these findings to explore new dimensions of branding strategies and cultural influences, ultimately enhancing industry competitiveness and consumer engagement on a global scale.

Contributions of the article

This article contributes to the existing literature in several ways:

Cultural branding

By focussing on the use of cultural and traditional symbols in brand identity formation, the study adds to the growing body of research on cultural branding. It highlights the importance of cultural heritage in shaping consumer perceptions and brand associations, emphasising the role of symbolism in brand communication.

Brand identity formation

The study offers insights into the process of brand identity formation, particularly in the context of the footwear industry in Ghana. Examining the relationship between logos and brand identity sheds light on the factors that contribute to the construction of a distinct brand identity.

Consumer behaviour

Through its exploration of consumer preferences and perceptions regarding cultural symbols in branding, the study contributes to our understanding of consumer behaviour. It underscores the significance of cultural resonance and emotional connection in influencing consumer attitudes towards brands.

Practical implications

The findings of the study have practical implications for footwear manufacturers in Ghana and beyond. By highlighting the effectiveness of incorporating cultural symbols into brand identity, the study offers actionable insights for marketers seeking to enhance brand awareness, brand image and consumer engagement. Overall, this study enriches our understanding of branding strategies, cultural influences and consumer behaviour, while also providing valuable guidance for practitioners in the field of brand management. The study also extends the body of knowledge by extending Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory.

Conclusion

Heritage and cultural symbols have played pivotal roles throughout history, serving as identifiers of the people and societies they represent. However, a critical review of these symbols in the context of logo design reveals a significant gap in the literature. While brand identity, awareness, logos and geometric shapes have been extensively studied, there has been a notable neglect of the importance of our heritage and cultural symbols in organisational success. To address this gap and broaden the scope of knowledge, leveraging heritage and cultural symbols for brand-building is proposed to enhance organisational success.

Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a moderate statistically significant relationship between heritage and cultural symbols and brand identity building (0.30) as well as all three logos A (Atumpan drums), B (Akofena) and C (Sankofa) and brand identity building. Notably, logo C (Sankofa) exhibited a particularly strong correlation with brand identity (0.51) suggesting its crucial role in shaping the new footwear brand identity in Ghana. Regression analysis further confirmed the significance of logos A and C as predictors of brand identity building, with logo B being statistically insignificant in this regard. These findings align with prior research by Alawode et al. (2018), Dolah et al. (2021) and others, emphasising the effectiveness of logos incorporating cultural symbols in eliciting strong positive responses from consumers.

Furthermore, the correlation analysis indicated a weak yet statistically significant relationship between brand identity and brand awareness (0.13) and brand image (0.18). This underscores the importance of visual identity elements, such as cultural symbols, in enhancing brand awareness, brand image and interactions, as supported by the existing literature (Kahn et al., 2016; Labrecque et al., 2013). In addition, the study revealed gender-specific perceptions and preferences influencing brand identity building. For instance, the findings show females as dominant in terms of brand preferences designed by cultural and traditional symbols. Although males may prefer functional and performance-driven symbols, females often seek emotional connection, aesthetics and inclusivity. Hence, for footwear brand identity to be successful, it must leverage both preferences by creating an authentic and relevant message that resonates with diverse audiences. The findings are consistent with studies by Fischer et al. (2004) and Lieven et al. (2015). These insights underscore the need for tailored branding strategies that resonate with diverse consumer preferences.

To sum up, the findings suggested that the Sankofa logo was the most effective for building footwear brand identity in Ghana for both genders (males and females) given that the results from both correlation and regression exhibited higher than Atumpan and Akofena logos. The findings advocate for the integration of heritage and cultural symbols, colours and geometric shapes in footwear brand identity building in Ghana. By leveraging these design elements, brands can convey patriotic and emotional messages, thereby enhancing brand awareness and brand image that influence consumer purchase intentions. However, caution is advised in generalising the results, particularly concerning logos A (Atumpan drums) and B (Akofena), which exhibited weaker correlations. Nonetheless, the study's implications extend beyond the footwear industry, offering insights applicable to various sectors of Ghana's economy. Ultimately, the study underscores the power of heritage and culturally resonant branding in fostering consumer engagement and organisational success.

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Competing interests

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Authors' contributions

E.K.-A. and A.P. contributed to the conceptualisation and design of the study. E.K.-A. conducted the data collection. E.K.-A., A.P. and M.T. contributed to the data analysis, drafting of the manuscript and interpretation of results. The results were reviewed by E.K.-A., A.P. and M.T., who also approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, E.K.-A. upon reasonable request.

Disclaimer

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