

# **PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP: THE UNANSWERED CALLS OF THE GHANA NATIONAL MUSEUM?**

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## **Abstract**

Museums have great responsibility of identifying, collecting, documenting and preserving the artistic heritage of their respective countries in which they are established. They also have the responsibility of educating and entertaining visitors with their exhibits and documents. These responsibility requires that funders of these museum provide funds timely while museum managements adapt creative branding strategies to attract more visitors and make it impact felt nationally, if not globally. The Ghana National Museum is besotted with the problem of funding, proper branding strategy, leadership and state-of-the-art infrastructure. Through unobtrusive observation and re-reading of theoretical perspectives in museum management, this article examines the potentials of using Public Private Partnership in solving the problems of the museum. Data collected through the observation has presented through narrative analysis and supported with the theoretical perspectives. The study recommends that government must consider the Public Private Partnership option in solving the problems facing the Ghana National Museum. This will help in building a state-of-the-art museum with restaurant, car park, children's museum and gift shop. It also recommends the establishment of professorial chairs in Art Departments in the Ghanaian universities to promote museum research in Ghana. The professorial chairs when established must take oversight responsibility of publications of books, journals, exhibition catalogues and magazines in relation to the museum.

**Keywords:** *Public Private Partnership, museum branding, exhibitions, Ghana National Museum, Art Licensing*

## **1. Introduction**

Any society that does not document, protect and preserve its past and evolving cultures for the benefit of posterity is culpable of committing a socio-cultural crime against it succeeding generations. This duty will remain a humanitarian obligation for the search, discovery, consolidation and sharing of knowledge and its appropriation for the future. The pursuance of this humanitarian obligation is not an end in itself. Displaying of the amassed exhibits to a broader audience facilitates the knowledge and information sharing process and helps establish their historical connections and educational significance. Traditionally, museums offer visitors with contextual learning environment, present knowledge and information through documentations, and display of physical exhibits whose thorough engagement assist in shaping identities (Kelly, 2004; Lans, 2011), change perceptions, and elicit psychological and emotional responses. Encounter with these learning experiences are mostly common at leisure

time of individuals or groups of people. The continual search for knowledge in this era for the betterment of the world has generated multiplicity of bizarre leisure time from which one could decide where, when and why to visit a place of interest. Consequently, this affects visitors' presence and participation in museums. Kelly (2004, p.47) confirms that the "twenty-first century poses many other challenges for museums." She recounts the challenges as "decreasing attendances worldwide due to increased competition and a proliferation of leisure choices for a more sophisticated and demanding consumer; decreasing budgets and limited resources" since it is a nonprofit establishment.

In the face of this development, museums all over the world are always strategizing in giving visual answers to why visitors must visit. They consider the diverse interest and sophistication of visitors in this regard. Some museums have resorted to the exploration of modern technological software including the internet in creating online interactive virtual museum to pull internet users who may love to reach the exhibits of a museum with the click of a button. This also increases the number of visitors who view the exhibits of such museums. Jones (2009, p.8) proposes that the "museum must make the idea live in its displays, exhibitions, events, collection policy, interpretation, education programme – even the things on sale in its shop – before making big new claims in the outside world." With this suggestion, Jones (2009) is referring to an internal strategic branding of the museums in a way that will yield better visual experience and satisfaction upon visitation. When the internal branding is achieved, then externalizing it will deepen the aesthetic experiences of audience. Enriching aesthetic experiences of museum audiences have a strong correlation with increased museum attendance. Naturally, good branding offers audiences a compelling reason to embark on pleasurable visitation to the museum anytime they think of leisure. These huge expectations from the museums seem difficult to accomplish, especially, the state-owned ones including the Ghana National Museum since it is highly dependent on funds from the government. Consequently, this challenge necessitated the suggestion of some scholars that there is the need for museums to operate on commercial basis and collaborate with a wide range of productive and reputable partners (Kelly, 2004; Dekumwine, 2012) with outstanding track records in related operation for its effective and efficient running.

The glorious historicity of the Ghana National Museum as one of the oldest in West Africa dims in the face of the 21<sup>st</sup> century world. Besides, its symbolism in forging the new African identity and role in African independence celebrations, and as ancestral heritage home (Jenkins, 2011, December) is not given the needed scholarly attention. Jenkins adds that it was a 'Mecca' for both children in the diaspora, and famous global icons including Louis Armstrong, Maya Angelou, Muhammad Ali, C.L.R James, Martin Luther King, who visited with President Nixon for the Independence celebrations. Dekumwine (2012) found that, "the museums in Ghana are unpopular with the majority of Ghanaians because they are unaware that the museums feature as part of Ghana's development strategies." Lans (2011, December) hammers on the pressing questions that erupted during the visitation of Kofi Annan and his wife to the Ghana National Museums in 2011. He lists the questions as: "What is the role of the museum in the future, are we restoring it, are we using it the same way? How can we make sure it gains meaning for all Ghanaians? Do we need to develop the concept of a 'museum without walls'?" These questions are very relevant and demands spontaneous practical and results-oriented actions in uplifting the image of the museum. This article examines whether or not the Public Private Partnership (PPP) introduced by the government in 2011 is the best option to consider in branding the Ghana National Museum in unlocking its potential of attracting a broader audience.

## **2. Branding Nonprofit Brands**

The term 'brand' has been variously defined to mean a product or a service, a trademark (Brawise, 2003) and expectant values of product or a service (Kim, 2008). Its signification goes beyond the mere visual identity of a company and also implies "the perception of a product, service, or company that people have in their minds." (Kim, 2008, p. 5.) Publics' positive perception about a museum informs their patronage of that museum. Collectively, the term 'brand' represents the entirety of one's impressions about a museum (Arts Branding, 2012). Branding, therefore, includes a company's graphic identity portraying its core values, products, services and other information that increases the company's public presence and audience acceptance. Graphic identity includes but not limited to logos, posters, brochures, magazines, journals and other branded paraphernalia employed as tools in promoting a product or service. It is what the museum stands for and does that could be traced in all its operations. Holding to this, Jones (2009) cautions that a "museum shouldn't try to change its image until it's demonstrably changed its reality. The museum world needs this new kind of branding." (p.8)

State-owned museums are non-profit entities charged with the responsibility of collecting, preserving and exhibiting objects of great cultural and historical ties to particular constituencies. The exhibits are often interpreted to audience in a way that unravels their production process, function, aesthetical circuit and historical strings for the purpose of education, cultural understanding, and enjoyment (ICOM statutes, 2001). In addition to this perceived

*traditional* educative role, it must impress and entertain both regular and first-time visitors. Ghana National Museum is one of the casualties that dance to the tune of the government's "there is no money" refrain (Fosu, 2014, p.18). The museum's annual budgetary allocation is woefully inadequate. With the financial constraint coupled with the bureaucratic snafu in its operations, the museum, which by its coincidental birth with the nation's independence brought hope to Africa, has sullied its enviable reputation. Strangled with these problems, the exhibits are still domiciled in its 1957 temporal museum building. For fifty-eight years, it has seen no major improvement. Former President Nkrumah's plans for the extension of the museum building (Jenkins, 2011, December), few years after its inception, continues to be in a standstill since he was hoisted from power in 1966. Remnants of his intended two-storey building extension located behind the offices of the museum, in the same compound, are in a stalemate.

Currently, the museum is dependent on free donation of artifact to boost up its collections due to inadequate funds. The museum yawns for space, financial resource, innovative and professional branding to redeem its past glory. Governmental and donor funding reliance has proved so meagre to encourage greater patronage. Studies conducted to improve Victorian public art museums' community engagement skills using brand management principles, firmly established the relevance of public museums, adding that they are perceived to be elitist, stuffy, conservative and judgmental; and also lack a strong entrepreneurial orientation in its community engagement potential and sustainability (Bridson & Evans, 2013). Similar perceptual schema applies to the Ghana National Museum and warrants serious attention. Though museum's major task revolves around collection of artworks and presenting them in an interesting way, Jonker (2008) observes that much attention has been shifted to the presentation of the exhibits. Presentation of exhibits and organization of strategic branding events in an entertaining composure enriches the visual experience of viewers hence, improving the attractive potency of the museum's brand. For a strong and well recognizable brand is a necessity for modern museums (Cirrincione & Pace, n.d; Arts Branding, 2012).

Hyojin (2002) suggests two ways branding could increase income for nonprofit. She sees the potential of branding as a unique tool in persuading and drawing the attention of philanthropic donors for help and building internal for-profit units within the nonprofit organization to engage in product merchandizing and art licensing. The latter holds viable in the case of the Ghana National Museum but the former needs complete reorientation of the benefit of museums in the development of the country to pull the needed attention it deserves from local donors. Decreasing monotonic pattern of public funding of museums have shifted the attention of public museum managements to explore the opportunity for other sources of funding since many philanthropic donors and financiers including government, private organizations and foundations prefer to "support special activities such as exhibitions and outreach programs, or specific acquisitions rather the providing museums with undesignated operating funds" (Anheier & Toepler, 1998 as cited in Kim, 2008). However, considering the economic impact of museums such as attracting tourists and investments, creation of employment, place branding, cultural promotion, and demand of goods and services (Bollo, 2013; European Commission, 2012; Dekumwine, 2012), and provision of educational services (National Museum Directors' Conference, 2004) government should not relent its effort in funding the museum. The source of revenue for nonprofit organizations has conventionally being from governmental support, voluntary donations and grants, and visitation fees charged visitors. Till now, these have been the major source of income generation for the Ghana National Museum. The museum needs marketing-oriented leadership and partnership boiling with entrepreneurial minds to embark on multi-dimension financial wealth creation that will support the full operation of the museum.

Expectation from such a buoyant leadership would be considering the publications of books, journals, exhibition catalogues and magazine in relation to museum studies; operating a state-of-the-art restaurant or cafes and online shop; expanding the museum gift shop to include the sale of branded museum paraphernalia; building a car park, and charging fees for parking; expanding the collection to include children museum; engaging in art licensing, and other avenues possible for income generation. These expectations are no novelty. Other museums have tried and succeeded with them. Generating income from publications and printing branded paraphernalia for sale to visitors as suggested needs no governmental interventions to work but a leadership pathway. Lewis (2004) admits that apart from funds from the public sector and private sources the museum could generate income through "the museum's own activities." Bureaucracy, inadequate managerial skills and financial constraints in some nonprofits organizations have caused them failures and stunted growth in building their image (Hyojin, 2002). Furthermore, developing an interactive virtual museum for online users, promoting the museum through social media (such as facebook, instagram, viber, twitter) and tracking the number of visitors who visit these sites in order to increase its number of visitors (apart from the regular visitors who move directly to the museum itself) is also essential. Lewis (2004) confirms that the "availability of information and communication technologies bring new opportunities to the interpretative aspects of museums. This can manifest itself in a number of ways. For this purpose the opportunity to bring together digital images, particularly from diverse sources, in order to present and

interpret the cultural and natural heritage and to communicate this to wider audiences must now be regarded an important role for museums.” (p.5)

Again, establishing a strong relationship with the art related universities in Ghana (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and University of Education, Winneba) to mount courses that will contribute to the research development of the museum and using its collections for teaching and learning equally needs leadership initiative of the museum and these art higher institution of learning. For instance, Council for Technical Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) has a collaborative relation with the University of Education, Winneba to redirect the research focus of the students by encouraging them to do researches that will lead to the betterment of technical and vocational education in Ghana. The leadership of the museum must do same.

### **3. Risks in Nonprofit Branding**

Brand is central to all museums globally – whether for profit or non-profit. Keller (2003) as cited in Mork (2004) proposes four sequential processes keen to museum branding in the audiences’ point of view. These processes are identification, meaning, response and relationship. To him the audience should be able to identify the name and type of the museum. Identity in the context of museums goes beyond just name and type but also include the corporate identity— logos and the quality of exhibits the museum is noted for in disseminating educational and cultural information. Innovation in museum programmes in an entertaining fashion could help imprint the name of a particular museum on the minds of visitors. In that case, that particular museum stands the chance of being selected in the planning of leisure activities by audiences. The second process considers how the characteristics of the audience (their interactions with the exhibits, attitudes and viewing experiences) shape their personalized meaning about the museum. Besides, quality care giving to visitors, pricing policies (Keller, 2003), museum space and presentation of exhibits contribute to the meaning making process; intensifies the visitors’ emotional satisfaction which in effect influence their judgments and responses. Having enjoyed quality aesthetic experience in the museum, there is a high tendency of a visitor recommending a museum to a relation or friend for a visit. Though Keller’s proposed processes are sequential, they have a strong symbiotic relationship with each other and position the visitor as the centre of focus. Targeting of greater museum visitors calls for factoring their needs and desires in the branding process. This, according to Weisnewski (2009, p.3), has become the bane of many nonprofits – not considering the “needs and desires of the audience”.

Like any other business, nonprofits also face risk which, in most cases, dwindle their explorative branding agendas. Potential risks nonprofits are prone to include fear of being perceived more commercialized which might consequently truncate donor financial anchorage; inadequate financial muscles to sustain long-term brand branding since it is capital intensive; and the ability of branding to fuel publics’ negative perception about a museum (Kim, 2008). Branding can make and unmake the reputation of a museum and therefore needs well-coordinated strategies for its success. Branding has been the secret behind the success stories of many nonprofit organizations. “It is always best to be proactive in managing issues associated with risk so that the risks can be avoided or contingencies can be put in place to minimize them.” (Plantalony, 2013, p.23)

### **4. Concept of Public Private Partnership**

Governments all over the world have the mandate to provide its people with infrastructure and other essential services to push forward the wheels of sustainable development. This responsibility of governments seemed an insurmountable challenge, especially for developing economies like Ghana. The concept of Public Private Partnership (PPP) was primarily introduced in the 1990s in Europe (Hall, 2008) and adopted in Ghana in 2004 to ameliorate the infrastructural deficit that continues to retard progressive development. Ghana’s government sees the PPP concept as an official invitation of the private sector to partner her in minimizing the infrastructural deficit. In this sense the partnership is perceived as a complement and not a panacea for PPPs constitute meagre amount of public sector investment (Hall, 2008). The popular Akan proverb which says “*Beenu so a emmia*” and translates as “When two people shoulder a burden it is relieving” gives the concept of PPP a strong footing. It is a “contractual arrangement between a public entity and a private sector party, with clear agreement on shared objectives for the provision of public infrastructure and services traditionally provided by the public sector. Usually, in PPP arrangement, the private sector party performs part of or all of government’s service delivery functions, and assumes the associated risks for a significant period of time.” (Government of Ghana, 2011, p.2) The private sector partnering government gets financial rewards from government through user tariffs, government budgets or a combination of the two. Hall (2008, p.2) refers to the form of PPP in which the private company gets its payment form user charges as ‘concession contracts’. Irrespective of the model of PPP agreement entered into, be it “outsourcing of some routine operations” or the “private sector conceiving, designing, building, operating, maintaining and financing a project” there should be a considerable bearing of risk (p. 3). The strengths advanced

for using PPP are that considerable risk is transferred to the private sector makes it more cost effective in comparison to traditional procurement; It is also argued that PPP creates value for money; ensures cost efficiencies; reduces borrowing and relieves government of huge infrastructural and financial burdens. Added to these, it ensures quick and timely delivery of products or services in meeting deadlines. Hall (2008, p.15) tabulate the myths of PPP in an attempt to demystify them. Table 1 answers basic questions that have been misconstrued as merits of using PPP. It indicates that it does not reduce public spending, government subsidies or user charges the public authority or users eventually pay for the cost of the project or services. Governments only relay the baton of borrowing to the private sector to do so and the public repay with interest.

**Table 1. Myths about PPP**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Does the PPP reduce public spending, government subsidies, or user charges? | No. The public authority, or users, have to pay for the cost of building and the service whether it is done through a PPP or through the conventional option.   |
| Does a PPP mean that the private company pays for the cost of building?     | No. The cost of constructing the building has to be paid for out of public spending or user charges. The private company just borrows money – but the public have to repay that loan, with interest.  |
| Does a PPP reduce the cost of running the service?                          | No. The cost of running the service is paid for out of public spending or user charges. And empirical evidence shows that private companies are usually no more efficient than the public sector – and a PPP usually costs more to set up and manage. |
| Does it allow the government to spend more money on other services?         | No. The public authority has to spend at least as much on the PPP as it would on the conventional option – so it may even have to cut other services.   |
| Does the PPP reduce borrowing?  | No. The same amount of money has to be borrowed to pay for the construction of the building- or even more, because PPP construction costs are usually higher.   |
| Does the PPP reduce government borrowing?                                   | Yes –if statisticians agree that it can be treated as ‘off-balance sheet’. But there is increasing uncertainty about whether PPPs can be treated as truly private borrowing.  |

(Source: Hall, 2008)

### **5. Exploiting the Public Private Partnership option in Branding the Museum**

The working definition of PPP in Ghana as contained in the policy document is in tandem with what Hyojin (2002, p. 48) describes as “uncontrolled branding”. She defines the term as a process whereby a “nonprofit organization is branded as a result of partnering with another branded organization, which is often a for-profit corporation.” It involves a partnership building of multi-agency steering group in providing a service to customers with a mind of making profit and at the same time considering affordable user charges or tariffs. Under this condition the involvement of the private sector maximizes investments in the facilities so as to make the business customer-oriented thereby focusing on their preferences and tapping into their leisure schedules. There is a high tendency of reviewing the collection policy and increasing visitors’ visual and interactive satisfaction in the case of a museum. Nonetheless, this should be guided by the mission, vision and core values of the museum.

Using the PPP as a litmus test in complementing government effort of improving infrastructural development has proved to be successful. For example, the biggest ultra-modern one-stop retail shopping, West Hills Mall located at Dunkonah near Weija, off the Accra-Cape Coast Highway was borne out of a PPP, and demonstrated the practical role of PPP in boosting up the infrastructural development of the country. The shopping

facility was built out of a joint venture with 60% stake from Delico Property Development Limited, a private investment company, and Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), a public sector entity, contributing 40% respectively. It accommodates two anchor tenants and 63 line shops with more than one-thousand car parking spaces (Bopke, 2014). Many including the President of the state have lauded this development agenda and the replication of the market facility in Achimota, and encouraged other developers to emulate the example set by the partners (Effah, 2014). Similarly, adapting a PPP approach in resuscitating the liveliness of the Ghana National Museum is laudable since the policy applies to all sectors and levels of government. The museum is envisioned to be an effective and focused institution in the preservation of the material cultural heritage of Ghana and West Africa (Dekumwine, 2012). It sits on vast land which can support state-of-the-art iconic museum building to mediate the current problem of exhibition space and also accommodate ultra-modern restaurant, children's museum, guest rooms, conference rooms and car parking spaces. As identified earlier, museums are not solely for making financial profit and will be ideal when funded by governments, donors and other philanthropists. That notwithstanding, in the event of the museum switching to commercial lanes and searching for business partners, Plantalony (2013, p.40) advises that:

“... it will have to provide some evidence of return on investment, which will be of interest from a business perspective. It is imperative, therefore, to be able to quantify the values placed upon the perception of doing business with a recognized non-profit institution in order to increase the overall value of the return on investment as a means of maintaining a business partner's interest. This is especially true if the financial return on investment is only moderate, or cannot be realized for a significant period of time.”

Many critics entertain the fear that, involving a private partner in managing the affairs of the museum could lead to the change of its national identity. This, however, could happen if the vision, mission and core values of establishing the museum are compromised in the partnership agreement. Examining both the strengths and weaknesses of PPP in general terms revealed that it could be helpful in delivering products and services to the people such as recreation centres and other social amenities but could be more costly than the public sector providing them. Having weighed the pros and cons of PPP programmes and considering the current economic standing of the country, we recommend that government should consider the option of PPP in branding the museum to redeem its identity and image.

## 6. Conclusions

Amongst the core mandate of the Ghana National Museum is to identify, acquire, protect and document the country's past and evolving artistic cultures for the benefit of posterity. Museums serve as historic powerhouse that educate and entertain its audience. Museums offer visitors with contextual learning environment that engage and teach them. However, the Ghana National Museum is faced with leadership challenge, financial constraints and state-of-the-art infrastructure. As a result, it is dependent on free donation of artworks to boost up its collections, struggles with exhibition space, and still domiciled in 1957 temporal building. It has not taken enough advantage of the information and communication technologies to promote its exhibits. For instance, it has no virtual museum for online users and has little or no presence on social media to attract more visitors. Little has been done to give it a befitting branding strategy to popularize it globally.

Though the option of PPP has its own negative consequences, it is a better option for branding the museum considering the long neglect in funding by government. We, therefore, recommend that government must consider the PPP option in solving the problems facing the Ghana National Museum. This will help in building state-of-the-art museum with restaurant, car park, children's museum and gift shop. In addition, the leadership of the museum must consider using the Information and communication technologies to increase the presence and popularity of the museum, engage in art licensing, and other avenues possible for income generation. For the purpose of education and research, the museum must link up with the Art Departments in the Ghanaian universities to promote museum research in Ghana. To achieve this, professorial chairs must be established in these universities to take oversight responsibility of publications of books, journals, exhibition catalogues and magazine in relation to museum studies. Increased technological inventions have created a plethora of leisure choices from which to select from. This necessitates strategic branding of the museum in order to draw more visitors. Strategic branding in this context refers any creative way will make visitors to put the museum on their top priority in terms of leisure.

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