Africa’s consumer market: The case of Ghana
Global Immersion Program

Spring 2019 A  
NY Dates: Tuesdays, 5:45-7:15pm  
Week in Ghana: March 16- 23  
Uris Hall 307

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Office hours: by appointment only

TA: XXX

Important: This course requires additional time commitment compared to a typical GIP because students will work in groups on a project with a firm in Ghana. Students will be required to be working on that project before the trip with the project manager in Ghana. In addition to conference calls it also requires additional meetings with the instructor before the trip in order to scope and structure the project.

COURSE OVERVIEW

Africa’s consumer market has large potentials. Africa is the world’s second-fastest growing region – after emerging Asia according to the African Development Bank Report. About half of the growth of the continent’s GDP growth is due to consumer-facing industries. 1.3 billion people live in Africa and the population is expected by the United Nations to increase to 2.5 billion by 2050. The working-class population in Africa is growing by 2.7 percent each year (compared to 1.3 percent in Latin America and 1.2 percent in Southeast Asia). McKinsey projects that by 2025 two-thirds of the estimated 303 million African households will have discretionary income and consumer spending will reach $2.1 trillion.¹ Not surprisingly, many firms and investors try to tap into Africa’s consumer market.

This course tries to train students’ global intelligence, i.e. the understand of specific cultural aspects of different consumer markets by analyzing the potential and challenges of Africa’s consumer markets – in the case of Ghana. Ghana is a West African country with 28 million inhabitants which is expected to be one of the fastest growing country in the world with 8.9 percent projected GDP growth in 2018.

While most of the growth can be attributed to oil and cocoa, its consumer market is also growing fast. It is considered one of the safest and most stable countries in sub-Saharan Africa. But the country shares similar demographic and consumer characteristics than its neighbors: About half of income earners are young (between 16 and 34 years old) and aware and eager to try new products.

The students will work in groups on a project with an organization in Ghana that is consumer facing. Through work with the Ghana partner firm and interviews with consumer in Ghana, the students should develop ideas for solutions to the Ghana partner firms. The firms in Ghana will come from different industry ranging from a Doughnut producer to a computer gaming firm. The projects are time-consuming and students are expected to spend a significant amount of time in NY working on those projects. In-country, students will spend about 3-4 days working with the partner firm and prepare a presentation to the leadership of those companies. As a return to the hard work on these projects, students will get a truly multicultural immersion experience in Africa working on a project.

The course teaches Design Thinking as a tool to understand unmet needs of consumers. Many of the problems of international firms trying to succeed outside their home market is a lack of understanding differences in culture and preferences. Design Thinking puts a large emphasis on understanding consumers – especially in unknown territory. As the CEO of IDEO (one of the most successful design firms) stated in HBR: “Thinking like a designer can transform the way you develop products, services, processes – and even strategies.”

In addition to understanding consumers in Africa, the course should also strengthen student’s cultural intelligence, i.e. their capabilities to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings. Working together with a student team in collaboration with a partner organization in Ghana will allow student to briefly experience the benefits and also challenges of working in cross-cultural environment.

COURSE ORGANIZATION

This course is part of the Global Immersion Program but has some specific features that distinguish the course from most other GIP trips.

Global Immersion Program classes bridge classroom lessons and business practices in another country. These three credit classes meet for half a term in New York prior to a one week visit to the country of focus where students will meet with business executives and government officials while working on team projects. Upon return from the travel portion of the class, students may have one wrap up meeting at Columbia Business School. The 2018-2019 Global Immersion Program fee for most classes is $1850 and provides students with double occupancy lodging, ground transportation and some meals; unless an increased fee is otherwise specified in the course description. It does not cover roundtrip international airfare. Attendance both in New York and in-country and regular participation are a crucial part of the learning experience and as such attendance is mandatory. Students who miss the first class meeting may be removed from the course. No program fee refunds will be given after the add/drop period has closed. Please visit the Chazen Institute website to learn more about the

Global Immersion Program, and visit the Global Immersion Policies page to review policies affecting these courses.

A large part of the class is about a project with a consumer-facing company in Ghana. The partner organization are in different industry, but all will be consumer-facing firms. This will allow the students to observe and talk to consumers in country. 3-4 days during the time in-country will be devoted to the project. The rest of the time in-country are structured in a way to give a deeper view into the culture, political, and business landscape of Ghana.

The sessions in NY will provide the students with the tools to work on their project in Ghana and give some background about Ghana. Importantly, students need to start working on their project with the partner firm in Ghana. This involves understanding the industry context, setting up conference calls with the firm in Ghana in order to understand the partner firm and the consumer basis, and planning the days of project work in Ghana.

The sessions in NY will be comprised of a mixture of lecture, case discussions, simulations, guest speakers and presentations by student teams.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

Requirements for the course are to prepare for, attend class and participate in discussions and exercises in sessions in NY. Even more important is the engagement in the project with the partner organization in Ghana.

*Deliverables* in addition to active participation is group-based:

1. Presentation before trip to class about project scope, completed pre-trip work and detailed schedule for project work.
2. Daily reflection emails to instructor in Ghana about the experience and learning of the day.
3. Presentation to the firm in Ghana about the result of the study.
4. Final deliverable to the firm including revisions after the presentation in Ghana.

This course adheres to Columbia core culture. Students are expected to be:

**Present:**
- On time and present for every session
- Attendance tracked

**Prepared:**
- Complete pre-work needed, expect cold calling
- Bring nameplates and clickers

**Participating:**
- Constructive participation expected and part of grade
- No electronic devices unless explicitly called for by the instructor
METHOD OF EVALUATION

Class preparation, Attendance and Participation 30%
Project deliverable 70%

COURSE OUTLINE FOR NYC SESSIONS

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Timeline NYC Sessions

Session 1: Intro

Content:
This session is to set the stage for the GIP and to introduce the different tools used during the class and the projects. Introduction into 1) Ghana context and Africa’s consumer market, 2) Design Thinking as a tool, 3) Cultural Intelligence

Readings:
XXX TBA: More reading about doing business in Africa and Ghana.

Each team will get a ‘Statement of Work’ for their project and a description of the company. Those project descriptions will have additional readings tailored to the respective industry/company.

Optional Readings:

XXX TBA
Session 2: Design Thinking

Content:
Learn about Design Thinking and the core aspect of observing and understanding consumers. Design Thinking championed by the much celebrated and innovative design firm IDEO is a way of understanding the user, challenging assumptions and redefining problems in order to find alternative solutions and strategies. While Design Thinking is used in innovation process of firms such as Apple, Google, Samsung or GE, its human-centric approach is also extremely useful in deepening the understanding of the culture, norms and preferences of consumers in a new environment.

Readings:
- “IDEO: Human-Centered Service Design” (HBS 615022-PDF-ENG)

Session 3: Cultural Intelligence

Content:
Cultural Intelligence (CQ) has been defined as individuals’ capabilities to function and manage effectively in culturally diverse settings. In this session, we will discuss results from Cultural Orientations Indicator (COI) self-assessment using Cultural Navigator (website that provides content and tools relevant for doing business across cultural borders. With a panel of African students from CBS and the CU, we discuss differences between own culture and culture in different countries in Africa and Ghana in particular.

Readings:

Assignment:
- Go to Cultural Navigator and complete Cultural Orientation Indicator (COI)
- Look at and review content on Cultural Navigator of two countries: 1) a country that you are familiar with and 2) Nigeria (CN doesn’t have Ghana).
- Reflect on most important difference between culture in Nigeria and your own orientation.

Session 4: Future of Africa?

Content:
This session will feature a guest speaker who speaks about the promise and challenges of Africa’s economies.

Guest Speaker:
TBA
Session 5: Project Presentations

Three of the six groups present details about their projects:
1. Background about company
2. Project questions (“What is considered to be success?) and suggested approach
3. Work and insights up to this point
4. Detailed schedule for in-country project work

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PROGRAM IN-COUNTRY

TBD