



ASHESI UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

A Marketing Communications Plan to Increase Brand Awareness of Accents & Art

APPLIED PROJECT

B. Sc. Business Administration

by

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Applied Project Report submitted to the Department of Business Administration, Ashesi University College in partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration

April 2017

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this Applied Project Report is the result of my own original work and no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

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Candidate's Name: Naa Adukwei Quarcoopome

Date:

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this Applied Project were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of Applied Project laid down by Ashesi University College.

Supervisor's Signature:

Supervisor's Name: Gloria Emefa Dako

Date:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am supremely grateful to my friends and family who supported me in various ways through the creation of this report. I am thankful for their constant promptings and reminders.

Next, I would like to thank my supervisor Mrs. Emefa Dako for her feedback which went into the creation of this report.

Lastly, I am greatly thankful to God for giving me the strength, good health and ability to see this project through to completion.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Accents & Art Limited (A&A), is a fully Ghanaian-owned company founded in May 2000 by Constance E. Swaniker. The company specializes in furnishings and décor made primarily out of metal, with wood, glass, and cane accents.

The primary objective of this project was to identify a problem that Accents & Art faced, and go through the necessary steps to find an appropriate solution for it.

Having been in operation for a little over 16 years, A&A has relied mainly on customer referrals to gain business and new customers. This has led to them having relatively low brand awareness thus making it difficult to attract new customers.

Qualitative research was used to find the appropriate and most effective means by which A&A could reach potential clients. Findings from this were then used to craft a solution suited to A&A and its problem. This solution was a marketing communications plan based on the PASTA model which involves Problem Definition, Analyzing, Strategy, Tactics and Action.

When implemented, this marketing communications plan will be able to help A&A increase its brand awareness and thus be able to attract a wider range of new customers.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to Project

The purpose of this project is to craft a marketing communications plan for the Ghanaian furnishings and décor company, Accents & Art (A&A). This marketing communications plan would be used to generate brand awareness in new markets and increase brand awareness in already existing markets. This first chapter provides a complete company profile including what exactly the company does, their vision, mission, short and long-term goals, as well as their values. It also provides a brief description of the Ghanaian manufacturing industry under which Accents & Arts falls. Lastly, it will provide a brief analysis of the external environment in which Accents & Art operates in the form of a PEST analysis.

1.2 Rationale for selecting Accents & Art

Accents & Art (A&A) is a Ghanaian-owned company that deals in furnishings and décor. They are dedicated to providing clients with products that they describe as ‘functional creativity’. This unique term pays homage to the marriage between creative artistry and the everyday functionality of A&A’s pieces.

An interest in Marketing & Communication was intensified after taking the Marketing course in second year and discovering the workings involved in coming up with marketing activities for companies, products, and services to name a few. Fascinated by the processes involved in drawing up marketing strategies and communicating to customers, this led to an internship at a marketing and advertising agency to gain real-world insights into the industry. In a bid to further solidify knowledge in this area and to apply already existing knowledge and skills, this applied project was selected over others.

The selection of A&A was based first and foremost on the fact that they had never made any deliberate attempts to establish a structured marketing strategy for the company however they had survived 16 years in the industry based purely on referrals. Prior to this proposed marketing plan, there has been no written or structured approach to the company's marketing efforts. Conversations with its founder Ms. Constance Swaniker indicated that they now believed that a recent need had arisen due to a reduction in referred customers and projects. According to her viewpoint, due to various changes in the industry and economy, more and more people were turning to cheaper and more readily-available substitutes. Hence, there was now a need for them to actively work at getting their name out there as opposed to sitting back and waiting for work to come to them. Thus, A&A provided not just an appropriate opportunity for the application of existing knowledge and skills, but also a unique and challenging one in that they had no prior marketing strategy and communications plan in place and they were not a start-up but rather an established long-running company.

1.3 Company Profile

Accents & Art Limited (A&A), a fully Ghanaian-owned company, was founded in May 2000 by Constance E. Swaniker as a sole proprietorship. In November of 2009, it was registered as a limited liability company in Ghana. A&A is located in Bubiashie, a suburb of Accra. This location is the site of their office, production facility, and showroom.

Over the past 17 years A&A has focused on creative exploration towards satisfying the Ghanaian market's appetite for quality, practical, and creative one-of-a-kind home and office furnishings. Through its select group of artisans, A&A has

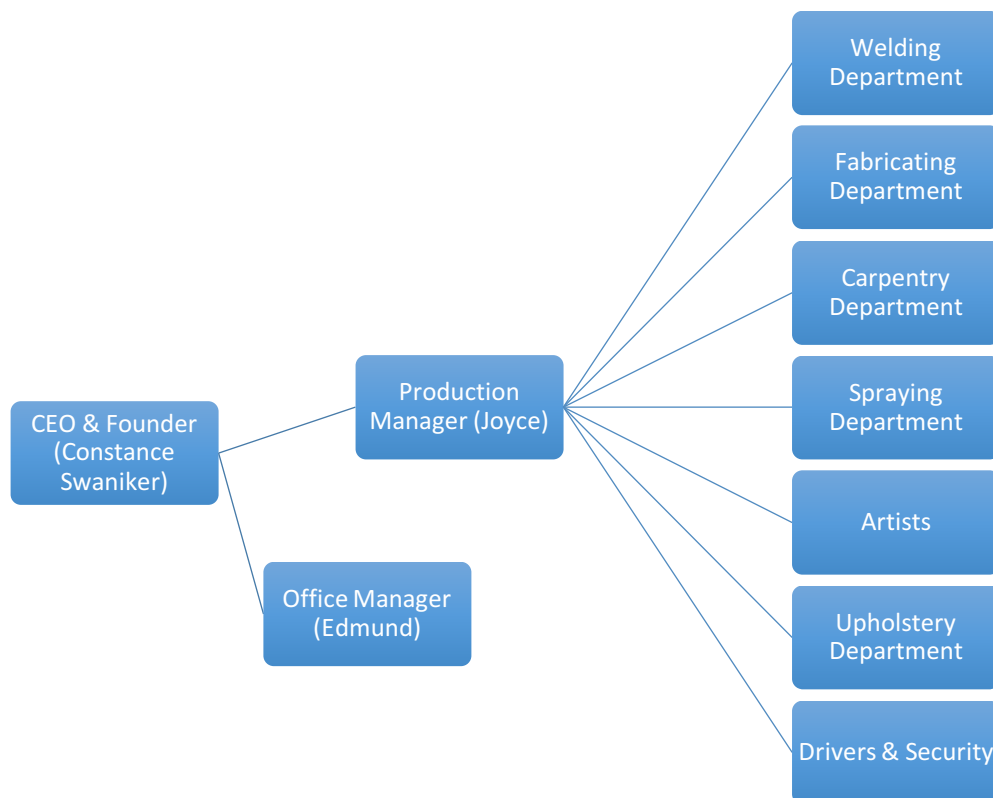
established for itself an image of timeless craftsmanship, with an extensive range of traditional and contemporary designs, and high-end finishes. Coupled with top of the line organization, customer service, and quality, the company has managed to occupy and hold onto a unique position in the furnishings market. Through careful attention to minute details, it ensures each crafted piece possesses a quality look and feel easily comparable to global standards. At A&A, artisans work mainly with wrought iron, and exotic hard woods, incorporating cane, and glass to create unique combinations which promote exclusivity.

A&A provides expertise in the wrought iron and wood furnishing industry whilst meeting the challenging organizational, planning and quality needs of architects, homeowners, interior designers and building & construction professionals. Founded on, and operating on the values of professionalism, workforce safety, on-time delivery, quality of workmanship, and design innovation, A&A has a vision to be acknowledged as a market leader that delights its customers with exceptional quality furnishings and décor with a brand of innovative designs, supported by a motivated and disciplined workforce. Its mission is to make its name signal reliability and quality, thus becoming the premier purveyor of a rare blend of art and functionality in Ghana and beyond. In order for this to happen and to make their vision a reality, they strive to do the following:

- Focus their best attention on all their customers' needs
- Afford uncompromising commitment to the quality of the end product
- Create value for shareholders by creating value for their customers
- Provide immediate access to world-class design and manufacturing

- Cultivate strategic relationships with key component manufacturers and suppliers in order to build a value chain that promotes long term sustainability and global competitiveness
- Consistently develop and monitor efficient, high quality operations through technological and process oriented innovation.

With a thirty-five (35) person permanent workforce comprising mainly skilled artisans (welders, fabricators, carpenters, sprayers, artists and upholsters), A&A operates under a flat organization structure. According to Dr. Rishi Pal (2014), in a paper titled *“Analytical Comparison of Flat and Vertical Organizational Structures”*, a flat organization is one with relatively few layers or just one layer of management. Below is an organizational chart delineating the management structure at A&A:



Lastly, A&A has six (6) product categories – Wrought Iron Railings, Gates & Fencing, Wrought Iron & Wood Residential Furniture, Wrought Iron & Wood Commercial Furniture, Indoor & Outdoor Décor & Accessories, Garden Furniture, and Lighting. Out of these categories they manufacture and sell the following: balustrades; trellises; gates; burglar proofing/security grills; tables (center, patio, side, writing desks, console); chaise lounges; beds; shelving units (sideboards, bookshelves, bar counters, drinks units); seating (sofas, chairs, benches); mirrors; signage; sets (patio, garden, dining); lighting (chandeliers, lanterns, wall lights, lamps); garden sculptures; and accessories (wall décor, butterflies, candle stands, picture frames, painting easels) (Accents & Art, 2016).

1.4 SWOT Analysis

<u>Strengths</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relatively small workforce • Highly skilled artisans • Strong positive brand image • Custom & unique designs • Hands-on & involved CEO • Strong creative & artistic attributes 	<u>Weaknesses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small number of administrative staff • Products are on the pricier side • Location of showroom • No deliberate marketing function or activities • Ineffective existing marketing tools • Overreliance on consumer referrals
<u>Opportunities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New untouched domestic markets • Heightened interest in Made-in-Ghana products • Construction & Real Estate sector growing • Increasing awareness and appreciation for the creative arts scene 	<u>Threats</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New entrants • Alternative products

Strengths

- A relatively small workforce means that each employee feels that they are an integral part of the smooth and successful running of the company. Also, on the side of management this allows for easier managing and means that there is very little evidence of a hierarchical office nature as evidenced by the adoption of a flat organization structure.
- The relatively small workforce compared to the quality and quantity of work that comes out of Accents & Art attests to the superior skill of its craftsmen and artisans.
- A hands-on and involved CEO who understands not just the management aspect but also the technical creation aspect of the business means that she always has her fingers on the pulse at all times and she is not entirely dependent on others.
- The strong creative and artistic attributes of its CEO (a celebrated sculptor and showcased artist) lends A&A's work a unique aspect which is different from what other companies in the industry are doing. In addition, artisans who work under her get the opportunity to learn from her, ensuring that their own work has its own unique flair also.
- The custom and unique designs of A&A means that their work is next to impossible to replicate or substitute easily.
- Currently, A&A has a strong positive brand image in the eyes of its clients who associate the brand with quality craftsmanship, unique designs, on time delivery, reliability, timelessness and durability among others.

Weaknesses

- The small number of A&A's administrative staff means that each person has multiple duties and functions which they perform. This means that some business functions get neglected or pushed to the side for others. Currently, the Head of Productions is also in charge of managing the office. In a conversation with the CEO, she mentioned that because they were a small growing company with limited staff they tend to be overwhelmed and things like a designated marketing personnel are not a priority.
- Due to the nature of the products and the labour-intensive processes involved in creating them, A&A's prices tend to be on the higher side. On average, the lowest a client would spend on a product is GHS 5000.
- A third weakness is the location of its showroom. Bubiashie is a suburb located away from the central hub of activity within the city. This location works perfectly as the site of its factory and workshop, however it is a drawback for its showroom and making their pieces more visible.
- Due to the fact that A&A does not do any deliberate marketing itself, it has an overreliance on consumer referrals. Consumer referrals are one way of attracting new clients however, relying on these alone means that A&A has less control over the information that gets shared about it.

Opportunities

- A&A has the opportunity to target new domestic markets which it currently does not serve. With its wide range of products, A&A has much to offer a number of different markets.

- In recent years, interest in locally produced products has heightened thereby providing A&A with more people they could target. This heightened interest is not just on the side of consumers with the Government of Ghana also introducing the ‘Made in Ghana’ campaign to promote buying locally (Eduku, 2015).
- Another opportunity is the growth currently being exhibited in the construction and real estate sectors. In 2016 it was reported that both sectors were growing year-on-year as a contributor to the economy (Oxford Business Group, 2016). A&A products are used by companies in these sectors thus growth in them would translate to opportunities to sell more of its products.

Threats

- A&A faces threat from new entrants into the market. Other companies may decide to enter into the markets in which A&A sells and this could pose a threat.
- Lastly, A&A faces threats from alternative products which customers might buy over their products. These products might be cheaper or more visible to customers.

1.5 Overview of the external industry (Ghana) - PEST ANALYSIS

Political

Since its transition to a multi-party democratic state in 1992, Ghana has been considered as one of the more stable West African countries (BBC News, 2017).

December 2016 saw a peaceful change in the ruling party from the National Democratic Council (NDC) following a loss in the elections, to the former opposition party, the New Patriotic Party. The stable nature of the Ghanaian political climate provides businesses operating in the country with a peaceful environment in which to conduct their business.

In 2015, the Government of Ghana launched its ‘Made in Ghana’ campaign which was aimed at improving the country’s local manufacturing sector by encouraging Ghanaians to buy made-in-Ghana goods whilst encouraging local manufacturers also, to produce at the highest possible quality (Eduku, 2015). As a follow up, the Ministry of Trade and Industry launched a policy in 2016 encouraging institutions, public ones especially, to acquire locally made goods and services (Citifm online, 2016).

For Accents & Art, this goes a way towards assuring them of government’s commitment towards improving the local manufacturing sector in which they are positioned. Also, campaigns like this protect local industries, and help towards strengthening & sustaining them whilst encouraging local patronage.

Economic

However, on the other hand, Ghana’s economy has since 2013, been faced with a mounting public deficit, a weakening currency, and high inflation which all caused a request for an International Monetary Fund bailout to ensue (BBC News, 2017). Also in addition to these, loose fiscal policy, a steadily depreciating currency and a relative lack of consistent electricity have contributed towards slowing down economic growth. Fiscal targets set by the IMF for Ghana include reductions in fiscal deficits through cutting back on subsidies, decreasing an over-inflated public sector wage bill, strengthening revenue administration, and increasing revenue generation and collection (CIA, 2017).

This could translate to higher taxes and lower industry subsidies for Accents & Art thus making the cost of doing business higher. Economic growth is however expected to increase to 8.7% this year from last year’s expected 5.8% following consolidation of macroeconomic stability and implementation of measures to address the power crisis

(African Development Bank, OECD Development Centre, United Nations Development Programme, 2016).

Social

With regards to the socio-economic environment we find that Ghanaian consumers want products that meet their expectations of quality. To this extent, Ghanaian consumers are not highly ethnocentric in that they will choose price and quality over buying local products solely to support Ghanaian businesses. They will purchase products that offer the best value for the money they spend regardless of which country it comes from (Saffu & Walker, 2006).

As a developing country, Ghana needs consumers who are highly ethnocentric in their attitudes towards locally produced goods. Despite a shift in recent years towards supporting made-in-Ghana products, at the forefront of which is the government's 'Made in Ghana' campaign, Ghanaian consumers' attitudes towards locally produced goods is still not at a stage which will help boost local manufacturing (Bamfo, 2012). From this we can conclude that the Ghanaian consumer will purchase made-in-Ghana products not just on the basis that they are locally-produced, but rather because these local products are comparable in quality and price to foreign-made products.

Technological

The broad Ghanaian manufacturing sector is characterized by prevalent use of obsolete technologies and methods. This means that local producers usually spend more time to produce goods and also are not able to produce in larger quantities (Ghana National Commission for UNESCO, 2010).

1.6 Manufacturing Sector of the Ghanaian Economy

The manufacturing sector of Ghana although underdeveloped, constitutes about 9% of the country's industrial sector which is the second largest sector in Ghana, accounting for about 25% of GDP. (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). The manufacturing sector is a broad one that is dominated by agro-industries. However, it also constitutes the following industries – aluminium smelting, oil refining, cement, food & beverages, textiles, wood processing, glass, and metal processing just to name a few. (Ghana National Commission for UNESCO, 2010).

Ghana's manufacturing sector was described as continuing to shrink by James Asare-Adjei, president of the Association of Ghana Industries (AGI). Some of the factors cited as affecting the decline in industry growth include cedi depreciation, high cost of credit, unfair competition from imports, and high labour costs. The AGI believes that Ghana risks losing its industrial base if government policies and interventions are not quickly introduced to tackle these challenges (Laary, 2015).

Having introduced the purpose of this project, identified the rationale for opting to work with Accents & Art, given a summary of the company and its organizational context, and finally, having discussed the external environment in which the company operates, this report will now move on to discussing the identified problem Accents & Art faces.

CHAPTER 2 – PROJECT NEEDS ANALYSIS

This next chapter will look at revealing the exact problem that Accents & Art faces and which this project is trying to solve. It will also highlight the procedures that were used in identifying this problem, and the importance of finding a solution to the problem.

2.1 Needs Assessment

A needs assessment is typically performed to identify a gap in an organization's current operating processes. This is done through a systematic set of procedures which identify and determine what qualifies as a need, examine its nature and causes, and set prioritized goals for subsequent action. A needs assessment is necessary to guide and justify any decision making, as well as to offer a systematic perspective for decision makers (Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

2.2 Problem Statement

Accents & Art does not currently have a structured approach to its marketing efforts to attract new clients. For the past 16 years it has attracted clients mainly through referrals and its clientele is made up mostly of retained or returning clients. In recent years they feel that work gained through referrals have slowed down due to economic conditions in the country coupled with the rise of cheaper substitutes to their products. For this reason, they believe that they need to become more proactive and intentional in their marketing efforts and in getting their name out there in order to attract new clients.

Real Life Anecdotes

In order to get an idea of A&A's reach in the furnishings and décor industry, informal conversations with some potential clients and competitors comprising a mix of

real estate developers, construction firms, furniture companies, architects, interior designers, and private homeowners (who prefer to remain anonymous). Their answers to whether or not they had heard about A&A was usually yes, but only a small percentage could say exactly what it is they did. Those who did know A&A either knew the owner personally or had come into contact with their work. The last category of respondents had a vague recollection of the name Accents & Art.

When asked how it was they procured furnishings and décor for their developments, most companies stated that they either imported products since they were cheaper, outsourced that entire function, or had long-lasting working relationships with certain companies. These companies very rarely, if ever, went out themselves to source products such as balustrades, furniture, gates or burglar proofing among others. Producers of such items rather approached them and pitched their services.

On the part of private homeowners however, when building or redecorating, they relied on recommendations from family, friends and colleagues. They also tended to visit reputable showrooms such as Casa Trasacco, Orca Deco, and Palace Hypermarket for items such as furniture and decorative pieces. Items such as railings, balustrades, and gates were left to their builders or architects to source based on their specifications and wants.

Speaking to existing clients also, a recurring theme was that they had been referred to Accents & Art by friends, colleagues, business associates or people close to or around them. Another way they had found A&A was by coming into contact with their work and making requests from the owners of said works. These responses from potential

and existing clients further proved that Accents & Art has low brand awareness amid potential clients and, its existing clients found the company through referrals.

2.3 Relevance of the Project

A structured marketing communications plan is necessary to help A&A put its brand out there for more potential clients to be able to readily identify them. It would help them to identify exactly who their customers are, the best way to reach them and what exactly it is they want them to know about A&A and its work. A marketing communications plan will help A&A switch strategies from depending on referrals and waiting for people to come to them, to proactively putting themselves and their brand out there to be able to reach more people.

As mentioned, a structured communications plan will also help them to control the exact message and brand image they want potential clients to have about them. Not to say that there is anything wrong with referrals, but with that method it is harder for A&A to control what messages about its brand are going around and with that, some key things pertaining to its brand image may be lost. An actual example of this could be how A&A's pricing is referred to amongst existing and potential clients. There is the tendency for people to describe A&A as being pricey without talking about how superior quality raw materials, handcrafting and uniqueness affect their pricing strategy. Thus, a structured marketing communications plan would help A&A explicitly identify who they want to target, how to reach them, and what exactly they want to tell them about A&A.

2.4 Procedures used in needs assessment

In performing the needs assessment, the first procedure used was informal conversational interviews (sometimes termed unstructured interviews) with potential and

existing clients, possible alternatives and Accents & Art itself. In addition to A&A, twenty (20) other companies (real estate developers, construction, furniture, furnishings, restaurants & a club), architects, interior designers, and private home owners were spoken to. These twenty (20) parties were selected because they were either existing or potential clients of A&A, or their products could be classified as alternatives to what A&A has to offer.

These parties were selected based on a purposive sampling method. This is a non-probability sampling method whereby participants are deliberately chosen because of qualities they possess, in addition to being available and willing to participate. Participants are selected by virtue of knowledge or experience in the research area (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Some of the characteristics of participants to this research were: experience in the construction, manufacturing, or design industry; prior experience with Accents & Art; and individuals who had recently built homes or were in the process of doing so. This technique was chosen in order to gain inside knowledge on what A&A's potential and existing clients look out for in terms of marketing, how it is they gain information, and on what basis do they take decisions on furnishings and décor.

Interviews with Accents & Art were set up in order to gain a better understanding of the company, its history and operations so far, the industries it operates in, its competitors, existing clients, and what exactly their expected outcome for this project was. Also, they were used to garner a clear understanding of the problem they faced, and what their internal viewpoint was.

Unstructured Interviews

Informal conversational interviews (Unstructured interviews) were selected over structured interviews because they help expose a researcher to unanticipated and unexpected themes. This interview structure can be very useful in research into how people seek and use information, especially when attempting to find a pattern which is what this project seeks to do concerning finding a way to get information about A&A out to potential clients. With unstructured interviews, the researcher does not come to the interview with a predefined set of questions but rather has conversations with interviewees about the research topic and generates further questions in response to the interviewees' narration. To achieve a certain level of consistency across different interview sessions, the structure of the interviews were loosely guided by an aide memoire – a broad guide of topic issues to be discussed as opposed to actual questions to be asked (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009).

This was seen as necessary due to the unique nature of A&A's position compared to other furnishings & décor firms in the industry. Falling between the manufacturing and creative arts industry, A&A has a wide range of products and diverse clients ranging from corporate bodies, to hospitality firms, the government, schools, churches, and private homeowners.

Internet Research

Secondly, internet research was used as another means of gathering information on Accents & Art. This part of the research process was used to gather further information on the company itself, what kind of image it had out there based on what people were putting up about it and lastly, to assess the extent of its online presence.

To this extent, information was gathered from both their website, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook page. In determining the extent of its online presence, the conclusion was that their website had more information and was better utilized than both their Facebook and Twitter pages. However, in the time taken to prepare this report, it was noticed that activity on their Facebook and Twitter pages had noticeably picked up (especially in the month of March) with the hiring of a social media handler. Their Instagram account was however dormant and heavily underutilized with only two posts from 2016, and no description of what the company does.

This process also dug up the fact that A&A and its founder (Constance Swaniker) specifically, had been involved with a number of forums, workshops, panels, and summits. Lastly, based on reviews posted online it was determined that A&A did indeed have a positive brand image with people actively posting positive reviews and feedback about the work that A&A showcased.

2.5 Findings from Potential and Existing Clients & Internet Research

- I. People who knew about Accents & Arts did so because they had come into personal contact with its work or founder, knew somebody who had referred them, or owned some of their work, and not through any deliberate marketing efforts by A&A. This was taken to mean that the company had a moderate brand awareness in the general public.
- II. For people who had maybe heard the name Accents & Art somewhere, there was a vague understanding or recollection of what exactly the company did. This was also understood as A&A having moderately low brand recall in the minds of potential clients thus further indicating

- III. Majority of people who were not clients but knew exactly what A&A did, classified the company as being expensive without mentioning/considering the quality of the work, its artisanal nature and the very strong uniqueness of its products.
- IV. Construction firms and real estate developers did not go out to source furnishings rather, companies came to them to pitch their ideas and products.
- V. Private homeowners relied on recommendations from friends and family, or typically visited showrooms for convenience and speed. This is when they look for furnishings & décor items themselves.
- VI. Builders and architects have some considerable influence over purchasing decisions of private homeowners.
- VII. Sufficient information about Accents & Art and its portfolio can be found on its website.
- VIII. Even though it has an online presence and has started being more active, more can be done to leverage this presence to effectively attract new clients and to turn the positive reviews on its page into actual orders.

CHAPTER 3 – MASTERY OF SUBJECT MATTER

Now that the problems A&A face have been identified and spelt out, this next chapter will provide an in-depth understanding of brand awareness, its importance to a company and how a marketing communications plan can increase brand awareness. This will be done through a review of studied literature and published articles. In addition to these, the chapter will also identify possible frameworks and models that could be used in finding a solution and designing a tool that would be used by Accents & Art.

3.1 Brand Awareness

Keller (1993) defines brand awareness as the first essential element of the entire brand knowledge structure in the minds of consumers, which reflects their capability to identify a brand under varied conditions – the likelihood that a brand will come to the mind of a consumer and how easy it does so. Tara Gustafson and Brian Chabot in their article '*Brand Awareness*' for the Cornell Maple Bulletin also simply defined brand awareness as “how aware existing and potential customers are of your business and its products” (Gustafson & Chabot, 2007). It is also described as the lowest level of brand recall. Brand awareness is the starting point of the brand recall scale, extending from brand awareness to brand recognition, followed by brand recall, and finally top-of-mind awareness whereby, unaided, consumers recall a brand first. (Koniewski, 2012).

Another view of brand awareness is to see it as encompassing both brand recognition and recall. Brand awareness according to Keller (1993), consists of both (i) brand recognition –the ability of consumers to confirm having seen or heard about the brand before and (ii) brand recall – which is the ability of consumers to retrieve the brand from memory when confronted with the product category, the needs fulfilled by that

product category, the specific use of the product, or some other cue. Brand awareness is related to the strength of a brand's presence in the memory of consumers as reflected by their ability to identify the brand under a variety of conditions.

Brand awareness can be further classified according to (i) depth – the probability that a brand can be recognized or recalled easily and (ii) breadth – the varied purchase and consumption circumstances in which the brand easily comes to the mind of consumers (Tuominen, 1999). From the above definitions, it can be surmised that brand awareness refers to consumers' ability to recognize or recall a particular brand, its exact use, and the product category in which it falls.

Brand awareness should be taken seriously by companies since it is a dominant factor in consumer purchasing choices and develops into consumer brand loyalty when coupled with high consumer satisfaction levels (Koniewski, 2012). Gustafson & Chabot (2007) further back this up by stating that there are few things more worthwhile to a firm than investing time and resources in increasing their brand awareness. This is due to the fact that brand awareness plays a major role in consumer purchasing decisions, and in reality, the more aware consumers are of a brand and its product, the more likely they are to make an initial purchase and to keep purchasing if they are satisfied. This is further supported by Moisescu (2009) in his research article '*The Importance of Brand Awareness in Consumers' Buying Decision and Perceived Risk Assessment*' where he finds that brand awareness does in fact represent a crucial factor for a brand to be included in the consideration set when a consumer is going through the buying process. This is because most consumers prefer buying brands that they are familiar with, or at least have heard of.

3.2 Marketing Communications Plan

The set of associations and facts consumers have about a particular brand is partially as a direct result of the firm's deliberate marketing activities. Other factors beyond the firm's direct control such as reviews and recommendations by other consumers also have an effect (Koniewski, 2012). Keller (2007) manages to trace brand awareness back to marketing communications activities when he states that "from a customer-based brand equity perspective, marketing communications activities contribute to brand equity and drive sales in many ways. In addition to creating brand awareness, he also associates marketing communications activities with, linking brand image in the minds of consumers with the right associations desired by companies, eliciting positive brand judgments, and facilitating a stronger consumer-brand connection. He further adds on to this when he says that marketing communications can play a critical role in making sure that the right knowledge structures exist in the minds of existing or prospective clients so that they respond positively to the firm's marketing activities (Keller K. , 2009).

In effect, building brand awareness begins with getting specific messages about the brand, out to the consumer. The means by which these messages get from a company to consumers is through a marketing communications activities. Thus, the question of what marketing communications are, needs to be addressed next.

Keller (2009) describes these as the various means by which firms endeavor to inform, convince, and remind consumers about their brands and associated products, either directly or indirectly. He further describes them as being representative of the company and its brands' voice and being the means by which a company can start a

dialogue and build relationships with and among consumers. Further backing this, the Chartered Institute of Marketing (2009) simply defines marketing communications as “the tools a company uses to deliver a range of promotional messages to its target markets”. It goes on to point out that the aim of marketing communications is to provide consumers with information in a way that will encourage a positive (buying) response.

According to Bennett (1995), and Kotler and Keller (2009), there are eight (8) major modes of communication within the marketing communications mix which can be classified as either: mass media types – advertising, sales promotion, events & experiences, and public relations and publicity; or personal modes – direct marketing, interactive marketing, word-of-mouth marketing, and personal selling.

Therefore, a marketing communications plan is a systematic plan drawn up to communicate a firm’s marketing messages to a targeted audience. The BusinessDictionary (2017) defines it as a “step-by-step process to ensure that the intended message is received, understood, and acted upon by the recipient”. This process typically involves (i) determining your objectives – what it is you want the activities in the plan to achieve, (ii) choosing the audience – who are the messages intended for, and (iii) selecting the appropriate channel(s) to reach them – where and what are they most likely to pay attention to, what are they influenced by, just to name a few considerations.

3.3 Frameworks & Models

SOSTAC Model

The first planning framework to be discussed is the SOSTAC marketing model developed in the 1990s by PR Smith. This has been described as a straightforward model that considers all relevant factors, and goes through a logical step-by-step process, to

build a marketing plan. It does this in six-steps that waylay the need to go into excessive and sometimes expensive detail (BSA Marketing, 2014).

The name SOSTAC is an acronym for the six steps that comprise the model shown in the diagram below:



Model 1 (SOSTAC) (a detailed infographic can be found under Fig. 2 in the appendix)

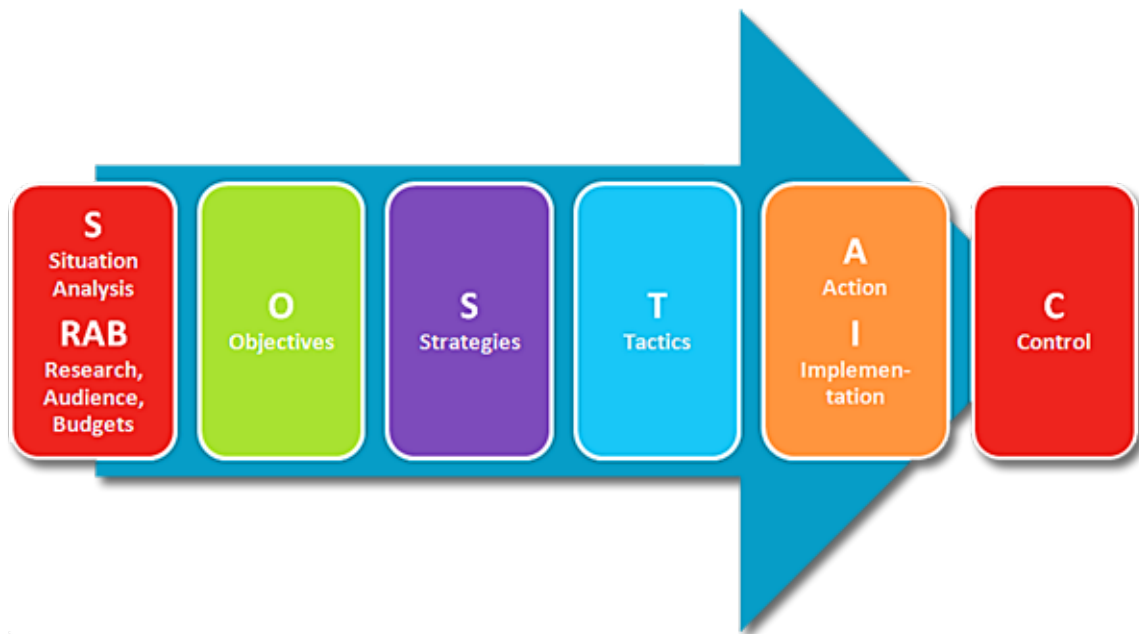
The first step which is the Situation Analysis looks at where the company is currently. The next step – Objectives, looks at where it is the company aims to be. The third (3rd) step Strategy asks how the company is going to get to its targets (the bigger picture). The fourth, Tactics, looks at exactly how the company will achieve its objectives. Fifth is Actions, which answers ‘who is doing what and when?’. Finally, Control looks at how performance will be monitored and measured (Smith, 2016).

RABOSTIC Model

The IMC RABOSTIC Planning Model is a framework designed to be used in creating an Integrated Marketing Plan. RABOSTIC, created by David Pickton and

Amanda Broderick, is an acronym which stands for **R**esearch (& Analysis), **A**udiences, **B**udget, **O**bjectives, **S**trategy, **T**actics, **I**mplementation and **C**ontrol.

The first step of this model (Research & Analysis) looks at performing market and consumer analysis on which to base decision making when creating an IMC plan. The second step (Audiences) considers segmentation, targeting, and position of the target audience. The third (Budget) looks at how budgets can be set, and how setting a budget provides resources for communication activities. The fourth step (Objectives) looks at what it is a company wants to achieve. Strategy broadly looks at how they will achieve their objectives and finally, Tactics details how each of the above strategies could be implemented. The model is shown in the diagram below:



Model 2 (RABOSTIC)

PASTA Model

The third and final model to be discussed is the PASTA model. This five – step PASTA model designed by Theo Zweers, simplifies the various steps which are used to

develop an operational marketing communications plan. The diagram below outlines the steps involved:



Model 3 (PASTA)

The PASTA model begins with a clear definition of the problem which the plan is seeking to solve. This is followed by analyzing the internal and external environment. This consists of an analysis of the market and the environment in which the firm is operating in. In addition to this the organization has to be examined internally. The third step, 'Strategy', is a comprehensive term which encompasses the following building blocks target group, objectives, proposition, and positioning. The next comprehensive term 'Tactics' is used to decide which devices, techniques, and tools will be used in the communications plan. This term thus encompasses the communication tools and devices (channels) to be used as well as techniques if any. The last step in this logical model is

the 'Action' step. This stage looks at creating a schedule, drawing up a budget, and assigning responsibilities to the various stakeholders (Cunningham Web Solutions , 2016).

Through reviews of studied literature and published articles, we have been able to determine that brand awareness – the consumers' ability to recognize or recall a particular brand, its exact use, and the product category in which it falls, is important to companies since it is a direct influencing factor on consumer purchasing decisions. In focusing resources on establishing, increasing, and retaining brand awareness, the medium available to firms is the marketing communications plan. This is a structured approach by which firms send out chosen messages about themselves and their brand(s) to targeted audiences. Finally, in drawing up a marketing communications plan, there are a number of frameworks and models available to guide the planning process. Examples of these include the SOSTAC, RABOSTIC, and PASTA models. The next step to be addressed in the consequent chapter is to select a model which can be adapted to fit the unique problem faced by Accents & Art, and to develop a solution based on this.

CHAPTER 4 – THE SOLUTION

This next chapter will outline the exact solution developed to solve Accents & Art's problem. It will first talk about what the proposed solution is based on the information in the previous chapter, outline why this solution was chosen and how it is intended to help and Accents & Art. What this chapter also seeks to do is to practically apply the developed solution in order to help gain a clearer understanding of how it will work and be used.

4.1 Proposed Solution

At the start of this project, it was identified that Accents & Art did not currently have a structured approach to its marketing efforts to attract new clients. The purpose of this report was to develop a solution that could help increase its brand awareness thereby helping them to attract new clients. To this end, the proposed solution is a marketing communications plan which is based on the aforementioned PASTA model and the steps of which can be found in the diagram below:



In the subsequent sections of this chapter the model, starting from strategy, would be discussed. This is because the first two steps constituting problem definition and analysis of the internal organization and external market have already been addressed in the Introductory (first) and Needs Assessment (second) chapters. The PASTA model was selected since it is a simpler model and has relatively fewer steps as compared to both the SOSTAC and RABOSTIC models. Being a relatively small company with few administrative staff and no actual marketing department, A&A would need a marketing plan that is simple enough to implement, and that fits easily into the existing system of things without disrupting job roles or becoming an added burden to existing staff. Also, it is relatively more practical than the other two models.

4.2 Strategy: Objectives, Positioning, Proposition

Objectives

In identifying and setting out objectives for what A&A wishes to achieve with this plan, they needed to be considered as SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Bound.

The objectives of the subsequent solution are:

- To increase Accent & Art's brand awareness among high-income home owners, building & construction companies, architects, and interior designers by 10%, by the end of 2017.
- To have Accents & Art pieces displayed in two other showrooms other than theirs by January 2018.

Positioning

Brand positioning can broadly be defined as the target consumer's reasons for purchasing your brand out of preference, over others. Brand positioning can be further defined as an activity whereby a company creates a brand offer in such a way that it occupies a unique and distinct place and value in the minds of targeted consumers (Management Study Guide, 2016). Brand positioning is key to brand awareness in that it helps consumers' ability to easily recognize and eventually recall Accents & Art when they think of furnishings and décor. A crafted sample positioning statement for Accents & Art could be:

- “Accents & Art (A&A) is dedicated to providing clients with unique, handcrafted and timeless, home and office furnishings, and décor pieces. Crafted from the highest quality metal, and accented by wood, glass, and cane, we introduce to you ‘functional creativity’ – a rare marriage between creative artistry and everyday functionality.”

Proposition

A brand's proposition refers to “the aggregate offer which can be separated into product, price, distribution (channel) and the communicative value of the offer (Cunningham Web Solutions , 2016). In the case of A&A, its brand proposition would be centered on communicating the value of its products, and the unique benefits they convey.

A sample recurring theme through its communication messages would be the idea of “functional creativity”. These messages would be centered on A&A's mission statement, a part of which states that they intend to become the premier purveyor of a rare

blend of art and functionality in Ghana and beyond. Another theme that its communication messages could be based on are its values and vision. The following are sample messages which could be communicated:

- At Accents & Art, we promise to deliver exceptional quality furnishings and décor on time.
- Accents & Art, the home of unique designs, handmade pieces, and timeless quality.

4.3 Tactics

This next section identifies the various mediums by which Accents & Art intends to reach its targeted audience.

- Starting with social media, I believe Facebook represents the most effective form based on majority of Accents & Art's current clientele. A strong Facebook presence coupled with its website which provides more than adequate information are all Accents & Art needs if it decides to focus on its current target market only. However, that is not to say that it should delete its Instagram and Twitter accounts. These can be kept and used as online portfolios. They could be useful for secondary target audiences who may not purchase products themselves but can influence the purchasing decisions of the primary targeted audience. This tactic will achieve the objective of increasing Accents & Art's brand awareness by ensuring that a portfolio of its products is out there and easily accessible. In executing this, A&A could rely on the use of a content calendar. This is a tool used by digital marketers to plan and lay out the different content it intends to put online and the frequency with which they will do so (Griffith, 2015). This content

calendar will make it easier for different administrative staff to be able to take part in the digital marketing.

- The second tactic would be for A&A to continue employing word-of-mouth marketing. Word-of-mouth marketing is people-to-people in either oral, written or electronic communications. Currently, A&A uses the oral medium and this has given them a strong brand image in the eyes of existing customers and this can be leveraged in attracting new clients. For example, A&A could encourage its existing clients to leave reviews on their website. This could also double as a means of leveraging its current brand image to improve its social media presence. In addition to the oral aspect, they could also employ written word-of-mouth marketing by using brochures. These brochures would be filled with images of Accents & Art's work, some of their existing clients, and also the benefits and experiences of purchasing or using their products.
- The third medium A&A can use is personal selling whereby they set-up face-to-face interactions with prospective buyers where they A&A, pitch their services in a bid to procure orders and contracts. This medium can be used to target potential building & construction clients, and real estate developers. From market research conducted, this group of the target population do not go out to actively search for products of this nature but rather, companies go to them to pitch their products and sell themselves.
- The next tactic to be employed would be Business-to-Business marketing. Commonly referred to a B2B, it is the marketing of products to businesses or other organizations instead of consumers (Study.com, 2015). In the case of A&A

they would be marketing to businesses to display their (A&A's) products or to outright buy and resell in their own spaces. Identified businesses which could be targeted by this tactic are Casa Trassaco, La Maison, and Lifestyle Gallery to name a few. Not only will this make A&A products more visible and easier to find, it would also go a way towards solving the problem of the location of A&A's showroom which came up in the research.

4.4 Action Plan

ACTIVITY	Description	PERSON RESPONSIBLE
Increasing Online Presence (with the aid of a content calendar)	This will be done through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and the Official Website	Office manager/newly hired social media marketer
Designing, Printing & Distribution of Brochures	This would be outsourced to an external design and printing agency, preferably an Advertising agency	External ad agency
In-person pitches to targeted companies & individuals	Using contract staff to reach out to select potential clients such as architects, interior designers, construction companies	External Marketing and Sales team
Approaching external showrooms to carry A&A products	In order to make A&A pieces more visible, they will be stocked at showrooms such as La Maison & Casa Trasacco which are at the center of activity in the city	External marketing & Sales team

CHAPTER 5 – RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Recommendations

- The first would be to hire staff to aid with the external marketing efforts and running around on a commission basis. This would mean that they would be paid a percentage or flat fee based on how much work they manage to pull in. Also, to protect against intermediary staff trying to redirect work to themselves, A&A could get them to sign contracts which hold them liable to any breaches.
- The second recommendation would be to look at the possibility of identifying new markets to enter into. There is a general consensus within the country that the construction and housing bubble will soon burst. In order to not be negatively affected should that happen, A&A can look into identifying entirely new markets which it can serve. Its product portfolio means that it has a wide range of products which can be used to cultivate new markets. Also, the slowdown in orders could be as a result of stagnation in the markets which A&A serves. These markets could possibly have reached maturity thus there is no more opportunity for growth. The recommended tools to do this are Porter's Five (5) Forces, and the drawing of a Strategic Group Map to identify under-served areas and gaps.

5.2 Conclusion

This project was intended to provide Accents & Art with a marketing communications plan which would be used to increase brand awareness and help to attract new customers. This solution developed based on the PASTA model will thus be used as a guide by Accents & Art in starting to deliberately market its products and services.

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APPENDIX SOSTAC Framework

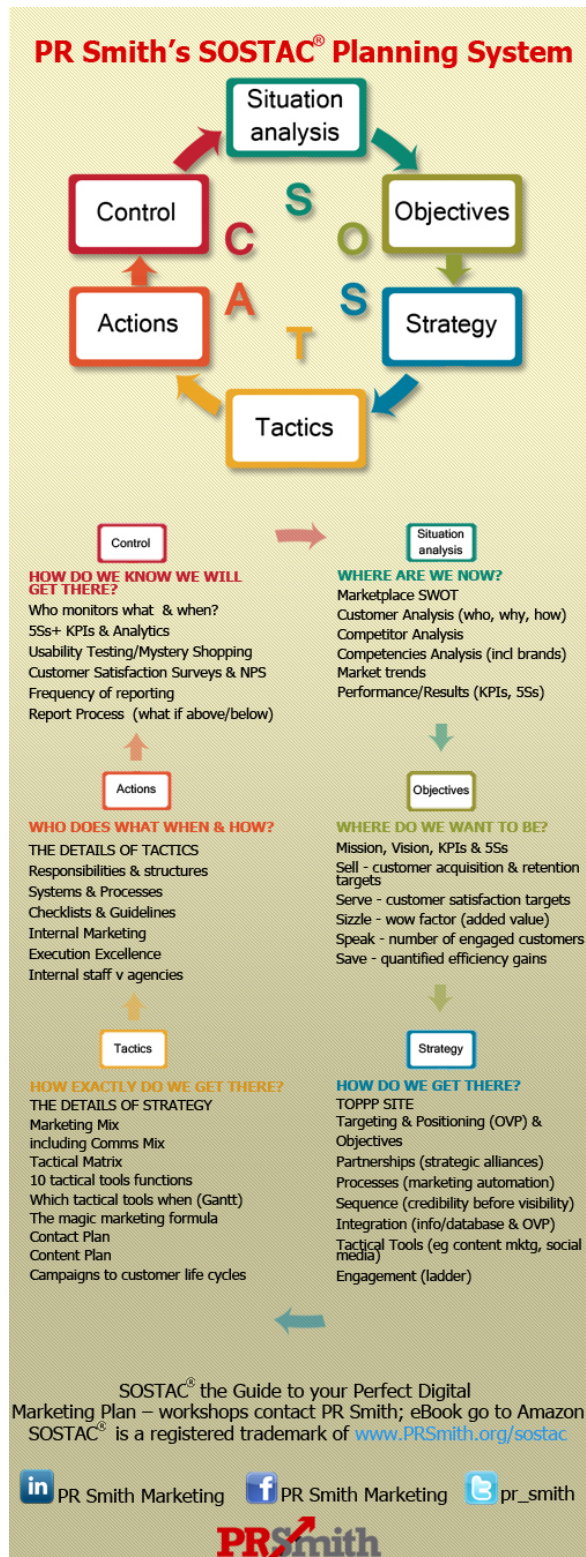


Fig. 1.

source: (Smith, 2016)