



THE GHANAIAAN NETWORK

PHASE 1 – CONCEPT REPORT

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29 November 2015

CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	0
INTRODUCTION.....	1
THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE UGLY	3
AN ANALYSIS OF COGNATE AND NON-COGNATE SITES	5
CASE STUDY: DIVINE CHOCOLATE.....	8
SWOT ANALYSIS.....	12
A DISCUSSION ON REVENUE GENERATION/ALTERNATIVE VALUE THIS PROJECT WILL DELIVER	13
CONCLUSION.....	14
BIBLIOGRAPHY & REFERENCES.....	15

INTRODUCTION

I guess what attracted me to this project was the idea that I could find out more about Ghana, embark on a heritage quest (Henley, 2015). Most importantly highlight Ghanaian culture in London, focusing on the 'My London'/diaspora part of the market.

My Twitter description I hope, encapsulates the scope of this project as well as elicit curiosity:

The Ghanaian Network

Helping the discerning user discover, taste and enjoy the variety of Ghanaian culture on offer in London.

This leads me to 'the problem', Ghanaian culture is relatively new in London compared to Asian, West Indian and Chinese cultures so one would be hard pressed to describe what it is exactly.

So my solution is to create a website that would inform the user about Ghanaian culture, namely traditions and customs, provide translations and events so that users (myself included) do not have to visit 2-4 websites to access this information.

As a Value Proposition I will act as tour guide leading the way, sometimes allowing the user a chance to play host and interact with other users in the process.

Here's my manifesto. My hope is that it will encourage me throughout the project.

Manifesto

- **I believe** that Ghanaian culture has a lot to offer.
- **I want to live in a world** where sharing information is encouraged, developed and supported.
- **This is what I know for sure** – we can learn a lot from culture.
- **To trust** my instinct.
- **I will not** be afraid to ask for help.
- **I promise** to manage my time wisely.

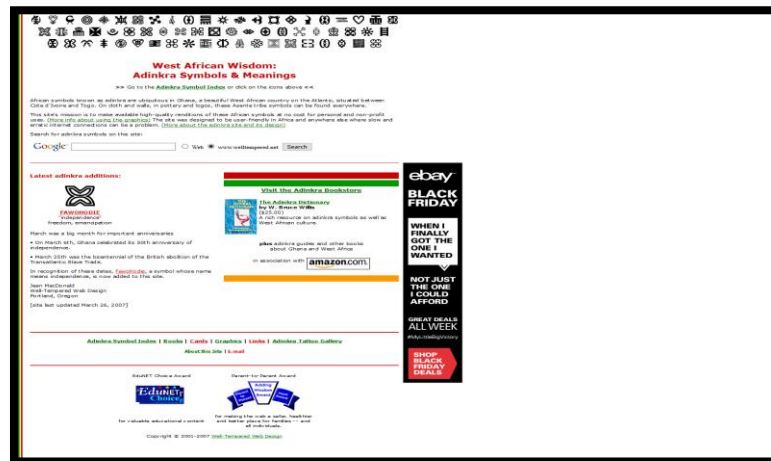
THE GOOD THE BAD AND THE UGLY

My initial thoughts on the existing web landscape were not good.

I suppose I was surprised at how little quality control existed.



My concerns were raised by the perpetual lack of current up-to-date information, giving websites an abandoned look.



The list goes on, poor grammar; the awful pictures used seemed to describe a Ghana of yesteryear and one that I didn't recognise.

In the majority of cases page rendering was extremely slow, some sites failed to load or open altogether triggering security warnings on my laptop!

And the ‘good’ in all this? I felt encouraged that web technologies such as WordPress are being slowly introduced.

So what would I do differently?

- **Use of colour** - unless I’m displaying the Ghanaian flag I would avoid using red, gold and green. It reeks of lack of creativity and I know that’s definitely not true of Ghanaians, they are the most skillful people that I know.
- **Use of text** – less is definitely more.
- **Pictures** – Optimisation! Optimisation! Optimisation!
- **Layout** – is key in my fight to redesign this area. I want to invite the user to visit my website, not put them off.
- **Performance** – I’m willing to put my knowledge and skills to the test and prepared to research appropriate applications and software.
- **Visuals** – in general this has to be broadened to include my third stakeholder: non-Ghanaians (Watson, 2015) . Again video/audio quality has to be improved and appropriate translations provided.

AN ANALYSIS OF COGNATE AND NON-COGNATE SITES

Cognate Sites:

www.adanwomase.com

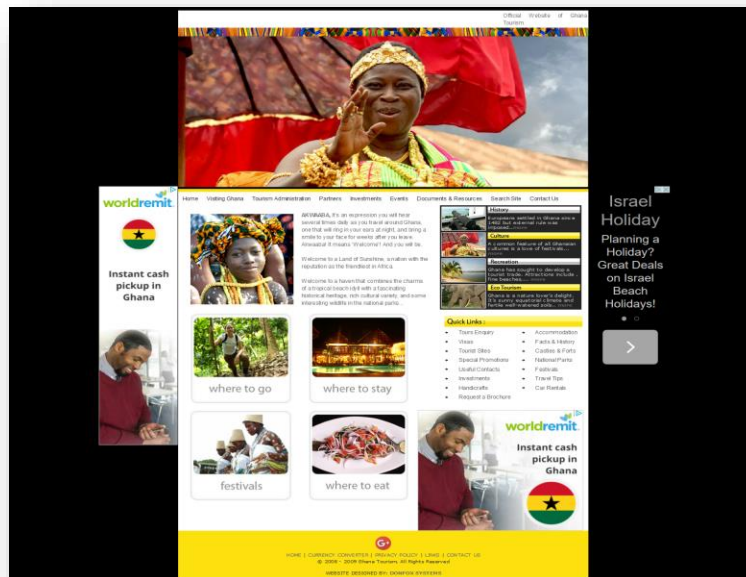
www.adinkra.org

www.touringghana.com

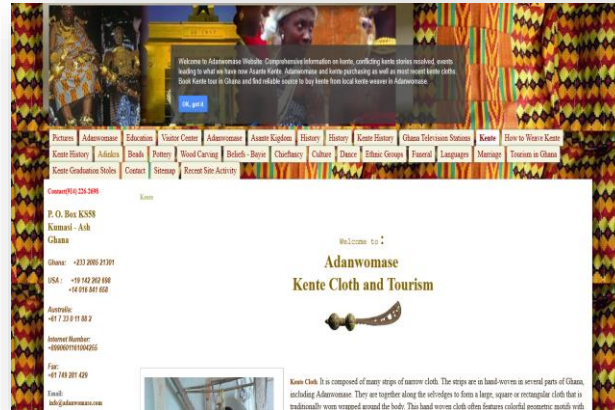
www.afumnathan.wordpress.com

I discovered that these sites were mainly curated by Ghanaians for Ghanaians who were mostly based in Ghana or outside the UK.

A lot tended to offer one-stop solutions to travellers seeking a brief rundown of the country. I'm sad to say the same information kept popping up as if nothing new happens in Ghana.



As the user is assumed to be Ghanaian hardly any custom details were explained.



Adanwomase focused on Kente cloth and used it a lot in the design of the site, giving it a very dated feel. It falls prey to all the 'ugly' I mentioned before (see previous section) so it desperately needs a revamp, could benefit from SEO and most importantly stronger information architecture. It crams way too much onto its homepage which can be overwhelming for the user.

Non-Cognate Sites:

www.thepennnetwork.org.uk

www.proskillconsulting.com

www.ibdesignsvi.com

www.ghanaemberlin.de

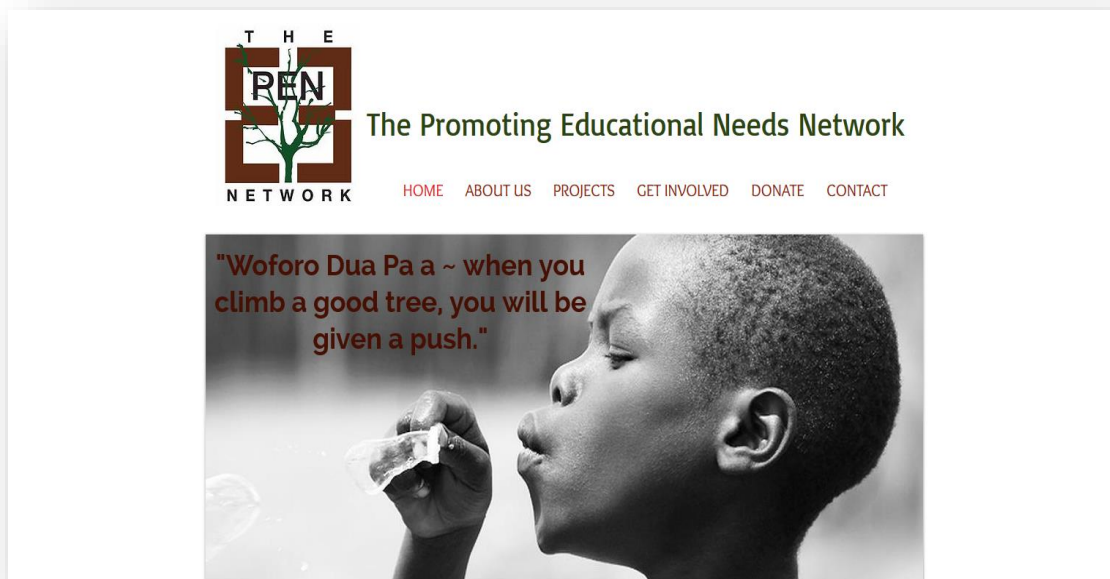
Now, it gets interesting.

These sites tended to be created by individuals or organisations outside of Ghana. They involve learning, business, charities, community and health sectors.

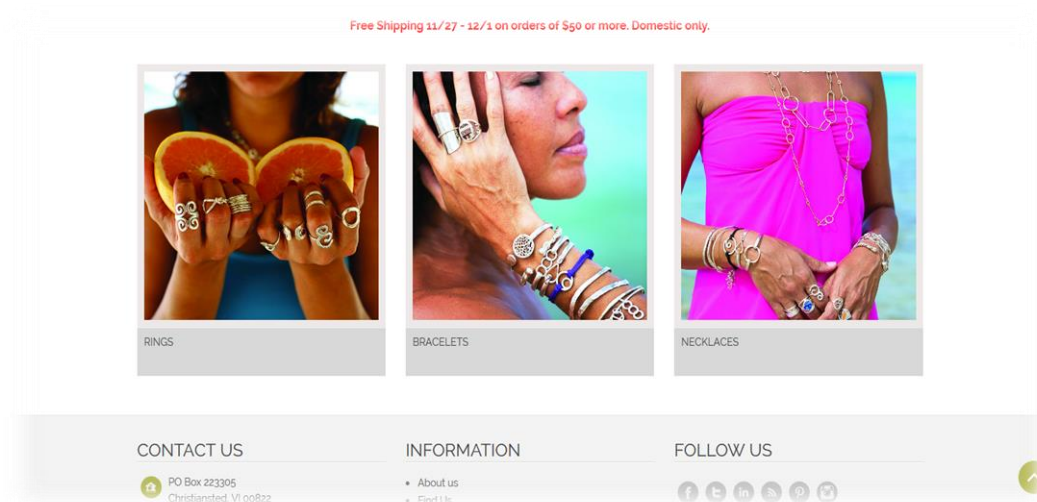


The sites generally come across better, clean fresh images and different colour schemes were used. I guess my third stakeholder is taking matters into their own hands.

Taking a brief look at embassy websites and the 'bad' rears its head again. Have a look at the Ghanaian Embassy in Berlin's website.



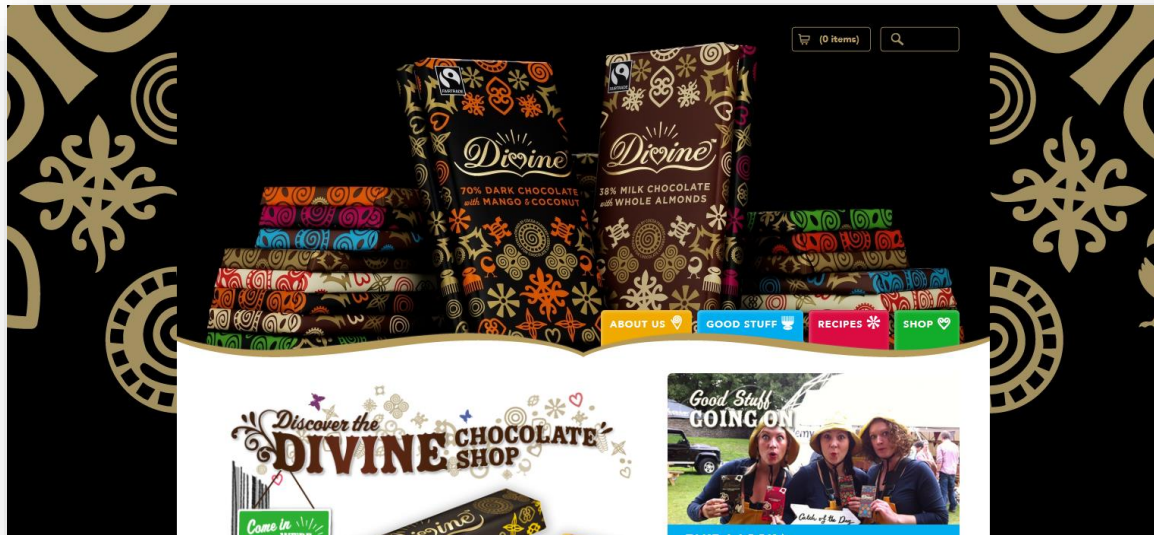
One site in particular, ibdesigns, branches into tribal fashion jewellery and has a great e-commerce site to boot.



CASE STUDY: DIVINE CHOCOLATE

Taking of e-commerce leads nicely to my case study: Divine Chocolate.

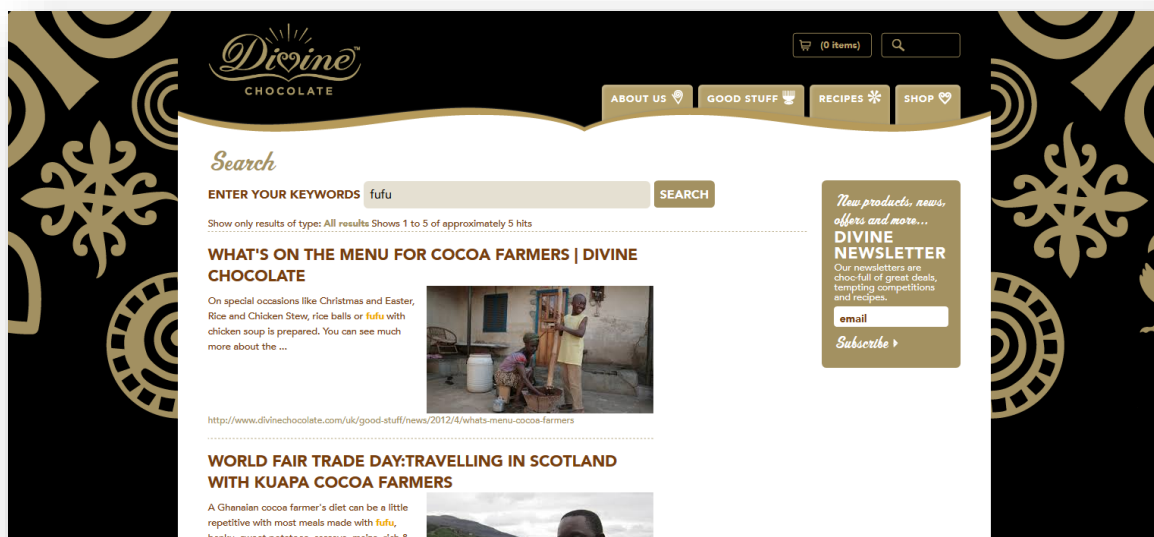
www.divinechocolate.com/uk



- **Business** – clearly the aim of this website is to entice the user to buy chocolate. But its real purpose I believe is to provide economic power to those who would have gone without, involving them in the whole creation and marketing side of the business as well as giving them a share in the profits.
- **Cultural Context** – Divine Chocolate website is immediately set in Ghana's cocoa farms. However, the website has far outreaching ambitions, after all "it is the only Fairtrade chocolate company which is 44% owned by cocoa farmers." (Divine Chocolate Ltd, 2011) The farmers use these precious profits to improve their community so it's a win-win situation all round.



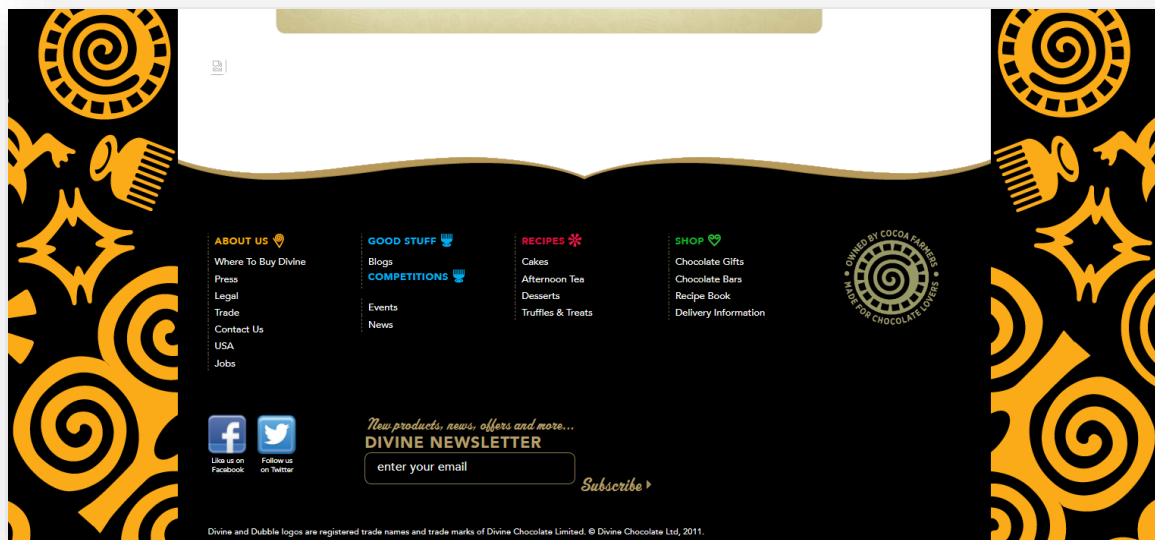
- **Commodity** – I find the site well structured, information is where I would expect it and the search engine is excellent too. Constantly educating the user along the way during their visit. I noticed too the lack of ads and felt very encouraged as I would have no ‘distractions’.



- **Firmness** – the site has been put together well. Three things caught my attention: a short YouTube video on Divine's story, an interactive screen

describing what the symbols on the packaging means and an interactive historic timeline. Not only do they keep the user entertained but they prove that solid coding such as JavaScript is at work.

- **Delight** – I seriously can't rave enough about this site. They have cleverly used colour not only to invite the user to their website but to organise their information as well.



Fonts are nicely balanced and I can only imagine they used the colour of chocolate as well as Ghanaian design for their inspiration.

Their carefully considered use of CSS assists the user experience. The colour selected for each subject matter is also reflected in the background so the user knows immediately what part of the site they are on and the kind of information they would expect to find there.

Finally, a personal touch is added which I have come to admire from Divine Chocolate. As they continue to engage with and educate the user, they include an infographic detailing what the symbols on their packaging (which resembles luxurious fabric) means in their FAQs.

Even today, the adinkra symbols are carved, woven and printed on traditional craft and fabrics in Ghana. They were originally used by village chiefs for important celebrations and events like weddings and funerals, but now they have become part of everyday items such as t-shirts and jewelry...and Fairtrade Divine chocolate bars!

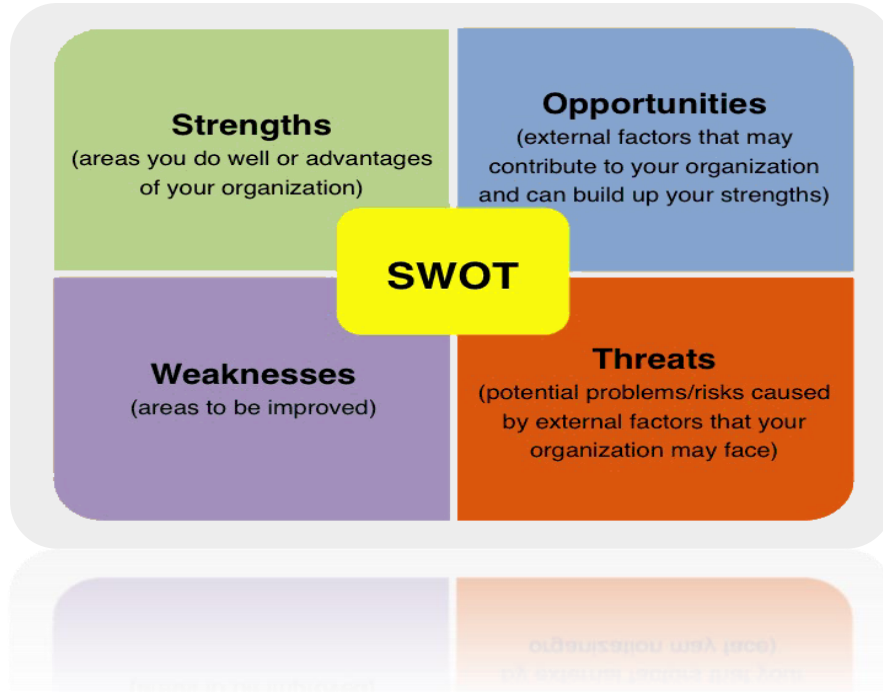
Q What do the symbols on Divine Chocolate wrappers mean?

A They are adinkra symbols. Created in Ghana and Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa, they are used in decoration at special occasions. Each holds a special meaning, conveying traditional wisdom and values.

Tag your treats! #divinechocolate

Just in case the user missed it the first time round and lest we forget the bigger picture. Genius.

SWOT ANALYSIS



(B2B CFO Partners, 2002)

- **Strengths:** strong Ghanaian culture, wealth of information, my heritage.
- **Weaknesses:** I wasn't born in Ghana, need parents/friends input, need to do lots of research on Ghana.
- **Opportunities:** to learn/discover more about Ghana, meet people, go to different venues/places and build a great website.
- **Threats:** Lack of cultural/technical knowledge, wrong information, risk of offence, alienate Ghanaians.

A DISCUSSION ON REVENUE GENERATION/ALTERNATIVE VALUE THIS PROJECT WILL DELIVER

I can see this project going in one of two ways:

- a) **I could develop the site in such a way as to encourage ads (use Google ads) and gain a steady income from them.** Particularly if the ads are the same subject matter. The plus side is that I could build networks, 'return the favour' which could be beneficial for users. The downside, they could have an impact on the design and layout of the site. I am keen to use this project to learn as much as I can and so I'm not sure that I want to compromise in such a crucial area.
- b) **I could create an alternative value project,** something similar to what Divine Chocolate (see Case Study section) have achieved. I've come to realise that self-sufficiency is really important to me.

CONCLUSION

A lot can be done to 'open up' Ghanaian culture to the rest of the world.

The sites I analysed have two very different authors, creating very different content. This area has to be amalgamated; combined to create a stronger, unified voice and web presence.

I feel inspired to use this project to change people's thinking in this area and if done well, for generations to come.

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Cover photo 'Adinkra Stamps', courtesy of Cynthia Samaké, 2015,
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