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.

But Africa is not a single country but constitutes of 54 very different countries with their distinct cultures and business environments. 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 29 million inhabitants which was one of the fastest growing country in the world with 8.1 percent GDP growth in 2017 and expected around 6 percent GDP growth (Economist Intelligence Unit, Country Report).[2] 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-Sahara 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, the students should develop ideas for solutions to the Ghana partner firms. The firms in Ghana will come from different industry ranging from a chocolate producer to small tech start-ups. 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 1-2 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 Ghana working on a project.

The course aims at providing students familiarity with interview-based customer insights 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. The project are scoped so that students need to do at least twenty interviews with current and potential customer of their partner firm.

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 experience the benefits and also challenges of working in cross-cultural environment.

This course is part of the Global Immersion Program but has some specific features that distinguish the course from most other GIP trips. Travel to Ghana will take place during spring break, tentatively March 12-19, 2022 to Accra; exact dates and details to be confirmed.

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 will have one wrap up meeting at Columbia Business School.  The 2021-2022 Global Immersion Program fee for all classes is $1850 and provides students with double occupancy lodging, ground transportation and some meals. 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](file:///C%3A/Users/jt2121/Desktop/course%20descriptions/Global%20Immersion%20Program%20classes%20bridge%20classroom%20lessons%20and%20business%20practices%20in%20another%20country.%20These%20three%20credit%20classes%20meet%20for%20half%20a%20term%20in%20New%20York%20prior%20to%20a%20one%20week%20visit%20to%20the%20country%20of%20focus%20where%20students%20will%20meet%20with%20business%20execut) to learn more about the Global Immersion Program, and visit the [Global Immersion Policies](http://www8.gsb.columbia.edu/chazen/students/globalimmersion/policies) page to review policies affecting these courses.

All participants must be vaccinated (no exceptions to the mandate permitted).  We will be keeping a close eye on the COVID-19 levels in Ghana.  Should the situation deteriorate, the travel component of the course may be cancelled.