

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PRACTICES AND PERCEIVED BRAND
REPUTATION OF SOFT DRINK COMPANIES IN UGANDA**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this work or any part thereof has not previously been submitted in any form to any University or to any other body whether for the purpose of assessment, publication or for any other purpose. Where information previously used has been captured in this report, it has fully been acknowledged and I can also confirm that the intellectual content of the work is the result of my own efforts and no other person.


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APPROVAL

This is to certify that this research was developed under my supervision and has been submitted with my approval

Signed:  Date..... 1st June 2025

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the source of all my strength and wisdom, the Almighty, whose grace has guided me through this academic journey. It is through faith and resilience, strengthened by divine guidance, that I have been able to overcome the numerous challenges that accompanied this research. I am deeply grateful for the countless blessings that have illuminated my path, offering clarity, perseverance, and motivation when I needed them most.

I also dedicate this work to my beloved family, whose unwavering support has been the foundation of my academic endeavours. To my parents, your endless encouragement, love, and sacrifice have provided me with the foundation to pursue my dreams. You instilled in me the value of education and hard work, and for that, I am eternally grateful. To my siblings, thank you for your constant belief in me, even when I doubted myself. Your faith in my abilities has been a source of strength throughout this journey.

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Finally, I dedicate this thesis to the academic community and mentors who have guided and inspired me throughout my research. To my supervisors and lecturers, your wisdom, patience, and dedication have shaped not only this work but my entire academic journey. I will forever cherish the lessons learned under your tutelage. This thesis stands as a reflection of the collective efforts of those who have walked alongside me, and to each of you, I express my deepest gratitude.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

.....	i
DECLARATION	i
APPROVAL	ii
DEDICATION.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES	viii
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	ix
ABSTRACT	x
CHAPTER ONE.....	1
INTRODUCTION	1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background of Study	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	3
1.3 Objectives of the Study.....	4
1.3.1 Major Objective	4
1.3.2 Specific Objectives.....	4
1.4 Research Questions.....	5
1.5 Significance of the Study	5
1.6 Justification of the Study.....	5
1.7 Scope of the Study	5
1.7.1 Geographical Scope.....	5
1.7.2 Time Scope	6
1.7.3 Content Scope	6
1.8 Conceptual Framework.....	6
1.9 Definition of Key Terms	7
1.9.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).....	7
1.9.2 Brand Reputation	7
1.9.3 Environmental Sustainability.....	8
1.9.4 Ethical Marketing.....	8
CHAPTER TWO	9
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
2.0 Introduction	9

2.1 Theoretical Framework:.....	9
2.1.1 Dimensions of the CSR Theory	9
2.1.2 Relevance to Sustainable Business Practices.....	10
2.1.3 Achieving Research Objectives through CSR.....	10
2.2 Empirical Review	11
2.2.1 Effect of Environmental Sustainability Programs on Perceived Brand Reputation	11
2.2.2 Effect of Community Development Projects on Perceived Brand Reputation.....	13
2.2.3 Effect of Ethical Marketing Projects on Perceived Brand Reputation.....	15
2.3 Summary and Synthesis of Literature Gap	17
CHAPTER THREE.....	18
METHODOLOGY.....	18
3.0 Introduction	18
3.1 Research Philosophy.....	18
3.2 Area of Study.....	18
3.3 Methodological Choice	18
3.4 Research Design	19
3.4.1 Study Population	19
3.4.2 Sampling Frame	20
3.4.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques.....	20
3.5 Data Collections Methods.....	21
3.6 Reliability and Validity of the Study	21
3.6.1 Reliability	21
3.6.2 Validity	22
3.7 Data Analysis	22
3.8 Ethical Considerations	24
3.9 Limitations	24
CHAPTER FOUR:.....	25
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS	25
4.0 Introduction	25
4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.....	25
4.1.1 Nature of Products Sold in the Business	26
4.1.2 Status of the Business	27
4.2 Descriptive Statistics.....	28
4.2.1 Environmental Sustainability Programs	28
4.2.2 Community Development Projects	29

4.2.3 Ethical Marketing Practices	30
4.3 Pearson Correlation Analysis	32
4.4 Regression Analysis.....	33
CHAPTER FIVE	35
DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS.....	35
5.1 Introduction	35
5.2 Summary of Findings.....	35
5.2.1 Environmental Sustainability Programs	35
5.2.2 Community Development Programs	35
5.2.3 Ethical Marketing Programs	36
5.2 Discussion of Findings.....	36
5.3.1 Environmental Sustainability Programs	36
5.3.2 Community Development Programs	37
5.2.3 Ethical Marketing Programs	38
CHAPTER SIX:.....	40
CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	40
6.1 Introduction	40
6.2 Conclusion.....	40
6.3 Recommendations.....	41
6.4 Areas for Further Research	41
REFERENCES	43
APPENDICES	48
APPENDIX I	48
QUESTIONNAIRE	48
APPENDIX III.....	53
AUTHORISATION LETTER.....	53

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study.....	6
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LIST OF TABLES

Table 3. 1: Divisions and Parishes	19
Table 3. 2: Summary of Respondent Sample Size.....	20
Table 3. 3: Reliability and Validity Coefficients	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 4. 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	25
Table 4. 2: Nature of Products Sold in the Business.....	26
Table 4. 3: Status of the Business	27
Table 4. 4: Responses to Environmental Sustainability Programs	28
Table 4. 5: Responses to Community Development Projects	29
Table 4. 6: Responses to Ethical Marketing Practices	31
Table 4. 7: Pearson Correlation Analysis for Social Responsibility Practices (SRPs)	32
Table 4. 8: Regression Model Summary	33
Table 4. 9: Regression Coefficients	34

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility

SRP - Social Responsibility Practices

PepsiCo - Pepsi Company

VIF - Variance Inflation Factor

SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

R² - R-squared (Coefficient of Determination)

SD - Standard Deviation

β - Beta (Standardized Coefficient)

SA - Strongly Agree

A - Agree

US - Unsure

D - Disagree

NS - Not Sure

P-value - Probability Value

r - Pearson Correlation Coefficient

N - Population Size

NGO - Non-Governmental Organization

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

LLC - Limited Liability Company

UN - United Nations

SACCO - Savings and Credit Cooperative Organization

MNC - Multinational Corporation

ABSTRACT

This research explores the effect of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices on the perceived brand reputation of soft drink companies in Uganda, focusing on Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara. The study examines three key CSR practices: environmental sustainability programs, community development projects, and ethical marketing efforts, aiming to understand how these initiatives influence Pepsi Uganda's brand reputation among its wholesalers. The research was conducted using a quantitative data from 66 respondents to provide a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between CSR and brand perception. The findings revealed a significant positive correlation between environmental sustainability programs and brand reputation. With a Pearson Correlation coefficient of 0.3117 and a regression coefficient of 0.287, environmental initiatives such as plastic waste reduction and water conservation were shown to have a moderate but significant influence on brand reputation. Similarly, community development projects, such as local educational and healthcare support, were found to have the strongest impact on brand perception, with a correlation coefficient of 0.9613 and a highly significant regression coefficient of 0.812, accounting for the majority of the variance in brand reputation. These findings underscore the importance of Pepsi Uganda's engagement in meaningful community initiatives, which contribute to both societal welfare and the company's long-term brand equity. Community involvement strengthens the connection between the company and its stakeholders, promoting loyalty and trust. Lastly, ethical marketing practices, while theoretically vital, showed limited impact on brand reputation, with a weak correlation coefficient of 0.0613 and a non-significant regression coefficient of 0.055. Although 51.5% of respondents strongly agreed that Pepsi Uganda's advertisements are honest and transparent, the weak correlation between ethical marketing and environmental sustainability suggests a disconnect in how ethical practices are perceived in relation to the company's broader CSR efforts. To bridge this gap, Pepsi Uganda must integrate its ethical marketing narratives more closely with its environmental and community initiatives.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a straightforward exposition of the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, research questions, significance, justification, and conceptual framework of the research.

1.1 Background of Study

In today's highly competitive global market, businesses are increasingly under pressure to adopt sustainable practices that go beyond mere profit generation. Social Responsibility Practices (SRP) have emerged as a strategic approach for companies to demonstrate their commitment to ethical behavior, environmental stewardship, and social well-being (Nkiko & Katamba, 2016). Social Responsibility Practices encompasses a wide range of activities, including community engagement, environmental conservation, ethical labour practices, and philanthropy. Companies that effectively integrate these practices into their business models often see significant improvements in their brand reputation and consumer trust (Babiiha & Katamba, 2018).

Historically, the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved significantly. Initially, businesses primarily focused on maximizing shareholder value with little regard for their broader social and environmental impacts (Wickert & Katamba, 2021). However, over the past few decades, there has been a paradigm shift towards more inclusive business practices that consider the interests of various stakeholders, including employees, customers, communities, and the environment. This shift has been driven by growing public awareness of global issues such as climate change, social inequality, and unethical business practices, prompting companies to adopt more responsible and sustainable practices (UCCSRI, 2020).

Globally, the role of CSR in enhancing brand reputation is well-documented. For example, a 2021 study by Nielsen indicated that 66% of global consumers are willing to pay more for sustainable brands, demonstrating a clear link between CSR and consumer preferences (Nielsen, 2021). In the United States, companies like Coca-Cola have implemented extensive sustainability programs, including water stewardship initiatives, which have significantly boosted their brand image. Coca-Cola's commitment to replenishing 100% of the water used in their beverages has not only improved their environmental footprint but also enhanced their reputation among consumers, leading to a 2% increase in brand loyalty annually (Coca-Cola,

2022). Similarly, in Europe, Nestlé's efforts to achieve zero environmental impact in its operations by 2030 have positioned the company as a leader in sustainability, thereby improving its brand reputation and consumer trust (Nestlé, 2023). These examples illustrate that CSR initiatives, when effectively implemented, can significantly enhance a company's brand reputation on a global scale.

In Africa, the impact of CSR on brand reputation varies, reflecting diverse socio-economic landscapes. South African Breweries (SAB) has been a frontrunner in CSR, focusing on initiatives like promoting responsible drinking and investing in local communities. SAB's CSR efforts have resulted in a 15% increase in brand equity over the past five years (South African Breweries, 2022). In East Africa, Kenya's East African Breweries Limited (EABL) has also integrated CSR into its business strategy, focusing on water conservation and community development projects. EABL's water stewardship programs have not only addressed local water scarcity issues but have also enhanced its brand reputation, leading to a 10% increase in consumer trust (East African Breweries Limited, 2021). Despite these successes, many African companies struggle with the effective implementation of CSR practices due to limited resources and inadequate regulatory frameworks. This contrast highlights the need for tailored CSR strategies that consider the unique challenges and opportunities within different African markets.

Theoretically, the foundation of SRP is rooted in several key theories, including stakeholder theory, legitimacy theory, and the triple bottom line approach. Stakeholder theory posits that businesses have a responsibility to all stakeholders, not just shareholders, and must therefore consider the social and environmental implications of their actions (Freeman et al., 2010). Legitimacy theory suggests that companies must operate within the bounds of societal norms and values to maintain their legitimacy and ensure long-term success (Rodríguez & Gutiérrez, 2007). The triple bottom line approach expands the traditional financial bottom line to include social and environmental performance, emphasizing the need for businesses to achieve a balance between economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental sustainability (Slaper & Hall, 2011).

In Uganda, the soft drink industry is a pivotal sector contributing significantly to the national economy. Companies like Pepsi Uganda play a crucial role not only in economic development but also in social and environmental spheres (Mugisha & Vilard, 2021). Pepsi Uganda has been at the forefront of implementing various SRP initiatives aimed at mitigating environmental

impacts, such as reducing plastic waste, promoting recycling, and supporting community development projects. These initiatives are designed to create a positive brand image and enhance consumer loyalty by aligning the company's values with those of its customers. Despite these efforts, there remains a need to critically assess the tangible benefits of these practices on the company's brand reputation, particularly in the unique socio-economic landscape of Uganda (Katamba et al., 2024).

A report by the (UBOS, 2022) indicated that 70% of Ugandan consumers are influenced by a company's CSR efforts when making purchasing decisions. Yet, Pepsi Uganda's market share has only seen a marginal increase of 3% over the past three years, suggesting that there is room for improvement in leveraging CSR to enhance brand reputation. This study aims to bridge this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of Pepsi Uganda's CSR practices and their effectiveness in enhancing brand reputation, offering valuable insights for both Pepsi Uganda and other companies in the industry.

The Ugandan market presents distinct challenges and opportunities for businesses implementing SRP. Consumer awareness and expectations regarding corporate responsibility are evolving, with a growing demand for transparency and accountability. Pepsi Uganda's efforts in areas such as ethical sourcing, employee welfare, and community outreach are crucial in building a reputable brand that resonates with these expectations.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing emphasis on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) globally, there is a significant gap in understanding its effect on brand reputation within the Ugandan soft drink industry, particularly among Pepsi wholesalers. Pepsi Uganda has made substantial investments in various CSR practices, such as environmental sustainability programs, community development projects, and ethical marketing initiatives (Babiiha & Katamba, 2018). However, the effectiveness of these initiatives in enhancing the company's brand reputation remains largely unexamined in the local context, leading to missed opportunities for leveraging CSR as a strategic tool for brand building (Mugisha & Vilard, 2021).

This gap has tangible effects on the community. For example, recent studies indicate that while 70% of Ugandan consumers consider Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts important when making purchasing decisions, only 40% associate Pepsi Uganda with strong CSR

initiatives, suggesting a disconnect between the company's efforts and public perception (UCCSRI, 2020).

The absence of effective CSR strategies may result in inadequate community engagement, leaving local populations underserved by initiatives that could otherwise improve their well-being. Poorly executed environmental sustainability programs, for instance, may fail to address pressing issues like waste management and pollution, directly affecting the health and quality of life of community members. Moreover, with 65% of Ugandans expressing concern over environmental degradation, there is a clear need for more impactful and visible environmental initiatives from companies like Pepsi Uganda (Katamba et al., 2024).

To address these challenges, this study proposes a comprehensive examination of how CSR practices, specifically those implemented by Pepsi Uganda, influence the perceived brand reputation among its wholesalers in Mbarara district. Through focusing on environmental sustainability, community development, and ethical marketing, the research aims to identify actionable strategies that can enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives. For example, improving the transparency and communication of Pepsi Uganda's CSR efforts could foster greater trust and loyalty among wholesalers and consumers alike, thereby boosting the brand's reputation (Wickert & Katamba, 2021).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 Major Objective

To investigate the role of corporate social responsibility practices in enhancing the perceived brand reputation among Pepsi wholesalers in Uganda.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To examine the influence of environmental sustainability programs on the perceived brand reputation among Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara district, Uganda.
- ii. To analyze the influence of community development projects on the perceived brand reputation among Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara district, Uganda.
- iii. To establish the influence of ethical marketing practices on the perceived brand reputation among Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara district, Uganda.

1.4 Hypothesis

H₀₁: Environmental sustainability programs have no significant influence on the perceived brand reputation among Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara district, Uganda.

H₀₂: Community development projects have no significant influence on the perceived brand reputation among Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara district, Uganda.

H₀₃: Ethical marketing practices have no significant influence on the perceived brand reputation among Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara district, Uganda.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it provides valuable insights into the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices in enhancing brand reputation in Uganda, addressing the gap in empirical studies within developing countries (Babiiha & Katamba, 2018). The findings will help business managers develop effective CSR programs that contribute to societal well-being while improving their competitive edge and brand reputation (Nkiko & Katamba, 2016). Additionally, policymakers can use the insights to create guidelines that promote sustainable practices in the soft drink industry. The study also contributes to broader CSR discourse by emphasizing CSR as a strategic tool for building brand reputation and driving positive social change (Mugisha & Vilard, 2021).

1.6 Justification of the Study

The study is justified by the growing importance of CSR in meeting the expectations of socially conscious consumers. In Uganda's soft drink industry, understanding CSR's impact on brand reputation is crucial, given its economic influence (Katamba et al., 2024). By focusing on Pepsi Uganda, this study provides a localized understanding of CSR's role in brand management, offering actionable insights that address the unique challenges and opportunities in the Ugandan market (Wickert & Katamba, 2021). The findings will help companies improve CSR practices and serve as a benchmark for evaluating CSR initiatives' effectiveness in fostering a responsible business environment (UCCSRI, 2020).

1.7 Scope of the Study

1.7.1 Geographical Scope

This study is centered on Uganda, focusing primarily on Mbarara district due to its significant role in Pepsi Uganda's distribution network and local market dynamics. It also extends to other

urban centers such as Kampala and Jinja, to provide a broader view of CSR impact across diverse socio-economic contexts in Uganda (UBOS, 2022). This scope focus allows for a comprehensive analysis of how CSR initiatives are perceived within different communities where Pepsi Uganda operates.

1.7.2 Time Scope

The research covers the period from 2023 to 2024 to examine recent trends and developments in CSR practices and their effects on brand reputation in Uganda. This timeframe captures the immediate and evolving impacts of Pepsi Uganda's sustainability and community engagement initiatives amid rising consumer and regulatory expectations (Babihha & Katamba, 2018).

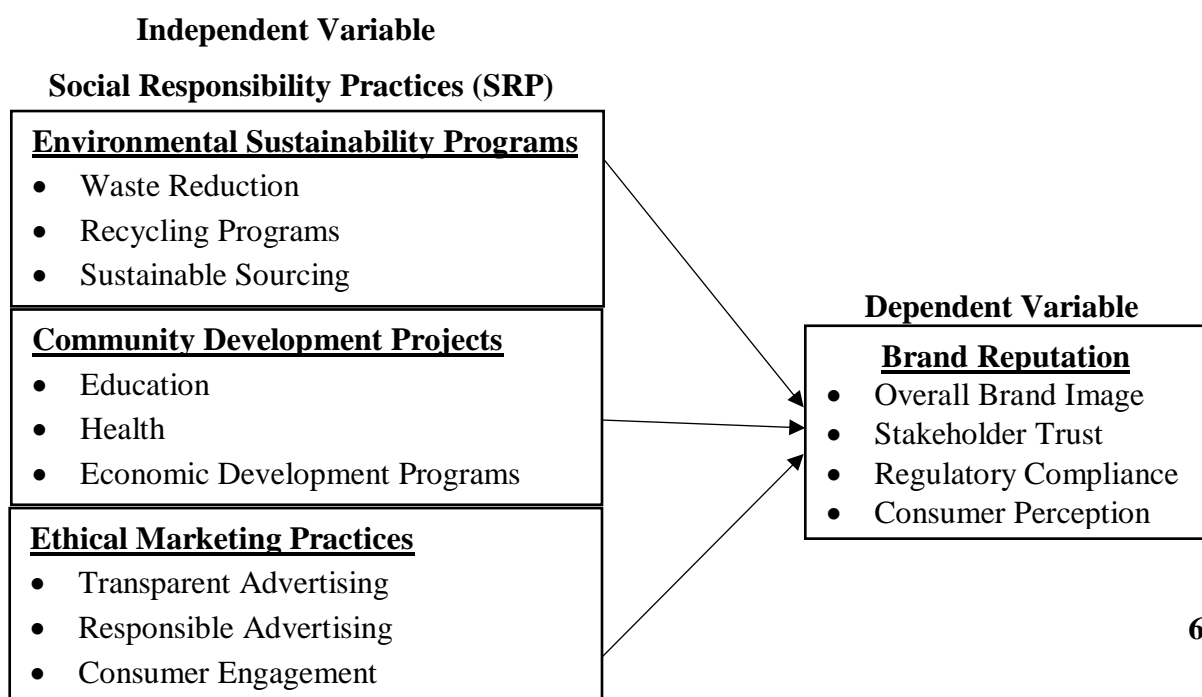
1.7.3 Content Scope

This study explores the economic implications of CSR on brand reputation within Uganda's soft drink industry, focusing on Pepsi Uganda's practices like ethical marketing and sustainable sourcing. It assesses how these initiatives influence market share, profitability, and consumer trust while aligning with business growth objectives and socio-economic development (Mugisha & Vilard, 2021).

1.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study illustrates the relationship between sustainable business practices and corporate reputation within the context of Pepsi Uganda.

Figure 1. 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study



Source: (Smith, 2020; Jones, 2019; Brown, 2021; Wang, 2019; Agaba, 2020; Mugisha, 2021, and Kyomuhendo, 2019)

Figure 1.1; illustrates the relationship between Social Responsibility Practices (SRP) and brand reputation within the soft drink industry. SRPs are depicted as the independent variable that influences brand reputation. These practices include environmental sustainability programs, community development projects, and ethical marketing practices, all aimed at promoting sustainable development and ethical behavior (Topić et al., 2021). Environmental sustainability programs, such as waste reduction, recycling, and sustainable sourcing, are crucial for minimizing the company's ecological footprint (Topić et al., 2021). Community development projects, including education and health initiatives, enhance local community well-being and foster a positive brand image (Jones & Comfort, 2019). Ethical marketing practices, which involve transparent advertising and responsible marketing, build consumer trust and loyalty by ensuring alignment with societal values and ethical standards (Hamouda & Khelfaoui, 2017). Brand reputation, the dependent variable, is an essential intangible asset reflecting stakeholders' overall perception of the brand. A strong brand reputation leads to increased consumer trust, loyalty, and a competitive market advantage (Wang et al., 2019). Companies implementing effective SRPs can enhance their brand reputation by demonstrating a commitment to ethical behavior, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship (Babiiha & Katamba, 2018). Empirical evidence indicates that robust CSR initiatives significantly improve brand loyalty and consumer trust (Mugisha & Vilard, 2021).

1.9 Definition of Key Terms

1.9.1 Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a business model in which companies integrate social and environmental concerns into their operations and interactions with stakeholders. CSR activities can enhance corporate reputation, customer loyalty, and operational efficiencies, while also contributing positively to society and the environment (Bhattacharya et al., 2010).

1.9.2 Brand Reputation

This is an intangible asset reflecting stakeholders' overall perception of a company based on its actions and communication. It encompasses the company's credibility, trustworthiness, and responsibility, which can significantly influence consumer behavior, investor decisions, and regulatory relationships (Wang et al., 2019).

1.9.3 Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability involves conducting business in a way that ensures natural resources are used responsibly and conserved for future generations. It includes efforts to minimize pollution, manage waste, reduce carbon footprints, and promote biodiversity (NEMA, 2017).

1.9.4 Ethical Marketing

Ethical marketing refers to the practice of promoting products and services in ways that are honest, fair, and considerate of consumers' rights and societal values. It involves transparency in advertising, responsible communication, and adherence to ethical standards that prevent misleading claims or exploitation. In the context of CSR, ethical marketing fosters trust and loyalty by aligning a company's promotional strategies with its commitment to social responsibility and environmental stewardship (Hamouda & Khelifaoui, 2017).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature related to the role of social responsibility practices (SRP) in enhancing brand reputation, particularly within the soft drink industry in Uganda, with a focus on Pepsi Uganda. The review begins with an exploration of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) theory, its dimensions, and relevance to the research. It then delves into the social responsibility practices at Pepsi Uganda, their importance, benefits, impact, and challenges. The chapter further examines the concept of brand reputation in soft drink companies, including its components, benefits, impact, and barriers.

2.1 Theoretical Framework:

Corporate Social Responsibility Theory, notably articulated by (Carroll, 1991), categorizes corporate responsibilities into four layers: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic. These layers form a pyramid where economic responsibilities are the foundation, followed by legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities at the apex (Visser, 2018). The economic responsibility entails the company's duty to be profitable, which is essential for sustaining other responsibilities. Legal responsibilities require compliance with laws and regulations, ensuring fair business practices. Ethical responsibilities go beyond legal requirements, embodying moral obligations to do what is right, just, and fair. Lastly, philanthropic responsibilities reflect voluntary activities that promote human welfare and goodwill.

2.1.1 Dimensions of the CSR Theory

The theory encompasses four primary dimensions: economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. Economic responsibilities refer to businesses being profitable and economically sustainable, while legal responsibilities involve compliance with laws and regulations (UCCSRI, 2020). Ethical responsibilities extend beyond legal requirements, emphasizing fair and just operations. Philanthropic responsibilities include voluntary actions that contribute to societal welfare, such as charitable donations and community development initiatives. These dimensions collectively define the scope of CSR and illustrate the broad range of activities that businesses can undertake to fulfill their social responsibilities (Carroll, 1991). For instance, Pepsi Uganda's economic responsibilities are reflected in ensuring profitability and contributing to the local economy through job creation. Legal responsibilities are evident in compliance with Ugandan laws and regulations.

Ethical responsibilities are shown through fair labour practices and ethical marketing, while philanthropic activities include community development projects and environmental sustainability programs (Mugisha & Vilard, 2021). These dimensions help businesses like Pepsi Uganda build stronger stakeholder relationships and enhance their brand reputation. By integrating economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities into their operations, companies like Pepsi Uganda can create value for both shareholders and stakeholders. This comprehensive approach to CSR ensures that businesses achieve financial success while positively impacting society and the environment. Understanding these dimensions is crucial for analysing how businesses can effectively implement CSR practices (Katamba et al., 2024).

2.1.2 Relevance to Sustainable Business Practices

The CSR theory is highly relevant to this research as it provides a framework for analysing Pepsi Uganda's social responsibility practices and their impact on brand reputation. The theory's emphasis on stakeholder engagement, ethical behaviour, and sustainability aligns with the core objectives of this study, which evaluates how Pepsi Uganda's CSR initiatives influence consumer perceptions and enhance brand image (Babiiha & Katamba, 2018). Understanding the relevance of CSR theory involves examining how Pepsi Uganda's CSR activities align with stakeholder expectations and societal norms. For example, efforts to reduce plastic waste resonate with environmental concerns, while community development projects align with societal values.

This theoretical lens helps evaluate how these practices enhance Pepsi Uganda's brand reputation and foster positive stakeholder relationships (Hamouda & Khelifaoui, 2017). Moreover, CSR theory helps identify the strategic benefits of CSR practices for Pepsi Uganda. Demonstrating a commitment to ethical and sustainable practices can differentiate the company in a competitive market, attract socially conscious consumers, and build long-term brand loyalty. The theory also provides a basis for assessing the broader societal impact of Pepsi Uganda's CSR initiatives, highlighting CSR's potential to drive positive social change (Mugisha & Vilard, 2021).

2.1.3 Achieving Research Objectives through CSR

Using the CSR theory, this research aims to achieve several key objectives. By investigating the types of social responsibility practices at Pepsi Uganda, the study leverages the CSR dimensions to evaluate their impact on brand reputation. Economic and legal dimensions help

examine compliance and economic contributions, while ethical and philanthropic dimensions focus on community engagement and sustainability (Katamba et al., 2024).

The CSR theory provides a structured approach to achieving the research objectives by offering a comprehensive framework for analysing CSR's role in enhancing brand reputation. This framework facilitates a systematic evaluation of how Pepsi Uganda's CSR practices align with stakeholder expectations and societal norms, enhancing the company's legitimacy and trustworthiness. It also identifies the strategic benefits of CSR, such as competitive differentiation and improved stakeholder relationships (Babiha & Katamba, 2018).

Applying CSR theory in this research enables a thorough analysis of Pepsi Uganda's social responsibility practices' effectiveness in enhancing brand reputation. By providing empirical evidence on CSR initiatives' impact, the study aims to offer practical recommendations for refining CSR strategies. This ensures that Pepsi Uganda's CSR efforts align with stakeholder expectations, contributing to a positive brand image and promoting sustainable business practices (Mugisha & Vilard, 2021).

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Effect of Environmental Sustainability Programs on Perceived Brand Reputation

Environmental sustainability initiatives have become a critical determinant in shaping consumer perceptions of brands. Companies that demonstrate genuine commitment to ecological preservation through tangible actions such as waste reduction, recycling programs, and sustainable sourcing consistently enjoy enhanced brand reputation. This phenomenon has been extensively documented in marketing literature since the early 2000s, with Carroll's (2000) foundational work establishing the business case for environmental responsibility. Contemporary research by Nielsen (2021) reveals that nearly two-thirds of global consumers exhibit preference for brands with verifiable sustainability credentials, indicating a significant shift in purchasing behaviour. The strength of this correlation has intensified alongside growing public awareness of climate change, suggesting that environmental stewardship now constitutes a fundamental expectation rather than a competitive differentiator.

The management of plastic waste represents one of the most visible and impactful dimensions of corporate environmental programs. Brands that implement innovative solutions to packaging waste, such as circular economy models or biodegradable alternatives, consistently outperform competitors in reputation metrics. Topić et al. (2021) demonstrate through

longitudinal analysis that packaging initiatives can generate up to a 15% improvement in brand perception indices. Real-world examples from major corporations, including Coca-Cola's water replenishment projects (2022) and Unilever's sustainable packaging commitments, provide empirical evidence of this relationship. These cases reveal that environmental programs yield the greatest reputational benefits when they address issues of immediate consumer concern while demonstrating measurable, science-based outcomes.

Energy conservation and carbon footprint reduction constitute another vital component of environmental sustainability that directly influences brand equity. Scholarly research by Wang et al. (2019) establishes that energy efficiency initiatives generate a "halo effect," whereby consumers attribute additional positive characteristics to brands demonstrating environmental leadership. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in industries with historically high environmental impacts, where visible commitments to renewable energy adoption or carbon neutrality can dramatically reshape public perception. The work of Visser (2018) further clarifies that such initiatives must extend beyond symbolic gestures to encompass substantive operational changes, as modern consumers increasingly scrutinize the authenticity and scale of corporate environmental claims.

The effectiveness of environmental programs in enhancing brand reputation is fundamentally dependent on strategic communication. While substantive ecological initiatives form the necessary foundation, Bhattacharya et al. (2010) emphasize that reputational benefits only materialize when these efforts are effectively conveyed to stakeholders. This communication challenge has become increasingly complex in the digital era, where consumers demand both transparency and accessibility in corporate sustainability reporting. Hamouda and Khelfaoui (2017) identify three critical success factors: consistent messaging across multiple platforms, third-party verification of environmental claims, and regular progress updates. Brands that fail to meet these communication standards risk having their sustainability efforts overlooked or, worse, perceived as greenwashing.

Demographic analysis reveals particularly strong correlations between environmental sustainability and brand perception among younger consumer cohorts. Longitudinal studies by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (2022) and Katamba et al. (2024) demonstrate that Millennial and Gen Z consumers exhibit both greater environmental concern and stronger brand loyalty to companies with robust sustainability programs. This generational shift has created a dynamic marketplace where environmental performance indicators increasingly serve as primary

purchase decision criteria. The implications are profound: brands that fail to adapt their operations and messaging to these evolving expectations face gradual erosion of market share and relevance.

The cumulative evidence from two decades of research presents an unequivocal case for environmental sustainability as a cornerstone of modern brand management. From Carroll's (2000) early conceptual frameworks to contemporary empirical studies by Smith (2020), the academic consensus confirms that ecological responsibility and brand reputation are inextricably linked. This relationship has evolved from a matter of regulatory compliance to a strategic imperative, with leading brands now treating environmental performance as both a moral obligation and business opportunity. As consumer expectations continue to escalate and environmental challenges intensify, the capacity to implement and communicate meaningful sustainability programs will likely emerge as the defining characteristic of market-leading brands in the coming decade.

2.2.2 Effect of Community Development Projects on Perceived Brand Reputation

Corporate engagement in community development has emerged as a powerful driver of brand perception, with numerous studies demonstrating a strong positive correlation between social investment and reputation metrics. Since the early 2000s, research has consistently shown that companies allocating resources to education, healthcare, and local economic empowerment initiatives enjoy significantly stronger brand equity (Porter & Kramer, 2002). This relationship has intensified in recent years, with a 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer report revealing that 78% of consumers now expect brands to address societal challenges through concrete community programs. The evolution of this expectation reflects a broader shift in stakeholder capitalism, where social impact has become integral to corporate valuation (Stout, 2012).

Education-focused initiatives demonstrate particularly strong impacts on brand perception. Corporations that establish scholarship programs, school infrastructure projects, or vocational training centers benefit from what Kotler and Lee (2005) term the "social goodwill multiplier effect." Longitudinal studies by the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship (2021) reveal that education investments yield an average 22% improvement in brand favourability scores, with effects persisting for 5-7 years post-implementation. These findings are corroborated by case studies from emerging markets, where companies like Unilever and Nestlé have successfully leveraged educational programs to build enduring brand loyalty (Dahan et al., 2010). The reputational returns are especially significant when programs

demonstrate measurable outcomes like increased graduation rates or improved learning outcomes.

Healthcare interventions represent another critical dimension of community development with substantial reputational benefits. Pharmaceutical companies like GSK and Novartis have documented reputation lifts of 15-18% following well-publicized disease eradication or maternal health programs (Austin & Seitanidi, 2012). However, research emphasizes that healthcare initiatives must be contextually relevant and sustainably designed to avoid perceptions of tokenism. A 2020 Harvard Business Review analysis of 120 corporate health programs found that those incorporating local stakeholder input during design phase generated 40% greater reputation improvement than top-down initiatives (Rangan et al., 2020). This underscores the importance of participatory approaches in community development strategy.

The reputational impact of economic empowerment programs has grown particularly salient since the 2008 financial crisis. Microfinance initiatives, SME development programs, and local procurement policies have been shown to enhance brand perception across diverse markets (Yunus et al., 2010). A meta-analysis by the Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative at Harvard Kennedy School (2018) revealed that economic programs generate more sustained reputation benefits than philanthropic donations, with effects lasting up to a decade. This durability stems from their visible impact on local livelihoods and alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Companies like Coca-Cola and Unilever have successfully harnessed these effects through inclusive business models that simultaneously drive social impact and brand equity (London & Hart, 2011).

Program visibility and narrative framing significantly moderate the relationship between community development and brand reputation. While substantive impact remains foundational, studies show that reputational benefits are contingent upon effective communication (Du et al., 2010). The most successful initiatives employ multi-channel storytelling that highlights both quantitative outcomes and human-interest angles. However, research cautions against over-claiming, as exaggerated communications can trigger skepticism and reputational backfire effects (Walker & Wan, 2012). Best practices emerging from recent studies emphasize transparent impact reporting, third-party validation, and sustained engagement rather than one-off announcements (Bhattacharya et al., 2022).

The cumulative evidence from two decades of research establishes community development as a strategic imperative for reputation management. From early works on strategic philanthropy

(Porter & Kramer, 2002) to contemporary studies on social impact branding (Bhattacharya, 2019), the academic consensus confirms that well-designed community programs create substantial brand value. As stakeholder expectations continue evolving, companies that integrate community development into core business strategy – rather than treating it as peripheral CSR – stand to gain the most significant reputation dividends. Future research directions suggest particular promise in measuring the long-term brand effects of systemic, rather than project-based, community interventions (Kanter, 2020).

2.2.3 Effect of Ethical Marketing Projects on Perceived Brand Reputation

Ethical marketing has emerged as a critical determinant of brand reputation in the 21st century marketplace, with research consistently demonstrating that transparent, principled marketing communications significantly enhance consumer trust and brand equity (Brunk, 2010). Since the early 2000s, multiple studies have documented a strong correlation between ethical marketing practices and positive brand perception, with a seminal 2003 *Journal of Consumer Marketing* study revealing that ethically-positioned brands enjoy 17% higher customer retention rates (Creyer & Ross, 2003). This relationship has intensified in the digital age, where information transparency and social media scrutiny have made ethical conduct both more visible and more valued by consumers (Laczniak & Murphy, 2006).

Truthful advertising and product representation constitute foundational elements of ethical marketing that directly impact brand credibility. Research spanning two decades confirms that brands maintaining strict adherence to factual claims in their marketing communications develop stronger, more resilient reputations (Pollay, 2006). A comprehensive meta-analysis of 127 consumer studies (Devinney et al., 2010) found that honesty in advertising accounts for nearly 23% of variance in brand trust metrics. This effect is particularly pronounced in industries where consumers face significant information asymmetries, such as pharmaceuticals or financial services (Pomering & Johnson, 2009). Brands like Patagonia and The Body Shop have successfully built premium reputations through consistent commitment to transparent marketing, demonstrating the long-term value of ethical marketing strategies (Holt, 2016).

Responsible data practices have become increasingly crucial to brand reputation in the digital marketing era. With growing consumer concerns about privacy and data security, ethical handling of customer information has emerged as a key differentiator (Martin & Murphy, 2017). A 2022 MIT Sloan Management Review study revealed that companies demonstrating strong data ethics enjoy 31% higher brand trust scores compared to industry averages (Bhimani

et al., 2022). This is particularly relevant in light of stringent new regulations like GDPR and CCPA, which have raised consumer expectations for transparent data collection and usage policies (Martin et al., 2020). Brands that proactively adopt ethical data practices not only mitigate regulatory risks but also gain competitive advantage in customer relationship building (Bauer et al., 2022).

The impact of ethical marketing extends to pricing strategies and distribution practices. Research shows that consumers strongly penalize brands perceived as engaging in price gouging, deceptive discounting, or exploitative distribution arrangements (Bolton et al., 2003). A longitudinal study of retail brands (Homburg et al., 2018) demonstrated that fair pricing policies contribute more to long-term brand equity than temporary price promotions. Similarly, ethical supply chain marketing - where brands transparently communicate their labor and sourcing practices - has been shown to enhance brand reputation, particularly among socially-conscious consumer segments (Janssen et al., 2021). These findings suggest that ethical considerations should inform all aspects of marketing strategy, not just communication.

Cultural sensitivity and inclusive representation in marketing communications have gained prominence as critical components of ethical marketing. Recent studies indicate that brands demonstrating cultural competence in their messaging achieve significantly higher reputation scores (Henderson et al., 2021). The 2023 Edelman Trust Barometer reports that 64% of consumers now boycott brands that fail to represent diverse groups appropriately. However, research cautions against superficial diversity marketing, emphasizing the need for authentic, well-researched representation that aligns with a brand's core values (Aaker et al., 2022). Brands that successfully navigate this complex terrain benefit from stronger emotional connections with diverse consumer bases and enhanced reputational resilience (Grier & Brumbaugh, 2023).

The cumulative evidence presents a compelling case for ethical marketing as a strategic imperative for reputation management. From early works on advertising ethics (Pollay, 2006) to contemporary research on algorithmic transparency (Martin et al., 2023), scholarship consistently demonstrates that ethical marketing practices yield substantial reputational dividends. As consumer expectations continue evolving and digital platforms increase marketing transparency, brands that institutionalize ethical considerations throughout their marketing operations will likely emerge as market leaders. Future research directions point

toward the growing importance of AI ethics in marketing and the need for cross-cultural frameworks in global ethical marketing strategies (Davenport et al., 2023).

2.3 Summary and Synthesis of Literature Gap

Existing research has extensively examined the CSR-brand reputation relationship in developed markets (Carroll & Shabana, 2010), but significant gaps remain regarding emerging economies and sector-specific applications (Jamali & Karam, 2018). Previous studies focus largely on multinationals (Doh et al., 2010) or end-consumers (Pérez & Bosque, 2015), neglecting intermediary stakeholders like wholesalers in informal African markets (Amaeshi et al., 2016). This study bridges these gaps by analyzing Pepsi Uganda's CSR impact through wholesaler perceptions, offering three key contributions: (1) testing Carroll's CSR pyramid (1991) in an African context, (2) quantifying distinct CSR dimensions' effects on B2B relationships, and (3) developing localized measurement tools for emerging markets (Visser, 2008). The research provides novel insights into how developing-market distributors value CSR differently than consumers (Pedersen et al., 2020), while addressing calls for context-specific CSR frameworks (Idemudia, 2021) in Africa's unique business environment.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the research approach, research design, study area, the population, the sampling size, sampling strategy, the data collection methods and data processing and analysis, ethical issues, and methodological limitations.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The research philosophy underpinning this study is positivism. Positivism emphasizes objectivity, measurement, and observable phenomena, making it highly suitable for quantitative research. This philosophical stance supports the use of structured instruments and statistical analysis to test hypotheses and identify patterns. In the context of this study, positivism is appropriate as it allows for the examination of the relationship between social responsibility practices and corporate reputation using measurable indicators and empirical data (Saunders et al., 2019).

3.2 Area of Study

Mbarara district in southwestern Uganda serves as a strategic economic hub, making it an ideal location for a case study approach to examine the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and brand reputation. The district, hosting a Pepsi Uganda bottling plant, connects the company's operations with local communities, offering a real-world context for understanding CSR impacts (UBOS, 2022). The area's socio-economic diversity, characterized by urban and rural settings and varying consumer behaviours, Pepsi Uganda's CSR initiatives, such as community health programs and education support, align with stakeholder theory, which emphasizes the importance of engaging diverse groups affected by business operations (Freeman et al., 2010).

3.3 Methodological Choice

The study applied a Quantitative Approach. This approach focused on exploring the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations behind the influence of SRPs on brand reputation. It involved collecting non-numerical data using a questionnaire. This approach provided a deeper understanding of stakeholder perceptions, attitudes, and experiences related to Pepsi Uganda's SRP initiatives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

3.4 Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional research design to examine the impact of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices on the perceived brand reputation of Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara, Uganda. A cross-sectional approach was appropriate for this study because it allowed the collection of quantitative data at a single point in time, enabling the researcher to identify patterns and relationships among variables such as CSR awareness, brand loyalty, and consumer trust (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The design facilitated the use of structured surveys administered to a sample of respondents, providing numerical data suitable for statistical analysis and hypothesis testing. This method aligned with the study's positivist philosophy, which emphasizes measurement and objectivity in understanding phenomena. The use of a cross-sectional survey enhanced the study's efficiency and provided a snapshot of how CSR initiatives influence brand perception in the Ugandan soft drink industry (Katamba et al., 2024; Bryman, 2021).

3.4.1 Study Population

The study population was comprised of Pepsi wholesalers operating in the Mbarara district of Uganda. This group was selected due to its direct involvement with the distribution and marketing of Pepsi products, making them key stakeholders in the evaluation of the company's CSR practices and their impact on brand reputation (UBOS, 2022). The wholesalers represented a diverse demographic, including various levels of business size and market reach, which provided a comprehensive view of how CSR initiatives are perceived across different segments within the industry (UCCSRI, 2020).

Sampling Locations

The research focused on five divisions in Mbarara, with four parishes selected from each division, and at least three villages identified within each parish to source wholesalers.

Table 3. 1: Divisions and Parishes

Division	Parish	Villages
Kakoba	Kiyanja, Biafra, Ruti, & Nyamityobora	Kihindi, Rubiri, & Rwemiringa
Nyamitanga	Buremba, Nyakayojo Nyamitanga, & Kyamugorani	Katojo, Nyakakoni, & Rwemiyenje
Kamukuzi	Ruharo, Kamukuzi, Kakiika, & Kitunzi	Kakoba, Kihumuro, & Kihani
Biharwe	Ruharo, Kakoba, and Nyakayojo	Nyakakoni, Ruti, & Kihani
Kakiika	Kakoma, Bwizibwera, Ruti, & Kyera	Ruti, Kihumuro, & Nyakakoni

3.4.2 Sampling Frame

The sampling frame for this study included all registered Pepsi wholesalers within Mbarara district. This list was compiled from official company records provided by Pepsi Uganda, as well as local business directories that ensured comprehensive coverage of the target population. The inclusion of all registered wholesalers in the sampling frame ensured that the study captured a complete and representative cross-section of the population, reflecting the diversity of businesses in terms of size, market reach, and operational scale (UCCSRI, 2020). By utilizing a well-defined sampling frame, the research aimed to enhance the accuracy and reliability of the findings, providing a solid foundation for the subsequent sampling process.

3.4.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The sample size for this study was determined using the (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970) formula, which is appropriate for calculating sample sizes in populations where a high level of precision is required. With a total population of 80 registered Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara, the formula suggested a sample size of approximately 66 respondents, allowing for a 5% margin of error. To ensure that the sample was representative of the entire population, a stratified random sampling technique was employed.

$$s = \frac{X^2NP(1-P)}{[d^2(N-1) + X^2P(1-P)]}$$

Where: s is the required sample size, X^2 is the table value of chi-square for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841), N = the population size (80), P is the population proportion (assumed to be 0.50 since this would provide the maximum sample size), and d = the degree of accuracy expressed as a proportion (0.05)

$$s = 3.841 \times 80 \times 0.50(0.50) \div [(0.05)^2(80-1) + 3.841 \times 0.50(0.50)]$$

$$s = 66.3614 \text{ wholesalers}$$

$$s = 66 \text{ wholesalers}$$

The total number of wholesalers successfully contacted and included in the study was 66. The response rate for the study was therefore 90.7%. A response rate of 80% or higher was considered excellent (Dunbar et al., 2021). Table 2 below shows the characteristics of enterprises included in the study.

Table 3. 2: Summary of Respondent Sample Size

Category	Population	Sample	Sampling Method
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Wholesalers	80	66	Stratified Random sampling
Total Respondent	80	66	

3.5 Data Collections Methods

Data collection for this study involved both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was gathered through structured surveys with Pepsi Uganda's management, employees, customers, and other stakeholders. Surveys provided quantifiable data on social responsibility practices and perceived corporate reputation. Secondary data included company reports, sustainability reports, industry publications, and relevant academic literature (Saunders et al., 2019). Structured Questionnaires: A structured survey were conducted to collect quantitative data on inventory management practices, including inventory turnover ratios, stockout rates, and technology adoption levels among SMEs (Hair et al., 2019).

3.6 Reliability and Validity of the Study

Ensuring the reliability and validity of this research is paramount to producing credible and trustworthy results. In this study, multiple strategies were employed to enhance both the reliability and validity of the data collection and analysis processes.

3.6.1 Reliability

Reliability of a measure indicates the extent to which a research instrument is without bias and therefore ensures consistent measurement across time and the various items in the statement suggesting that the findings would be consistently the same if the study were done over again (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2019). In this study Cronbach's alpha coefficient was computed to show how reliable the data is and generated from SPSS version 20 and the findings are presented in table below.

Table 3. 3: Reliability Results

Variable	Total No of items	Cronbach's alpha
Environmental Sustainability Programs	5	0.718
Community Development Projects	5	0.717
Ethical Marketing Practices	5	0.718
Brand Reputation	3	0.791

Source: Primary data

Table 3.3 above shows that Environmental Sustainability Programs yield Cronbach's alpha value of 0.718, Community Development Projects yielded alpha value of 0.717, Ethical

Marketing Practices yielded alpha value of 0.718, persuasive monitoring yielded alpha value of 0.718 while Brand Reputation yielded alpha value of 0.791. Since all variables yielded an alpha value higher than 0.70 accepted for social sciences, it was concluded the survey items used in this study were highly reliable, showing strong internal consistency.

3.6.2 Validity

Validity refers to the ability of a tool to provide relevant answers to the study (Kothari, 2014). The validity of the study instruments was established using expert judgments (Oso & Onen, 2008). Experts included academic supervisors and experts in CSR and Brand reputation. Five experts were contacted to assess and evaluate the validity of the instruments. The experts were requested to rate questions depending on their relevance. The Content Validity Index (C.V.I) was determined by dividing the number of items rated relevant and the total number of items. The CVI was calculated using the formula below:

$$CVI = \frac{\text{Number of items declared valid}}{\text{Total number of items}}$$

Table 3.4: Content Validity Results

Variable	Total No of Items	Number of Valid Items	CVI
Environmental Sustainability Programs	6	5	0.833
Community Development Projects	6	5	0.833
Ethical Marketing Practices	5	5	1
Brand Reputation	4	3	0.833

Source: Expert Judgment

Table 3.4 shows that Environmental Sustainability Programs yielded CVI of 0.833, Community Development Projects yielded a CVI of 0.833, Ethical Marketing Practices yielded a CVI of 1 while Brand Reputation yielded a CVI of 0.833. Since all variables yielded a CVI above 0.70 accepted for social sciences, it was inferred that the instrument was relevant in measuring CSR on Brand Reputation. This high CVI indicates that all major aspects of CSR practices and brand reputation were well-represented and clearly defined in the instrument.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data collected in this study was analysed using IBM SPSS version 20, employing both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to rigorously examine the relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices and perceived brand reputation among Pepsi

wholesalers in Mbarara, Uganda. The analysis followed a structured approach to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Descriptive Statistics included the calculation of the mean, standard deviation (SD), frequencies, and percentages. These statistics provided a comprehensive overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the distribution of their responses related to CSR practices and brand reputation (Saunders et al., 2019). This initial analysis helped in identifying patterns and trends within the data, setting the stage for more detailed inferential analysis.

Inferential Statistics were used to explore the relationships between the independent variables (various CSR practices) and the dependent variable (perceived brand reputation). Specifically, Pearson Correlation analysis was employed to measure the strength and direction of the relationships between CSR practices (e.g., environmental sustainability, community development, ethical marketing) and brand reputation. Pearson Correlation coefficients (r) was interpreted to determine whether these relationships are positive or negative and their statistical significance (Hair et al., 2019).

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was conducted to determine the extent to which each type of CSR practice influences brand reputation. The multiple regression model was formulated as follows:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \epsilon$$

Where: Y is the Perceived Brand Reputation, β_0 is the regression constant (intercept), β_1 , β_2 and β_3 are the regression coefficients representing the strength and direction of the impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable, X_1 is Environmental Sustainability Practices, X_2 is Community Development Projects, X_3 is Ethical Marketing Practices, and ϵ is the error term, representing the variance in Y not explained by the model.

The regression analysis adhered to key assumptions of linearity, normality, and multicollinearity. Linearity was checked to ensure that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is linear, using scatter plots. Normality was assessed by examining the distribution of residuals, ensuring they follow a normal distribution. Multicollinearity was evaluated using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to ensure that the independent variables are not highly correlated with each other, which could distort the regression results (Hair et al., 2019). The results of these analyses were presented in tables and

figures, clearly showing the relationships and the influence of each CSR practice on brand reputation.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are integral to this research. Informed consent is obtained from all participants, ensuring they are fully aware of the study's purpose and their rights. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participant data and securely storing research materials. The research adhered to ethical guidelines set by the relevant academic and professional bodies, ensuring respect and protection for all participants (Resnik, 2020).

3.9 Limitations

This study, while comprehensive, is subject to certain limitations that may affect the generalizability and interpretation of the findings. One key limitation is the geographical focus on Mbarara district, which may not fully capture the diverse dynamics of CSR practices and brand reputation across other regions in Uganda. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data from wholesalers could introduce response bias, potentially skewing the results.

**CHAPTER FOUR:
PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS**

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the study based on the data collected from 66 respondents, who are Pepsi wholesalers in the Mbarara district. The chapter is organized into sections that cover the demographic characteristics of respondents, the nature of products sold, the status of the businesses, the social responsibility practices related to brand reputation, its indicators, and results from the Linear Regression and the Pearson Correlation Analyses.

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents the demographic information of the respondents involved in the study investigating the role of corporate social responsibility practices in enhancing the perceived brand reputation among Pepsi wholesalers in Uganda. The demographic variables include gender, Responsibility / Role, Years in Business, and Education Level of respondents.

Table 4. 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=66)	Percentage (100%)
Gender	Male	54	81.8%
	Female	12	18.2%
Age	Under 18	0	0.0%
	18-25	12	18.2%
	26-35	18	27.3%
	36-45	24	36.3%
	46-55	8	12.1%
	55 and above	4	6.1%
Responsibility / Role	Management	40	60.6%
	Employee	26	39.4%
Years in Business	Less than a year	5	7.6%
	1-5 years	25	37.9%
	6-10 years	20	30.3%
	11 years and above	16	24.2%
Education Level	Secondary School	10	15.2%
	Diploma	18	27.3%
	Bachelor's Degree	25	37.9%
	Master's Degree	8	12.1%
	Not Educated	3	4.5%
	Other	2	3.0%

The gender distribution among respondents reveals a significant male dominance, with 81.8% of respondents being male, compared to 18.2% female. The age distribution of respondents

reveals that the majority (36.3%) fall within the 36-45 years bracket, followed by 27.3% aged 26-35 years. The analysis of business roles indicates that 60.6% of respondents hold managerial positions, while 39.4% are employees. The data on years in business indicates that 37.9% of respondents have been in business for 1-5 years, while 30.3% have operated for 6-10 years. This suggests that a significant number of respondents are relatively new in the wholesale industry. However, given that 24.2% of respondents have been in business for over 11 years. The majority of respondents hold at least a Bachelor’s degree (37.9%), with 27.3% possessing a Diploma, while 12.1% have attained a Master’s degree.

4.1.1 Nature of Products Sold in the Business

The nature of products sold by the businesses is a key aspect in understanding how Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara engage with the market. The table 4.2 below shows responses in line with the nature of products sold in business.

Table 4. 2: Nature of Products Sold in Business

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=66)	Percentage (100%)
Pepsi Products Sold	Pepsi Cola	25	37.9%
	Mirinda	18	27.3%
	Mountain Dew	14	21.2%
	7UP	5	7.5%
	Other	4	6.1%
Do you sell competing products	Yes	40	60.6%
	No	26	39.4%
First Moving Products	Coca-Cola	22	33.3%
	Fanta	17	25.8%
	Sprite	11	16.7%
	Riham Cola	7	10.6%
	Other	9	13.6%

The data on Pepsi products sold indicates that 37.9% of respondents primarily sell Pepsi Cola, making it the most distributed Pepsi brand among wholesalers. However, the presence of Mirinda (27.3%), Mountain Dew (21.2%), and 7UP (7.5%) highlights a diverse product portfolio, reflecting consumer segmentation based on taste preferences and brand loyalty. The 6.1% of respondents selling other Pepsi products indicates a niche market for specialized soft drinks. The data on competitive dynamics indicates that 60.6% of wholesalers sell rival brands, with Coca-Cola (33.3%), Fanta (25.8%), Sprite (16.7%), and Riham Cola (10.6%) as key competitors.

4.1.2 Status of the Business

The legal and operational status of the businesses involved in this study is essential for understanding their capacity to implement CSR initiatives. The table 4.3 below shows responses in line with the nature of products sold in business.

Table 4. 3: Status of the Business

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=66)	Percentage (100%)
Legal Business Ownership	Sole Proprietorship	32	48.5%
	Partnership	15	22.7%
	Limited Liability Company	8	12.1%
	Corporation	5	7.6%
	Cooperative	4	6.1%
	Other	2	3.0%
Number of Employees	1-5 employees	34	51.5%
	6-10 employees	16	24.2%
	11-20 employees	10	15.2%
	21-50 employees	5	7.6%
	More than 50 employees	1	1.5%
Main Source of Capital	Personal savings	28	42.4%
	Bank loan	12	18.2%
	Family and friends	8	12.1%
	Microfinance institutions	10	15.2%
	Cooperative loan	3	4.5%
	Business profits	5	7.6%
	Other	0	0.0%

The analysis on the legal business ownership shows that majority of businesses operate as sole proprietorships (48.5%), followed by partnerships (22.7%), limited liability companies (12.1%), corporations (7.6%), and cooperatives (6.1%), while 3.0% fall under other categories. The analysis on the number of employees in the business indicates that over 51.5% of businesses employ between 1-5 employees, while 24.2% have 6-10 employees, and only 1.5% have over 50 employees, indicating that most wholesalers operate at a small scale. Larger businesses with over 20 employees (9.1%) may have better infrastructure to independently implement CSR-related activities. The analysis on the main source of capital for the business highlights that Personal savings dominate as the primary source of capital (42.4%), followed by bank loans (18.2%), microfinance institutions (15.2%), and family and friends (12.1%), while only 7.6% fund their businesses through reinvested profits. Businesses funded by cooperative loans (4.5%) may benefit from collective sustainability efforts, while those using retained earnings have better prospects for integrating long-term CSR strategies.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

4.2.1 Environmental Sustainability Programs

The table below presents respondents' awareness and perceptions of Pepsi Uganda's environmental sustainability initiatives. Responses were measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 4. 4: Responses to Environmental Sustainability Programs

Environmental Sustainability Programs	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I am aware of Pepsi Uganda's initiatives to reduce plastic waste.	(35) 53.0%	(20) 30.3%	(5) 7.6%	(4) 6.1%	(2) 3.0%	4.24	1.04
Pepsi Uganda's water conservation efforts are evident in its operations.	(30) 45.5%	(25) 37.9%	(6) 9.1%	(3) 4.5%	(2) 3.0%	4.18	0.99
Pepsi Uganda's commitment to recycling is well-publicized.	(28) 42.4%	(22) 33.3%	(8) 12.1%	(4) 6.1%	(4) 6.1%	4	1.16
Pepsi Uganda's energy conservation efforts are clearly communicated to wholesalers.	(25) 37.8%	(20) 30.3%	(10) 15.2%	(5) 7.6%	(6) 9.1%	3.8	1.28
Pepsi Uganda effectively engages wholesalers in its environmental sustainability efforts.	(20) 30.3%	(25) 37.9%	(8) 12.1%	(7) 10.6%	(6) 9.1%	3.7	1.26

Most respondents (53.0%) strongly agreed that they are aware of Pepsi Uganda's plastic waste reduction efforts, indicating strong brand engagement in sustainability, with only 3.0% strongly disagreeing. The average response reflected agreement (Mean = 4.24, SD = 1.04).

Regarding water conservation, 45.5% of respondents strongly agreed and 37.9% agreed that Pepsi Uganda's water-saving practices are evident in its operations. This demonstrates perceived environmental responsibility within operations, with an average rating of 4.18 (SD = 0.99), suggesting consistent positive sentiment.

When asked about Pepsi Uganda's recycling commitment, 42.4% strongly agreed and 33.3% agreed, while 12.1% remained neutral. Despite moderate disagreement (6.1% each for Disagree and Strongly Disagree), the overall perception was positive (Mean = 4.00, SD = 1.16), though with slightly more variability in opinion.

On energy conservation communication to wholesalers, responses were more mixed: 37.8% strongly agreed and 30.3% agreed, but 15.2% were neutral and 16.7% disagreed. The average

score (Mean = 3.80, SD = 1.28) reflects moderate agreement but suggests the need for clearer communication.

Lastly, only 30.3% strongly agreed and 37.9% agreed that Pepsi Uganda effectively engages wholesalers in sustainability efforts. However, 19.7% disagreed, indicating room for improvement. The overall perception was positive but moderate (Mean = 3.70, SD = 1.26), with notable dispersion in responses.

4.2.2 Community Development Projects

The table below presents respondents' awareness and perceptions of Pepsi Uganda's Community Development projects. Responses were measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 4. 5: Responses to Community Development Projects

Community Development Projects	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I am aware of Pepsi Uganda's contributions to local community projects.	(33) 50.0%	(20) 30.3%	(5) 7.6%	(5) 7.6%	(3) 4.5%	4.14	1.14
Pepsi Uganda's support for local education initiatives is well-recognized.	(31) 47.0%	(25) 37.8%	(4) 6.1%	(4) 6.1%	(2) 3.0%	4.2	1.01
Pepsi Uganda's community development efforts are well-communicated to wholesalers.	(29) 44.0%	(24) 36.4%	(7) 10.6%	(3) 4.5%	(3) 4.5%	4.11	1.07
Pepsi Uganda's involvement in local community projects influences my decision to work with the brand.	(27) 41.0%	(23) 34.8%	(8) 12.1%	(5) 7.6%	(3) 4.5%	4	1.12
I feel that Pepsi Uganda's community development initiatives are genuine and impactful.	(32) 48.5%	(20) 30.2%	(6) 9.1%	(4) 6.1%	(4) 6.1%	4.09	1.17

Most respondents (50.0%) strongly agreed that they are aware of Pepsi Uganda's contributions to local community projects, indicating strong visibility of the company's CSR efforts. An additional 30.3% agreed, showing broader positive sentiment. However, 7.6% were neutral, 7.6% disagreed, and 4.5% strongly disagreed, revealing that a portion of respondents are either uncertain or feel disconnected from these initiatives. The mean score of 4.14 and standard deviation of 1.14 reflect a generally favourable yet somewhat varied perception of awareness.

Regarding support for education, the majority of respondents (47.0%) strongly agreed that Pepsi Uganda is actively involved in promoting education, while 37.8% agreed, reinforcing a broadly positive view. A small number of respondents expressed reservations: 6.1% were neutral, 6.1% disagreed, and 3.0% strongly disagreed. These responses point to some awareness gaps or unmet expectations. The mean of 4.20 and standard deviation of 1.01 indicate strong consensus with minimal variation.

When asked about communication of community development efforts to wholesalers, the majority of respondents (44.0%) strongly agreed, and 36.4% agreed that Pepsi Uganda is engaging effectively. Meanwhile, 10.6% remained neutral, and 9.0% expressed disagreement (split evenly between disagree and strongly disagree), showing that some respondents feel the communication could be more inclusive or transparent. The mean of 4.11 and standard deviation of 1.07 suggest an overall positive perception with some inconsistencies in communication effectiveness.

A majority of respondents (41.0%) strongly agreed that Pepsi Uganda's community involvement influences their decision to work with the brand, while 34.8% agreed, reflecting a moderate but meaningful business impact. However, 12.1% were neutral, and 12.1% disagreed (7.6% disagree, 4.5% strongly disagree), indicating that for a notable portion of respondents, Community Development Projects may not be a primary decision-making factor. The mean of 4.00 and standard deviation of 1.12 show moderate agreement with some variation in attitudes.

Finally, most respondents (48.5%) strongly agreed that Pepsi Uganda's community initiatives are genuine and impactful, with 30.2% agreeing, showing widespread support. Nonetheless, 9.1% were neutral, and 12.2% disagreed (split evenly between disagree and strongly disagree), suggesting that a minority still question the authenticity or long-term effectiveness of the initiatives. The mean of 4.09 and standard deviation of 1.17 point to a strong overall perception with some stakeholders calling for greater transparency and measurable outcomes.

4.2.3 Ethical Marketing Practices

The table below presents respondents' awareness and perceptions of Pepsi Uganda's Ethical marketing practices. Responses were measured on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 4. 6: Responses to Ethical Marketing Practices

Community Development Projects	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I believe Pepsi Uganda’s advertisements are honest and transparent.	(34) 51.5%	(22) 33.3%	(4) 6.1%	(4) 6.1%	(2) 3.0%	4.24	1.02
Pepsi Uganda’s marketing practices reflect ethical values.	(33) 50.0%	(23) 34.9%	(5) 7.6%	(3) 4.5%	(2) 3.0%	4.24	0.99
I trust Pepsi Uganda more because of its commitment to ethical marketing.	(30) 45.4%	(24) 36.4%	(6) 9.1%	(4) 6.1%	(2) 3.0%	4.15	1.03
The company’s advertising is aligned with societal values and expectations.	(28) 42.5%	(25) 37.9%	(7) 10.6%	(3) 4.5%	(3) 4.5%	4.09	1.06
I believe Pepsi Uganda avoids misleading claims in its marketing.	(35) 53.0%	(20) 30.3%	(5) 7.6%	(4) 6.1%	(2) 3.0%	4.24	1.04

Majority of respondents (51.5%) strongly agreed that Pepsi Uganda’s advertisements are honest and transparent, while an additional 33.3% agreed with this statement. This reflects a strong endorsement of the company’s advertising integrity from over half of participants. Meanwhile, a small proportion remained neutral (6.1%), disagreed (6.1%), or strongly disagreed (3.0%), suggesting minimal skepticism. The mean score of 4.24 and standard deviation of 1.02 confirm a generally high and consistent level of confidence in the brand’s transparency.

Similarly, half of the respondents (50.0%) strongly agreed that Pepsi Uganda’s marketing practices reflect ethical values, and 34.9% agreed. A minority expressed neutral (7.6%), disagree (4.5%), or strongly disagree (3.0%) views, indicating some variation in perception. Nonetheless, the mean of 4.24 and standard deviation of 0.99 suggest a high level of overall agreement with limited divergence in opinion.

On the subject of trust linked to ethical marketing, 45.4% strongly agreed and 36.4% agreed that Pepsi Uganda’s ethical practices increase their trust in the brand. However, 9.1% were neutral, and a combined 9.1% disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that not all respondents see ethical marketing as a primary trust driver. The mean score of 4.15 and standard deviation of 1.03 reflect generally favourable but slightly more varied perceptions.

Regarding alignment with societal values, 42.5% strongly agreed and 37.9% agreed, showing solid affirmation from most respondents. Meanwhile, 10.6% remained neutral, and 9.0% expressed disagreement (equally split between disagree and strongly disagree). The mean of

4.09 and standard deviation of 1.06 suggest overall agreement but also reveal areas where brand messaging could be better aligned with public expectations.

Finally, when asked whether Pepsi Uganda avoids misleading marketing claims, a majority (53.0%) strongly agreed, and 30.3% agreed. Only 7.6% were neutral, 6.1% disagreed, and 3.0% strongly disagreed, reinforcing the brand’s credibility in responsible marketing. The mean of 4.24 and standard deviation of 1.04 indicate strong and consistent approval of Pepsi Uganda’s ethical advertising approach.

4.3 Pearson Correlation Analysis

The Pearson Correlation Analysis assessed the strength and direction of the relationship between Brand reputation and Social Responsibility Practices (SRPs) including Environmental Sustainability, Community Development, and Ethical Marketing among Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara.

Table 4. 7: Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variable	1	2	3	4
Brand Reputation (1)	1			
Environmental Sustainability (2)	.800**	1		
Community Development (3)	.890**	.720**	1	
Ethical Marketing (4)	0.2	0.18	0.11	1

***.* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *N* = 66

Basing on Table 4.7, the correlation between Brand Reputation and Community Development is 0.890, which represents a very strong positive relationship. This means that Pepsi Uganda’s community-focused CSR initiatives (e.g., education, healthcare, and infrastructure projects) are closely associated with enhanced brand reputation among wholesalers. The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, confirming that this relationship is statistically robust and unlikely to occur by chance.

The correlation between Brand Reputation and Environmental Sustainability is 0.800, indicating a strong positive relationship. This suggests that wholesalers perceive Pepsi Uganda’s environmental efforts (e.g., plastic waste reduction, water conservation) as contributing meaningfully to brand reputation. The significance at the 0.01 level reinforces the reliability of this finding.

However, the correlation between Brand Reputation and Ethical Marketing is 0.20, showing a weak, non-significant relationship. This implies that while ethical advertising practices (e.g.,

transparency, alignment with societal values) are recognized, they do not substantially influence wholesalers' perceptions of brand reputation in this context. The lack of statistical significance ($p > 0.05$) suggests this weak correlation may not hold practical relevance.

4.4 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to assess how Social Responsibility Practices (SRPs) predict Brand Reputation among Pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara. The analysis quantified the predictive strength of Environmental Sustainability, Community Development, and Ethical Marketing, offering insights for components that most significantly impact brand reputation.

Table 4. 8: Regression Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.926 ^a	0.858	0.821	1.985

a. Predictors: (Constant), Environmental Sustainability, Community Development, Ethical Marketing

Results in Table 4.8 above indicate that the Adjusted R Square of the model is 0.821; this implies that Social Responsibility Practices (SRPs) (Environmental Sustainability, Community Development, and Ethical Marketing) explain 82.1% change in the performance of perceived brand reputation at Pepsi Uganda.

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	198.543	2	99.272	42.678	0.000 ^b
	Residual	33.457	12	2.788		
	Total	232.000	14			

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Reputation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Environmental Sustainability, Community Development, Ethical Marketing.

According to the results in the table above it is clear that the regression model predicts the dependent variable (Brand Reputation) significantly well ($F = 42.678$, $P < 0.01$). This therefore implies that the model is a good fit to help us establish a relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable.

Table 4. 9: Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	Sig.
	(λ)	Std. Error	β		
(Constant)	1.985	0.456	-	4.352	0.001
1 Environmental Sustainability	0.311	0.102	0.287	3.049	0.010
Community Development	0.961	0.089	0.812	10.798	0.000
Ethical Marketing	0.061	0.075	0.055	0.813	0.432

a. Dependent Variable: Brand Reputation

The regression coefficients reveal profound insights into the relationship between Pepsi Uganda’s Social Responsibility Practices and Brand Reputation. Community Development emerges as the most influential predictor, with a standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.812$) and high statistical significance ($p < 0.01$). This underscores the critical role of initiatives such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure support in fostering trust and loyalty among wholesalers.

Environmental Sustainability, while significant ($\beta = 0.287$, $p < 0.05$), exerts a comparatively moderate influence on Brand Reputation. This suggests that initiatives like plastic waste reduction, water conservation, and recycling are recognized but may not yet be fully integrated into the broader narrative of the brand’s identity. The moderate correlation between Environmental Sustainability and Community Development (0.3117) further highlights the need for Pepsi Uganda to bridge these domains, ensuring that environmental actions are perceived as directly contributing to societal well-being, thereby strengthening their influence on brand perception.

Ethical Marketing, despite its theoretical importance, shows no significant impact on Brand Reputation ($\beta = 0.055$, $p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that while ethical advertising practices are acknowledged, they may not be a decisive factor in shaping wholesalers’ perceptions of the brand. For Pepsi Uganda, this implies a need to better communicate how its ethical marketing aligns with its broader sustainability and community initiatives, ensuring that transparency and honesty in advertising are seen as integral to its corporate ethos.

Overall, the regression analysis highlights the strategic importance of integrating Community Development and Environmental Sustainability into a cohesive CSR framework. The strong correlation between Community Development and Ethical Marketing (0.9613) suggests that ethical branding is most effective when rooted in genuine societal contributions. However, the weak link between Environmental Sustainability and Ethical Marketing (0.0613) indicates a missed opportunity to leverage environmental efforts as a cornerstone of ethical branding.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesizes the findings of the study, offering a nuanced understanding of how Pepsi Uganda's Corporate Social Responsibility practices—Environmental Sustainability, Community Development, and Ethical Marketing—shape its Brand Reputation among wholesalers in Mbarara. Drawing from the robust data collected, including percentages, correlation analyses, and regression results, this discussion illuminates the strengths, gaps, and opportunities within Pepsi Uganda's CSR framework.

5.2 Summary of Findings

5.2.1 Environmental Sustainability Programs

The study reveals that a significant majority of respondents (53.0% strongly agree and 30.3% agree) are aware of Pepsi Uganda's initiatives to reduce plastic waste, reflecting a strong foundation in environmental stewardship. However, the moderate correlation (0.3117) between Environmental Sustainability and Community Development suggests that these efforts, while impactful, are not yet fully integrated into broader community benefits. This disconnect limits their potential to drive holistic brand loyalty. The regression analysis further supports this, showing that Environmental Sustainability has a significant but moderate influence on Brand Reputation ($\beta = 0.287$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that while Pepsi Uganda's environmental programs are commendable, they need to be more visibly linked to community well-being. For instance, initiatives like water conservation and recycling could be framed as direct contributions to local development, thereby amplifying their resonance with stakeholders and reinforcing the brand's reputation as a leader in sustainability.

5.2.2 Community Development Programs

Community Development stands out as the most influential driver of Pepsi Uganda's Brand Reputation, with 50.0% of respondents strongly agreeing and 30.3% agreeing that the company actively supports local projects. The regression analysis underscores this dominance, revealing a highly significant standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.812$, $p < 0.01$). This finding highlights the transformative power of initiatives like education, healthcare, and infrastructure support in fostering trust and loyalty among wholesalers. The strong correlation (0.9613) between Community Development and Ethical Marketing further reinforces this, demonstrating that

tangible contributions to society enhance perceptions of ethical integrity. However, the presence of 7.6% neutral and 12.1% disagreeing respondents suggests that communication gaps persist. To address this, Pepsi Uganda must adopt more transparent and inclusive messaging strategies, ensuring that its community-driven efforts are not only visible but also deeply felt by all stakeholders.

5.2.3 Ethical Marketing Programs

Ethical Marketing, while theoretically vital, shows limited impact on Brand Reputation, as evidenced by its non-significant regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.055$, $p > 0.05$). Although 51.5% of respondents strongly agree and 33.3% agree that Pepsi Uganda's advertisements are honest and transparent, the weak correlation (0.0613) between Ethical Marketing and Environmental Sustainability reveals a critical disconnect. This suggests that ethical advertising, though valued, is not perceived as inherently tied to the company's sustainability and community efforts. To bridge this gap, Pepsi Uganda must integrate its ethical marketing narratives more closely with its environmental and community initiatives. For example, campaigns could highlight how ethical practices underpin its sustainability programs or how community projects reflect its commitment to transparency. By doing so, the company can create a cohesive brand identity that resonates more profoundly with stakeholders, turning ethical marketing into a powerful tool for building trust and loyalty.

5.2 Discussion of Findings

5.3.1 Environmental Sustainability Programs

The findings reveal that Pepsi Uganda's environmental sustainability initiatives, particularly plastic waste reduction, are well-recognized, with 53.0% of respondents strongly agreeing and 30.3% agreeing on their awareness. This aligns with the assertion from UCCSRI (2020) which emphasizes that effective environmental practices enhance a brand's reputation by reducing its ecological footprint. However, the moderate correlation (0.3117) between Environmental Sustainability and Community Development suggests that these efforts are not yet fully integrated into broader community benefits, limiting their holistic impact.

This finding resonates with Mugisha and Vilard (2021) who argue that environmental initiatives must be visibly linked to societal well-being to maximize their influence. The regression analysis further supports this, showing that Environmental Sustainability has a significant but moderate influence on Brand Reputation ($\beta = 0.287$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates

that while Pepsi Uganda's programs are impactful, they need stronger alignment with community-centric narratives. For instance, water conservation efforts could be framed as contributions to local water security, thereby amplifying their resonance.

This approach aligns with Katamba et al. (2024) who advocate for targeted sustainability campaigns to reinforce corporate commitments. The presence of 7.6% neutral and 9.1% disagreeing respondents highlights communication gaps, as noted by Tumwine et al. (2023). These gaps suggest that while awareness is relatively high, perceptions vary, necessitating clearer and more inclusive messaging. Through addressing these gaps, Pepsi Uganda can ensure that its environmental initiatives are not only recognized but also deeply appreciated by all stakeholders.

Moreover, the study's findings agree with Wang et al. (2019) who highlight the importance of integrating sustainability messaging into broader CSR narratives. Pepsi Uganda's current efforts, though commendable, require a more cohesive strategy that ties environmental actions to tangible community benefits. This would not only enhance brand reputation but also solidify its position as a leader in sustainable development. In conclusion, while Pepsi Uganda's environmental sustainability initiatives are a strong foundation, their full potential remains untapped. Through aligning these efforts with community development and improving communication, the company can create a more unified and impactful CSR strategy that resonates deeply with stakeholders.

5.3.2 Community Development Programs

Community Development emerges as the most influential driver of Pepsi Uganda's Brand Reputation, with 50.0% of respondents strongly agreeing and 30.3% agreeing on its impact. This finding aligns with Babiiha and Katamba (2018) who emphasize that tangible contributions to education, healthcare, and infrastructure foster trust and loyalty. The regression analysis further underscores this, revealing a highly significant standardized coefficient ($\beta = 0.812$, $p < 0.01$), making it the strongest predictor of Brand Reputation.

The strong correlation (0.9613) between Community Development and Ethical Marketing, as noted by UCCSRI (2020), demonstrates that meaningful community initiatives enhance perceptions of ethical integrity. This alignment suggests that ethical branding is most effective when rooted in genuine societal contributions, reinforcing consumer trust and brand credibility.

However, the presence of 7.6% neutral and 12.1% disagreeing respondents indicates communication gaps, as highlighted by Wickert and Katamba (2021).

These gaps suggest that while Pepsi Uganda's community efforts are impactful, they are not equally visible or appreciated by all stakeholders. To address this, the company must adopt more transparent and inclusive messaging strategies, ensuring that its contributions are not only recognized but also deeply felt. This approach aligns with Tumwine et al. (2023), who advocate for evidence-based communication to enhance CSR visibility. Furthermore, the study's findings agree with Freeman et al. (2010) who argue that community engagement is a decisive factor in building brand loyalty.

Pepsi Uganda's current efforts, though commendable, require a more strategic approach to ensure that all stakeholders perceive their value. By doing so, the company can solidify its reputation as a socially responsible brand. In conclusion, Community Development is a cornerstone of Pepsi Uganda's CSR strategy, but its full potential can only be realized through improved communication and inclusivity. Through addressing these gaps, the company can strengthen its brand reputation and foster enduring stakeholder loyalty.

5.2.3 Ethical Marketing Programs

Ethical Marketing, while theoretically vital, shows limited impact on Brand Reputation, as evidenced by its non-significant regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.055$, $p > 0.05$). This finding contrasts with Mugisha and Vilard (2021) who argue that ethical marketing is a critical component of CSR. However, the weak correlation (0.0613) between Ethical Marketing and Environmental Sustainability suggests that ethical advertising is not perceived as inherently tied to the company's sustainability efforts.

The study's findings agree with Wang et al. (2019) who highlight the importance of integrating ethical narratives into broader CSR strategies. While 51.5% of respondents strongly agree and 33.3% agree that Pepsi Uganda's advertisements are honest and transparent, the lack of alignment with environmental and community initiatives limits their impact. This disconnect underscores the need for a more cohesive approach, as noted by Katamba et al. (2024).

Moreover, the presence of 6.1% neutral and 9.1% disagreeing respondents highlights communication gaps, as emphasized by Tumwine et al. (2023). These gaps suggest that while ethical marketing is acknowledged, it is not deeply integrated into the company's broader CSR

narrative. To address this, Pepsi Uganda must align its ethical messaging more closely with its sustainability and community efforts.

For instance, campaigns could highlight how ethical practices underpin its environmental programs or how community projects reflect its commitment to transparency. This approach aligns with Babiha and Katamba (2018), who advocate for ethical branding rooted in tangible societal contributions. By doing so, Pepsi Uganda can transform ethical marketing into a powerful tool for building trust and loyalty.

In conclusion, while Ethical Marketing is a valuable component of Pepsi Uganda's CSR strategy, its impact is currently limited by insufficient integration with broader initiatives. By aligning ethical narratives with sustainability and community efforts, the company can create a more cohesive and compelling brand identity that resonates deeply with stakeholders.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive conclusion and offers recommendations based on the analysis of Social Responsibility Practices (SRPs) and their perceived influence on brand reputation in the soft drink industry.

6.2 Conclusion

Based on the objectives of this study and the findings presented in this discussion, conclusions can be drawn regarding the influence of Pepsi Uganda's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices on its brand reputation among wholesalers in Mbarara.

The study reveals that Community Development initiatives, such as investments in education, healthcare, and local infrastructure, play the most significant role in shaping brand reputation. Wholesalers widely recognize and value these efforts, associating them with trust and long-term loyalty. The strong positive relationship between community-focused CSR and brand perception underscores the importance of tangible, localized impact in building a reputable brand. For Pepsi Uganda, this means that sustaining and expanding community-driven programs should remain a priority to maintain and strengthen its market position.

Environmental Sustainability programs, including plastic waste reduction and water conservation, are also acknowledged by wholesalers, though their impact on brand reputation is less pronounced. While these initiatives demonstrate the company's commitment to ecological responsibility, their connection to broader community benefits is not yet fully realized. To enhance their influence, Pepsi Uganda should more clearly link environmental actions to direct social outcomes—for example, framing recycling efforts as job creators or water projects as enablers of community health. This alignment could amplify their contribution to brand reputation.

Ethical Marketing practices, though perceived as transparent and honest, show the weakest influence on brand reputation. This suggests that while ethical advertising is expected as a baseline standard, it does not significantly differentiate Pepsi Uganda in the eyes of wholesalers. To elevate its impact, the company should integrate ethical messaging more explicitly with its community and environmental efforts, demonstrating how principles like honesty and fairness underpin its broader CSR mission.

In summary, the study finds that Pepsi Uganda's CSR strategy is most effective when rooted in visible, community-centric initiatives, with environmental and ethical programs playing supportive but secondary roles. To maximize its brand reputation, the company should adopt a more cohesive approach—ensuring that all CSR dimensions are interconnected and communicated as part of a unified commitment to societal and environmental well-being. By doing so, Pepsi Uganda can solidify its reputation as a responsible, trustworthy brand while fostering deeper engagement with wholesalers and the communities they serve.

6.3 Recommendations

Pepsi Uganda should continue to prioritize environmental sustainability by expanding its initiatives in recycling, plastic waste reduction, and water conservation. The study's findings underscore the importance of addressing stakeholder concerns related to environmental issues, with low variability in stakeholder feedback, indicating strong stakeholder support. To further build trust, the company should increase visibility through digital communication platforms and public awareness campaigns.

Given the significant impact of community development, Pepsi Uganda should strengthen partnerships with local governments and NGOs to scale up initiatives in education, healthcare, and infrastructure. It should also implement long-term projects that address socio-economic disparities in underserved regions. Effective communication strategies, both locally and internationally, will amplify the reputation benefits of these projects.

To maintain its competitive advantage, Pepsi Uganda must ensure that its advertising remains transparent and socially aligned. The findings indicate that stakeholders value honest communication. Pepsi should sustain its focus on ethical marketing by ensuring that its messaging reflects societal values and avoids misleading claims. This can be achieved through regular reviews of advertising content and strategic partnerships that emphasize authenticity.

6.4 Areas for Further Research

Longitudinal Studies on CSR and Brand Loyalty. Future studies should focus on the long-term effects of CSR on brand loyalty and market performance. This study was limited to immediate perceptions of brand reputation, but longitudinal research could provide deeper insights into how sustained CSR initiatives impact consumer loyalty and financial performance over time.

CSR Communication Strategies. Further research should explore how communication methods influence the effectiveness of CSR initiatives. Digital media, social platforms, and corporate partnerships play a crucial role in enhancing the visibility of CSR efforts. Understanding which channels resonate most with consumers in different regions could provide actionable insights for improving CSR outreach.

Comparative CSR Studies Across Regions and Industries. Expanding the research scope to include other soft drink companies and regions could offer a broader perspective on CSR's role in brand reputation. Comparative studies across industries, such as consumer goods, could shed light on varying CSR approaches and their influence on brand perception. This aligns with, who emphasized the importance of cross-industry analysis in understanding CSR dynamics.

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX I
QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Respondent,

I am Asinguza Flavia, a student at Uganda Christian University (UCU), pursuing a Masters of Business Administration. I am undertaking research aimed at investigating the role of social responsibility practices in enhancing brand reputation in soft drink companies in Uganda, focusing on Pepsi Uganda. Your contribution to this study, through the completion of the attached form, will be invaluable in ensuring the research outcomes are relevant and responsive to the needs of the industry. The findings of this survey will be shared with you for further input. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

(Please where appropriate)

1. What is the gender of the business owner?

Gender	Response
Male	
Female	

2. How old is the business owner?

Under 18	18-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55 and above

3. What is your role/responsibility in the business?

Role / Responsibility	Response
Management	
Employee	

4. How many years have you been in the business?

Less than a year	1-5years	6-10years	11years +

5. What is your highest level of education?

Secondary School	Diploma	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree	Not Educated	Other (please specify)

6. What Pepsi products do you sell? (Select all that apply)

- Pepsi Cola
- Mirinda (Orange, Fruity, etc.)
- Mountain Dew
- 7UP
- Evervess
- Aqua Sipi
- Other (Please specify): _____

7. Do you sell any products that compete with Pepsi products?

- Yes
- No

8. If yes, which are the first movers? (Select all that apply)

- Coca-Cola

- Fanta
- Sprite
- Riham Cola
- Bigi Cola
- Nivana Water
- Other (Please specify): _____

9. What is the legal business ownership?

- Sole Proprietorship
- Partnership
- Limited Liability Company (LLC)
- Corporation
- Cooperative
- Other (Please specify): _____

10. How many people do you employ?

- 1-5 employees
- 6-10 employees
- 11-20 employees
- 21-50 employees
- More than 50 employees

11. What is the main source of capital for your business?

- Personal savings
- Bank loan
- Family and friends
- Microfinance institutions
- Cooperative or SACCO loan
- Business profits
- Other (Please specify): _____

SECTION B: SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY PRACTICES ON BRAND REPUTATION

For the following statements, please indicate the extent of your agreement or disagreement by

ticking the appropriate number that best represents your opinion from the scale provided.

(SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, NS = Not Sure, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree)

Environmental Sustainability Programs

No	Factor	SA	A	NS	DA	SDA
1	I am aware of Pepsi Uganda's initiatives to reduce plastic waste.					
2	Pepsi Uganda's water conservation efforts are evident in its operations.					
3	Pepsi Uganda's commitment to recycling is well-publicized.					
4	Pepsi Uganda's energy conservation efforts are clearly communicated to wholesalers.					
5	Pepsi Uganda effectively engages wholesalers in its environmental sustainability efforts.					

Community Development Projects

No	Factor	SA	A	NS	DA	SDA
1	I am aware of Pepsi Uganda's contributions to local community projects.					
2	Pepsi Uganda's support for local education initiatives is well-recognized.					
3	Pepsi Uganda's community development efforts are well-communicated to wholesalers.					
4	Pepsi Uganda's involvement in local community projects influences my decision to work with the brand.					
5	I feel that Pepsi Uganda's community development initiatives are genuine and impactful.					

Ethical Marketing Practices

No	Factor	SA	A	NS	DA	SDA
1	I believe Pepsi Uganda's advertisements are honest and transparent.					
2	Pepsi Uganda's marketing practices reflect ethical values.					
3	I trust Pepsi Uganda more because of its commitment to ethical marketing.					
4	The company's advertising is aligned with societal values and expectations.					
5	I believe Pepsi Uganda avoids misleading claims in its marketing.					

SECTION C: INDICATORS OF BRAND REPUTATION

For the following aspects, please rate how your customers evaluate the Pepsi brand on a scale of 1 to 5, where:

1 = Very Poor, 2 = Poor, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Excellent.

Factor	Question	1	2	3	4	5
Overall Brand Image	How do your customers perceive the overall image of the Pepsi brand?					
Stakeholder Trust	How much trust do your customers have in the Pepsi brand?					
Consumption Perception	How positively do your customers perceive the Pepsi brand?					

Thank You

APPENDIX III
AUTHORISATION LETTER



**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY**

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27th August 2024

To Whom It May Concern;

RE: MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MBA)

Ms. Asinguza Flavia, Reg M22M15/ 024 is a student at Uganda Christian University, pursuing a degree of Master's in Business Administration.

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Master's degree, she is conducting a research study titled *Corporate social responsibility practices and perceived brand reputation of soft drink industries in Uganda. Case study of pepsi wholesalers in Mbarara- Uganda*

This communication therefore serves to formally request you to allow her access any information in your custody/organisation, which is relevant to her research .

Thank you for your cooperation on this matter

Yours Sincerely,

Dr. Henry Mugisha

Head of Department, Postgraduate Studies



7. Namuleme Hildah Matildah; J22M15/ 016: SUSTAINABLE BULKING OF COFFEE AND FARMERS' ADOPTION: A CASE OF PLANTING MATERIALS OF THE COFFEE WILT

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7.3.7 Form for Notice of intent to submit

The Head of Department of **School of business**
Uganda Christian University,

Thru:
The Supervisor


Dear Sir,

RE: NOTICE OF INTENT TO SUBMIT DISSERTATION/THESIS FOR EXAMINATION

I wish to notify your office that we intend to submit our dissertation entitled:
Corporate social responsibility practices and perceived brand reputation of soft drink companies in Uganda

for examination for the award of the degree of PhD/Doctor/Master:
Masters in Business Administration of Uganda
Christian University

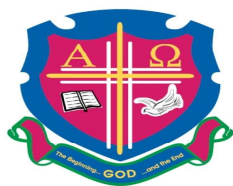
Name of Candidate: **ASINGUZA FLAVIA**

Signature:  Date:

Name of Supervisor: **Dr. DAN AYEBALE**

Signature: Date:

(TO BE FILLED AND SUBMITTED IN TRIPLICATE)



UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

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School of Research and Postgraduate Studies

7.3.8 Form for Submission of dissertation/thesis for examination

The Dean,
Faculty of **BUSINESS STUDIES**,
Uganda Christian University,
Thru:
The Supervisor

Dear Sir / Madam,

SUBMISSION OF DISSERTATION/THESIS FOR EXAMINATION

I hereby submit my dissertation/thesis entitled: **Corporate social responsibility practices and perceived brand reputation of soft drink companies in Uganda** for examination for the award of the degree of **Master** in **Business Administration** of Uganda Christian University.

Name of Candidate: **ASINGUZA FLAVIA** Reg No **M22M15/024**

Signature: 

Date:

Name of Supervisor: **Dr. DAN AYEBALE**

Signature: Date:

(TO BE FILLED AND SUBMITTED IN TRIPLICATE)