

**CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF  
CENTURY BOTTLING COMPANY (COCA COLA)-MBARARA BRANCH**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM, MEDIA AND  
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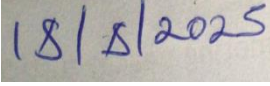
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## Declaration

I, **Nyebaza Shallot**, declare that this dissertation is my original and independent investigation. It has never been submitted to any institution of learning for an award. Omissions and commissions in this dissertation are entirely mine.

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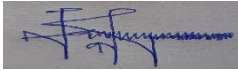
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## Approval

This dissertation has been done under my supervision and is now ready for submission to Uganda Christian University Academic Board.

Sign:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in blue ink. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Morris Jatim'.

DATE: 26/08/2025

MORRIS JATIM

UNIVERSITY SUPERVISOR

## **Dedication**

This research work is dedicated to my beloved parents who have always supported me through the course of my studies and career.

## **Acknowledgement**

Heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor Mr. Morris Jatim, every time I needed the guidance he rendered to me through the whole research.

Sincere thanks also go to my parents for all the support they rendered to me during these years.

I appreciate all the respondents that were the source of my information for enabling me to conduct my field research; your co-operation has made this research a success.

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May God bless you abundantly!

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## List of Acronyms

**CBC** Century Bottling Company

**CSR** Corporate Social Responsibility

**FGD** Focused Group Discussion

**NEMA** National Environment Management Authority

## **Abstract**

This study aimed at investigating the role of corporate social responsibility on public perceptions of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch. The study was guided by the following objectives; identifying and describing the key corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives implemented by Century Bottling Company, exploring the perception of the Mbarara Community regarding Century Bottling Company's CSR initiatives, and analysing the relationship between perceived CSR initiatives and the overall organizational image of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola) Mbarara branch.

The study employed the use of a descriptive research design where qualitative research approach was used. The method of data collection used during the study was interviews and focus group discussions. A sample of 20 customers of Century Bottling Company and 5 key informants who are the top management of Century Bottling Company was gotten using both simple random and purposive sampling methods.

The study findings revealed that Century Bottling Company's CSR interventions especially clean water projects; education assistance, health initiatives, and environmental interventions are highly valued by the citizens of Mbarara because they address pressing needs and establish social inclusion. Such interventions have played significantly in enhancing the image of the company in the eyes of the public, increasing trust, loyalty, and competitiveness. Nevertheless, further outreach to rural communities and more frequent CSR interventions are required to maintain positive attitudes during the entire year.

Last, the study recommended the need for Century Bottling Company to increase the frequency and visibility of its CSR activities, expand the coverage to rural areas, intensify collaboration with local stakeholders, utilize effective communication strategies to raise public awareness, and implement ongoing monitoring and feedback mechanisms to allow CSR activities to be sustained and become responsive to community needs.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter presents the background of the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, scope of the study, justification, significant of the study and limitations of the study.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has grown to be the core of the modern business trend, where the businesses are prone to be demanded to contribute towards public welfare over and above the reason of profitability (Aji, 2023). The practice of CSR is at the core of shifting stakeholders' views to see a company's consideration of social issues and environmental responsibilities (Afzali & Kim, 2021). This picture is most important to a company's image, customer retention, and sustainability in the long run as CSR initiatives build confidence and emotional connection among the populace (Pattanaik, 2024). Companies that openly explain their CSR initiatives enjoy a good image among the public and are considered ethical and responsible companies (Saputra & Hanutama, 2025). As such, CSR is not a charitable gift but a strategic communication strategy aimed at enhancing the corporate reputation and competitive position of an organisation (Alam & Islam, 2021).

Corporate image is public perception and relies heavily on the consistency, transparency, and congruence of CSR activities with community needs and organizational values (Chiu et al., 2025). CSR activities that find resonance in society and are well communicated create shared value between the firm and society (Lee, Bang & Shonk, 2021). Further, CSR can offset the negative effects of corporate crises

and secure public support during challenging times (Fazal & Aslam, 2023). Social media platforms and, more broadly, media in general have emerged highly influential channels for propagating CSR messaging and building online reputations that resonate and influence a firm's brand image (Ekpebu, 2024). The integration of CSR into public relations activities reflects a company's commitment and accountability to social growth, thus forming positive public images (Oparaugo, 2021).

Globally, CSR practices have developed greatly, especially in the United States, with firms such as Microsoft and Google investing heavily in environmental sustainability and educational programs in order to develop a good corporate reputation (Afzali & Kim, 2021). In European countries such as Sweden and Germany, CSR is embedded in corporate governance, and firms emphasize transparency, environmental sustainability, and ethical labor practices in order to establish a corporate reputation (Alam & Islam, 2021). Asian countries, in particular Japan and South Korea, also embraced CSR, and business firms like Toyota and Samsung have also employed it as a source of generating trust and securing the loyalty of stakeholders based on green and community-oriented actions (Nengsih et al., 2021). All these efforts indicate that in developed nations, CSR is a significant determinant of public opinion and brand equity (Chiu et al., 2025). Moreover, specific CSR communication strategies in those fields are culturally tailored to values, which facilitate authenticity and enhances consumer trust (Vuong & Bui, 2023).

In Africa, CSR has gained momentum with businesses valuing its contribution to corporate legitimacy and positive stakeholder relations (Wirba, 2024). In countries like South Africa and Nigeria, CSR is viewed as a forum where corporate contributions

toward socioeconomic progress and conflict resolution are anticipated (Olayinka & Odunayo, 2024). In Nigeria, for example, companies employ CSR initiatives directed toward education, health, and environmental sustainability to advance public acceptance (Ekpebu, 2024). In Sub-Saharan Africa, as in Ghana and Kenya, CSR initiatives are increasingly associated with local community development and public health interventions, with sponsorship from both corporate organizations and government policy (Skana & Gjerazi, 2024). Despite setbacks like weak regulatory frameworks and low levels of public awareness, CSR continues to be a force shaping public opinion through the demonstration of corporate responsibility and moral obligation (Hanaysha, 2021).

In Uganda, CSR is increasingly being adopted as a means of enhancing corporate reputation, particularly among large corporations such as Century Bottling Company (Coca-Cola), which operates the Mbarara Branch (Katamba & Wickert, 2021). The company has launched several CSR initiatives related to water conservation, youth empowerment, and waste management as a means of enhancing public image and strengthening community relations (Kakuba et al., 2023). These initiatives have assisted in raising the profile of the company in the region, with CSR increasingly becoming a key driver of public trust in Uganda's corporate sector (Gessa et al., 2024). Secondly, CSR practices in Uganda are guided by localized needs and expectations, in the sense that firms are forced to map their initiatives onto social concerns like poverty and environmental degradation (Katamba & Wickert, 2021). As CSR consciousness grows amongst the Ugandan populace, business firms that demonstrate genuine interest in

social responsibility are bound to enjoy the rewards of increased brand loyalty and public goodwill (Aji, 2023).

## **1.2 Problem statement**

Ideally, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives are expected to enhance the public's perception of an organization's image by fostering trust, loyalty, and positive brand associations (Alam & Islam, 2021). However, Century Bottling Company (Coca-Cola) has recently faced declining public perception due to concerns over environmental pollution, weak community engagement, and lack of transparency (Saputra & Hanutama, 2025). A local survey in southwestern Uganda revealed a 27% decline in public trust and a 32% decrease in perceived ethical conduct of beverage companies over the past three years (Kakuba et al., 2023). Furthermore, trust, transparency, and community responsiveness have deteriorated by 25%, 30%, and 28%, respectively (Gessa et al., 2024). If not addressed, these negative perceptions could damage brand loyalty, reduce consumer advocacy, and threaten long-term business sustainability (Pattanaik, 2024).

Although stakeholders such as the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA), civil society groups, and the company itself have promoted green campaigns and social investments, public image concerns persist (Katamba & Wickert, 2021). In addition, while several scholars like Chiu et al. (2025); Vuong & Bui (2023); Ekpebu (2024) have examined CSR's influence on consumer behavior, brand equity, and corporate profitability, there is no research specifically focusing on how CSR shapes public perceptions of organizational image in Uganda's beverage industry. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by investigating the role of corporate social

responsibility in shaping publics' perceptions of organization image with a specific focus on Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara Branch.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate the role of corporate social responsibility in shaping publics' perceptions of organization image: a case of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara Branch.

### **1.4 Objectives of the study**

- i. To identify and describe the key corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives implemented by Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola) Mbarara branch.
- ii. To explore the perception of the Mbarara Community regarding Century Bottling Company's CSR initiatives.
- iii. To analyse the relationship between perceived CSR initiatives and the overall organizational image of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)- Mbarara branch.

### **1.5 Research questions**

- i. What are the key corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives implemented by Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch?
- ii. To what extent do these CSR initiatives influence the public's perception of Century Bottling Company's organizational image in Mbarara?
- iii. How do the specific CSR activities contribute to a positive organizational image, according to the Mbarara community?

## **1.6 Justification**

The premise behind this study was derived from the expanding necessity of utilizing corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a tool for influencing people's views and enhancing organizational image, particularly where markets are intensely competitive like the soft drink business. Even with efforts organizations such as Century Bottling Company (Coca-Cola) put forth to be involved in CSR endeavors, the company brand image perception by the general public continues to be doubted, typically manifesting in skepticism or indifference. While previous studies by scholars like Chiu et al. (2025); Vuong & Bui (2023); Ekpebu (2024) have looked into CSR's influence on customer loyalty, purchasing behavior, and environmental performance, not much research has been done on how CSR really influences public images of an organization in local Ugandan contexts. This study filled this gap by examining CSR's role in shaping public opinion, presenting localized evidence that can inform corporate practices as well as communication models in comparable settings.

## **1.7 Scope of the study**

### **1.7.1 Geographical scope**

Geographically, the study was conducted in Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch located along Mbarara-Kampala road, Mbarara, Southwestern Uganda. Century Bottling Company was chosen as the case for this study because the company has actively implemented various CSR initiatives, yet there remains limited understanding of how these efforts influence public perception of its organizational image in the region.

### **1.7.2 Content Scope**

The study specifically focused on; identifying and describing the key corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives implemented by Century Bottling Company, exploring the perception of the Mbarara Community regarding Century Bottling Company's CSR initiatives, and analysing the relationship between perceived CSR initiatives and the overall organizational image of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)- Mbarara branch.

### **1.7.3 Time scope**

The research concentrated on academic publications from 2020 to 2025 since this period provided the most recent and relevant data reflecting current trends, corporate social responsibility practices, and public perception dynamics affecting the image of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola) in Mbarara.

### **1.8 Significance of the study**

The study will be instrumental in helping the management of Century Bottling Company understand how its corporate social responsibility activities influence public perception and overall brand image.

The study will also be useful to the policy makers in guiding their process of formulation of effective CSR policies that can enhance corporate reputation and foster community trust.

Furthermore, the study will be beneficial in amplifying the community's voice on how CSR activities impact their perception of corporate institutions like Century Bottling Company.

In addition, the study will be valuable to the public relations practitioners in shaping strategic communication approaches that align CSR efforts with public expectations and image-building goals.

Lastly, the study will be of use to the future researchers/ academicians as it will act as a significant reference point for future academic inquiries into CSR and public perception, filling existing research gaps and contributing to scholarly literature.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the existing literature put forward by different scholars and personalities on the role of corporate social responsibility in shaping publics' perceptions of organization image as well as critically analyzing the deviations in the explanations to find out the research gap in the study variables. Literature was reviewed objectively by starting with definition of concepts followed by reviewing of objectives. Sources like newspaper articles, magazines, encyclopedia and books related to the topic were used.

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

#### **2.1.1 The Agenda-Setting Theory**

The theory that underpinned this study is the Agenda-Setting Theory, developed by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw in 1972. The theory was formed from their initial study on the 1968 U.S. presidential election wherein they theorized that mass media heavily determine the public agenda through selecting those issues which they deem important and covering them frequently (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2014). The central idea of this theory is that the media will not tell people what to think, but what to think about. In mass communication, this theory explains the role of the media in shaping perceptions and opinions by giving priority to some stories (Hao, 2022).

The most significant principles of Agenda-Setting Theory are media salience, or how the issue is presented as being prominent and frequent; accessibility, or the more people are exposed to the information, the more they will find it to be significant; and

media framing, as it determines the way the issue is framed (Mohammed et al., 2022). Assumptions in the theory are that audiences are passive and must wait for the media to tell them what is important, and media outlets provide homogeneous content. The theory also assumes a one-way influence of the media agenda on the public agenda. The assumptions therefore find the theory very applicable where media coverage significantly shapes what is perceived of an organization and activities within the organization (Muskita & Putri, 2023).

However, the theory is limited, especially in that it underestimates the audience's ability to critically evaluate information and does not provide for personal experience or interpersonal communication that can also influence perceptions (Wang et al., 2023). Additionally, in the social media and digital age, where audiences can select and filter information, the traditional top-down agenda-setting effect has fragmented. The theory also assumes a rather homogenous media landscape, one that perhaps doesn't always obtain in the richness of sources provided by modern media landscapes (McCombs & Valenzuela, 2014).

With such constraints, however, the Agenda-Setting Theory is very much relevant to this research on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and public image of Century Bottling Company. CSR activities tend to be reported in the media, and how this is covered greatly affects the company's image perceived by the public (Hao, 2022). As long as CSR activities are covered widely and are presented in positive terms, it is likely that these will help create a good public image. Conversely, negative or limited media coverage can generate public indifference or criticism. Thus, there was a sound basis for this theory to be applied in investigating how the public image of the company's

corporate image is shaped by the communication of CSR activities (Muskita & Putri, 2023).

## **2.2 Corporate social responsibility activities implemented by companies**

Environmental sustainability initiatives. The majority of companies conduct CSR activities through environmental sustainability initiatives such as managing waste, reducing carbon, and using green energy. Such initiatives improve the company's green image and can act as a point of competitiveness (Alam & Islam, 2021). For instance, organizations that explicitly reduce their environmental detriments by undertaking activities like deforestation or green packaging create a more positive perception among stakeholders (Saputra & Hanutama, 2025). These initiatives become unavoidable not only for the sake of compliance but also in a bid to build public trust and enhance brand values (Pattanaik, 2024).

Community development initiatives. Yet another CSR activity of major importance is community development, where corporations contribute to society in the form of health camps, clean drinking water supply, road construction, and education (Katamba & Wickert, 2021). Such initiatives allow corporations to demonstrate their commitment to social responsibility and increase corporate reputation within communities (Katamba & Wickert, 2021). As posited by Kakuba et al. (2023), when companies invest in the host community, they establish goodwill and long-term relationships with stakeholders, which are indispensable for sustainable operations in such territories.

Scholarships and educational assistance. Provision of assistance to education through the provision of scholarships, provision of learning materials, and construction of schools is an everyday CSR strategy. These interventions are human capital construct factors and cast the company in a socially responsible light that invests in the future generation (Vuong & Bui, 2023). Furthermore, these practices were also shown to have a wide influence on people's perception of brand reputation and organizational ethics (Nengsih et al., 2021). These education-based CSR interventions increase confidence and customer loyalty, especially if targeted towards the poor community.

Employee well-being and volunteering. Globally, CSR is attained in businesses by investing in programs of employee well-being such as healthcare, insurance, training, and workplace diversity. The activities raise job satisfaction and are deemed genuine CSR practices that improve internal branding (Afzali & Kim, 2021). Additionally, employee engagement in volunteerism enhances corporate reputation and provides employees with a sense of purpose and relevance (Vuong & Bui, 2023). Such activities reflect ethical leadership and are typically communicated as a part of the company's value proposition.

Health and safety campaigns. Some companies practice CSR by initiating public health campaigns such as HIV/AIDS awareness, free medical checkups, and road safety sensitization. Such activities benefit communities as well as align the company image with care, compassion, and social consciousness (Saputra & Hanutama, 2025). In the opinion of Lee, Bang, and Shonk (2021), companies that routinely sponsor health programs are seen as contributing to public well-being, augmenting corporate reputation and customer loyalty.

Ethical consumer protection and marketing. Ethical CSR actions such as truthfulness in advertisement, openness in labeling products, and safeguarding consumers' rights are part of CSR. If organizations place consumer protection at the top of their agenda, they gain consumers' trust and establish long-term consumers' relationship (Olayinka & Odunayo, 2024). This generates brand equity and augments public confidence, especially among industries with a high level of consumer vulnerability (Chiu et al., 2025). Ethical practices in marketing assure the general populace that an entity is committed to ethical business apart from profits.

Empowering marginalized groups. Empowering marginalized populations such as the disabled, women, and out-of-school youths is an excellent CSR instrument. This includes creating employment opportunities, offering specialized training, and fostering inclusive business practices (Wirba, 2024). Aji (2023) believes that such targeted CSR initiatives enhance social justice and a positive corporate image by exhibiting empathy and equity. Additionally, when CSR is targeted towards vulnerable populations, it resonates deeply with the public and enhances perception of societal value (Ekpebu, 2024).

### **2.3 Public's perception of company involvement in corporate social responsibility**

The way a company publicizes its CSR activities to a great extent shapes public perception, strategic communication enhancing the perceived legitimacy and sincerity of the company's intentions (Saputra & Hanutama, 2025). When CSR is publicized freely and frequently, especially through media and storytelling, it leads to more positive public meanings and greater affective engagement with the brand (Ekpebu, 2024). This

would mean that companies ought not only to practice CSR but also to prioritize communicating it to the public in order to establish a positive brand reputation.

Authenticity of CSR communication plays an important role in building public trust and attitude towards a company's social responsibility initiatives (Afzali & Kim, 2021). Consumers will be more optimistic and loyal towards those firms that they perceive to be genuinely committed to societal welfare, compared to those perceived to undertake CSR for publicity or compliance (Aji, 2023). When CSR actions mirror the firm's key values and practices, public perception is more favorable and enduring.

Public perception of CSR directly affects the corporate reputation of a firm, and stakeholders are likely to link social contribution visibility to corporate responsibility and integrity (Kakuba et al., 2023). For instance, studies show that Uganda's commercial banks have improved reputations and loyalty from customers where CSR initiatives are needs-driven and communicated effectively (Katamba & Wickert, 2021). Thus, CSR is not merely a philanthropic tool but a strategic instrument in building long-term corporate reputation.

The media and ethical journalism play a fundamental role in shaping public opinion regarding CSR initiatives, whereby biased or unethical reporting by the media distorts the true motive for CSR action (Olayinka & Odunayo, 2024). Fair and objective media reports can enhance the credibility of CSR actions and establish positive public perception through the reflection of actual impact rather than perceived intentions (Skana & Gjerazi, 2024). Responsible media practices are therefore paramount to ensuring that CSR is portrayed fairly and public trust is not eroded.

Public reactions to CSR initiatives vary across industries, with some industries like sports, banking, and environmental management differing in the degree of scrutiny and stakeholder interest (Lee et al., 2021). For sports, for instance, the alignment between CSR and the firm's core business significantly affects fan and consumer perceptions of the value and authenticity of such initiatives (Chiu et al., 2025). This suggests that the success of CSR in shaping public opinion is also dependent on how relevant and timely the activity is to the industry.

Environmental responsibility is a key facet of CSR that has an important role in shaping public opinion, especially at a time when environmental consciousness is heightened (Alam & Islam, 2021). When companies make conspicuous and significant environmental moves such as carbon offsetting or investing in renewables the public is going to view them as forward-looking and socially responsible (Pattanaik, 2024). However, unless followed through with transparent communication and long-term follow-through commitment, this could be greeted with cynicism and accusations of green-washing.

#### **2.4 How corporate social responsibility initiatives shape public attitudes toward company brand image**

Corporate Social Responsibility has emerged as a strategic brand instrument that organizations use to influence public perception of their brand image positively. Saputra and Hanutama (2025) argue that CSR is not only a benevolent act but also a communicative strategy that companies use to foster a socially responsible image consistent with the expectations of stakeholders. In the same vein, Waldron (2022) underscores that as much as CSR is mistaken for public relations, it serves a special

function in establishing long-term trust and credibility that goes a long way toward influencing brand reputation.

Green CSR activities heavily influence consumers' attitudes and perceptions through the presentation of a green corporate image that fuels brand loyalty. Alam and Islam (2021) demonstrate that when companies adopt green practices as part of their CSR, it improves their public image and provides a green competitive advantage. Pattanaik (2024) supports this by stating that public trust in corporate environmental initiatives is significantly influenced by the extent to which these efforts are justified, with open communication being critical to the development of positive attitudes.

The specificity and channels of CSR communications play a significant role in determining how the public responds to and interprets a firm's brand image. Chiu et al. (2025) found that when messaging is extremely specific and closely aligned with the central values of the firm, consumers respond more positively to CSR initiatives, building stronger brand image as well as behavioral intentions. Lee et al. (2021) also pointed out that the choice of communication channels, such as social media and mainstream media, influences the reception of CSR messages in forming the overall image of the firm in consumers' mind.

Authentic CSR behavior is crucial in shaping favorable public attitudes because fake or performative CSR harms brand image. Afzali and Kim (2021) note that CSR perception as authentic facilitates higher consumer trust and favorable brand perceptions and serves as a mediator between public opinion and CSR practice. Aji (2023) also, through a systematic review, determined that authentic CSR activities

those perceived to be altruistic, not promotional in nature build a more credible, stronger brand image in public minds.

The convergence of CSR and public relations enhances company credibility and brand power through the reinforcement of social commitment messages. Oparaugo (2021) contends that effective public relations serve as a bridge between CSR initiatives and stakeholder awareness, building a unifying brand image that is socially and ethically responsive. Gessa et al. (2024) build on this by demonstrating the manner in which public relations in sectors like wildlife conservation articulate CSR in a positive way to build public goodwill, trust, and positive brand impression.

CSR activities also shape the attitudes of employees towards the company, making them champions of the brand who contribute towards outside perceptions of the brand. Vuong and Bui (2023) proved that CSR enhances the employees' perception regarding their firm's brand reputation and equity, thus motivating them to promote a good company image. Nengsih et al. (2021) also proved that organizational trust created through CSR activities translates to external trust, constructing the brand image in the overall market.

## **2.5 Summary of literature and literature gap**

The reviewed literature reveals that corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities ranging from environmental sustainability to employee welfare and ethical marketing significantly influence public perception and brand image when communicated effectively and authentically. The Agenda-Setting Theory supports this link by illustrating how media coverage of CSR shapes public awareness and opinion.

However, despite extensive literature on the influence of CSR on public perception, a notable gap exists in understanding how these perceptions are shaped specifically within local Ugandan contexts, such as the operations of Century Bottling Company, particularly in light of modern media fragmentation and public skepticism toward corporate motives.

## **Chapter Three: Methodology**

### **3.0 Introduction**

In this chapter, the researcher describes how the study was conducted. Inclusive is the research design, the study area and the population, sampling procedures, sample size and composition, data collection methods, data processing, data analysis methods and ethical considerations.

### **3.1 Research design**

In this study, a descriptive design was used to explore to what degree corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributes to an organization's perceptions of public image, in this case, Century Bottling Company (Coca-Cola), Mbarara Branch. The design was appropriate since it leaves space for scientific and precise description of the manner in which the CSR activities impact perceptions without altering any variables. Through this descriptive design, the researcher was in a position to gather and examine data concerning the type of CSR practices the firm undertakes and how individuals perceive them. It was best utilized when determining prevailing trends, opinions, and relationship between CSR and corporate reputation, thus giving an unambiguous view of prevailing organizational practices and individuals' perspectives.

Besides, qualitative research was employed in the study, most suitable for achieving indepth insights into perception, attitudes, and experiences towards CSR initiatives and organizational reputation. This approach entailed the use of focus group discussions and interviews among self-selected public members/consumers of Century Bottling Company and top management officials such as the Public Relations Manager, the Marketing Manager, and other officers pertinent to the study respectively. With

qualitative research, the study gathered rich descriptive data that are reflective of personal experience and subjective meaning, which enabled the researcher to analyze how CSR is conceptualized, enacted, and staged, and how the processes affect the public's perception of the company's reputation.

### **3.2 Study area**

This study was conducted in Century Bottling Company (CBC)-Mbarara branch located along Mbarara-Kampala road, Mbarara, Southwestern Uganda. Century Bottling Company was chosen as the case for this study because the company has actively implemented various CSR initiatives, yet there remains limited understanding of how these efforts influence public perception of its organizational image in the region.

### **3.3 Study population and sample size**

Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) defined population as the group of people with one or more characteristics in common. The population included; the customers of Century Bottling Company products and according to the company's annual report (2024), the company has more than 50,000 customers in Mbarara and these were included in the study as the study population. The study population also included the top management of Century Bottling Company particularly; the Public Relations Manager, the Safety, Health, Environment, and Quality (SHEQ) Manager, the Marketing Manager, the Employee Relations Specialist, and the Finance Manager totaling to 5 key informants. However, the researcher selected 20 customers of CBC as the sample size. This was further represented in the table below;

**Table 1: Showing sample size and sampling methods**

| Category of respondents | Sample size | Sampling methods       |
|-------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| Customers of CBC        | 20          | Simple random sampling |
| Top management of CBC   | 5           | Purposive sampling     |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>25</b>   |                        |

Source: CBC (2025)

### 3.4 Sampling method

To select the 20 customers of Century Bottling Company, simple random sampling was employed. This guaranteed that every customer in the target population has an equal and independent chance of being selected, thereby eliminating bias and enhancing the generalizability of the findings. The researcher drew a sampling frame from customer lists and retail stores supplied by the company and randomly selected participants using techniques such as the lottery technique or random numbers. This was suitable because it captures varied customer views and experiences of the company's CSR activities.

On the other hand, purposive sampling was used for the top management respondents. This non-probability technique involves setting individuals with the greatest information about and proximity to the objectives of the research. The Strategic Insights are informed by managers such as the Public Relations Manager, SHEQ Manager, and other corresponding managers. They had in-depth, qualitative data that deepened quantitative findings framing, and purposive sampling enabled expert views best to be gained.

### **3.5 Sources of data**

Primary data was gathered using interviews and focus group discussions on the basis of the research hypothesis, which were presented to respondents to express their views, opinions, and observations. Primary data helped the researcher in collecting information for the specific purposes of their study. In essence, the questions that the researcher asked were tailored to elicit the data with the study.

### **3.6 Data collection tools**

#### **3.6.1 Focus group discussion guide**

The study utilized focus group discussions (FGDs) to obtain data from Century Bottling Company customers. 20 members of the public, being customers of the company, were purposively selected to take part. They were split into two FGDs with each having 10 members. The FGDs were facilitated by a semi-structured discussion guide to elicit the participants' perceptions of the company's CSR activities and how the activities impact its corporate image. The discussions facilitated the free flow of issues, exchanging ideas, and expansions on each other's opinions, thereby producing rich, thick qualitative data. The FGD method is appropriate for this study because it facilitates interaction, captures variation in views, and provides information that cannot be obtained from single responses. The sessions were audio-recorded with the consent of participants and carefully taken notes to ensure accuracy and completeness of the information.

#### **3.6.2 Interview guide**

In the case of CBC's top management, a face-to-face or virtual interview guide was used. The tool was suited because it facilitates in-depth questioning of key matters

related to planning, execution, and communication of CSR programs at the company. The interview guide included semi-structured questions that provide guidance while still being flexible for probing and follow-up, in order to produce rich qualitative findings. This approach was best suited to senior managers as it is adaptable enough to suit their busy schedules and allow recording detailed, experiential responses that add richness to overall analysis.

### **3.7 Data collection procedure**

The researcher obtained an introductory letter from the Faculty of Education, Arts and Media Studies in Uganda Christian University, after which she sought permission from the different respondents from Century Bottling Company and the public. The researcher approached various respondents to conduct interviews and focus group discussions.

### **3.8 Data analysis, presentation and interpretation**

#### **3.8.1 Qualitative data analysis**

Qualitative information gathered through interviewing the management of Century Bottling Company and focus group discussions with members of the public was analyzed using thematic content analysis. Responses were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and coded into meaningful coding schemes. Analysis involved identifying patterns, categories, and common themes regarding CSR planning, enactment, and effects on organizational reputation. The identified themes were linked to study objectives and research questions. Responses of both management and public participants were utilized in presenting findings as a means of emphasizing points and

gaining true insights into the strategic significance of CSR in public image perception of the organization.

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

**Informed consent.** In this research, informed consent was obtained from all the participants ensuring they comprehend the purpose of the research, the methods applied, and that they agree voluntarily. The participants were informed about their freedom to withdraw from the research at any point without consequences. Written consent was obtained from the key informants and verbal consent from focus group discussion participants.

**Confidentiality and privacy.** Confidentiality and privacy of the participants was maintained throughout the study. Personal identifiers were removed from the data, and responses were stored securely so that they could not be accessed inappropriately. Data of the participants was used only for research purposes and was not disclosed publicly without permission.

**Voluntary participation.** Voluntary participation was used in the study. No participant was forced to participate, and they were guaranteed that their participation or lack of participation would not impact the relationship they have with the researcher or any institution with which they are involved.

**Respect for participants.** Respect to all the participants was ensured in the study, particularly the way their experience and views were portrayed. The researcher never directed the answers of the participants during the interview and the focus group discussion.

Minimizing harm. The researcher sought to minimize physical, emotional, or psychological harm to participants. Any sensitive issues raised during the study were dealt with sensitively, and support was provided if necessary. Participants were told that their wellbeing was important throughout the research process.

Transparency and honesty. Honesty and transparency were maintained by the researcher with participants over the study's objectives and the manner in which the results were utilized. Participants were informed that results would be made public but that their identities remained confidential.

### **3.10 Limitations and delimitations of the study**

Some respondents were not willing to provide information because of being suspicious of where the information would be taken. This was solved through the nice remarkable reputation in the study context as a learning institution and also obtaining an introductory letter from the university.

The researcher was limited by funds that were needed to facilitate the research such as motivating the respondents, printing fees and even daily transport to the organization to collect data. However the researcher used self-initiatives and strategies to mobilize financial assistance from family.

## Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Interpretation and Discussion

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the results of analysis that has been done to look at the specific objectives of the study and in relation to the reviewed literature. The study was carried out using focus group discussions with the customers of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch and interviews with the key informants who are the top management of Century Bottling Company particularly; the Public Relations Manager, Safety, Health, Environment, and Quality Manager, Marketing Manager, Employee Relations Specialist, and the Finance Manager. The findings are presented with the help of tables for purposes of clarity and interpretation.

### 4.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

This section presents the general background information about the respondents in relation to their gender, age, and level of education of the customers of CBC as shown in the table below;

**Table 2: Background Information about the respondents**

| Item               | Description  | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| Gender             | Male         | 11        | 55.0           |
|                    | Female       | 9         | 45.0           |
|                    | <b>Total</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |
| Age                | 20-29 years  | 10        | 50.0           |
|                    | 30-39 years  | 7         | 35.0           |
|                    | 40-49 years  | 3         | 15.0           |
|                    | <b>Total</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>100.0</b>   |
| Level of education | Primary      | 4         | 20.0           |

|  |              |           |              |
|--|--------------|-----------|--------------|
|  | Secondary    | 7         | 35.0         |
|  | Tertiary     | 9         | 45.0         |
|  | <b>Total</b> | <b>20</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Source: *Primary data*

The findings show that the majority of the respondents were males, represented by 55.0% of Century Bottling Company customers, whereas females took up 45.0%. This is just showing a slightly higher male representation in the study than female representation.

The findings also revealed that 50% of the respondents were aged 20-29 years, followed by those between 30-39 years represented by 35.0%, with the least being 40-49 years, with a share of 15.0%. This suggests that young customers form the greater part of the company's clients in Mbarara.

Lastly, the largest percentage of the respondents have at least attained tertiary education, represented by 45.0%, followed by those who have at least attained secondary education, represented by 35.0%, whereas the lowest percentage have at least attained primary education represented by 20.0%. This would imply that a large number of the company's clients are rather well-educated.

**4.2 The key CSR initiatives implemented by Century Bottling Company-Mbarara**

**4.2.1 CSR initiatives implemented by Century Bottling Company in Mbarara**

From the focus group discussions with customers of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch, plus interviews with key informants who are the top

management of Century Bottling Company, they were asked to give their views on the key corporate social responsibility initiatives implemented by Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch and their responses were as follows;

**Environmental conservation initiatives:** Members of the FGDs indicated that Century Bottling Company has engaged in tree-planting activities across Mbarara in an attempt to promote environmental conservation. They added that the company typically partners with local schools and community groups for these activities. Along the same lines, the management key informants highlighted the company's "World without Waste" program, which focuses on recycling plastic bottles and reducing waste pollution in the region. Both groups agreed that these ventures have given the company a positive impression of environmental responsibility.

**Water access and conservation projects:** Some of the clients in the FGDs indicated that the company has enabled the construction of boreholes and water tanks in some of Mbarara's rural communities, improving clean water accessibility. In the same vein, management interviewees confirmed that water stewardship is among the key areas of CSR focus, adding that the company also sensitizes communities on water conservation. Both perspectives identified this intervention as a direct response to water shortages at the local level.

**Community health programs:** The FGD members indicated having seen the company sponsor medical camps, especially during health awareness days, and donate materials like handwashing facilities to schools. In the same perspective, the top management interviewees pointed out their direct engagement in public health

campaigns, like during the COVID-19 pandemic, where they distributed sanitizers and masks. Both groups agreed that such initiatives enhance the company's image as a health-conscious organization.

**Education support and scholarships:** From the FGDs, participants observed that Century Bottling Company has been offering scholarships to underprivileged but bright students in Mbarara and contributing educational materials to local schools. In the same vein, management informants indicated that sponsorship of education is one of the long-term CSR commitments, aimed at empowering the youth and building a future skilled workforce. Both parties mentioned this intervention as a strategy for earning community trust.

**Sports sponsorship:** The other visible CSR activity cited by FGD participants is the company's sponsorship of local football tournaments and athletics events. They added that such events not only promote sport but also unite the community. The management corroborated this and stated that the sponsorship of sports is one of their brand engagement activities through which the company is able to connect with the youth while promoting healthy living.

**Employment and skills training:** Consumers in FGDs liked the company's periodic skill development training programs, e.g., small business management seminars for retail vendors of Coca-Cola products. Management, on the other hand, noted that apart from direct employment, they conduct vendor capacity-building as a means of expanding the value chain. Both groups agreed that this activity economically rewards the company and society.

Waste management and clean-up drives: Members of the FGD indicated that Century Bottling Company has regular clean-up exercises in Mbarara town during which they particularly pick up plastic trash. Managers also confirmed that the exercises are part of their environmental sustainability efforts, with the trash collected being taken for recycling. Both groups recognized such efforts as fostering a clean and healthy environment. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

*“.....We have seen them plant trees in schools and public spaces, which makes the place greener and more beautiful.....”* **FDG Participant**

*“.....Our priority is water stewardship; we make sure communities have safe and clean water because it’s essential for life.....”* **Public Relations Manager**

*“.....They support our youth through football tournaments, and that brings people together in a positive way.....”* **FDG Participant**

#### **4.2.2 How the company decides which CSR activities to implement**

From the focus group discussions with customers of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch, they were asked to give their views on how the company decides which CSR activities to implement and their responses were as follows;

The key informants revealed that the company prioritizes CSR activities based on a comprehensive analysis of the needs and issues of the community. It achieves this by engaging with local leaders, community associations, and civil society groups to gather data on the most critical social, environmental, and economic issues that affect

the region. Through this, the CSR initiatives of the company are relevant and efficient, addressing real issues of the Mbarara community.

Management ensures that CSR activities are purposeful and integrated with the company's long-term goals and mission and core values. The emphasis is given to activities that boost sustainability, conserve the environment, and enhance social welfare, establishing the company's reputation as an ethical corporate citizen. This integration ensures that CSR activities are coherent and improves the reputation of the company at the global and local levels.

CSR planning also draws upon strategic business objectives that are designed to create shared value. The company looks for places where social benefit and business interest intersect, creating stronger customer, employee, and community stakeholder relationships. In so doing, CSR not only continues to be philanthropic but also strengthens brand loyalty and community goodwill.

The company regularly reviews its previous CSR initiatives to evaluate their success and glean insights from the failures. Through this loop of feedback, more efficient, scalable, and sustainable future initiatives are selected. Through lessons learned, the company maximizes its social return and resource utilization.

Financial sustainability is a key determinant of which CSR projects are pursued. The company evaluates the cost and resources at hand so that commitments are within limits and projects are achievable well without impacting operational stability. Extensive financial planning serves to ensure long-term CSR sustainability.

Furthermore, regulatory requirements and industry benchmarks are considered by the company in selecting its CSR portfolio. Local law compliance and conformity with global CSR standards enhance the authenticity of initiatives and demonstrates the company's commitment to ethical business practice. It also mitigates reputational consequences due to non-compliance.

Finally, stakeholder engagement is central to decision-making. The company engages with workers, customers, and partners regularly to obtain multiple opinions on CSR issues. The participatory approach constructs openness, accountability, and confidence, which are essential for successful CSR implementation and positive public opinion. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

*“.....We always start by listening to the community, if an initiative doesn't respond to a real need, it won't have lasting value.....”* Key Informant

*“.....CSR for us is about finding the sweet spot where community priorities and our company values meet.....”* Key Informant

#### **4.2.3 Most impactful CSR initiative to the community**

From the focus group discussions with customers of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch, they were asked to give their views on which of the initiatives they think have had the biggest impact on the community and their responses were as follows;

Majority of the focus group discussion participants agreed that the clean water supply and road construction community development activities have had the most glaring and tangible impact on the community. They noted that these interventions are directly improving daily life and access to basic services and making a tangible contribution to residents' health as well as mobility.

A number of the respondents also highlighted the education support programs such as scholarships and the provision of learning materials as strongly influential. They clarified that investing in education yields long-term dividends by equipping the youth with knowledge and skills, hence contributing to the future development of the community.

Health and safety campaigns were also recognized as relevant, especially those for HIV/AIDS awareness and free medical check-ups. Beneficiaries valued how these services increase health awareness and provide vital services to marginalized groups and enhance overall well-being of the community.

Environmental sustainability efforts, such as green energy and waste management, were mentioned to have an impact by some respondents. They appreciated the contribution of the company to a healthier environment and the fight against climate change, which is also good for the community's health and future sustainability.

Well-being schemes among employees were viewed in a positive light, although participants believed that they worked less visibly in the community compared to other

initiatives. They did, however, appreciate that these projects result in an inspired workforce that can then provide better service and public engagement.

Lastly, empowering marginalized groups was seen as a major undertaking, especially programs that involve women and persons with disabilities. The participants communicated that such initiatives promote social inclusion and equity, leading to the improvement of livelihoods and the reduction of vulnerabilities at the grassroots level. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

*“.....The clean water projects are what we see every day, they have really changed how people live and stay healthy.....”* FDG Participant

*“.....Giving scholarships to our children show the company cares about our future, and that means a lot to us.....”* FDG Participant

### **4.3 The perception of the Mbarara Community regarding CBC’s CSR initiatives**

#### **4.3.1 Community perception of Century Bottling Company’s CSR initiatives**

From the focus group discussions with customers of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch, plus interviews with key informants who are the top management of Century Bottling Company, they were asked to give their perceptions on how they would describe the community’s general view of Century Bottling Company’s CSR initiatives and their responses were as follows;

Participants in both the focus group discussions and interviews typically revealed that the community tends to view Century Bottling Company's CSR activities positively. They further stated that most of them appreciate the company's regular offering of

assistance in education, healthcare, and environmental protection. Likewise, the key informants noted that the good reputation stems from the company's consistent adoption of projects whose needs address existing concerns in the community.

FGD participants frequently said that the community has confidence in CBC since the CSR activities can be observed and are beneficial. Interviewed managers also stated that visibility and direct public interaction have strengthened the company's relationship with the surrounding residents, making CSR efforts easier to comprehend and appreciate.

There was also a shared view among both groups that CSR activities have made CBC more credible in Mbarara. FGD respondents explained that people generally associate the brand with social responsibility and philanthropy. In the same manner, key informants pointed out that the company's image has improved since CSR is now included in its business strategy and is not viewed as an ad hoc activity.

Some of the other participants noted that while appreciation is wonderful, there is even less awareness of the full range of CSR activities. Members of the FGD stated that residents only know of some high-profile projects. Key informants corroborated, however, that communication gaps sometimes limit community knowledge of lesser-publicized projects.

Both the groups of respondents agreed that the positive response of the community is also facilitated by the company's accommodation in implementing CSR. The focus group participants observed that CBC tends to ally with local leaders and communities, making them feel ownership. Similarly, managers said that involving the

community in planning and implementation ensures that projects are more appropriate and accepted.

The other frequent observation from the FGDs is that CBC's CSR efforts are viewed as an answer to short and long-term needs. Examples include timely relief during times of crisis and such ongoing programs as protecting the environment. Key informants also mentioned that balancing timely relief and sustainable efforts guarantees that goodwill is consistent.

Finally, both the interviewers and the focus group members underscored that while most of the feedback is positive, there are occasional requests for more expansion of CSR coverage to more remote areas. The FGD members stressed that people from outside Mbarara town sometimes feel left behind, and the managers cited the same as a problem they are trying to resolve. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

*“.....People here generally see Coca-Cola as a company that gives back, not just one that sells products.....”* **FDG Participant**

*“.....Our CSR work is well-received because we make it part of our culture, not just a side project.....”* **Key Informant**

*“.....Some people only know about a few big projects; if they knew the full picture, the appreciation would be even higher.....”* **FDG Participant**

#### **4.3.2 Feedback received from the community about these CSR initiatives**

From the focus group discussions with customers of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch, they were asked to give their views on the feedback they

have received from the community about these CSR initiatives and their responses were as follows;

The key informants noted that majority of the people in the community have enjoyed the continued investment by the company in social development projects. They are grateful that the projects are not a one-time handout but a continued effort that addresses different segments of society, such as youths, farmers, and schools. The company has also been commended by society for its conservation efforts as an environmentalist. Tree planting, waste disposal, and water conservation campaigns have improved the immediate environment and sensitized the public to sustainability.

The majority of residents have indicated that the training courses and skill development opportunities offered by the firm have had a lasting impact. The programs are reported to improve employability and provide avenues for independence, particularly among youths. Local leaders have observed that the company's support towards education, especially through provision of learning materials and infrastructure enhancements, has had the direct impact of enhancing better learning environment and boosted school enrollment.

There has also been commendation for the fast response of the company to community needs in times of emergency. For example, during health emergencies or natural disasters, the company has been praised for responding quickly with relief supplies, cash contributions, or transport support. Some people from the community have indicated that the CSR activities have made them more loyal and trustworthy towards the company's brand. They feel that the company is actually a member of the

society rather than just a firm conducting business in the area. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

*“.....People see our presence beyond the bottle; they see us planting trees, building classrooms, and showing up when they need us most.....”* Key Informant

**Informant**

*“.....The feedback we hear most often is that our projects are not just symbolic gestures but real interventions that change lives.....”* Key Informant

#### **4.3.3 Effectiveness of CSR activities in meeting Mbarara community needs**

From the focus group discussions with customers of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch, they were asked to give their opinions on how well these CSR activities address the needs of the Mbarara community and their responses were as follows;

Majority of CBC customers expressed that the CSR activities of the company have had a real impact in the Mbarara community, particularly on clean water projects and solid waste management, which they felt tackle key environmental and health concerns. Several of the participants stated that the support programs for schools, such as donations to schools and scholarships, have significantly helped poor children, thus providing long-term development to the community.

Others indicated that sports sponsorship and youth empowerment programs have provided platforms for young people to demonstrate their talent, gain self-confidence, and avoid risky behavior. A few respondents indicated that the company's health-

focused programs, including medical camps and public awareness programs on health, have improved access to primary health care, especially in rural areas.

A few of the respondents mentioned that although the initiatives are working, there could be improvement in penetrating more rural and distant areas as they appear to be primarily in urban and semi-urban centers. There were some remarks also made on appreciating the initiative on the part of the company to partner with local organizations and government agencies so that these CSR programs reach farther and are more sustainable. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

*“.....The clean water projects have reduced cases of waterborne diseases here. It’s one of the most practical things they could have done for Mbarara.....”*

**FDG Participant**

*“.....Their scholarships are changing lives, children who could have dropped out now have a chance to finish school.....”* **FDG Participant**

#### **4.4 Relationship between perceived CSR initiatives and the overall organizational image of Century Bottling Company (CBC)**

##### **4.4.1 Influence of CSR activities on the image of CBC**

From the focus group discussions with customers of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch, plus interviews with key informants who are the top management of Century Bottling Company, they were asked to give their perceptions on how the company’s CSR activities affect its public image in Mbarara and their responses were as follows;

Several respondents from both the focus group discussions and interviews expressed that CSR activities have significantly enhanced Century Bottling Company's public image in Mbarara. Customer FGD participants asserted that activities such as community clean-up campaigns, youth sports sponsorships, and school water programs provide a very good impression of goodwill, while management interviewees further asserted that the activities make the company seem socially responsible and humane. This shared understanding means that CSR is a public demonstration of the company's commitment to society.

Both the managers and the customers emphasized that CSR activities have increased trust and loyalty to the organization. FGD members counted that people get to become more connected to brands that give back to their communities, whereas the managers mentioned that CSR has helped maintain customer loyalty amidst competition. This refers to the fact that not only does CSR build image but also strengthens long-term relationships with the public.

Both groups of respondents also emphasized that CSR activities make the company more credible. FGD members stated that tangible projects like installing water tanks in schools demonstrate the company's commitment to follow through, and interviewees agreed, stating that it helps balance negative publicity and establishes corporate reputation.

According to both perspectives, CSR was seen as a vehicle for differentiation of the brand. FGD participants held that Century Bottling Company is differentiated from other companies because it openly exhibits its community involvement, whereas

managers also noted that their portfolio of CSR differentiates them among beverage companies and gives them a competitive advantage in Mbarara.

Some members of the FGD mentioned that CSR programs humanize the company as it is established that it cares more about people than producing goods, and interviewees validated this view by explaining that CSR programs make the public become aware that CBC is a partner of community development, not just a profit-maker.

In a couple of cases, there were admissions by customers as well as managers that while the image has been enhanced by CSR, there are calls for greater and more frequent initiatives. FGD respondents mentioned that some activities are seasonal and possibly would not retain their positive image year-round, and similarly, management agreed that it is important to sustain the momentum to keep high public visibility.

Overall, the FGD and interview respondents agreed that CSR interventions are a primary driving force behind Century Bottling Company's good reputation in Mbarara. The alignment of customer perceptions and management intentions is a testament to the strategic significance of CSR in brand positioning and the establishment of reputation. Some of the selected respondents reported that,

*“.....When a company invests in our community, we see it as more than just a business, it becomes part of our lives.....”* **FDG Participant**

*“.....Our CSR programs are not just projects; they are relationship-building tools that strengthen our bond with the people of Mbarara.....”* **Key**

**Informant**

*“.....Seeing the company support schools and cleaning the town makes me proud to be their customer.....”* **FDG Participant**

## **Chapter Five: Summary of Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes all findings reported in chapter four according to questions of the study, draws conclusions, suggests recommendations and also proposes some areas for further study.

### **5.1 Summary of major findings**

The study findings from interviews and focus group discussions with Century Bottling Company (Coca-Cola)-Mbarara branch consumers revealed that the community prioritizes clean water supply projects and road construction as the most important CSR activities, given their direct contribution to improved health, mobility, and accessibility to basic services. Education support programs, including scholarships and provision of educational supplies, were also highly valued for their long-term benefit in empowering youth and advancing community development. Health and safety programs, including HIV/AIDS awareness and free medical exams, were applauded for enhancing well-being, and environmental sustainability programs like green energy consumption and waste management were appreciated for providing a healthier and more sustainable future. Whereas employee wellness programs were seen to be less visible at the community level, they were known to improve service delivery indirectly by having a motivated workforce. Similarly, programs for empowering vulnerable populations, i.e., women and persons with disabilities, were commended for promoting social inclusion, equity, and livelihood improvement.

Furthermore, the study findings from key informant interviews and focus group discussions both indicated that CSR initiatives by Century Bottling Company are widely

regarded as effective in addressing priority needs of the Mbarara community, most prominently through clean water programs, solid waste management, and education support such as scholarships and school donations, which have had direct impact for underprivileged children. Sports sponsorship and youth development programs were also commended for cultivating talent, confidence, and healthy living habits among young people, whereas health-focused interventions, including medical camps and health education campaigns, have improved access to essential health services, especially in rural areas. However, the respondents stated that CSR activities are still more in the public eye in urban and semi-urban centers, suggesting the need for increased outreach to rural areas, with coordination between CBC, local organizations, and government agencies being deemed necessary for expanding coverage and sustaining it.

Lastly, the findings from both focus group discussions and interviews with managers indicates that Century Bottling Company's CSR efforts have greatly enhanced its public image in Mbarara by making the company socially responsible, caring, and committed to citizens' well-being through clean-up exercises, sponsorship of children's sports, and school water programs. These actions were linked to the creation of trust, customer loyalty, credibility, and positioning CBC differently from its competitors as well as the humanization of the company as a community developer partner rather than a mere profit-generating company. But the managers as well as the customers understood the need for more intense and regular CSR activities to maintain the good reputation all year round, with consensus that CSR remains at the heart of the company's reputation and competitive advantage in the region.

## 5.2 Conclusions

In conclusion, the study confirmed that CSR initiatives by Century Bottling Company are highly valued by the citizens of Mbarara, primarily in the provision of clean water, road development, education support, and healthcare programs. These initiatives address critical social needs and significantly contribute to the well-being, health, and education of the community, making the company a socially responsible corporate citizen. The positive image of these projects is the success of CBC's concerted efforts to raise standards of living and fortify weak social segments within the community.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the company's CSR initiatives have managed to generate strong community trust and loyalty, enhancing the public perception of CBC and making it distinct from other business rivals. By integrating CSR into its business model and possessing visible, significant projects, CBC has become a responsible and engaged partner in community development. Such harmonization of community needs and company operations strengthens the strategic worth of CSR in creating long-term relations and building corporate image in Mbarara.

However, the research also confirms that there is room for improvement, most importantly in extending CSR coverage to more remote rural and distant communities where awareness and reach are currently constrained. Customers and management agree on the necessity of undertaking more frequent, consistent, and broadly communicated CSR initiatives to maintain positive public perception all year round. Closing these gaps will be essential for CBC to sustain its competitiveness and further enhance its community roots in the future.

### 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been found necessary concerning corporate social responsibility and public perceptions of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch;

The study recommends the need for Century Bottling Company to increase the rate and visibility of its CSR initiatives throughout the year to maintain ongoing community engagement and continue to have a good image in Mbarara. Ongoing and well-promoted programs will maintain the company's pledge and drive residents' confidence.

The study also recommends the widening of CBC's CSR programs to rural and remote areas alongside urban and semi-urban cities. Through the extension of such programs like clean water programs, education support, and health drives to distant communities, the company is assured of more inclusive social returns and higher goodwill from the community.

Furthermore, the study recommends the need for more effective partnership between Century Bottling Company and local government institutions, NGOs, and community-based organizations to improve planning, implementation, and sustainability of CSR initiatives. This partnership approach will promote leverage of resources, improved project value, and ownership of CSR programs at grass-root level.

In addition, the study recommends the need for adoption of a systematic communication strategy by CBC that will appropriately inform the public of the whole range of CSR activities. Increased transparency and awareness will build appreciation

of the company's initiatives, close knowledge gaps, and create more community engagement and support.

Lastly, the study recommends the need for continuous monitoring and evaluation of CSR activities in assessing their effectiveness and suitability to community demands. Continuous feedback mechanisms involving community stakeholders should be instituted to feed into the analysis of activities so that CSR activity is continuously responsive to emerging social priorities and maximizes value capture.

#### **5.4 Areas for further research**

Considering the research focus on investigating the role of corporate social responsibility on public perceptions of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch, the following areas of further research are recommended;

First and foremost, further research is recommended to examine the long-term impacts of Century Bottling Company CSR initiatives on economic empowerment of rural communities and environmental protection in rural communities beyond Mbarara.

Lastly, public awareness and involvement that can be stimulated by CSR communication approaches may also be researched, as well as comparative assessments of the efficacy of CSR practices of different beverage companies throughout Uganda.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Interview Guide

#### For selected top management of Century Bottling Company- Mbarara

I am Nyebaza Shallot, a student of Mass Communication at Uganda Christian University conducting research on “Corporate social responsibility and public perceptions of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch”. I assure total confidentiality of the information given to me during this research. This research will contribute to the award of my bachelor’s degree in Journalism and Communication so I humbly ask you for your cooperation.

#### Section A: Bio Data

1. Gender (*Observe but don't ask*)
2. How old are you?
3. What is your position in CBC, Mbarara branch?
4. How long have you been working in this position?

#### Section B: The key corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives implemented by Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch

5. What are the main CSR initiatives currently undertaken by the company in Mbarara?
6. How does the company decide which CSR activities to implement?

#### Section C: The perception of the Mbarara Community regarding Century Bottling Company’s CSR initiatives

7. How would you describe the community's response to the company's CSR activities?

8. What feedback have you received from the community about these initiatives?

**Section D: The relationship between perceived CSR initiatives and the overall organizational image of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola) - Mbarara branch**

9. In your view, how do the company's CSR activities affect its public image in Mbarara?

10. To what extent do you believe CSR has contributed to building trust and goodwill for the company?

**Thank you for your cooperation**

## Appendix 2

### Focus Group Discussion Guide

#### For the selected customers of Century Bottling Company in Mbarara

Good morning/afternoon, I am Nyebaza Shallot, a student of Mass Communication at Uganda Christian University conducting research on “Corporate social responsibility and public perceptions of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch”. I assure total confidentiality of the information given to me during this research. This research will contribute to the award of my bachelor’s degree in Mass Communication so I humbly ask you for your cooperation. The information given will be used only for academic purposes and will be treated with the highest level of confidentiality.

I will ask you a series of questions. There are no right or wrong answers. I only want to learn what you think. If I ask a question that you would prefer not to discuss, you do not need to discuss that topic. If you find the discussion topic uncomfortable, you are welcome to withdraw from the discussion at any time. I will be recording this discussion so that we can be sure to have your opinion in your own words when I analyse the information later. OK, let’s get started.

#### Section A: Bio Data

1. Gender (*Observe but don’t ask*)
2. How old are you?
3. What is your level of education?

**Section B: The key corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives implemented by Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola)-Mbarara branch**

4. What corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives by Century Bottling Company have you observed in Mbarara?
5. Which of these initiatives do you think have had the biggest impact on the community?

**Section C: The perception of the Mbarara Community regarding Century Bottling Company's CSR initiatives**

6. How would you describe the community's general view of Century Bottling Company's CSR initiatives?
7. In your opinion, how well do these CSR activities address the needs of the Mbarara community?

**Section D: The relationship between perceived CSR initiatives and the overall organizational image of Century Bottling Company (Coca Cola) - Mbarara branch**

8. How do these CSR activities influence your opinion about Century Bottling Company as a whole?
9. Would you say the company's CSR work has improved its public image? Why or why not?

**Thank you for your cooperation**