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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CORPORATE BRANDING AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS IN UGANDA: A CASE STUDY FOR 21ST-CENTURY BUSINESSES

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ABSTRACT

This is a conceptual paper and its primary goal is to assess the role of corporate branding in the promotion of sustainable business in Uganda. The new challenges of doing business in the 21st century coupled with the increasing demand of various stakeholders for firms and companies to consider the social and environmental problems associated with company's activities have made the concept of sustainable business a favored option. This study holds that corporate branding can be a prudent resource and process to arrive at a viable industry in Uganda, and it draws on key literature relating to corporate branding, sustainability and sustainable marketing. It develops a framework that explains and aligns the drivers of corporate brand and reputation. Practical implications- companies will be able to use the structure to help them utilize the corporate brand as a resource for sustainable business, including creating a competitive advantage that ensures the company's longevity.

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INTRODUCTION

The past two to three decades have seen Uganda walk steadily on the road to economic growth with the World Bank noting that over the last decade alone, the country has had an impressive economic growth rate estimated at an annual average of 6.6 per cent (World Bank, 2016). The rate has almost been maintained to date as reported in the 2019 state of the nation address by the President of the country. This trend has been made possible by several factors like increased Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in the country and policies like the Vision 2040 and the National Development Plan II whose implementation has increasingly created a proper ground for doing business. Uganda Vision 2040 carries with it the goal of "A transformed Ugandan society from a peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years" The goal, therefore, involves changing from a predominantly low income to a competitive upper middle-income country within 30 years. It was envisaged that the country would graduate to the middle-income segment by 2017 and reach a per capital of USD 9,500 by 2040. The theme of the Vision is "Accelerating Uganda's Socio-economic Transformation (Authority, 2016).

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The ministry of finance reports in its Performance of the economy reports that by May 2019, the sentiments of doing business in Uganda remained above the threshold of 50. Before that, evidence from the Uganda business registry in 2010 showed that the majority of enterprises were operating on (Development, 2017) employing less than five persons each (Development, 2017). In terms of ownership, sole proprietors constituted 43% of enterprises and private limited liability companies 33%. Others included: Partnerships (18%), Associations (2%) and cooperatives (4%). MSME's are predominately informal and young, the majority of which have not been in existence for more than five years. There is a high mortality rate of enterprises, with 90% of them operating for less than 20 years (Development, 2017). At the top end of the spectrum, only a handful of indigenous enterprises have survived the demise of their founders. The majority of these small enterprises are family-based with no formal skills, no clear addresses, and usually operating informally, using necessary technology. This undermines the ability of these enterprises to gain access to services such as advanced technology, information or financial services for them to compete favorably in the market (Sejjaaka, 2015). This ushers in the concept of sustainability of business whose understanding often takes two varying perceptions but which may, however, be harmonised. Some authors like (Sejjaaka,, 2015) perceive it in the form of longevity and survival of business where they argue that studies on SMEs in Uganda indicate that 90% of SMEs do not live to see their first birthday and those that survive beyond one year, less than 60% live to see their fifth birthday (De Mooij, 2010) in (Sejjaaka, 2015). In the same study, however, the authors switch to the understanding of sustainable business in line with the triple bottom line approach that considers the economic, social and environmental aspects of the business. It is this view of sustainability that this paper adopts. They aver that while several large companies have actively embarked on sustainability by developing initiatives to address corporate, economic, environmental and social issues, the concept of sustainability is still largely unknown among most SMEs in emerging economies like Uganda (Sejjaaka, 2015). You cannot become a sustainable business without critically analyzing your current operations and considering the changes necessary to move toward sustainability and honestly (Eccles et al., 2012) (An introduction while financial profit is essential for survival and sustainable business applies a broader view of the company, its responsibilities, and its performance (ibid).

The twenty-first century has created unprecedented challenges for doing business even though it is within this period that emerging economies like Uganda have registered a leap in terms of economic growth. The Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy (UGGDS) notes that this growth has not produced positive changes in the economic, social and environmental development (Uganda Green Growth Development Strategy). As such, natural resources such as forests and wetlands have shrunk, raising concerns about whether economic growth was achieved at the expense of natural resources and the environment National forest coverage as a percentage of the total land surface area declined from 24 per cent in 1990 to 14 per cent in 2015 while national wetlands coverage as a percentage of the total land area declined from 15.6 per cent in 1994 to 8 per cent in 2014 (ibid). This presents the need for a new development approach that can sustain economic growth while improving social and environmental development targets. It is this that has made sustainable business be thought about as the best option to achieve sustainable development. Sustainable business is already taking root and in the USA, by 2010 for example, Ceres released 'The 21st Century Corporation': The performance that, if met, would transform companies into truly sustainable enterprises and the Ceres Roadmap for Sustainability with 20 expectations in the areas of governance, stakeholder engagement, disclosure and (Sustainalytics, 2014). The presidents of both Ceres and Sustainalytics note that;

In some cases, companies are providing real leadership and demonstrating that sustainability isn't a luxury, and they have substantially accelerated and broadened their sustainability efforts. These companies, but rather an essential strategy for building long-term shareholder value.

There is a need for collaboration, innovation and transformation as a way of finding solutions to the ever-increasing challenges of doing business, the difficulties faced stem from the supply chain due to a changing climate, the risks posed to operations and to an increasingly resource-constrained world with a growing population, to mounting human rights abuses (ibid). As such, boards now understand that for them to create long-term competitiveness, it is necessary to understand the sustainability challenges before them and to set corporate sustainability policy and be accountable for its implementation (ibid).

The move towards sustainable business has not happened in the US alone, china, as reported by (Guoqiang, Zadek and Wickerham, 2010; Bai, Sarkis,& Dou, n.d;), has as well moved significant steps in that direction, Sweden as reported by Broman, (2017) has as well registered success through the use of sustainable brand indices (SBI), this stretches to almost all the Nordic countries that measure organizational sustainability using the Corporate Sustainability Indices (CSI) like the Sustainable Brand Index (SBI, 2017) in (Broman, 2017), Bangladesh is no exception as well as revealed by (Rahman, 2016). As suggested by (Sustainalytics, 2014) in their gaining the ground report, collaboration, innovation and transformation coupled with the involvement of all stakeholders are essential in meeting the demands of sustainable business. This makes corporate branding a vital strategy for creating sustainable business as the case has been in China, the US and the Nordic countries because as de Chernatony, (2001) notes, corporate branding involves what he refers to as a company-wide approach, i.e. a procedure that involves all stakeholders (including employees, customers and the owners of the company) (Broman, 2017) argues that different stakeholder groups including governments and NGOs put pressure on corporations to actively address sustainability issues in the form of sustainability reporting, and on the other hand investors and consumers pressure corporations by demanding sustainability ratings and indices. Since corporate brands help build brand identities and corporate reputations, companies are forced to respond to social, economic and environmental concerns for them to grow and maintain reputations among their various stakeholders.

In Uganda however, businesses have not moved steadily towards sustainable business (Sejjaaka et al., 2015) given the fact that the few that have tried often address one element of sustainability, either the social aspect or environmental aspect through corporate social responsibility (CSR) is known as corporate accountability (UCCA, 2016) and its coupled with corporate social responsibility awards done like the case was in 2016. Therefore this does not drive such corporations to sustainable businesses since in corporate social responsibility which is a mere element of corporate branding, not all stakeholders of the corporation or company are involved but rather a section of management charged with the role of corporate social responsibility is involved. This does not translate into sustainable business since it requires the involvement of all stakeholders as per (Freeman, 1984), including all employees of the company or business. It is upon this backdrop that this paper assesses the role of corporate branding in promoting sustainable trade in Uganda, recognizing the fact that the twenty-first-century company faces several unprecedented challenges and risks which require such new approaches of understanding and creating business performance. This paper is conceptual in nature and as such reviews the bulk of literature available on the two concepts of corporate branding and sustainable business. Noteworthy is that not much has been written about the two ideas in the context of Uganda. The paper intends, through review of relevant literature, to address the following specific objectives that will help achieve the primary goal of the article of assessing the role of corporate branding in promoting sustainable business in Uganda;

- To show an understanding of the concepts of sustainable business and corporate branding

- To advance an understanding of the relationship between corporate branding and sustainable business and explain its relevance in Uganda
- To develop a conceptual model that companies in Uganda can borrow to move towards sustainable business

In addressing objective two, the paper borrows from the stakeholder theory and then uses a comparative discourse with China from which Uganda can borrow lessons on the role of corporate branding for the promotion of sustainable business.

Sustainable business

_____*Sustainable business is a better business, and a sustainable future is a better future…… sustainability makes us more innovative, more flexible, and more resilient*____ BSR (2018)

In the May 2019 Performance of the Economy Report by the Ministry of Finance (Uganda), it was reported that generally, sentiments about doing business in Uganda remained positive in May 2019 as shown by the Business Tendency Index (BTI) which remained above the threshold of 50, despite a slight reduction from 58.63 in April 2019 to 58.06 in May (www.finance.go.ug). However, these sentiments reflect the general move to do business, leaving a question of how sustainable such a company would be. In response to this, it is essential to understand what sustainable business is first.

In the past, business success was entirely hinged on profitability (Slaper, 2011), but recent years and realities have since seen this perception of business success disregarded. The 1980s and 1990s brought in a new concept of sustainability as worth considerable concern in the success equation of any business (Broman, 2017; Lélé, 1991). In agreement is Anna-Kristin, (2017) who in her working paper on business and sustainability where she offers business history perspectives notes that the twentieth century provides a unique point in history where no other century in as far as historical records can stretch to reach can compare with it in its growth on problems related to environmental sustainability, thus the interest in sustainable business.

Consequently, a sustainable business may be defined as concentrating on integrating the social, economic, environmental success and having minimal impact globally and locally (Cooney, 2009) explains that it is these three elements that bring us the concept of the "Triple Bottom Line (TBL)", an idea that will be addressed at a later stage in this paper. In an anonymous article, there seems to be consensus on the definition where the section defines sustainable business as one 'that operates in the interest of all current and future stakeholders in a manner that ensures the long-term health and survival of the business and it's associated economic, social, and environmental systems' (Eccles, 2012). This definition puts me in a safer position to talk about sustainable business as it combines the traditional/orthodox understanding of sustainable business looked at as the long term survival of business and the definition of the twenty-first century that looks at sustainability in terms of concern to the economic, social and environmental systems while meeting needs of the current generation without compromising those of the future. The article further argues that 'the sustainable business seeks to have a positive social impact, a reduced negative environmental impact, and a positive economic impact' (*ibid*). Impressively, the article makes a distinction between a sustainable business and a green business which is a business-focused entirely on a reduced negative environmental impact. The concept of sustainable business is one that has gained considerable good debate and focuses on a wealth of scholarly literature and it has been argued that organizations and companies that manage their sustainability activities effectively and successfully quickly gain competitive advantages in their industries (Securer et al., 2005) cited in (Ajike E et al., 2015). Sustainable business is a relatively new trend in today's business world, by a survey conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers, which found that among 900 global corporations, 80% of CEOs said they believe "sustainability" is or soon will be vital to the profitability of their company, and 71% said they would consider sacrificing short-term profit to move their company toward sustainability (Savitz & Weber, 2006). The increased growth in interest in sustainable business practices comes from changing societal expectations and the ever-growing awareness that sustainability creates a win-win situation for the business and humanity alike (Eccles, 2012). However, for such sustainability to take shape and for companies and organizations to gain competitive advantage, they must have a wealth of resources at their disposal, and these must be carefully aligned for competitive advantage to be achieved. To this end, branding, mainly corporate branding, carries with it the potential for aligning resources towards the organisation's achievement of strategic competitive advantage (Broman, 2017). Corporate branding also offers a proper yardstick for the measurement of sustainability of businesses, especially corporate sustainability (ibid).

Dyllick and Muff (n.d) note that the inclusion of sustainability into business comes from the realization of emerging business challenges that are unprecedented in traditional market exchanges. These are what they refer to as extra-market challenges of social and environmental concerns raised by external stakeholders, including NGOs, government, and media, among others. The interests create risks and opportunities for businesses. Argues that the rise of environmental consciousness in the 21st century has made marketers reflect cultural trends on the broader environment to which companies belong. MacGillivray, et al., (2007) in (Guoqiang, 2010) quote Lamy, the Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) who summarised the essence of this rather new trading environment as;

Responsible competitiveness blends forward-looking corporate strategies, innovative public policies and engaged and vibrant civil societies. It is about creating a new generation of profitable products and business processes underpinned by rules that support societies' broader social, environmental and economic aims. The move towards sustainable business in the twenty-first century has led to the development of sustainability-related standards developed through the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), including the ISO 14000 environmental standards and the ISO 26000 Social Responsibility Guidelines (ibid).

Corporate branding: Corporate branding has gained considerable interest by a number of scholarly researchers and academics (Balmer, 2001; Balmer, 2003; Knox, 2003; Rahman, 2016; Abratt, 2012) with others emphasizing its potential economic value inherent in managing and developing the brand at the level of the organization (Fombrun and Van

Riel, 1997; Greyser, 1999; Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 1999) in Knox and Bickerton, (2003). Balmer (2010) argues that it has enjoyed scholarly attention for the last fifteen years. Alireza, (2012) in his Doctoral thesis attests to this in mentioning several scholars that have spent a considerable chunk of their efforts in writing about corporate branding. He stresses the intellectual maturity that the concept has gained through the thick of literature that has been written about it. However, it is within this literature that several definitions have been raised as well. (Alireza, 2012) highlights three of the most outstanding definitions in the literature which are.

First, (Knox, 2003) who have defined the corporate brand as the visual, verbal and behavioral expression of an organisation's unique business model. The second definition that Alireza presents is by Balmer and Greyser (2003) who define the corporate brand as an organizational identity type which revolves around the notion of brand 'promise' and needs to be in alignment with other organizational identity types, namely 'cultural', 'communicated', 'conceived', 'actual', 'desired', and 'ideal' brand identities The third definition is by (Hatch, 2008) who define corporate branding as the process of maintaining alignment among organizational brand perceptions from the three main perspectives of strategic 'vision', organizational 'culture' and stakeholder 'image' based on 'organizational identity'. Away from the definitions highlighted by (Alireza, 2012), Ajike E. *et al.,* (2015) summarize corporate branding as the process to maintain, continue and create a positive corporate reputation and associations using the power of a brand, which in return is a promise to the stakeholder and consumer in particular at which the brand has formed a set of perceptions about a product, service or business. From the above definitions, it is important to highlight certain elements that play out as a common denominator in all. These are the organizational culture, organizational identity, stakeholder image and engagement and the general brand promise being in line with the character, including the values of the company or organisation. With this at hand, this paper will adopt the following definition that will meet the objectives of the article that primarily point to the role of corporate branding in promoting sustainable business in Uganda.

Corporate branding is then the process of organizations making an effort to streamline the brand promises that are given to stakeholders (including consumers or customers) with the identity, values, philosophy, culture and image of the organisation. It is the process of making sure the brand that is sold out to the public is in line with the company's or organisation's ethos, which builds into a brand trust. This definition is consonant with Jones, (2010) on the role of vision in implementing the corporate brand. (Alireza, 2012). (Hatch, 2008) agree without reservations that corporate branding offers a medium of exchange among all stakeholders. (Balmer, 2001) in explaining corporate branding notes that the brand must respond to the following. What is the promise inferred from/ communicated by the brand? Are these inferences accurate, reflected in reality (the promise/performance gap), shown in management commitment and underpinned/made explicit by effective communications?

Corporate branding, (Kay, 2006); (Wallstrom, 2008) argue, is the way an organisation communicates its identity. However, (25) notes that corporate branding is a little challenging given the fact that it involves what he refers to as a company-wide approach, i.e. a procedure that involves all stakeholders (including employees, customers and the owners of the company). (De Mooij,, 2010) in Ajike E. *et al.,* (2015) adds that corporate branding is a type of the brand architecture, a chosen strategy by the company on how they want to create their brand presence in the market by associating the company name with the individual brand name where the mother brand is applied, and all products carry its title as the case is for the coca-cola company. Corporate branding offers a company a clear corporate image which is the sum of impressions and expectations of an organisation created in the minds of its stakeholders and the public (Topalian, 2003) in Ajike et al., (2015). However, Corkindale and Belder (2009) try to advance a not so convincing argument that corporate branding focuses on relevancy to customers only, a discussion this paper vehemently disagrees with since the authors deviate from the fact that even the employees and the shareholders of the company hold a high stake in building the brand. This paper's position is supported by Abratt and Kleyn, (n.d) who as well disagree with the same authors because the corporate brand is integral in building corporate reputations across all stakeholder groups, not only customers. (Balmer, 2001) delves deep into the concept of corporate branding by highlighting a number of schools that relate to it and branding generally where brands are seen as one of the following; (1) marks denoting ownership; (2) image denoting building devices; (3) symbols associated with critical values; (4) means by which to construct individual identities; and finally (5) a conduit by which pleasurable experiences may be consumed.

Balmer moves a step further to explain what each of the five implies. Here, I will highlight some of the main issues in the explanations he offers. Marks denoting ownership. In this, Balmer deviates from what he terms the traditional view of the sender-end of communication, arguing that a brand means a name, logotype or trademark denoting ownership (Bar wise et al., 2000) in (Balmer, 2001; Broman, 2017). Image-building devices and in this, Balmer argues that branding is associated with corporate image building (Broman, 2017). Symbols associated with critical values. In this Balmer argues that branding is seen to capture the additional benefits that are inherent in or associated with the corporation and its products and services and it is through this that the idea of promise is introduced, i.e. corporate brands are viewed as a promise and guarantee of quality, as an insurance against risk of poor performance or financial risk (Balmer, 2001). Hanna, Won Mor and (Hanna, 2015) argue that brands attempt to communicate to their consumers what they are, what they want to be, and what they value. They add that consumers want to know whether a corporate brand would keep its promises and not behave opportunistically. The brand signals the values to the firm's stakeholders, such as customers, media, shareholders and the general public (Broman, 2017). Means by which to construct individual identities. Here, Balmer argues that branding is considered from the "consumer-end" of the equation and as such the consumption of brands by consumers' defines who they are, wish to be and want to be seen as. (Hanna, 2015) argue that consumers regard a corporate brand as more attractive and trustworthy when its brand identity is similar to their own preferences and beliefs. They offer an example of the perceived CSR activities of a brand which form a positive impression on consumers who are sensitive to those social issues. Vlachos et al. in (Hanna, 2015) have as well argued that consumers consider a company to engage in CSR activities from its sincere intentions.

A conduit by which pleasurable experiences may be consumed in this, Balmer borrows from Schmitt (1999) who adopts a new approach where he argues that branding (and marketing generally) should be concerned with creating pleasurable consumer experiences. Worth noting is that businesses or organizations that want to create positive reputations amongst the various stakeholder groups must understand the dimensions on which stakeholders evaluate reputation (Abratt, 2012). The two provide the following as some of the grounds on which organizations are evaluated; the organisation's performance, its products and services, its citizenship activities, service, innovation, the workplace, governance and ethics. They further argue that;

The organisation creates its identity through its strategic choices and corporate expression. After that, it must develop a strong corporate brand, through its corporate expression and influence of brand image.

The case for corporate branding for sustainable business: The preceding sections of this paper have stressed and tried to explain the two broad concepts of corporate branding and sustainable business in the twenty-first century. A journey through the various literally works indicates that the two ideas are a creation of the twenty-first century (Balmer, 2001) in response to the ever-changing environment of doing business and marketing. This section now focuses on the various elements of the concept of corporate branding to see their potential in promoting sustainable business in Uganda. However, essential to note is that not much literature exists in relation to the two concepts in Uganda; instead, what exists is literature on corporate social responsibility. The section will start by gaining support from the stakeholder theory.

The Stakeholder Theory: The following lines offer a precursor to the relevance of the stakeholder theory to the concept of sustainable business through corporate branding; *few companies are born with a broad-based commitment to sustainability. To develop one, companies need leadership commitment, an ability to engage with (Chang, 2005) multiple stakeholders along the value chain, widespread employee engagement and disciplined mechanisms for execution (Eccles, 2012).*

Well, in arguing for the role of corporate branding in promoting sustainable business, this paper borrows theoretical insights from the stakeholder theory advanced initially by (Freeman, 1998) and which several researchers in the field of marketing and management have used to explain corporate branding and sustainability (Broman, 2017; Babirye, 2014) looks at its usage by scholars on corporate social responsibility, and in this, she uses a much later version of the theory in (Freeman, 1998). Freeman, in (Freeman, 1998), defines stakeholders as groups or individuals who can affect or be affected by the action connected to value creation. Bowmann-Larsen and Wiggen, (2004) in (Broman, 2017) later referred to them as "the individuals and groups who are depending on the firm to achieve their personal goals, and on whom the firm is depending for its existence. (Babirye, 2014) on expounding on the definition of stakeholders notes that since the primary objective of an organization is to maximize shareholder wealth through profit maximization, that indirectly takes into account all persons that are either positively or negatively affected by the company's operations and as such, she argues that "it is an injustice to narrow stakeholders down to only shareholders."

The theory believes in balancing the interests of the various stakeholders and managing the influences in the relationship between the stakeholders and the firm (Lee, 2011) in (Broman, 2017). As an addition, (Sacconi, 2004) in (Babirye, 2014) notes that the stakeholder theory stipulates that companies are obligated "to consider interests of all parties (stakeholders) affected by their actions on top of the stockholders and what is strictly required by law." Horish et al., (2014) in (Broman, 2017) note that the stakeholder theory is the most widely used when studying the social, environmental, and sustainability dimensions of corporate sustainability. It is this theory that was employed by Broman in assessing the purpose of the sustainable business index recognizing the fact that the sustainable business index goal is to analyze how corporations communicate corporate sustainability to the consumers as one of the stakeholder groups (SB Index, 2017) in (Broman, 2017). The stakeholder approach incorporates sustainability supports stakeholders to cooperate with critical sustainability-oriented values (ibid.). Broman further explains that;

The stakeholder approach promotes values that encourage corporate strategies and activities that add value to the corporation itself and its stakeholders while preserving the environment and the society connected to these operations in the long run. Based on these values, stakeholders negotiate to form shared sustainability interests.

A corporation's sustainability behavior is influenced by different stakeholders, and will, at the same time, influence how the stakeholders behave (Horish et al., 2014). Broman argues that different stakeholder groups including governments and NGOs put pressure on corporations to actively address sustainability issues in the form of sustainability reporting, and on the other hand investors and consumers pressure corporations by demanding sustainability ratings and indices. Notably, (Moir, 2001) notes that concerning social responsibility; the main concern is whether the stakeholder analysis motivates corporations to be responsible to all stakeholders. Freeman et al., (2000) in emphasizing the importance of the theory notes that stakeholder theory can help researchers and firms to identify relevant stakeholders, as well as these actors' expectations and requirements related to sustainability. In the field of marketing, branding has been argued to play an important role, especially in strategic marketing for businesses (Ajike E. *et al.,* 2015).

It has been widely recognized as a tool and source of sustainable strategic competitive advantage in organizations and businesses (Ajike E. *et al.,* 2015). Brands form a part of our life and are intertwined with our existence Sherry, 1995.

As argued elsewhere in this same paper, corporate branding holds the potential for businesses to achieve competitive advantage (Broman, 2017) explained that corporate branding is capable of aligning a company's resources for competitive advantage (Kelly, 1998). This claims that strong corporate brands are essential in creating a competitive advantage for a company or business. However, in this paper, I do not intend to stretch into the entirety of the discussion of how that may come about. I would slightly swing into the debate about the potential of corporate branding for sustainable business picking from the earlier paragraphs on the stakeholder theory. At this point, two slightly related questions will be posed, and I will walk through literature to address the issues. The items are; (1) can corporate branding meet the triple bottom line for sustainable business? And (2) can corporate branding help meet sustainable business in Uganda? Just to refresh and keep abreast with the concept of corporate branding, it is a process that involves promoting and communicating the company's ethos including the values of the company, the vision and the image (Hatch, 2003) in (Broman, 2017). Corporate branding is more of the branding of a company as a whole than the branding of a mere product or service offered by the company. It involves the visual, verbal and behavioral expressions of the company (Vallaster *et al.,* 2012). To this end, it goes beyond creating a new campaign, ad, logo or brochure as it offers a strategic company position in the marketplace hinged on the company beliefs and values (Ajike E. *et al.,* 2015). In (Milovanov, 2017), the two authors argue that companies that own successful brands, which are followed by a large group of loyal consumers, have the power to generate modification and even a complete shift in the value system, consumers' lifestyle, attitudes and behavior (Milovanov, 2012). Accordingly, environmentally friendly brands are an inevitable element of a sustainable marketing strategy and sustainability concept, given that its implementation requires changes that will trigger mass rather than individuals. At this point, I would like to return to the two questions posed earlier starting with the first;

Can corporate branding meet the triple bottom line for sustainable business? Responding to this question may be easily summed up in the concept of corporate sustainability that ( ) offers a considerable chunk of space in explaining what it is and the elements therein. However, it may not be safe in this paper to answer it that way and get away with it. Instead, I have to take off time to explain the triple bottom line first before I can smoothly sail through the answer to the question. I may as well find convenience in borrowing from Broman; (Broman, 2017) means that a business' contribution to social justice, environmental quality, and economic prosperity is what is referred to as the triple bottom line. In (An Introduction to Sustainable Business," 2012), the author notes that 'rethinking the business in terms of its triple bottom line impact and performance (social, environmental, and economic) is critical in establishing the foundation for sustainable business.' The concept of the triple bottom line can be attributed to John Elkington, the founder of a British consultancy called Sustainability, who first introduced the idea in 1994. Elkington argued that companies should prepare three different bottom lines (also called the "three Ps"); i.e. (1) profit, measuring their financial performance, return on investment, shareholder value and the broader economic posture, (2) the "people account"; and in this, companies are required to mind the impact they have on the society in which they operate and finally, (3) the "planet account," which measures companies' environmental responsibility (ibid). Xu adds that a positive Triple Bottom Line reflects an increase in companies' values, primarily social, environmental, and shareholders' benefits from the companies' operations. The following diagram illustrates the Triple Bottom Line, according to Sustainable business.

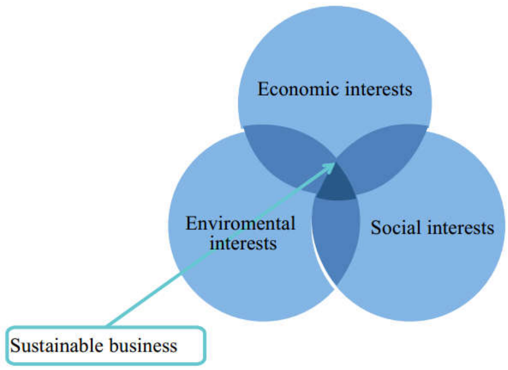


Figure 1. An illustration of the Triple Bottom Line (34).

(Broman, 2017) notes that the triple bottom line invites corporations to go beyond measuring economic sustainability by also addressing environmental sustainability and social sustainability. It is this that builds into corporate sustainability (ibid). At this point, there is ground for safe landing and returning to the question at hand; 'can corporate branding meet the triple bottom line for sustainable business?'

As for this paper, the answer is in the affirmative and yes corporate branding can meet the triple bottom line for sustainable business for what may now seem obvious reasons as we carefully consider the elements of corporate branding. Recall that as noted in the section on corporate branding in this paper, Jusang *et al*., (2015) argue that consumers regard a corporate brand as more attractive and trustworthy when it's brand identity is similar to their own preferences and beliefs. Like discussed before, they offer an example of the perceived Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities of a brand which form a positive impression on consumers who are sensitive to those social issues. Given the Triple Bottom Line, it is clear here that corporate branding, for example, meets the aspect of the social interest or social sustainability, as shown in *figure 1* above. This indicates the potential of corporate branding in promoting sustainable business. Abratt and Kleyn, (n.d) note that companies often utilize corporate brands to create positive reputations amongst the various stakeholders but this is reliant on the fact that for them to achieve such status, they are evaluated on a number of grounds including; the organization's performance, its products and services, its citizenship activities, service, innovation, the workplace, governance and ethics. The grounds for evaluation fall in the requirements for sustainable business, for example, the citizenship activities which may include attending to environmental concerns and social concerns.

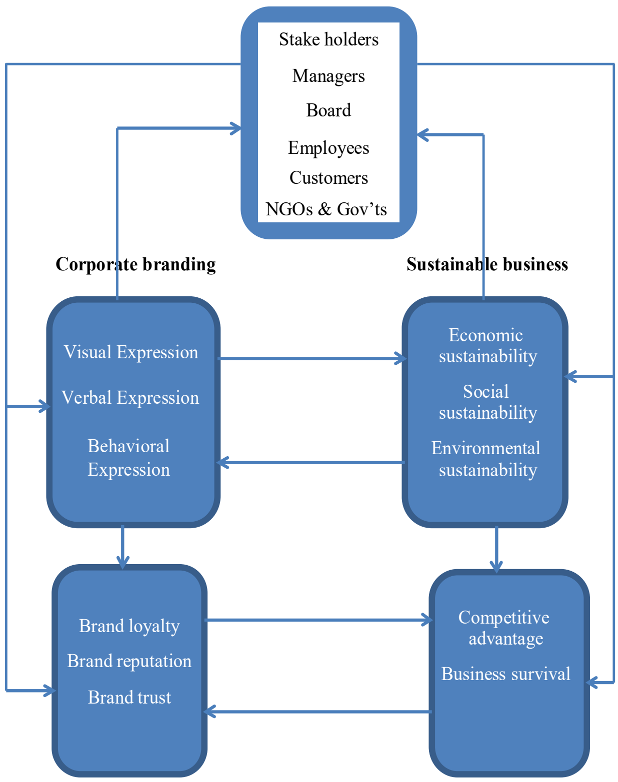
The equation may also be considered on a win-win basis where businesses practicing sustainability improve their image and reputation (corporate brand), reduce costs, and help boost the local economy, all of which lead to improved business and stronger and healthier local communities for operations. It is these benefits that set one company apart from its competitors and can become a source of competitive advantage. As a way of illustration, a 2012 Deutsche Bank study, found that companies that are strong sustainability performers have better access to capital and outperform companies with weaker sustainability performance (Sustainalytics, 2014; Guoqiang, 2010). also argue that Wei Jiafu, the President, China Ocean Shipping Company notes that Competition between MNCs (multinational corporations) has transformed from hard competitiveness to soft competitiveness, from simple reliance on technology and service competitiveness to reliance on concepts like corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Long Guoqiang, 2010) and social ethics which are part of corporate branding. They further note that corporate responsibility ideas and practices already constitute the heart of business competitiveness. Corporate branding calls for the concern and balancing of the interests of all stakeholders, which the 2014 joint report by Ceres and Sustainalytics notes is critical to success. The report further notes that from investors to the companies' employees, more corporations are seeing the value of formally engaging stakeholders around the world to maximize sustainability efforts and drive meaningful results. This shows the relevance of corporate branding towards sustainable business. Leading companies are looking to gain recognition from investors for their sustainability actions, inspire their workforces by integrating sustainability into the company culture, and incorporate the insights of external stakeholders into decision-making processes (ibid). Similarly, in (34), it is presumed that a company should understand that sustainability is a company-wide goal if it seeks to be a sustainable business that incorporates every aspect of the business and its relationships. The article summarizes and simplifies it as sustainability requiring systems thinking. Since sustainability is a company-wide philosophy or way of thinking;

…… there will be much coordination between the various parts of the business, and they will ultimately be overlapped. The contribution of each area of the company is critical to the overall success of becoming a sustainable business (ibid).

Building on the works of previous authors (Broman, 2017) sums up the relationship between corporate branding and sustainable business as corporate sustainability. He defines corporate sustainability that brings to light the role of corporate branding in promoting sustainable business. He thus defines corporate sustainability as "meeting the needs of a firm's direct and indirect stakeholders, without compromising its ability to meet the needs of future stakeholders as well." However, for that goal to be reached, companies have to maintain and grow their economic, social and environmental capital base while contributing to sustainability in the political domain (Dyllick & Hockerts, 2002) in (Broman, 2017). Sustainability requires a new sort of knowledge, capable of providing transparent business activities and processes with clear communication and without incorrect claims, which could be a wet area. Finally, taking sustainable projects should be a result of observing and listening market trends, nature and society needs rather than action forced by environment and society current issues, and all those actions and investments should be measured, testified, analyzed, improved and justified through the change of consumer perception, society welfare, company's reputation among others (Milovanov, 2017).

Can corporate branding help meet sustainable business in Uganda? The response to this question has already been heralded in the previous sections primarily through the answer to the above question. In the section on the efforts towards sustainable business in Uganda, I have already noted that what currently exists in Uganda is the practice of corporate social responsibility (CSR) often realized in demand for companies to practice corporate accountability. As such, Uganda has seen corporations moving steps towards sustainable business championed by their corporate social responsibility departments and campaigns that have come as a result. Examples include the *tuve Ku kaveera* campaign by NBS TV under Next media in partnership with Vivo energy aimed at promoting environmental sustainability as people are being encouraged to stop the use of polythene bags given their impact on the environment and people's health. The *safe driving* campaign by NTV under Nation media in partnership with Vivo energy meets the demands of social accountability. Another similar attack is by Coca-cola which is currently running a promotion where children are being encouraged to collect empty plastic soda bottles of any of its brands and deposit them at the nearest recycling plant which makes one stand a chance of winning their school a football pitch. Such a campaign is in line with environmental sustainability. Such efforts drive to sustainable business creation. A Baseline Study Report for the Uganda Consortium on Corporate Accountability where the focus was on three mining areas, i.e. Moroto, Mukono and Lake Albertine region and the nine significant companies involved in mining there. The report reveals that in Moroto, the study focused on three limestone mining companies including DAO Africa Ltd, Mechanized Agro Ltd and Tororo Cement and one gold mining company Jan Mangal Ltd. For the case of Mukono, the study investigated the stone quarrying in Nakisunga by Seyani Brothers and Tong Da China International. While in the Lake Albert region, the study focused on the oil-related developments there by the three leading oil companies, i.e. China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), TOTAL E&P and Tullow Oil.

Conceptual model



The study involved interviews held with company representatives, members of the communities, relevant government authorities and civil society organizations. The study indicated that members of the respective communities acknowledged the positive impacts of corporations on their lives which among others included the expansion of business and employment opportunities, facilitating access to services uch as transport, water and telecommunications, and improving infrastructure such as roads. The study report further revealed that communities appreciated the corporate social responsibility initiatives of the corporations such as offering scholarships, building health centers, boreholes and schools, and facilitating access to electricity.

However, like highlighted in the introduction to this paper, corporate social responsibility is just part of the broader corporate branding strategy and emphasis on it has often left the other businesses with the view that it is costly for them to pursue sustainability and it's because individual efforts in Uganda do not incorporate the broader approach that demands the involvement of all stakeholders in building a sustainable business. Such an approach (corporate branding) would have SMEs as well to join the move towards sustainable business since they contribute significantly to the GDP of the country. The possibility of corporate branding for sustainable business in Uganda is also by the fact that the two offer the required innovativeness of doing business in the twenty-first century as the following section does emphasize their emergence as 21st-century requirements for a business.

Conclusion

Throughout the entirety of this paper, I have discussed and highlighted the importance of corporate branding for sustainable business. The article highlights particularly the role of corporate branding in creating a brand identity and reputation and which can be maintained through the corporation's or business' commitment to sustainability given the fact that stakeholders especially the customers are more concerned about the social, economic and environmental costs of companies' activities. The twenty-first century has created unique and unprecedented challenges and risks of doing business as a result of the expenses mentioned above and as such inviting companies to win competitive advantage based on the triple bottom line (TBL) approach which will, in the end, transform into their longevity. It is this that has created the need for a new way of doing business that has to be sustainable and corporate branding at least from the literature and the conceptual model suggested in this paper shows the potential of creating such sustainable business. What has to be noted is that not many empirical studies and literature exist in line with the practicality of these concepts in Uganda, though research from elsewhere like in China primarily through corporate sustainability shows the possibility of the two. That notwithstanding, this paper concludes that corporate branding can play a significant role in promoting sustainable business.

Limitations and implications for future research: The gaps highlighted in the literature offer confidence for this paper to suggest the need for an empirical study into the role of corporate branding in promoting sustainable business in Uganda. An essential limitation of this paper is that it does not make a distinction between large corporations and SMEs but uses a rather universal language of business. This has the implication of lack of specificity to the context in that one is not sure how corporate branding may specifically help SMEs to arrive at a sustainable business in Uganda given the fear they often have in terms of the cost of taking on sustainable business. This, therefore, leaves room for carrying out more empirical studies to assess how corporate branding may mainly promote sustainable business for SMEs. This is particularly important because of the role played by SMEs to the GDP of the country.

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