Do Romanian youngsters envision a CSR-oriented world? A research regarding digital natives values

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Abstract. *The business world has undergone many changes in respect to how business is done as ITC evolved and as people became more and more concerned with the natural resources and their possible scarcity in the near future. Encyclopedias have welcomed pages addressing subjects as the need for oil consumption reduction in order to preserve some for future generations and the maliciousness of the greenhouse gas emisions. NGOs worldwide have been advocating for many decades for moderation, stressing on the effects of pollution of the seas and of deforrestation on climate and wild life. The level of general awareness related to environmental problems and human life`s frailty is higher than ever. People from many countries on every continent say they are interested in all of these things and feel motivated to support the CSR initiatives of the companies aimed to finding solutions to some of these issues. The members of the young generation, the of the digital natives, as well as elder people, have been exposed to many messages concerning the need for sustainable development, for nature preservation and for humanitarian acts meant to increase the level of life quality of the entire human race. A particular generation spread in the whole world today, Milennials are rapidly coming of age and gaining financial power. Living in virtual communities comprising of people from various places in the world, they are able to get over cultural differences and their coming of age empowers them to act upon these tasks. They are expected to do that but we do not know what they actually want to do. Most of the research regarding their behaviour insists that they are tech savvy and that companies should report their CSR oriented behaviour online, perhaps using smartphones applications, but these people`s true motivations are rather unknown. This is the reason why, in this paper, we present a research conducted in Romania based upon youngsters` personal values, as these are the most intimate criteria people use when they decide to do what they state it is desirable to do. The results of our survey show that there are true social activists among our respondents but also that about as many digital natives are self-absorbed power seekers who care little about the welfare of others and of the natural resources. Their common need for security is presented as a possible basis for favoring CSR-oriented behaviours.*

Keywords: *digital natives; CSR; generation Y; personal values; sustainable development.*

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Introduction

A recent research (Cone Communications & Echo Research, 2013), with over 10,000 respondents worldwide, shows that only 6% of these people believe that today a business should only make money, while the rest of them stress upon the fact that a business must pay efforts to improve the societal and environment conditions. And even up to 38% of these people expressed their wish that companies participate to the economic development by creating jobs and infrastructure for communities. 81% of the interviewed people say they would rather work for a CSR-oriented company, 85% would prefer such a company to operate in their community, 87% would rather buy products from it, and 85% would recommend its products to others. CSR is also a good differentiator for brands: 91% of the respondents say they would switch brands to one with a similar price and quality if that brand would be associated with a cause, while another study (Nielsen, 2013) states that 50% of the customers in 58 countries would even pay more for a product made by a CSR oriented organization. Zbuchea (2013) observes that people state they are influenced by CSR in terms of trust, loyalty, advocacy, and in their purchasing behaviour towards brands. Consequently, sustainable development seems to be important to many of the people aged 18 to over 55 and CSR initiatives are, at least on a theoretical level, highly valued. As shown above, people are attracted by companies that implement CSR strategies, but we have to acknowledge that CSR is expensive for a company to do (Smith, 2013). Also, CSR can be contradictory to the main role a business has in society, as it aims to improve societal needs, beyond a company`s legal obligations, but due to its costs it can impede the company from making available to its customers the best and cheapest products.

If elders might be more prone to think of environment issues and the welfare of others, as a legacy for their children and grandchildren, what can be said about what youngsters believe? It is an important thing to know, as the generations are changing and the Milennials, born by the mid-eighties to the year 2000 will become, at least in the US, the majority of the active work force by 2015, while by 2030 they will represent 75% of it (Mitchell, 2013). This means they will soon have the power to dictate how businesses should be conducted, as CEOs, employees and customers of the world's companies. We know they are gamers in their approach to life and that they have little trust in traditional companies and brands

(Filloux, 2010). Until now, researchers have addressed their impact on CSR practices by referring to their interest in social media and ITC devices use (Cone Communications & Echo Research, 2013) but little is known about their actual inner orientation towards sustainability and CSR.

Literature Review

The digital natives are a generation of people who use ITC devices and the Internet on a daily basis (Barna, 1995). Obviously, as many authors have shown (Prensky, 2001; Huntley, 2006; Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman & Lance, 2010; Dagnaud, 2011; Gansky, 2011; Hansen & Leuty, 2012), they are not like their parents and grandparents: they are proficient with technology and they use it constantly, as extensions of the self, and they even seem to process information in a different way, meaning they seem unable to think using linear models but go from a node to another in a web of thoughts and images. As we see, ITC proficiency is not their sole characteristic.

After studying over 6000 digital natives worldwide, Don Tapscott (2010) has come to believe these people are guided by eight principles in their behaviours and attitudes, which mark their lives both as employees and as humans: they value freedom of choice regarding jobs, personal style, the media (1), and they believe in the power of customization in every aspect of their lives, including jobs (2). They tend to search endlessly for the truth, they dream of a world where social justice is everpresent (3) and they ask for integrity (4). Egalitarians, digital natives dislike hierachies and prefer collaborative work when things need to get done (5). They believe anything can be improved and work towards innovation, especially related to ITC, each time it is possible for them to (6). They lack patience, so delays in gratifications are to be avoided by them (7) and they would always choose a job where they can work and have fun too (8). Tapscott stresses the facts that these people value the truth above anything else and that they expect managers to listen to their ideas and companies to always do what they preach. With these norms in mind, it is expected that they put pressure on companies to act responsible in their communities and towards their employees and customers.

In Romania the first true digital natives are the people born in the early 1990s. Along with the economic and political particularities of the country during the last twenty years, such as the ones given by the long process of democratization and the transition to a capitalist economic system, this fact has lead to a series of differences regarding the structure and characteristics of the digital natives here. As *The Coming of Age of Digital Natives* GfK Report (as cited in Calei, 2013) shows, they are thirsty of feedback but they prefer speed over depth, so they are rather superficial. They lack patience. Their desires are of great importance to them and they become restless when someone or something delays their gratification. Unlike the foreign digital natives, says the cited report, these youngsters are lazy and have no long-term plans. They prefer to spend most of their time with their many friends, who give them the sensation of stability. Romanian digital natives, states the report cited above, are interested in ITC just because it gives them the opportunity to stay connected with their friends and create, through SNSs VIP-like images of themselves, which help them maintain their fragile sense of self-worth.

They have, nonetheless, tremendous expectations from people around them, from companies and from brands and they expect everything to be customizable, although they would never pay more for customized products (Coca cited in Calei, 2013). They expect the world to change in order to fit their views rather than create and innovate themselves. Companies and managers should be extremely open to their needs and expectations, in their opinion, and create flexible jobs and allow them customizable work schedules, or over 50% of them would not take a job at all, unless they badly need the money (Leonte, 2014). This is a new trend, as a few years earlier Frunzaru (2008, pp.77-78) observed that students were willing to gain money by doing the jobs that were well paid, regardless of how much they disliked these jobs. Consequently, the next generation to take over the workforce in Romania is made up mostly of hedonist people who expect the world to do something for them because they are too afraid or unable to do something themselves. How does their attitude pair with the sustainable development orientation in business? We will approach this subject in an indirect manner.

Usually people are asked directly in surveys whether they prefer to work for a CSR-righteous company or to buy products made by one. As long as

today it seems to be a sin not to say that you care about the environment and social causes, it is possible that people state they envision a CSR-lead business environment without really being motivated to act upon these words. Or, as Leiserowitz, Kates and Parris (2006) put it, it is possible for people to agree that values as social equity are desirable, but their own values, needs and interests to be in conflict with such a view, so their acts to be different. This is the reason why we propose in this paper a research based upon people's personal values.

Values define or direct peoples' goals and frame their attitudes (Leiserowitz, Kates & Parris, 2006). As fundamental criteria that we use in order to understand other peoples behaviour, to choose the way we should behave ourselves, and to explain why we bevahed in a certain manner, values can be a good predictor of an individual's orientation towards sustainability and CSR-related topics. Values are concepts or beliefs that stress upon the desirable outcome of a state or behaviour. By invoking values, individuals evaluate the environment, people and their behaviours and events (Schwartz, 1992). The evaluation can be conscious or unconscious (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). Values transcend specific situations, meaning that they guide the selection and evaluation of events and behaviours regardless of the particular context and that they are placed in a certain hierarchy by each and every individual, according to the relative importance that the person places upon them (Schwartz, 1992, p. 4; Bardi & Schwartz, 2003). There are 10 value categories grouping 52 values: universalism, power, hedonism, self-direction, benevolence, security, tradition, stimulation, achievement, and conformity (Schwartz, 2001). The ten values can be grouped in four clusters (Schwartz, 2001), as it follows: (I) Self-transcendence –encompasses the values of Universalism and Benevolence, (II) Self-enhancement – corresponding to Hedonism, Power and Success collated, (III) Openness to change – bringing together Hedonism, Self-direction and Stimulation and (IV) Conservation, a cluster dominated by the values of Security, Conformism and Tradition. The preference for a value gives hint to the motivations behind peoples acts, as values are, in fact, motivational constructs (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003, p. 1208).

According to Schwartz (1992), people who rate highly the value of Power desire a high social status, believe they can and need to control resources and other people and wish to gain prestige. People who score high on

Achievement desire to have personal success, to prove they are competent in social contexts. Other people make a point in avoiding pain and increasing pleasure. These are the ones who value Hedonism above all. For others, Stimulation is the most important thing in life: they need variety in order to be satisfied with their existence. Some people thrive on independence, so they have high scores on Self-direction. While for some tolerance, the preservation of nature, the harmony with nature and other people is important (motivations linked to high values for Universalism), for others the welbeing of their community s members is the most valuable thing (Benevolence). Conformists, or the ones who value highly Conformism, are people who practice self-censorship in order to avoid upseting other people with their behaviours. The ones who cherish Tradition desire to be respected in their community, are loyal to their community, to its religion and culture. Finally, people who prize Security want to obtain safety, harmony and stability for themselves and for their group members.

Schwartz (2001) says that some values are compatible, while others are in conflict with each other. Power and Achievement can be appreciated by the same individual, as long as he desires to have social superiority and to be respected. Achievement and Hedonism are also compatible and people who tend to overindulge seem to rate both of these values high. Hedonism and Stimulation also work well together, especially for daunting individuals who wish to taste as many of the worlds pleasure as it is possible. Stimulation and Self-direction are to be found among the values of people who are intrinsically motivated to exhibit self-control and to welcome change in their lives. Individuals who rate high Self-direction can also rate high Universalism, as this way they show their high level of self-esteem and confort with the diversity of the existence. A great score for Universalism pairs well with a great score for Benevolence in people who are not egotistical and who desire to help others change in order to have better life experiences. People who obey the rules, rating high on Conformism, can also rate high on Tradition, as they may be submissive individuals who believe they can put their trust only in themselves. Conformism and Security are both important to individuals who wish to have harmonious relations with other people and who favor the existing order. Finally, people who embrace Security can also appreciate Power because this way they can avoid or surpass the uncertainty of life by controlling relationships and resources. However, a person who rates high on Stimulation and Self-

direction would hardly rate high on Conformism, Tradition and Security (Schwartz, 2001). Also, an individual who likes to see the good in the other people, who searches fot the beauty in life and who aims to have a deeply harmonious connection with the other people and nature (rating high on Universalism and Benevolence) would not be able to step onto others in order to get things done his way, as people who consider Power and Success the most important things in their lives do. And hedonists, the ones who live only for themselves would never be conformists, meaning they would never put their community s interests on top of their own, nor would they value Tradition, for it holds them back from manifesting themselves as independent individuals.

After studying many programmatic documents regarding sustainable development Leiserowitz, Kates and Parris (2006) came to the conclusion that the following values, described in the Milennium Declaration, are substantially linked to the idea of sustainability: freedom for each individual to live a decent life under a democratic and participatory governing system, equality for all people, solidarity (equated with equity and social justice), tolerance (understood as respect for diversity), respect for nature and shared responsibility for development. The aforementioned authors emphasize the values of economic development, environmental protection and equity as core values to sustainable development.

Methodology

The aim of our research was to provide insight into the core motivations of young Romanian people in order to understand their attitude towards CSR-related values. The main research questions were:

RQ1: What are the personal values Romanian youngsters cherish the most?

RQ2: Are there more types of personal values profiles among Romanian youngsters?

RQ3: What are the characteristics of these profiles?

Our hypothesis states that a true orientation towards CSR and sustainable development would be found in people for whom the clusters of Self-transcendence and Conservation are well represented, as these clusters

are linked to motivations related to the welbeing of the self along with the welbeing of the other people. A truly hedonist individual or one who wishes to earn social power and material goods at all costs would certainly have a collateral interest in other people and in the blue print of the businesses they have or interact with, if ever, unless, perhaps, they also rate high on Security.

We conducted a pen and paper survey between 9.05.2014 and 30.05.2014. The survey comprised of 52 items created by the author of this paper in order to reflect all the personal values identified by Schwartz (1992) and five other items that were meant to measure socio-demographical data. Respondents were asked to rate each of the 52 items using a scale with 9 points, as "guiding principles in life" for them. The 9 points were the following: -1 (opposed to my values), 0 (it is not important to me), 1 and 2 have no specific tags, 3 (it is important to me), 4 and 5 have no tags, 6 (it is very important to me) and 7 (it is the most important thing in life to me). The scale reflects the discriminations people naturally make when they think of the desirability of values, according to Schwartz (2001).

The response rate was 92.72%. Further, we eliminated 53 of the 510 returned surveys because there were suspicions regarding the level of accuracy of the answers, as long as more than 20 items were rated 7 in each of these papers, meaning respondents believed that more than 20 values are the most important things in life for them. We have 457 valid questionnaires and our respondents are aged 18 to 25 (M=20, SD=1.3), with 279 females and 175 males.

Most of the respondents were enrolled in the first year of study at their chosen university (n=351), while others were enrolled in the second year (n=11) and in the third year (n=95). It is important to note that we have chosen a convenience sample. However, we have tried to increase the possible relevance of the results by choosing to apply the survey in various universities and various faculties. 68% of our respondents were students at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, at the College of Management, the College of Communication and Public Relations and the College of Political Science, 11% were students at the "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University, at the College of International

Economic Relations, 25% at the University "Politehnica" of Bucharest, the College of Electronics, and 17% at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, at the College of International Economic Relations, at the College of Business Administration and at the Faculty of Economic Cybernetics, Statistics and Informatics. Most of our sample (n=334) are not working but still many (n=157) enjoy a decent life out of the revenue they have, while even more of them (n=166) say they can buy expensive things if they pay the efforts.

Results and Discussion

In order to simplify the analysis we created score variables for each of the 10 dimensions or value categories described in the Literature Review section. Because it did not prove to be beneficial, we have not eliminated any of the 52 items in computing these new variables (α=0.9). There is a good level of consistency for each dimension: universalism (α=0.7), power (α=0.6), self-direction (α=0.7), security (α=0.6), stimulation (α=0.8), conformism (α=0.6), hedonism (α=0.5), success (α=0.7), tradition (α=0.6), and benevolence (α=0.7).

Using the means for each dimension (universalism M=4.4, benevolence M=4.7, conformism M=4.6, tradition M=3.1, security M=4.9, power M=3.8, success M=5, hedonism M=5.6, stimulation M=3.8, self-direction M=4.8) we have created the graphic representation of the Romanian youngsters values in Figure 1. It should be noted that the highest ranking values were obtained for hedonism, success and security, closely followed by self-direction, benevolence and conformism. By further computing these data, we learn that our respondents are oriented towards self-actualization (M=4.8), that they are open to change (M=4.7) but also that they are interested in self-transcendence (M=4.6) and conservation (M=4.2). Generally, they seem to be more interested in achieving a great deal of social success by doing what they like and running away from what could bring them pain.

To determine wether there can be identified more than one profile of personal values in our sample, and also for better understading these profiles, if found, we conducted a principal components analysis using the

ten score variables. The principal components analysis we used was based upon the correlations between the 10 variables. Initially, 2 components were extracted, with values surpassing 1,00. The orthogonal rotation determined the component structure presented in Table 1. Because of the significant number of missing values, that would have limited the number of cases to 393 from 457, we have chosen to replace the missing values with means on each dimension. There have been replaced 15 missing values for universalism, 11 for power, 7 for hedonism, 7 for self-direction, 12 for security, 4 for stimulation, 4 for conformism, 3 for success, 10 for tradition and 11 for benevolence. The first component represents 31.4% of the variance, and the second 29.6% of the variance. The first factor seems to be the Revolutionary and the second seems to be the Guardian (both etiquettes are given by the author of this paper).
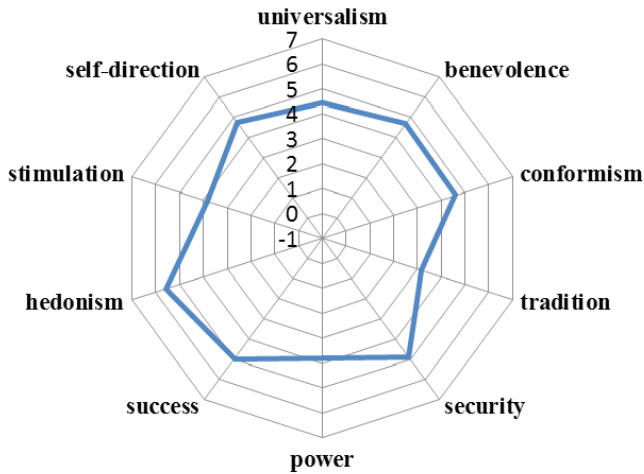

Figure 1. The Means Profile of Personal Values of Romanian Youngsters

Table 1. The Orthogonal Matrix for Ten Variables

Rotated Component Matrix

	Factor	
	1	**2**
	The Revolutionary	**The Guardian**
Self-direction	,814	,279
Success	,767	,336
Power	,747	,131
Hedonism	,678	,223
Stimulation	,654	,021
Tradition	-,115	,803
Conformism	,242	,767
Benevolence	,304	,755
Universalism	,289	,708
Security	,448	,632

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

The Values of the Revolutionary

The Revolutionary is a person who wishes to be free of all limitations, a Me-first, domineering individual. His aim is to choose by himself the goals to be pursued. Revolutionaries are people who believe they are creative and who want to create whatever they want, unlimited by existing rules. Also, they are people who thrive to explore the world *ad libitum*. They may create valuable things, as Revolutionaries are curious people, who may work hard and who have a good level of self-esteem; they are people who do not wait for others to come and help them achieve their goals.

Most of the time, they want to prove themselves competent, to obtain and to maintain other people`s respect for them. In other words, they are ambitious, intelligent, motivated by success, and work for becoming influent individuals. Their public image is of utmost importance to them. As they want to obtain a position of power in the society, to have prestige, to be able to control material resources and other people, they are sensitive to what others believe about them and do their best to present themselves as valuable people. However, their wish to gain social power is doubled by their love for material goods. Power is equated with money and with the

ability to control others, to whom they like to present themselves as people who have authority.

The guiding principle of their lives is avoiding pain and maximizing the level of pleasure felt. They are hedonists whose purpose is to enjoy life. They are daunting thrill seekers who need various experiences to maintain a good level of functioning, for whom the wisdom of the old holds little importance. Religion and local traditions are to be avoided as much as possible. At a deeper level, they run away from the cultural community they belong to by birth and even disrespect the world they were raised into. It is interesting to note that even though they dismiss traditional communities and customs, they are interested in security and stability.

It is hard to believe that Revolutionaries would agree to pay more for a product made by a CSR-oriented company. They are more inclined to choose the products that suit better their own needs than the products that are related with donations for humanitarian causes or that are made with reusable materials. As a manager, a Revolutionary himself would not change suppliers in order to diminish his company`s carbon emissions, unless he has some NGOs or media representatives knocking at the door. However, as he is sensitive to what other people think of him, he might donate money himself to a cause that would make him popular or he might even initiate a campaign addressing a special issue that he knows many public members would resonate with, so as to increase his chances to win public respect and appreciation. As employees, they will surely avoid a company that has bad reputation so that their reputation is kept safe and they will choose a company with excelent reputation.

Revolutionaries do not truly care about the community they come from, nor about the communities they interact with in their journey aimed to bring them to the best living standards available to a human being. It is not to say that a Revolutionary would not get involved passionately with CSR. As long as it earns him good points regarding his public image and as long as it helps him feel powerful and respected, he would work very hard to *look* responsible.

When his own sanity and life quality are threatened, he will become a very dedicated CSR preacher and activist but as long as he can gain money from a factory in a place far away, where working conditions are not really good for employees, and the media will not ever find that, CSR will be just a word to him. Anyway, as they like to feel secure, as stakeholders they would put hard pressure on a company to reduce pollution in the area where they live or to raise the quality of the products they make. In the end, the Revolutionary thinks much of himself and desires to live a good life, so if CSR is needed to enhance his life`s quality, he will surely get involved with it to a great length.

The Values of the Guardian

Guardians, unlike Revolutionaries, are very drawn to tradition, religion, symbols, rites and rules of the community they belong to, to whom they are fiercely loyal. They do not dream of a stimulating life, they are not adventurers. Moderate, devout, even humble, Guardians accept the place they were given in the world by birth right and attempt to make no changes in the way things are. They do not blame God or others for lacking better opportunities in life. They fight no battle with themselves and they are able to see the beauty in anything. These people prize sages and wish to become sages.

With a good capacity of self-discipline, Guardians are always polite and always in control of their words and actions. They fear they could say or do something that would upset the people close to them so they are permanently vigilant. They respect the elders and take their advice, they are obedient. Community is of utmost importance to them. The motivation behind their exquisite self-mastery is their strong desire to keep and to enhance the welbeing of the people close to them. Beside family, they have good friends to whom they are loyal, forgiving and with whom they are honest. They help their friends when asked to and they believe in true friendship and true love.

Openminded, Guardians promote tolerance at a general level, support equal rights and dream of the day when all people would be appreciated for who they are and not for the social status they have or their material

possesions. They would like to live in a world where there are no wars and where all the guilty people are punished for their wrongdoings. They feel at home in nature and they have a special interest in protecting it. They are also interested in their health and in the health of the ones dear to them. In essence, the Guardian wishes to live in a secure world, to be in harmony with the nature, with self and with the other people. A Guardian knows he is part of a community, feels like a cell in a living organism, and fears the possibility of losing its position as a member of it. He cherishes the feeling of belonging and feels protected by the cocoons that the national state, the local authorities, the family, the colleagues at work, the neighbours envelop him into. These protecting cocoons help him live relatively carefree, being able to search for and see the good in many areas in life, including people.

As security is one of his core needs, he will engage in all sort of activities that would protect him, his family and his friends from perceived harm, such as pollution, health issues, or human rights problems. This means he would be willing to go clean the parks in his town along with fellow Guardians and some flashy Revolutionaries, supporting a NGOs initiative. This also means he would donate for causes that are dear to him, resonating with health, community and family. He would buy products that support a cause related to health research or health improvement for people in poor countries. He would speak to others about the CSR initiatives of a company and he would be a good advocate for the underdog.

Guardians might choose to work for a company that has proven its dedication to social causes, even though this may mean he would have to drive longer to work. He needs to feel his work makes a difference in the world and he will accept some personal deprivations if this way his family or community would prosper. If the company he works with has a CSR-related problem, he would get involved with the team working on it but in case the company would be proven guilty, even though his reputation might be at stakes, if his family needs him to keep that workplace, so will he.

Guardians are less likely to become CEOs or business leaders. This does not mean that a Guardian who has a dream of solving a specific social problem or environment issue, and these are the kind of dreams they have,

would not fight for building his own company and for gathering around him the people he needs to make his dream happen. Actually, he might take the lead and become a social entrepreneur or he might create an NGO so that he would feel his life purpose as a member of the humanity is done well. He will also be open to protesting against companies that do not have or have little interest in CSR activities. It is beyond his power of understanding why a company would not care about its employees, about its neighbours or about the nature. People who are not born yet have the right to live in a world at least as good as the one we are living in, believes the Guardian.

Conclusion

From a personal values perspective, about 30% of the Romanian youngsters we selected distinguish themselves as true social activists, who would support by all means available to them the companies that prove to be CSR-oriented. Other 30% are more attracted to the hedonistic lifestyle, where community and sustainability have little value, unless their own persona gets to be affected by some CSR-unresponsible company.

We did not have access to data about how many of these youngsters declare their support for CSR initiatives and how many actually support through real actions these initiatives so we cannot make a comparison between what they say it is desirable for them to do and what they actually do. The general profile of the Romanian digital natives shows, however, a rather high interest of all youngstes in security and stability. This suggests that, even though some of them might be interested more into climbing the social ladder, most would choose to act in ways they perceive as enhancing their level of security, and CSR-related activities are just that.

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