Opportunities for small and medium sized enterprises
in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility
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OPPORTUNITIES FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES IN THE FIELD OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract: In our days the so-called Corporate Social Responsibility (hereinafter referred to as CSR), which is applied so often in business life, can be described, first of all, by a business attitude. Although several larger global companies aim to build in the value-oriented company management into their everyday management practices, the aforementioned attitude still prevails among the leaders of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in spite of changes and improvements. The objective of the article is to introduce a novel CSR programme, which offers deeper insight into the current CSR trends and directions and leads from the business-oriented CSR towards a more value-oriented CSR. For generation Y and generation Z, it is a more and more important factor in the job search that the would-be employer regards corporate social responsibility important. The voluntary contribution of the youth gives a significant basis for CSR programme, and it is also a serious opportunity for the employers. In the fights during the current structured unemployment - which is a global problem - the companies face serious challenges for obtaining and retaining new staff. My former research concluded that the members of generation Y change their workplaces 3-4 times more often than the representatives of generation X. Their loyalty is weak; their employee attitude cannot be described with allegiance. The CSR activity, a well-elaborated programme can be a serious appeal for the new generation. The paper presents novel solutions to retain the workforce and increase satisfaction, introduces false credits about social responsibility and provides a low-budget solution for innovative CSR solutions.

Keywords: CSR activity, generation Y, structured unemployment

**JEL Classification:** J11, M51, M14, O15

1 Introduction

The White Paper published by the European Committee in March 2017 argues that the impact of globalisation should be summarised in a document based on facts, clear and straightforward for everyone. It should be done in order to turn the impacts to our advantage. Many European people are worried that the globalisation may lead to job losses; social injustice as well as lower environmental, health and data protection standards. The younger generation also feels that their relations to people living in other countries may contribute to the improvement of their quality of life.

This generation – these days referred to as generation Y and its members are young employees – relates to their workplaces and jobs differently than the older generation X or the baby boomers.

The unemployment rate in the European Union seems to decline after its peak in 2010-2014. The unemployment rate of EU28 was 7.6 % in 2017; this value, however, did not include the data of Greece, Italy and the United Kingdom. The unemployment rate was the highest – almost 20% - in Spain. Malta and Hungary are the most successful with their current 4.0-4.2 % rates compared to the years of global crisis. (http://en.eustat.eus/)

According to Ghoul et al. (2017), CSR is linked with improved access to financing in countries with low equity and credit markets, greater investment and lower insolvency risk in countries with more limited business freedom, and longer trade credit period and higher future sales growth in countries with mild legal institutions. (Ghoul et al., 2017)

Figure 1: Unemployment rate (ages 16 to 74) by country 2017

Source: http://en.eustat.eus/
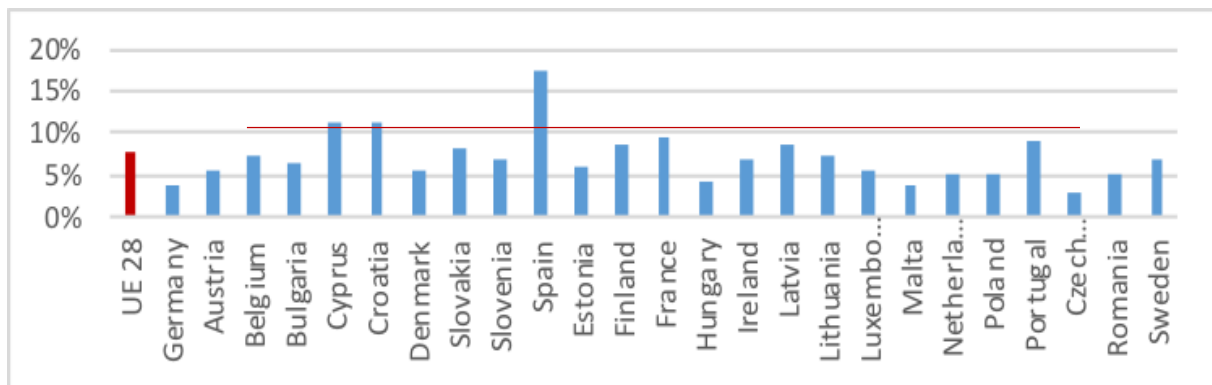
It is obvious, however, that structured unemployment has led to serious issues in Europe. It is very difficult for the unemployed to find jobs, while the companies struggle with serious skills shortages. The researcher economists have examined the problem from different approaches in order to explore the reasons and make recommendations to the European states to successfully cope with this issue. (Schubert and Turnovsky, 2018)

1.1 Millennials and their job choices

The definition of generation Y can be different on each continent depending on the historical background. The literature sources provide plenty of features about this generation, based on which its members can be clearly identified. Their everyday reliance on technology and the digital world; the constant use of a computer and the internet, which comes totally natural to them are probably their most important characteristics. Another important feature that career, money and success are of prime importance for them because they have learnt that only these would take them further in the consumer society. They are not obedient employees. (VanMeter et al., 2013) They are often very autonomous personalities, for whom the workplace is not necessarily a permanent thing: it can be changed anytime. They are not willing to stay in a job, where the pressure, the expectation of loyalty is a must. The individual freedom, family, friends, self-expression and „Carpe Diem" (Boyd, 2010) are more important to them. According to Valuch et al. (2013), who examined the Hungarian historical conditions from the points of sociology and politics, the Hungarian members of generation Y were born after 1982 and their lives have been enormously affected by the explosive development of information technology, globalisation as well as the drastic transformation of the educational system. (Robert and

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Valuch, 2013). Some popular articles suggest that Millennials are a "want it" and "want it now" generation but we cannot judge a book by its cover. When we (i.e. X gen members) were fresh graduates and young, did not we want the same? Good pays and benefits, rapid successes, work/life balance and, of course, challenging work. Although the career expectations of the Millennials are manifested differently in their career ladders, their needs and motivations are not really alter our earlier imaginations. Mostly the companies try to suit their structures, organizations and styles to their employees. Nicholas (2009) gave a good description of the workplaces of various generations. The new generation will not respect the authority; respect is not based on title or position; all the colleagues must earn their respect. "It has been suggested that many of the career goals and expectations among Millennials are ''supersized,'' unrealistic, and disconnected between reward and performance." (Nicholas, 2009)

Or just we are responsible for these "problems." According to Sacks (2006) they are said to have "helicopter parents" who hover over them (the over-involved Boomer parents). Other typical outcomes of this hovering behaviour are – among others - the Pan Peter syndrome or Mama-hotel and Papa-bank. (Kolnhofer-Derecskei et al., 2017) From the research regarding generation Y, it could be concluded that the members of this generation are more mobile both in choosing a workplace and a place to live. (Ng and Parry 2016) The members of generation Y are less tied to their workplaces than generation X; besides finding a good job, they are also attracted to the high level of welfare and they long for an active community and social life. (Twenge, 2010) They also choose their workplaces totally differently than generation X used to. The members of generation Y collect information and try to learn as much as possible about the company where they apply to (Szoboszlai et al., 2014). It is predestined in their socialisation process because they carry out even their purchases like this and for them – as digital natives – searching for information comes naturally. (Zhitomirsky-Geffet and Blau, 2016) The mission of the company; the working conditions, the community within the company where they have to work are important factors for them. They are more committed to environmental protection and they expect the companies to show social responsibility (Grebitus et al., 2017). According to the survey of Deloitte carried out in 2017, almost half of the members of generation Y and Z think that corporate management is not committed to support the improvement of society. In their opinion, the companies should pay attention to creating jobs, innovation, career and life fulfilment of their employees as well as the positive impact on society and the environment. (Deloitte 2017)

Figure 2: Their leaders are committed to helping improve society
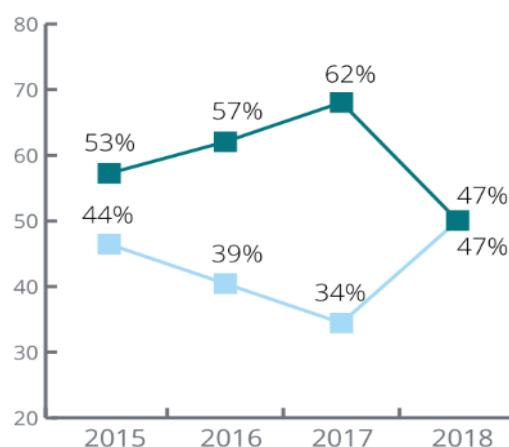
Source: Deloitte

Of course, they can see that their own employers give priority mostly to generating profit, selling products and services as well as to finding new methods to increase efficiency. They would consider much more important if their employers paid more attention to the issues of employment and creating new jobs as well as to questions affecting the whole society, like education, health, mass communication, etc.

Figure 3: Employers are "out of step" with millennials' priorities

Source: Deloitte

When looking for jobs, it is important for the representatives of generation Y that their workplace is a trusted brand and they also check whether the organisation they apply to do any kind of social or pro bono activity. For them, the opportunities of alternative working arrangements, green workplace and conditions of commuting are also more highlighted. They are looking for ergonomically comfortable workplaces; employers offering challenges and inspiring environment. (Stankiewicz and Łychmus, 2017) Many corporate executives are rather sceptical regarding the occasionally overheated manifestation of generation Y members. In their opinion, there are a variety of ways to tackle social and environmental issues without having thousands of young people struggling and stuttering through start-ups. The work may serve some social and environmental objectives and there are a lot of opportunities for this.

1.2 CSR or marketing

Dahlsrud (2008) introduced the general concept of social responsibility on the basis of the results of the content analysis of 37 different definitions of social responsibility. Enterprises have always affected the economy, society and environment; had close connections with government, clients or shareholders. Therefore, in his opinion, social responsibility consists of five elements: economic, social, environmental, volunteering and stakeholders (Dahlsrud, 2008). In summary: the definition of social responsibility can be interpreted in different ways depending on the actual case. The challenges of expanding globalisation and the business environment require the consideration of implementing the elements of social responsibility. CSR must be consistent with the business and development strategy of enterprises.

More and more companies start to recognize that their enterprise (the world of business, profit and work) is not a hermetically closed area but it is closely connected and is in constant

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interaction with its environment (natural and social). (Lindgreen, 2009) The competitive environment and competitors definitely make necessary efficiency and strategy or the so-called management whose goal is not merely to control. (Gyenge et al., 2013) Starting from this, the objectives and values of companies managed by responsible and committed leaders would include – apart from maximising profits – social, human rights and environmental aspects for sustainable growth. (Lichtenstein et al., 2004). In their paper, Eisingerne and Jozsa discuss a counterexample for CSR from the Hungarian sugar market. When these companies closed their factories, they did not behave according to CSR principles. (Jozsa and Eisingerne, 2010). The stakeholders of a company are persons or groups affecting the operation of the organisation and vice versa. The organisation involves the stakeholders, and they harmonize their interests in order to decrease risks and increase advantages. (Peloza and Shang, 2011) The stakeholders are the shareholders, investors, employees, consumers, competitors, suppliers, civil society, government and the corporate environment. In a definition on the stakeholder perspective, in Gray et al. (2001) opinion that the insertion of information about social responsibility is the preparation and publication of information about social and environmental activities and cooperation, with employees, customers, communities, and other stakeholders of the business. The information provided in financial information or usually a combination of other quantitative information, descriptive and qualitative information. Social information may be aimed at different targets but should provide clear and authenticated information. This definition is transparency and adequacy based on the dispute on transparency, democracy, and accountability that should be seen as the underlying goal of social accounting. In our days, when the HR experts of companies cope with serious challenges to find and retain the suitable employees, it is inevitable that the corporate and HR professionals know those criteria, which might be important for future employees. All the companies aim to maintain the balance between the generations because all the managers regard the training of replacement an important task. The high-level fluctuation of young employees, the lack of their loyalty imposes a great challenge for the management. They have to find and implement new ways of retaining their employees.

There are several areas of corporate social responsibility, but basically, it can be divided into internal and external corporate activities (Le Ha Nhu and Velencei, 2018). The internal activities may include those actions, which enhance the emotional connection of employees to the company and increase the value of company image. The organisation of training, communication of the secure job, actions related to change management, etc. belongs to this area. The external corporate dimensions strengthen the brand value, client relations and client image of the company. The researches indicate that high-need for status customers exhibit a more positive attitude than low-need for status customers when the CSR message is easy to process. (Zhang, 2018) The activities related to environmental protection, joint campaigns with partners and suppliers, activities organised in the micro-environment of the company or in smaller settlements, etc. can be listed here. (Lim, et al. 2018). Nowadays it is not enough to think at a corporate level, because the organization and planning of supply chains have become a strategic area; the companies' presence in the supply chain plays an important role in their growth and expansion. Supply chain management offers many advantages to companies connected to the chain. Due to organizational techniques and a high degree of coordination, work sharing, and capacity utilization improves. (Kozma, 2017)

2   Methodology

The research consists of three main parts. The first step is the review of interviews made with corporate professionals on the basis of secondary data, in which the CSR strategies of the companies from the current Hungarian SME sector are examined. The other question is how the company image is enhanced with the help of CSR activities and whether these opportunities are used for enhancing the loyalty of employees and for attracting new employees. The next step of the research is a focus-group survey with the members of generation Y and Z, who are already actively present on the labour market and with those, who are still in higher education. The third phase is a large-sample questionnaire survey among the members of our university, which may also contribute to the recruitment activities of companies in partnership with the university.

For the interviews with corporate executives, I was looking for companies, which pay special attention to the employment of young people and are well aware of the related everyday issues. It was an important aspect when selecting the sample that these are exclusively SME actors; there were no multinational companies in the sample. The reason for this was that the budge of large-scale companies can be very high in the field of CSR; they may even employ a separate expert in the area. Moreover, their CSR policy is mostly determined by their parent organisation and does not consider local, country-specific needs.

Upon selecting the members of generation Y and Z for the research, it is an important aspect that they have had at least two or more jobs since they started to work, and they are being employed – even if they are studying. Their job should not be with a large-scale company or a multinational company, or at least they should have some experiences with a least one SME company.

The questionnaire research should definitely reach students in part-time courses, who might have more extensive experiences in the labour market. In their case, their job experiences with SME will be the filtering question. It will also be a condition for full-time students, but not necessarily regarding a full-time job.

3   Result

The present article discusses the results of the expert interviews. Interviews were conducted with the representatives of five companies. Two of these companies are also in close partnership with the other two schools of the university, therefore the students in the engineering and economics courses are also targeted in the recruitment. The other three companies are not partnering the university, but they are advertising vacancies for areas which belong to the profile of our university. They are looking for IT graduates, engineers and managers. Four out of the five companies are considered medium-sized enterprises on the basis of European Union classification. The number of employees is between 50 and 85. The fifth company is a small-scale enterprise with 35 employees. All five companies cope with workforce issues and would need expansion. Only one of the companies has a separate marketing department, but the other four companies also employ marketing experts. Mostly the mid-level executives deal with human resource management, but two companies have separate HR professionals. Recruitment is carried out mostly with the help of head-hunter companies.

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Table 1: Companies participating in the interviews

	Number of employees	HR expert	Marketing	Cooperation with university	Staff need
1	79 persons	Yes	Independent department	No	IT expert, economist
2	72 persons	No	Outsourced	Yes	IT expert, technical manager,
3	63 persons	Yes	2 professionals	No	engineer
4	57 persons	No	1 professional	No	Engineer, technical manager
5	35 persons	No	1 professional	Yes	IT expert

Source: compilation by author

All of my respondents were aware of the concept, content and business opportunities of CSR. Four of the companies, however, saw this business opportunity mostly in one internal CSR activity, namely the environmental protection duties, for example reducing waste emission or decreasing the use of different resources in the course of producing their products. It should be added, however, that this activity was rather the inherent result of experiments aiming to achieve cost efficiency. Only one leader mentioned that the employees could participate in a healthy living program and go to regular training. The proper ratio of the work-family-recreation trio was not considered important by any of the companies. It is even more interesting because 2018 was declared the year of families by the Hungarian government and several national campaigns have been launched to drive the attention of Hungarian people to this. Advertisements and posters can be seen all over the country and they are trying to strengthen the childbearing pleasure of youngsters. Unfortunately, the economic trends of the 20th century and the trends in the change in the related educational structure resulted in the dominance of the two-child family, while large families were disappearing. The based on equality economic system with traditional family-friendly policies, in the combination with a family-unfriendly labour market. Future family policies should focus on the reconciliation of work and family. (Zeman, 2018)

Figure 4: Being a parent is a lifelong adventure – Don't miss it!

Source:csaladokeve.hu

Coping with serious changes in the life of the company, which usually also severely affect the employees, were not included in CSR activities, either. In their opinion, these changes often impose such volume of operative tasks in everyday life that simply there is no time to prepare employees and to consider the interests of those groups, which are the most intensively affected by these changes.

Out of external CSR activities, two executives mentioned the participation in the life of the local community. The admitted that they had "stolen" the idea from the multinational companies they are supplier partners with. Both executives, however, reported very positive outcomes and improved image as the result of 'Word of Mouth' both in professional circles and among their employees. None of the enterprises considers the selection of partners or suppliers as a CSR opportunity, although the business partners also affect the evaluation of a company, therefore their selection should not be made only on the basis of raw business aspects. The area of human rights was also brought up by every enterprise, but they rather regard it as a legal issue than a CSR opportunity. The position of companies regarding global environmental protection was very interesting. In theory, all the interviewees clearly regard this area as CSR and give it a high priority. It was revealed during the interview, however, that the implementation was not so straightforward according to the executives. Three of them mentioned significant investments in order to make progress in this area. Two of them wholeheartedly supported it in theory but had no capital to launch programs of this type. One of the interviewed executives realised by the end of the conversation that they practically covered this area when the company organised community work and cleared a green field on the outskirts of the small settlement with the help of the employees because that area had become an illegal waste dumping place in the recent years.

They all reported that employing young people imposes serious difficulties for them. Their preparedness is often incomplete or superficial, but the employers would be ready to overlook this and by all means help their development. They have to see, however, that these people leave them after 1-3 years, even if they seemingly enjoy themselves at the company. Often, they cannot even give an exact reason for leaving. This, however, means that the employment of a beginner entails serious financial disadvantages because the invested time and energy will not bring any return for the company; the benefits are often enjoyed by the competitors.

4 Discussion

Following the conduction and analysis of interviews, I called the company management to report about the achievements of my research. During these meetings the executives indicated that – using the available resources - they need help in planning and organising programs for the employees, which would enhance their loyalty, expand the CSR activities in the life of the company; can be well communicated by the marketing branch and creates a basis for implementing real responsibility and sustainability in the everyday life of the company. For this purpose, a small working group was formed with a representative from each of the five companies in order to develop a year-long programme as a result of which each company could find a new area for itself to include it in their CSR portfolio.

The main objective was to concentrate on those areas, which had not been covered by any of the companies and the support of which could be related to a group of employees. A timetable was attached to the programme, and responsible persons were named. The list of optional programmes was sent to the executives and marketing professionals of each company and they could choose from the suggested programmes. According to their choices, the program consisted of the following elements:

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- Self-study groups could be organised together with the inhabitants on the small settlement; the company provided the venue and part of the required equipment or facilities. For this, the recreation activities of employees should have been mapped with the help of a simple survey. This information can be useful later when the loyalty needs to be increased in order to retain employees. As a result, a small mixed choir has been formed, and we have found a conductor: an enthusiastic singing master. Each company launched a bowling club, and they organise a multi-round annual competition from now on and the winner will get a trophy. They have formed a theatre-goer club and a board game club as well.

- In the frame of team-building, the dog-owner employees could form joint teams and take part in the Hard Dog Race competition, which is a 12-km obstacle race with their own dog in teams of six people. It was possible to enter the race with dogs from shelters waiting for adoption in order to drive the attention of the internet community to the hard-working, hero dogs. It was an amazing day and the organizer dog shelter have got a number of volunteer helpers from the participants, who will regularly participate in the life of the shelter and help their everyday work.

- Drawing competition was announced for kids of the employees titled "Where does your mum/dad work?" The children's drawings were evaluated by a jury of three people in each company and, of course, the audience, the employees could also vote. This campaign was an enormous success among the employees. They voted for the kids' drawings with huge enthusiasm and enjoyed how the kids saw the world.

- Family day was organised where people could take part in a five-a-side football tournament. The most important representatives of bigger partners were also invited to this event. There was joint catering at the event and the best employees were also awarded at this forum. The winners of the drawing competition were announced here if the company organised one. It was also suggested to the companies to make a little exhibition to introduce the everyday life and work of the company to the family members. The exhibition was especially exciting for children. The men followed mostly the results of football matches. People made new friends and, according to the managers, there were some meaningful business meetings as well. All the managers reported that the impact of this event could be felt within the company for weeks.

- We suggested placing a comment box somewhere with an important provision: a notice board should have been placed above the comment box saying that all the comments would be read and answered in 5 days. However, this has an only positive impact if these rules are really observed by the management.

- It was also recommended to share some issues related to the everyday operation with the employees and ask their suggestions on a special platform to solve these. This would start the role of a future suggestion box. The proposals should be connected to a deadline, then the managers dealing with the issue should gather and examine the ideas received. Later the employees can make suggestions in their own areas, related to their own work for rationalizing if they are encouraged to do so. The creative and useful suggestions can be awarded by money if it is possible, but the employees should definitely receive feedback, especially regarding the long-term impact of their suggestion on the operation of the company. In this way, the employees could be more easily involved in crisis situations and embrace the solutions. Although creativity is beneficial for the companies but creativity might also produce negative effects by leading individuals to engage in unethical behaviour and to skip or reason wrong ethical solutions, as Kolnhofer-Derecskei (2016) suggested. Therefore, the impact of the environment is highly relevant,

which will give the background for a novel product, this background will motivate, secure the needed resources and will value it.
- The general alternative for this was the suggestion box, where anybody and anytime could drop any idea or suggestion, which they consider advantageous for the company, would improve the working conditions, etc.

5   Conclusion

Based on the interviews it can be concluded that the SME sector is still not aware of many areas of CSR activities. Especially, environmental protection is a highlighted area. These activities are considered from an economic perspective, and the company executives do not regard these as value-creating areas. The actors of the Hungarian SME sector struggle with labour shortages, and as a result, the solution of operative tasks and the fight for everyday existence consume their energies. They all agree that integrating some elements of CSR into the image of the company would offer serious possibilities. They can feel the necessity of change and that innovative solutions should be brought into this area, too, because the lack of money cannot hamper the development of the company. As a result of the cooperation, all the executives reported improved workplace morale. The employee turnover decreased. New partners were involved in the work. New and simple suggestions were received from the suggestion box, which may lead to 3 million HUF savings on annual level for one of the companies. The joint work resulted in new ideas and proposals for expanding CSR activities in each company; it launched common thinking among the employees of the companies, which has been unprecedented before. One of the companies contacted the employees of the foreign partner companies and introduced an "exchange kid" programme in the summer. Some employees of the other company went to the Bátor Tábor (therapeutic recreation camp for children) and volunteered to help. The companies organised fundraising for small pet shelters and took the dogs for a walk when they handed over the donations. There were several ideas dropped in the suggestion box, which had not any or hardly any costs but a lot of benefits.

Following almost one year of joint work, it can be concluded regarding these five companies that they have started on a new path, which may help them to increase their competitiveness due to the human resource development. Decreasing fluctuation and longer employee retention can ensure for the company the staff, who are aware of the aims and values of the company. This helps them to make decisions more easily regarding any issue; their confidence is growing; their position is stabilised, and the career opportunities become clearer. As a consequence, the loyalty will further increase and may have an impact on recruitment in the future. Some younger employees have already expressed their need to return to their former university when they are looking for employees and to involve their former university mates into their projects. The value of networking is invaluable for everyone and it is the most important feature of the young employees of the 21st century.

The corporate social responsibility enhances the loyalty of employees, partners and clients to the organisation. It integrates the company tasks into the policy of sustainable development considering economic, social and environmental aspects. With the help of this, it increases the conditions of long-term value creation and ensures financial success. Many researchers report about linear relations between CSR and employee attitudes. Some researchers have concluded that the CSR activity perceived by the employee exponentially increases the organisational pride, the local patriotism. The organisational pride has a positive and linear impact on job satisfaction and emotional connection. The perceived CSR exponentially raises job satisfaction and emotional responsibility indirectly through organisational pride. (Zhou et al., 2017)

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Examining the workplace choices and retention of the new generation, the impact of CSR cannot be neglected by the employers.

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