

# Generation Y and CSR

What is their Attitude?

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*Detailed Methodology & References Available Upon Request from Author*

# Abstract

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Modern times are characterized by a growing sense of urgency amongst local and global communities about the challenges they face. Equally however, there are strong doubts about the ability of Government(s) to change things. People therefore look to corporations for the power to provide social and environmental sustainability, given that many of these have revenues greater than the GDP of nations (Andriof and McIntosh, 2001.) This has led to the emergence of so-called 'Corporate Social Responsibility' (CSR) as an extremely important business issue. The concept asserts that the long term prosperity of communities and corporations are intrinsically linked and that ethical behaviour on the behalf of industry carries a mutual benefit. On top of this, the modern business world is also learning to cope with the influence of a new type of employee. Born between 1980 and 1994 (Weiler, 2005) 'Generation Y' is entering the workforce in ever greater numbers, causing a stir with hugely different priorities and characteristics to those of predecessors.

The purpose of this investigation is to consider these crucial business issues in parallel, exploring the nature and extent of their interaction. An answer to the question; 'What is Generation Y's Attitude towards CSR?' is pursued.

The study begins with a detailed review of academic literature and leads to a phase of primary research where the opinions of a sample of Generation Y employees are surveyed via a self-administered questionnaire. Findings suggest that there is a mixed attitude towards CSR and that underlying motivations for engaging with the concept are similarly ambiguous. The conclusions that emerge are analysed with reference to further academic literature. The study culminates by recognizing its inherent limitation and cites both a need and direction for further research.

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# 1.0 Introduction

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## 1.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will provide an overview of the study. After coming to an appreciation for the research area and its background, the rationale for the study will be demonstrated alongside the importance of its expected contribution to knowledge. The research question and the associated research objectives are discussed. Finally, there is a chapter-by-chapter summary of the structure of the investigation.

## 1.2 Background to Research Area

*'Woe to him who builds his realm by unjust gain...'*

*(Habakkuk 2:9)*

People have long considered the link between morality and the accumulation of wealth to be a weighty concern. Since ancient civilization, the Bible for example, has drawn attention to the great consequences of business realms built by 'unjust gain,' not least for direct transgressors, but for the effects on entire societies. Transcended to cultures of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the role of ethics in commerce has become known as 'Corporate Social Responsibility' or CSR and this remains a prominent societal and business issue (Frederick, 2006.)

There are various factors which perpetuate the significance of the concept; fuelled predominantly by society's quest to deal with matters raised by the scale and influence of industry. In modern times, people are well informed about the challenges facing the world but are dubious about the ability of Government to change things. Increasingly therefore, the corporation is regarded as the most powerful social construct (Andriof and McIntosh, 2001.) This is demonstrated by the fact that the revenues of some multinationals are larger than the GDP of many countries.

Corporations can to a very large extent dictate the prosperity of communities and the health of environments (Cannon, 1994.) It is not difficult to think of cases where deliberate or ignorant misuse of such power has brought about dire consequences

for millions of people; the global banking crisis, for example, or the BP oil disaster in the Gulf of Mexico. However, this power of corporations is also thought to possess a huge potential for good.

CSR is therefore not only concerned with limiting the detrimental impacts of industry and scrutinizing corporate behaviour in terms of ethics, governance, law, pollution, sustainability and the execution of social justice. It goes further than this, to understand and manage a company's influences on wider society with a view to universal benefit (Marsden and Andriof, 1998.) Engaging with this pursuit has become regarded as an imperative for both corporate and societal survival (Hood and Bedard, 2008.)

### **1.3 Rationale and Contribution of Study**

By virtue of its importance to society and continued relevance to the business world, CSR has become the subject of extensive academic research. However, Aguilera et al (2007) note that relatively few studies have considered the issue as it relates to employee-level phenomena. Ellis (2009) describes this gap as 'surprising' and calls for further theoretical and empirical consideration of employee attitudes towards CSR.

In response therefore, this study will seek to focus on the attitudes of employees towards CSR and in particular, gauge the attitudes of a group of employees collectively known as 'Generation Y.' The term 'Generation Y' (GY) is taken to represent those people born between the years 1980 and 1994 (Weiler, 2005.) Broadly speaking, this generation is believed to display significantly different characteristics to those of its predecessors which translate into a different set of attitudes towards the workplace.

Pfeffer (1994) observes that in today's economy, it is a company's employees who present the greatest opportunities for competitive advantage. Coupling this insight with the fact that GY is beginning and will continue to occupy the greater proportion of society's workforce (Eisner, 2005) the pertinence of understanding their attitudes towards CSR becomes apparent. This study will therefore make a contribution to academic knowledge by adding to what is known about GY and in particular, their attitudes towards CSR. By touching on perceptions of the 'correct' individual and

organizational motivations for CSR a further contribution will be made to the debate surrounding this aspect of the construct. Given that employees are important organizational stakeholders who may dictate to a large extent the success or failure of CSR initiatives, these are thought to be valuable insights which may help academics and practitioners alike make better informed judgements of the utility and impact of CSR policies (Ellis, 2009.)

## **1.4 Research Question and Objectives**

Specifically, the study will seek to answer the question:

‘What is Generation Y’s Attitude towards Corporate Social Responsibility?’

This is a multifaceted issue which has given rise to the following 4 research objectives:

1. Establish whether Generation Y regard CSR to be an altruistic or strategic concept.
2. Establish how important Generation Y believes CSR to be for both individuals and organizations.
3. Establish the extent to which Generation Y engages with CSR.
4. Establish the nature of Generation Y’s motivations to engage with CSR.

## **1.5 Report Structure**

### *Chapter 2 – Literature Review*

This chapter will serve to summarize and critique the existing literature related to the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility. Considering this alongside organizational motivations for engaging with the concept and various issues presented by Generation Y, it will thus provide a detailed and academic appraisal of the research area.

### *Chapter 3 – Research Findings and Analysis*

This chapter will present the research’s findings and via detailed analysis, will seek to identify any prevalent trends in the data. These are evaluated with reference to major themes in the literature review, providing an effective context for discussion.



Thus, the outcomes of the investigation and possible contributions to knowledge are expounded.

#### *Chapter 4 – Conclusion*

This chapter will be the study's culmination and will refer back to the research objectives, evaluating the extent to which each of these has been met. Bringing together key findings and the associated implications, the report will draw to a close by outlining possibilities for future research.

## 2.0 Literature Review

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### 2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will use existing literature to explore various facets of Corporate Social Responsibility; beginning with an introduction to the contested nature of its definition and an appreciation of its core characteristics. As has been stated previously, this research will centre on the attitudes Generation Y employees have towards CSR and in particular, their opinion of the correct motivations for engaging with the concept. The chapter will therefore review two major schools of thought on the correct motivations for CSR, before providing a background to literature on Generation Y and the issues they are thought to present to the business world. The chapter will culminate by proposing a conceptual framework to summarize and bring together the various strands of literature which contribute to the debate surrounding individual and organizational motivations for CSR.

### 2.2 Towards a Definition of CSR

Concerned with the holistic dynamics of interaction between businesses and society, CSR is clearly a multifaceted construct (Zhang and Gowan, 2008.) The issue's broad range of considerations is reflected by the fact that hundreds of attempts to reach a succinct definition have been made within abounding academic literature. However, despite this, no strong consensus has been reached on a definition (McWilliams et al, 2006.) In fact, 'there are as many definitions of CSR as there are disagreements over the appropriate role of the corporation in society,' (Crane et Al, 2006, p5.)

The difficulties in reaching an agreement are exemplified in the case of Davis (1973) who posited an early definition: 'CSR is the firm's consideration of, and response to, issues beyond the narrow economic, technical and legal requirements of the firm.' However, just a short time later, Carroll (1979) defined CSR in almost the completely opposite way; electing to include the exact elements Davis (1973) had sought to exclude: 'the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal ethical and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time.'

To this day, the dispute over the definitive nature of CSR continues unabated; it might even be argued that attempting to specifically define the concept is a futile pursuit, since it is a context dependent entity. In view of such contestation over the issue, perhaps the most acceptable definitions are those which are more general in nature and encapsulate themes from across the literature. One such definition, which this research will henceforth adopt, is that of Matten and Moon (2004.)

‘CSR is a cluster concept which overlaps with such concepts as business ethics, corporate philanthropy, corporate citizenship, sustainability and environmental responsibility. It is a dynamic and contestable concept that is embedded in each social, political, economic and institutional context.’

Crane et al (2006) argue that the most fruitful way to come to terms with the essence of CSR may not be to seek the ‘perfect’ definition, but rather, to appreciate the nature of the various characteristics that are at its core. Crane et al (2006) draw attention to 6 such characteristics which are summarized at Figure 2.2.1.

Figure 2.2.1: Core Characteristics of CSR – adapted from Crane et Al (2006)

CSR Characteristic	Description
Voluntary	There is broad agreement that CSR, in its purest form, is a voluntary effort on behalf of companies. This sees them go beyond the minimum legal or ethical requirements of the context in which they operate. Many companies have gone so far as to introduce self-regulating CSR mechanisms.
Internalizing or Managing Externalities	Externalities refer to the side effects of business activities that are borne by others and are not taken into account for business costing or decision making processes. Pollution is a good example. CSR would see a business voluntarily attempt to deal with its pollution, beyond legal requirements by investing in clean technology or clean production processes because it appreciates the importance of protecting the external environment in which it operates
Multiple Stakeholder Orientation	It has long been assumed that the prime responsibility of a business is towards the shareholders of that business. However, the concept of CSR, appreciates that besides these, there are various other key stakeholder groups which have a key interest or influence over that business' sustainability. CSR thus encapsulates notions of fair and ethical treatment of customers, suppliers, employees and local communities.
Alignment of Social/Economic Responsibilities	Appreciating that businesses have a responsibility to generate profit and wealth for shareholders (though the priority of this

	responsibility is contested) CSR need not necessarily conflict with this. There is now a significant 'business case' for CSR, whereby firms capitalize on the profitable benefits of being socially responsible.
Practices and Values	CSR is about more than just a particular set of activities or behaviours, but rather, the values and culture which underpin motivations to engage with those activities. CSR conscious companies seek to adjust their internal corporate mindsets and philosophies as well as the external expression of their behaviour.
Beyond Philanthropy	CSR was initially seen as a discretionary 'bolt-on' business activity, whereby corporations would periodically donate large sums of money, or show similar gestures of grandeur towards the poor. True CSR, however, means the integration of such benevolence into all aspects of business activity from production processes to marketing and from supply procurement to the treatment of employees.

### 2.3 Motivations for CSR

As with the nature of the concept's proper definition and the appropriate role of corporations in society, there is also significant disagreement and keen debate surrounding what should be the morally correct motivations for an organization seeking to engage with CSR. As will be demonstrated, there is a significant section of academic thought (Friedman, 1970; Carroll, 1991) which regards the primary responsibility of business to be the generation of wealth and profit and as such, perceives CSR as a strategic tool to be utilized to these ends. On the other hand however, is a school of thought which considers CSR in its purest form, to be a much more altruistic concept. In the view of Jones (2003) for instance, once a firm begins

to strategize being ethical, or ‘giving back’ to society in expectation of reward, they are no longer engaging in real CSR. Beginning with strategic motivations, the origins of these viewpoints alongside their relative merits and key criticisms are now explored.

## 2.4 Strategic Motivations for CSR

*‘It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love.’*

*Adam Smith (1776)*

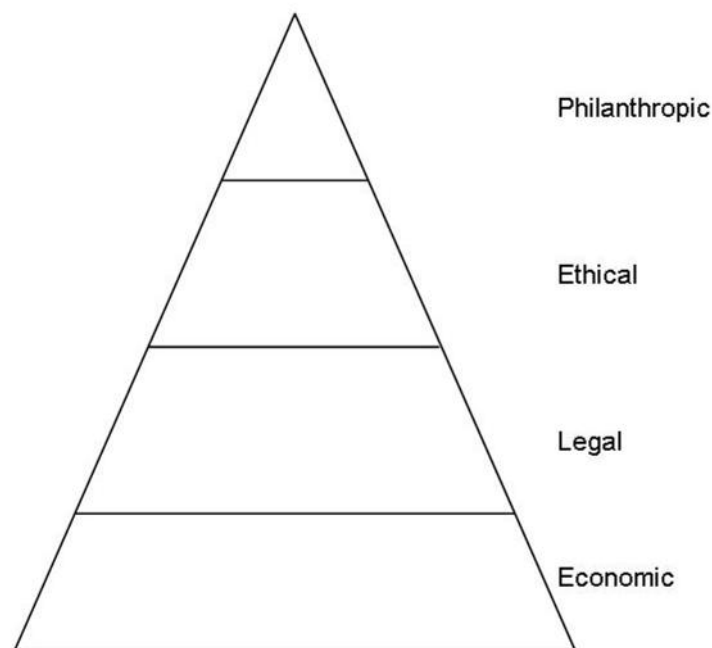
In his masterpiece work, *‘The Wealth of Nations,’* Scottish economist and moral philosopher Adam Smith (1776) postulated a concept which he referred to as ‘the invisible hand of self-interest.’ The essence of this compelling argument was that society benefited most when individuals and organizations addressed their own interests and regarded themselves as a matter of priority. In so doing, the unintended but inevitable consequences would be universal prosperity; not just for themselves, but also for others.

Modern derivations of Smith’s (1776) ‘laissez-faire’ economic philosophy have permeated academic considerations of CSR and have given rise to a significant school of thought which argues ‘there is one and only one responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud,’ (Friedman, 1970.) According to this view, the notion that businesses have a pervasive set of responsibilities to anyone but themselves is at best, a matter of pure rhetoric and at worst, a destructive influence on the proper, profit making responsibilities of the organization. Furthermore, the concept of CSR is unadulterated socialism, brought about by ‘unwitting puppets of the intellectual forces which undermine free society’ (Friedman, 1970.)

However, Friedman (1970) could be criticized for an argument which hinges on one, very questionable assumption. Is it necessarily the case that socially responsible practices will always mean a reduction in company profits? In response to these

vehement attacks on the merits of CSR, there was an emergence of theoretical constructs which agreed with Friedman (1970) that the corporation's first priority is the generation of profit, but argued that CSR activities are not in any way contrary to these objectives. One framework which illustrates this philosophy is that of the 'CSR Pyramid,' developed by Carroll (1991.)

Figure 2.4.1. – The CSR Pyramid – adapted from Carroll (1991)



Carroll's (1991) pyramid dictates that businesses should address issues from the bottom upwards. Therefore when companies' have got their priorities in order, economic matters such as the generation of profit, conducted in accordance with minimum legal requirements come first. After this, the companies are free to address matters of ethical or philanthropic concern, but in any case, the former must take precedence over the latter.

As has been seen, authors such as Friedman (1970) were particularly scathing of CSR, whilst Carroll (1991) and his contemporaries came to tolerate the concept. This remarkable change of opinion has continued to the point that nowadays, there is a strong consensus in ardent favour of CSR. Burchell (2008) highlights that in direct contrast to previous thought, an extremely robust 'business case' for CSR has emerged. This emphasizes that effective CSR strategies can actually enhance the

profit and general success of all organizations through the exploitation of 'win-win' scenarios. This has become known as the 'instrumental' or 'strategic' approach to CSR which regards corporate decisions to engage with the concept as expressions of 'enlightened self-interest' (Keim, 1978.)

These theories have enjoyed wide acceptance in the business world and increasingly, academics and practitioners bear witness to considerable positive links between CSR and corporate performance (Cowe and Hopkins, 2008.) Furthermore, there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support these claims. Little (2001) for example, has established quantitative correlations between CSR and business performance in the following areas:

- Reputation management
- Risk profile and risk management
- Employee recruitment, motivation and retention
- Investor relations and access to capital
- Learning and innovation
- Operational efficiency and
- Licence to operate

In view of such lucrative benefits, many businesses are seeing fit to integrate CSR activities with their mainstream practices. These are considered tactically astute manoeuvres which can serve as excellent methods of profit enhancement (Woods, 2008.) Grayson and Hodges (2004, p9) go further, asserting that CSR might be better regarded as 'Corporate Social Opportunity' since the concept can be 'synonymous with possibilities for market growth, product or service differentiation and new business.'

In conclusion then, CSR has become a prime component of business strategy which when used properly sustains activities and financial performance over the long-term (Krauthammer, 2009.) Consequently, many businesses see the function of the concept as nothing more than strategic tool to be utilized in the exclusive pursuit of profit enhancing ends (Garriga and Melé, 2004.) This however poses the question of whether this is morally correct.



## 2.5 Altruistic Motivations for CSR

*'Men have differed as regards what people you ought to be unselfish to – whether it was only your own family, or your fellow countrymen, or everyone. But they have always agreed that you ought not to put yourself first,'*

C.S. Lewis (1952)

Exploring the motivations behind an organization's decision to engage with CSR is a murky business. The task is made all the more difficult by the air of contradiction which pervades many aspects of public thought. On the one hand, society holds fast to a postmodern attitude which denies any existence of an absolute truth and therefore by definition, must refute the possibility of a single and objective moral code (Lennox, 2009) but on the other, it has reached a point of almost unanimous agreement on the obligation that companies have towards the societies they operate in (Christensen, 2007.) The philosophical 'ins and outs' of this paradox are not the present concern, but rather, how we emerge from the puzzle to answer the question, why *should* companies engage with CSR? (If in fact there is an answer to be found.) Thus far, we have appreciated the strategic and 'business case' motivations. However, there is an argument that these 'impure' purposes stand in stark contradiction to the true spirit of CSR and that furthermore, these might actually be providing a 'fig leaf' for greater than ever corporate misconduct (Werhane, 2007.)

It has been seen that CSR is a concept at the heart of which are notions of philanthropy, good deeds and ethical conduct. 'Virtuous corporate citizens' are thus inspired to use their power to address social problems; doing their part in the pursuit of welfare for one and all (Smith, 1994.) That said; where does 'self interest' come into play? Would not 'self interest' be something of an impostor in an otherwise noble construct? Jones (2003) asserts that the answer is simple; of course, 'self interest' has no part to play or any association with pure CSR. For, if being 'socially responsible' entails 'giving back' to society, then as soon as a firm begins meticulous calculation of the reward for so-doing, they have in fact, departed from being socially responsible. In other words, this type of conduct would not constitute anything like 'giving' because giving, by definition requires a break in the circle of economy.

This would seem to be harmonious with the position adopted by Mintzberg (1983) for whom also true CSR is without question, an altruistic entity. In subsequent works, (2002) he launches an attack on those who advocate 'self-interest' in CSR. For this use of CSR is far from noble in its unashamed attempts to justify, even glorify, a new level of corporate greed. Moore (2003) provides an apt summary of this criticism of strategic CSR, asserting that using CSR in a quest for profit puts virtue at the service of avarice.

Another criticism of the strategic use of CSR originates from a problem which was envisaged at the outset of the concepts' rise to fame. This being, that CSR may lend itself as a subtle device for the largest corporations to divert attention from other, less 'laudable' areas of their activity. Worse still, strategic CSR provides a means for them to extend their spheres of influence and decision making power into so many nonbusiness realms of (potentially dependent) societies, that before long, they become 'benevolent dictators' (Johnson, 1958.) The essence of the argument is captured by Burchell (2008) who observes that the majority of corporations pursue profit with an almost 'pathological' vigour. Therefore, as long as they use CSR as a strategic tool within a self-serving ideology, how can society possibly benefit by granting them ever more power and control?

## **2.6 Generation Y**

As has been seen, the term 'Generation Y' (GY) is taken to represent those people born between the years 1980 and 1994 (Weiler, 2005.) Although certain authors believe the generation to be comprised of a slightly wider age range, (Martin (2005) for example, includes those born from 1978 within her definition) there is broad agreement on the fact that this generation display significantly different characteristics to those of their predecessors which translate into a different set of attitudes towards the workplace. This presents a significant issue for organizations. As Petrela et al (2007, p.118) remark, 'the workplace of today is becoming increasingly multigenerational, and identifying what is important and valued by new employees is of paramount importance.' As GY begin to enter the workplace in ever greater numbers, their attitudes in general and towards CSR in particular are worthy of note for organizations, given that in today's economy it is a company's employees who yield the greatest potential for competitive advantage (Pfeffer, 1994.)

There are thought to have been a number of key influences on GY's significantly different outlook. Raines (2002) believes that the deepest effects have been caused by the trends of the 1990s and 2000s, such as: a renewed focus on children, family, scheduled and structured lives, multiculturalism, terrorism, heroism, patriotism and globalization. However, Tsai (2008) argues that the greatest amongst these is the relationship which this group has had with technology. She notes that most generations have become 'comfortable' with technology, but that GY have been *formed* by technology. This has brought about an 'I want it now' lifestyle, based on an expectation of instant results through technology and having vast amounts of information at their fingertips at any time. That said, GY are thought to be prepared to work hard for the success of goals which they perceive as worthy; they value teamwork and fairness, are entrepreneurial and are enthusiastic about tackling new tasks (Eisner, 2005.)

One significant contribution to the knowledge of GY's characteristics has been provided by Martin (2005.) The table at Figure 2.6.1 provides a summary of the chief GY characteristics that were identified.

Figure 2.6.1 – Characteristics of Generation Y – adapted from Martin (2005)

Characteristic	Explanation
GY have a desire for increasing responsibility	GY people will take any opportunity to prove themselves and exhibit their talents. Without a clear path of career progression, motivation will be quickly lost.
GY constantly seek greater flexibility	GY constantly wants to meet new people, see new places and move from project to project. Rather than expecting change, they demand it.
GY are self reliant and independent	GY do not respond well to micromanagement and when faced with a task, prefer to complete it in their own way. Preventing freedom to do this will result in a loss of motivation
GY are 'techno-savvy.'	Having been shaped and taught how to learn by technology, GY now regard the use of technology important for creation

	and self actualization.
GY have an urgent sense of immediacy	Growing up in a world where things are fast and continually accelerating, GY display the same attitude toward the workplace; wanting to do more things 'now,' add value today and be rewarded today
GY are entrepreneurial	Wishing to create and be innovative, GY are starting their own businesses in record numbers.
GY want increasing responsibility	GY will take any opportunity to prove themselves and exhibit their talents. Without a clear path of career progression, motivation will be quickly lost.
GY have adopted a 'free agency' attitude	Regardless of whether they are working for themselves or others, they seek to manage 'Me Inc;,' desiring the best deals and rewards for their talent.

## 2.7 Generation Y and CSR

As has been seen, GY are a complex proposition for organizations and the business world at large. There are many elements to their intricate character which include an emphasis on technology, desire for flexibility and diversity as well as their self reliance and independence. Crucially however, there is another attitude which differentiates GY from their predecessors; namely, the value they attach to Corporate Social Responsibility. For GY, the social responsibility of businesses is absolutely imperative and almost certainly a chief attribute of any desirable employer (Martin, 2005.) Within the workplace, GY have a strong urge to identify and pursue what is meaningful to them and seek to achieve perceived higher purposes. Therefore the opportunities that CSR presents in terms of 'giving back' to the community, protecting the environment and rendering collective benefits through ethical business conduct are harmonious with GY's esteemed notions of self actualization (Sampath, 2007.) This phenomenon is known as 'Person - Organization Fit,' an area of academic literature which considers that individuals have a propensity

to seek organizations which they perceive to have similar values to their own (Schneider, 1987.) There are various aspects of such theory which may provide further insight into the origins of GY's stress on CSR and identify their views on the 'correct' motivations for engaging with the concept.

## **2.8 Generation Y and Motivations for CSR**

The assertions which have been proposed thus far regarding the character of GY have obviously been generalizations; it goes without saying therefore that these may not be an accurate description of the attitudes and perceptions of every individual within the age group. Persisting with macro considerations however, there are numerous elements of GY's construct which are thought to be juxtaposed in terms of theorizing their perceptions of the correct motivations for CSR.

For instance, individuals who subscribe to the strategic view of CSR will insist that the sole responsibility of business is to make a profit. To this end, chief considerations ought to be towards shareholders and value enhancing activities; of which CSR may form part (Jensen, 2002.) There is evidence to suggest that this is the view of CSR which GY are most likely to adopt, given that they are motivated by salary, promotion and in this regard are very self-interested (Martin, 2005.) Individual strategic motivations for CSR may therefore include seeking recognition at work, receiving promotion or financial reward for doing so arriving at a lucrative topic for discussion at appraisal (Gyves and O'Higgins, 2008.) These objectives would appear to be harmonious with the typical character and aspirations of GY.

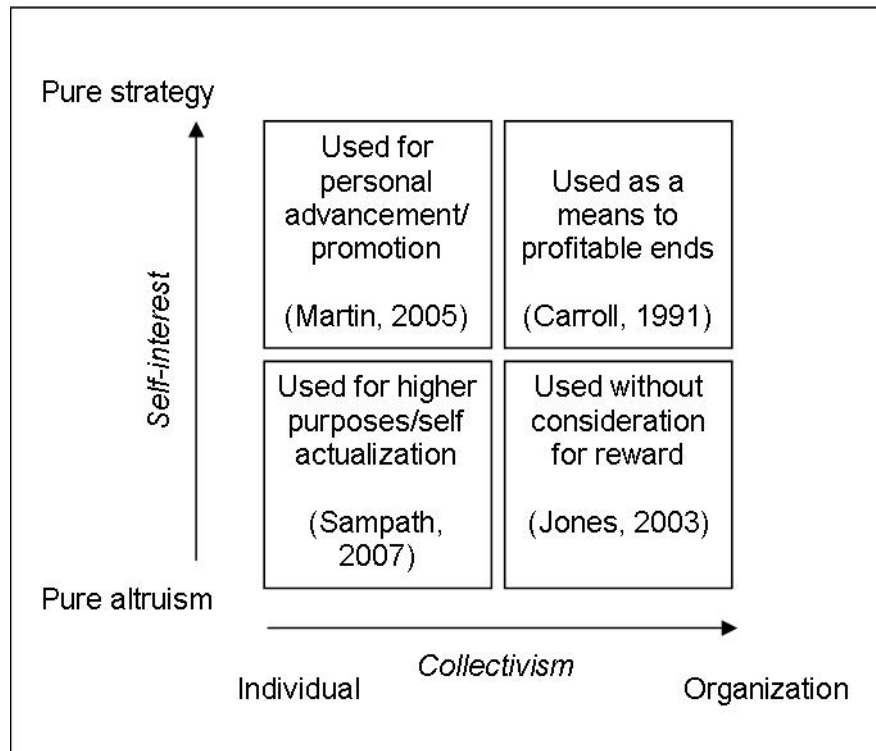
On the other hand, are the altruistic motivations for CSR which refute the valour CSR's association of self-interest. This type of CSR is prepared to give without expectation of reward and has no issue with a broken cycle of economy (Jones, 2003.) Again however, in apparent contradiction, there is reason to suggest that this would be the view most aligned with GY's individual motivations since they pursue personal meaning and seek to achieve higher purposes with a view to self-actualization (Sampath, 2007.)

## 2.9 Conclusion and Conceptual Model

It would appear that a review of literature has been largely inconclusive in identifying what are perceived to be the 'correct' motivations for engaging with CSR. The intensity of the 'strategic/altruistic' debate which occurs on an organizational level seems to be reflected by conflicting elements of GY's character and therefore casts doubt over the nature of individual motivations for engaging with the concept. The focus of this research; 'What is Generation Y's Attitude towards CSR?' is thus endorsed as a pertinent and worthy area for investigation.

In order to proceed with research objectives in clarity, it is helpful to succinctly bring together the various strands of literature which have been examined. Therefore, the author has established a conceptual model which effectively exhibits the various motivations which may exist for engaging with CSR on both an individual and organizational level. Shown at Figure 2.9.1 below, the model differentiates motivations for engaging with CSR on a continuum of self interest which ranges from 'Pure Altruism' to 'Pure Strategy.' On the other axes, motivations are differentiated according to the extent of collectivism concerned; i.e. whether they are individual or organizational. Simultaneous consideration of these factors gives rise to a matrix of motivations which are described in their respective quadrants. These are also mapped back to the area of literature from which they have been derived.

Figure 2.9.1: Conceptual Model of Individual and Organizational Motivations for CSR



## 3.0 Research Findings & Analysis

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### 3.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter will centre on the findings of the primary research of the study. After preliminary remarks, the research objectives which were established previously are considered in turn. For each of these, results are presented, analysed for consistency and cross-reviewed for the existence of prevalent trends or conflicts. Findings are then synthesized and considered on a collective basis in an attempt to reveal the overarching conclusions of the research. The incorporation of themes from the literature review and other secondary data develops an intriguing discussion surrounding the nature of Generation Y's attitudes and motivations towards CSR.

### 3.2 Preliminary Remarks

In total, the questionnaire received 37 responses. Although slightly less than expected, this remains a positive and important fact, since passing the milestone of 30 responses is necessary for reliable statistical inference to quantitative data (Morris, 2003.) Subsequently, this facilitates analysis via the application of statistical tests for relationships in the data and will enhance the sophistication of conclusions that can be drawn.

Questions 1, 2 and 3 were used to assess the basic attributes of each respondent in terms of gender, year of birth and prior awareness of CSR. Being alert to the influence of such factors may prove important for the accurate assessment of data. For example, out of 37 responses, 22 came from males (and 15 from females) which translates into an approximate 60/40 percentage split between the genders. This is vital insight into the characteristics of the population and might suggest that a (slight) skew towards masculine viewpoints is possible.

As has been seen, the term 'Generation Y' pertains to individuals born in the period 1980-1994 (Weiler, 2005.) Therefore it was necessary to inquire as to respondents' year of birth to ensure that they were in fact members of GY and thus acceptable for the purposes of the study. Significantly, all 37 respondents were born in the period with the range of their years of birth spanning a decade; the oldest respondent was



born in 1980 and the youngest in 1990. This does of course indicate that a portion of GY have not been surveyed; namely, those born between 1990 and 1994. However, this is in line with expectations since the organization from which the sample was selected employs no one under the age of 18.

The respondents were also asked to indicate if whether prior to receiving the questionnaire, they were aware and appreciative of the concept of CSR (included in the questionnaire introduction were various pieces of background information to CSR.) This was a necessary enquiry to provide comfort over the validity of their subsequent responses. With 95% of respondents claiming that they were indeed aware of CSR prior to the survey, reasonable assurance has been given in this regard.

### **3.3 Research Objective 1**

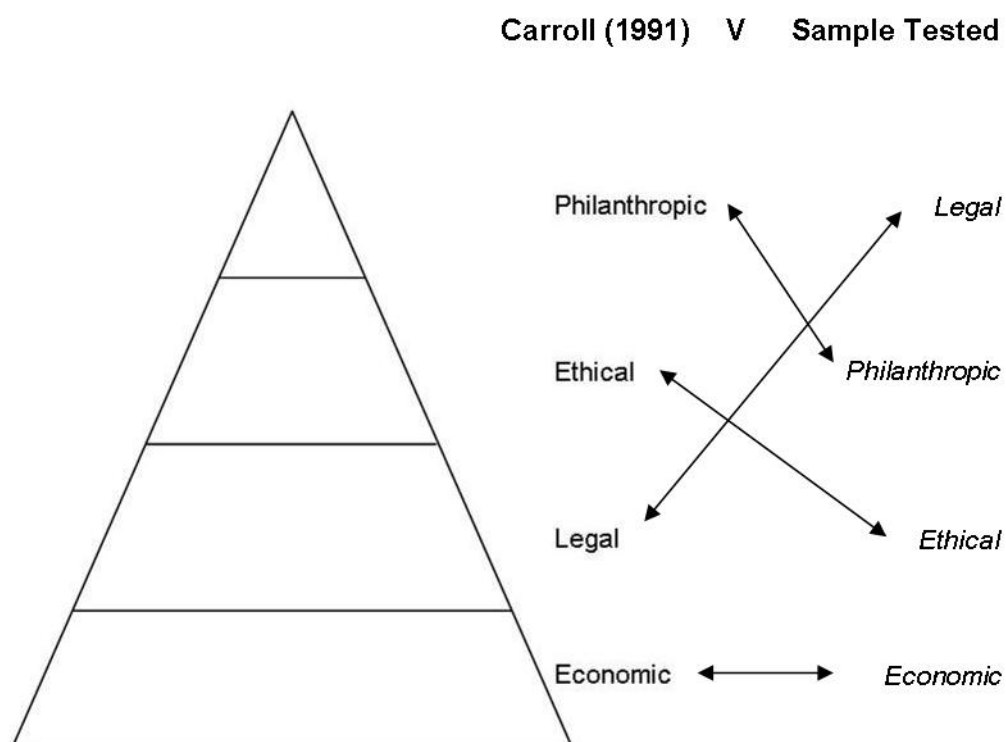
*'Establish whether Generation Y regard CSR to be an altruistic or strategic concept.'*

This objective was set in view of the heated debate regarding the 'correct' motivations for engaging with CSR which became immediately apparent from the literature review. On one hand are theorists who regard the first priority of business to make a profit (Friedman, 1970) and that CSR presents nothing more than an 'opportunity' (Grayson and Hodges, 2004) to advance these economic aims. By way of contrast, another significant group of theorists regard CSR to be much more an altruistic concept, carried out without expectation of reward since this is what would constitute truly noble behaviour (Mintzberg, 1983.) Furthermore, the literary review of Generation Y's characteristics suggested that there are elements of their temperament which may be sympathetic to either one (or both) of these viewpoints.

The objective was primarily addressed through questions 4, 5 and 8 of the research instrument. Question 4 began by canvassing the opinion on the correct order of the business priorities postulated by Carroll's (1991) pyramid – this was discussed previously and is available to view at Figure 2.4.1. In Carroll's (1991) view, businesses should give highest priority to creating economic wealth. After this they should seek to comply with minimum legal requirements. Less important is conduct of an 'ethical' manner and least of all, conducting business for the benefit of society.

The research findings suggest that GY's opinion is in very limited agreement with Carroll (1991.) In the view of the sample tested, it would appear that creating economic wealth has been upheld as the highest business priority, but the arrangement of the remaining elements of the pyramid is opposed. Ethical conduct emerged as the second highest priority, followed by aiming for the benefit of society; least important amongst the sample was conducting business in compliance with minimum legal requirements. Figure 3.3.1 compares the pyramid as constructed by Carroll (1991) with that of the sample; illustrating the differences in opinion.

Figure 3.3.1 – Carroll's (1991) Pyramid of Business Priorities v Sample Tested



The response of the sample to question 4 indicates the view that the first priority of business is to make a profit. That said; questions 5 and 8 give further insight to aspects of their philosophy as regards the proper use of CSR. Question 5 presented a dichotomy of statements. Respondents were asked to indicate which they were most likely to agree with. One statement pertained to a strategic use of CSR; the other to a more altruistic viewpoint. What has emerged in the results is a majority of opinion (60%) in favour of the statement 'CSR is very much an altruistic concept, which businesses should not use in expectation of reward.' Apparent agreement with the view of Mintzberg (1983) could be interpreted as something of a surprise in the

context of their prior emphasis on businesses using all means to make a profit. However, the sample's reluctance to recognize any merit in self interest as regards CSR is endorsed by their responses to question 8. Again, a dichotomy of statements (one pertaining to the merits of self interest; the other devaluing the notion) was used to assess their view on the matter from the point of view of individuals. On this occasion there was a 62% majority in favour of the statement: 'individuals should not put themselves first; this is not noble behaviour.' Figure 3.3.2 below cross-tabulates the responses to these questions and illustrates the majority of opinion in favour of devaluing the role of self interest in terms of organizational CSR and also where individuals are concerned.

Figure 3.3.2 – Cross Tabulation of Questions 5 and 8 – the Role of Self Interest

		Q5	
		CSR as Strategy	CSR as Altruism
		Count	Count
Q8	People Should Put Themselves First	8	6
	People Should Not Put Themselves First	8	15

On the surface then, it could be concluded that GY do regard the first priority of business as being to make a profit, but see no warrant for the use of CSR as a strategic means to these economic ends. For organizations and individuals alike, GY appear to see no merit in self-interest. It seems that Lewis' (1952) assertion is vindicated: '[men]...have always agreed that you ought not to put yourself first.'

### 3.4 Research Objective 2

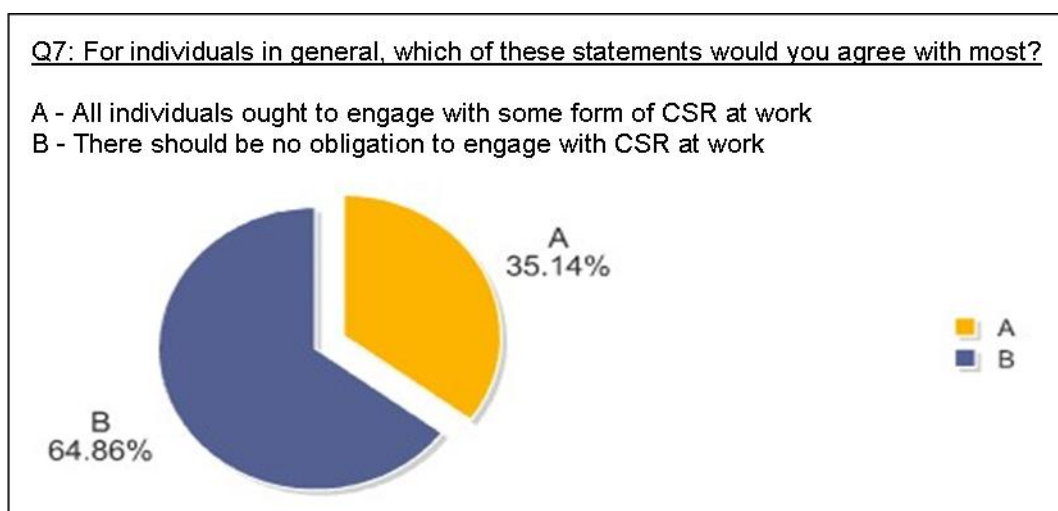
*'Establish how important Generation Y believe CSR to be for both individuals and organizations'*

This objective was set in view of the strong agreement among theorists and practitioners that emerged from the literature review regarding the importance of CSR in the modern business world. The concept is seen as a corporate imperative for well-run companies (Hood and Bedard, 2008) and as an express requirement from any desirable employer in the eyes of GY (Martin, 2005.)

The issues presented by this objective were primarily addressed through the design of questions 6, 7, 9 and 14a. In a similar fashion to before, 6 and 7 presented a dichotomy of statements where respondents were asked to indicate the one they felt most inclined to agree with. Question 6 was used to assess the level of importance that GY believe CSR to have for organizations. Findings show that there was a 57% agreement that 'businesses ought to engage with CSR, regardless of their motivation.'

Clearly though, this is a narrow majority, the strength of which could be further undermined by the findings of Q7 which asked respondents to turn from organizations to the consideration of how important CSR should be for individuals. Figure 3.4.1 below depicts that a far greater majority believe CSR should be an 'optional extra for individuals; there is no obligation to engage with it at work.'

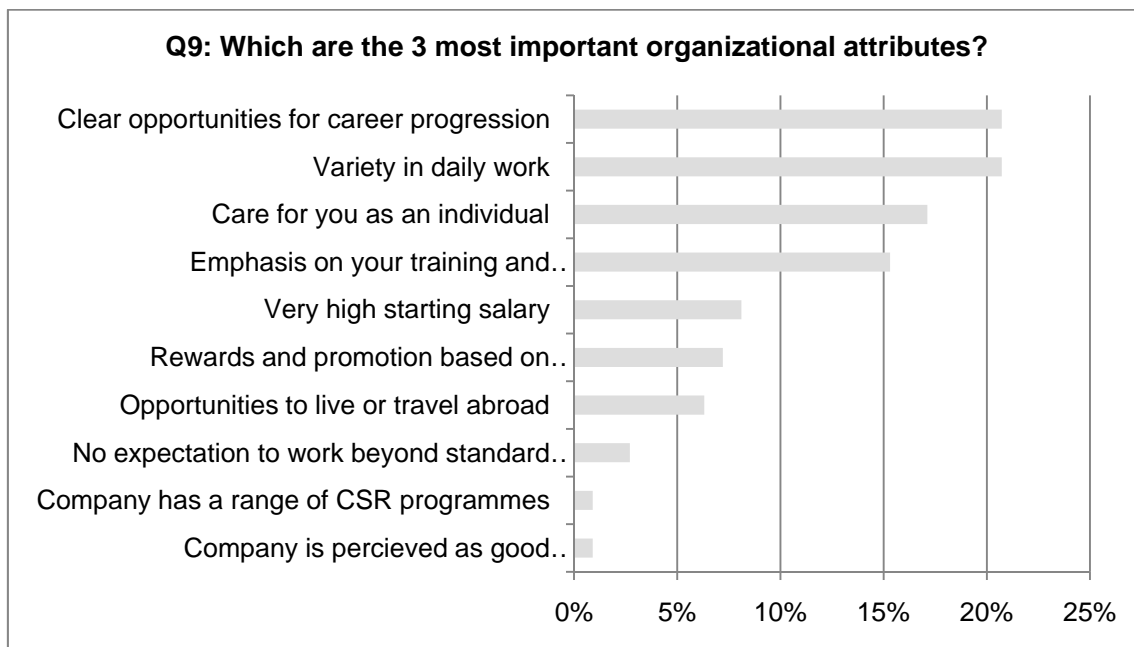
Figure 3.4.1 – Pie Chart to Show Responses to Question 7



This would suggest an interesting conflict in the mindset of the sample. It appears that the majority of respondents believe CSR to be a very important activity for the organization; something which all businesses ought to engage with. Simultaneously however, they believe that for individuals, CSR is quite unimportant and there should be no obligation to be involved.

This apparent contradiction and attitude of indifference towards the importance of CSR for individuals is echoed by the insights offered by questions 9 and 14. Q9 in particular, reveals the nature of the sample's true priorities as regards the characteristics of a desirable employer. Martin (2005) suggests that for GY, a good CSR record is an imperative attribute of any organization that they would consider working for, but this assertion appears not to have been substantiated. Respondents were asked to indicate the 3 most important organizational attributes on a list of 10 attributes identified and used in a similar study by Terjesen et al (2007.) Ranked in descending order of importance, Figure 3.4.2 shows that CSR and perception as a good 'corporate citizen' are minimal concerns, with 'opportunities for career development' and 'variety in daily work' taking much greater precedence.

**Figure 3.4.2 – Bar Chart to Show Most Important Organizational Attributes**



At question 14a, the majority of people (24%) 'completely disagreed' with the statement 'I would not work for a company which did not engage with CSR. Coupling both of these insights, it appears reasonable to conclude that whilst they pay tribute

to its importance for businesses as whole, the sample do not regard CSR to be a matter of importance for individuals or as an imperative requirement from an employer.

### **3.5 Research Objective 3**

*'Establish the extent to which Generation Y engages with CSR.'*

Thus far we have come to an understanding of GY's 'convictions' regarding CSR; their view of strategic versus altruistic motivations and the importance with which they view the concept for both individuals and organizations. This objective turns to consider the nature of their actual behaviour, seeking to establish the extent to which this matches their convictions.

It was a theme of the literature review that GY are thought to pay significant attention to the pursuit of 'higher purposes' and seek 'meaning' at work with a view to self-actualization (Sampath, 2007.) However, was this claim endorsed by the research findings?

On first impressions it appears that amongst the sample tested, there was quite a high CSR participation level. At question 10, a significant proportion (43%) of people indicated that yes, they 'were involved with their company's CSR efforts.' This was a larger percentage than those who had indicated previously that they thought CSR was something all individuals 'ought' to do, suggesting that there was indeed a motivator acting at a level above and beyond perceived basic requirements. Maslow, (1943) who first postulated the concept of self-actualization stated that this was the only motivator which could compel individuals to engage with activities on a voluntary basis. On the evidence of question 10 alone, Sampath's (2007) assertions that GY will act on such a driver seem to be valid.

However, the findings of subsequent questions shed further light on the situation. 43% are 'involved' with their company's CSR efforts, but at Q11, only 21% describe themselves as 'actively involved in organizing a CSR initiative.' This would suggest that although there is widespread sympathy and willingness to contribute to CSR efforts, the extent of commitment is actually very limited. The sample of GY that has been surveyed appears to prefer a distant, somewhat passive relationship with CSR.

This is a perplexing phenomenon, but Rollinson (2005) argues that it is far from unusual since many employees contribute to non-compulsory organizational efforts only if it is convenient to do so. It would appear that in this case at least, the sample involve themselves with CSR not out of a strong urge for self actualization but because such involvement requires little personal effort.

The emerging notion of the sample's passivity towards organizational CSR gathers further momentum with the findings of parts 'c' and 'd' of question 14. At part 14c, a significant majority (35%) of people strongly disagreed with the statement 'CSR is an important aspect of my work,' whilst at 14d, only 5% of people expressed strong or complete dissatisfaction with their current level of involvement with CSR.

To conclude the findings for this objective, it appears that the sample have a wide, if somewhat shallow level of engagement with CSR. A large proportion of those surveyed indicated that they had contributed, but only 1 in 5 described their involvement as active. Furthermore, the sample does not regard CSR to be an important aspect of their daily work and lacks any significant compulsion to show greater commitment.

### **3.6 Research Objective 4**

*'Establish the nature of Generation Y's motivations to engage with CSR.'*

This objective could be viewed as summative of all prior research findings. At this point, we have gained an insight into how important the sample believes that CSR should be for individuals and organizations as well as the extent to which they themselves engage with the concept. Crucially, we are also informed of how they believe, in an ideological sense; the purest form of CSR should be motivated. The sample appeared strong in their conviction that altruism should be the truly noble driving factor and also in their renunciation of merit in self-interest. The literature review suggested that CSR can allow individuals to act on altruistic principles in 'giving back' to their communities, but equally, could present opportunities for strategic progression; recognition at work, the enhancement of CVs, and so on. Having scratched the surface of a non-committal, 'matter of convenience' attitude, what more can the research findings suggest about the sample's behaviour and

actual motivations for engaging with CSR? Do these reflect the nature of their convictions?

The objective was primarily addressed through questions 12, 13 and parts of 14. At Q13, a reasonable majority (60%) of people asserted that CSR was not a legitimate means by which to seek to advance one's career. This would seem to be a rejection of using the concept for personal strategic aims. Also, at Q14b, respondents were asked to rate their agreement with various statements on a scale of 1-6, where 1=completely agree and 6=completely disagree. For the statement: 'individuals should use CSR primarily as a means to give back to their community,' the modal response was 2; strongly agree. In fact, more than half of the sample expressed this view. So on the strength of both these indications, thus far at least, the sample appears to validate their altruistic ideals with altruistic behaviour.

However, at part 14e, the emphasis on altruism as the primary motivator for the sample's engagement with CSR becomes less pronounced, if not very questionable. Again asked to rate agreement with a statement on the scale of 1-6, the vast majority of people agreed or strongly agreed that 'CSR should be recognized and rewarded by the employer.' Importantly, this was not an anomaly; because at question 12, a majority stated that they have or would bring up their CSR efforts during appraisal meetings. This is a puzzling admission which begs a number of questions. Why should involvement with CSR be discussed at appraisal and rewarded by the employer if it is an activity that should be practised in the absence of expectation of reward?

The sample appear to be contradicting their prior assertion that CSR should be motivated out of altruism, since they agree that involvement ought to be *rewarded* by the employer and profess to using it for advantage during appraisal processes. This would imply that despite (or in conjunction with) their altruistic convictions, they do see CSR as a means by which to achieve personal strategic purposes. These simultaneous and conflicting positions on the matter present something of an ironic inconsistency. This will be a subject of interest in the forthcoming discussion of research findings.



### **3.7 Closing Remarks on Research Findings**

As has been seen, the research objectives have returned some interesting findings. Of the various matters arising, some have aligned with expectations and others pose a challenge to widely accepted assumptions. It is evident that the interaction between employees and the organization is a complex tapestry. In addition, the automatic commitment of individuals to CSR initiatives cannot be assumed. This is exhibited by the fact that a limited engagement with CSR amongst a sample of Generation Y has been observed. Furthermore, GY appear to appreciate that CSR presents a 'win-win' opportunity for organizations. Findings seem to suggest that a similar philosophy influences the nature of individual motivations for engaging with the concept. An ongoing commentary has thus far analysed and related findings to the literature review on a detached basis. In the following chapter however, the author will synthesize these findings and attempt to consider their combined meaning.

# 4.0 Conclusion

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## 4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter is the culmination of the study and will begin by clarifying findings with respect to the 4 research objectives that were established previously. Discussion will turn to consider these on a combined level, enhanced by the incorporation of further academic literature. This will allow the emergent conclusions of the investigation to come to light. Bringing together key findings and the associated implications, the report will draw to a close by outlining possibilities for future research.

## 4.2 Research Findings Synthesis

In the previous chapter, findings were presented and analysed with respect to the 4 research objectives that were set for the study. For clarification, Figure 4.2.1 summarizes the trends and themes which were deduced.

Figure 4.2.1 – Summary of Research Findings by Objective

Research Objective	Research Findings
1. Establish whether Generation Y regard CSR to be an altruistic or strategic concept.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The sample appeared to believe that CSR (in its purest form) is an altruistic entity.</li> <li>• It was agreed that the first priority of business is to make a profit.</li> <li>• The exclusive use of CSR to strategically achieve economic ends was not endorsed.</li> <li>• The sample did not appreciate any merit in purely self interested conduct.</li> </ul>
2. Establish how important Generation Y believes CSR to be for both individuals and organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSR emerged as being very important for organizations; something which they should engage with regardless of motivation.</li> <li>• Simultaneously however, the sample believed that for individuals, CSR is quite unimportant with no obligation to be involved.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contrary to the suggestions from literature, CSR did not appear to be an imperative characteristic of a desirable employer – this was rated bottom on a scale of 10 other organizational attributes.</li> <li>• ‘Opportunities for career development’ and ‘variety in daily work’ took much greater precedence.</li> </ul>
<p>3. Establish the extent to which Generation Y engages with CSR.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant proportion of respondents stated that they were involved with their company’s CSR efforts.</li> <li>• However, only 1 in 5 described their involvement as ‘active.’</li> <li>• This suggested a passive attitude towards CSR.</li> <li>• The sample appears to engage with CSR when the prospect does not require personal compromise.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Establish the nature of Generation Y’s motivations to engage with CSR.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The notion that GY are motivated to engage with CSR out of a compulsion for self-actualization was significantly undermined.</li> <li>• The sample’s motivation to engage with CSR presented a contradiction in terms.</li> <li>• They thought that ‘CSR was not a legitimate means to advance one’s career’ but also thought that ‘CSR efforts should be recognized and rewarded by employers’ and furthermore, should be discussed at appraisal.</li> <li>• It was suggested that the sample recognize the ‘win-win’ opportunities that CSR can present and that involvement with the concept can acceptably carry benefits for everyone involved.</li> </ul>

### 4.3 Emergent Conclusions

The answer to the initial question of this research; 'What is Generation Y's Attitude towards Corporate Social Responsibility?' appears to be complex. However, after considering findings on a combined level and attempting to interpret their collective meaning, the author suggests that 2 key conclusions can be drawn.

**Conclusion 1:** GY's attitude towards CSR has a hybrid of altruistic and strategic influences.

**Conclusion 2:** GY's attitude identifies to a very limited extent with organizational CSR.

These assertions will now be justified and related to further academic literature, leading to a deeper discussion about their implications.

#### 4.3.1 Analysis of Conclusion 1

The first supposition that emerges from this research is that Generation Y's attitude is ostensibly shaped by a hybrid of altruistic and strategic influences. The evidence for this claim can be observed in the findings of objective one where respondents expressed belief that the purest form of CSR was an altruistic entity and renounced the existence of merit in self-interest. At the same time however, the sample held fast to an agreement with Carroll (1991) that the first priority of business was always to make a profit. On an individual level, the sample affirmed that the motivation to strategically advance one's career through involvement with CSR was not legitimate, but simultaneously, did not have a problem with discussing this at appraisal. The sample also believed that involvement with CSR should be recognized and rewarded by the employer.

This mindset does seem to be a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, it may not be impossible to resolve the conflict. Perrini et al (2006) argue that just as for organizations, CSR presents a 'win-win' opportunity for individuals. This makes it possible for them to be motivated out of altruism and 'giving back' to communities or equally, by strategy, in pursuit of recognition at work. Regardless, the fact that the community and society benefit from their actions remains a common denominator. This renders the origination of their motivation as somewhat inconsequential. Thus, it

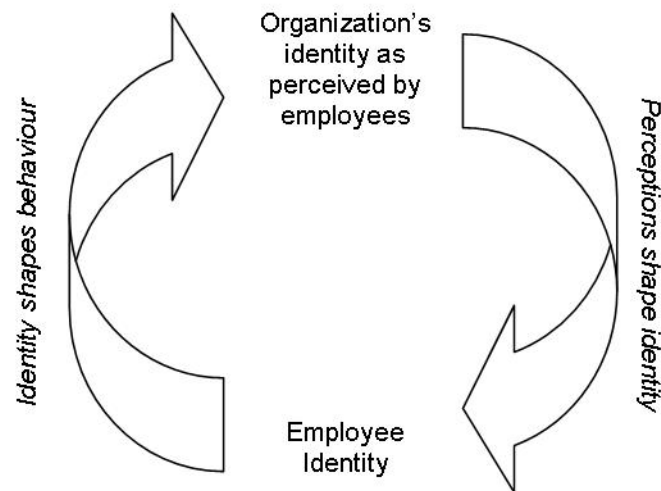
is commonly asserted that CSR is good for business and good for society; but the concept ought to carry benefits for employees too (Mattila, 2009.) Furthermore, given that CSR is something that employers will wish to encourage employees to engage with, it is not unreasonable that such behaviour be recognized or rewarded. In fact, Adams et al (2001) explicitly call for the development of policies and procedures which allow the organization's ethical ambitions to permeate the normative behaviour of employees. This can help ethical organizations to not only foster employee ethical sensitivity but through incentive for CSR activities, ensure that employees actually do behave ethically (Valentine and Fleischman, 2004.)

### **4.3.2. Analysis of Conclusion 2**

It appears that GY have an attitude of limited identification with organizational CSR. This is supported by the findings of research objective 2 which suggested that the sample believe CSR is extremely important for organizations; something which they should engage with regardless of motivation. Simultaneously however, the sample believed that for individuals, CSR is quite unimportant with no obligation to be involved. This implies that GY do not necessarily identify with the organization's values, aims and priorities, and regard them as a distinct and separate entity from their own. This theme resonated with the findings of objective 3, where having paid tribute to the vital nature of CSR to the organization; only 1 in 5 respondents indicated that they got actively involved.

According to Collier and Esteban (2007) this observation is archetypal of organizational realities. They observe that by default, most employees are not disposed to be motivated or committed to their company's CSR. Furthermore, they affirm that how employees relate to the organization governs the extent to which employees collaborate with ethical programmes. The phenomenon can be explained by the fact that organizations are seen as social systems where the collective creation of shared meaning mobilizes participants as they seek to make sense of their environment (Weick, 1995.) This is an aspect of social identity theory which believes people derive their identity from the group(s) to which they belong (Haslam, 2001.) The dynamics of this interaction are shown at Figure 4.3.3 below.

Figure 4.3.3 – Interaction in Social Identity Theory – adapted from Collier and Esteban (2007)



Employees' identity is thus intrinsically linked with that which they perceive of the organization. Returning to the context of CSR, Ellis (2009) believes that a key determinant factor will be the perceptual link that employees make between a CSR activity and its consistency with other values that emanate from the organization. Employees make sober judgements over what they perceive to be the organizational agenda. Attributions are made regarding CSR initiatives in an attempt to understand why the company is engaging with the activity in question (Bhattacharya and Sen, 2004.) It follows therefore, that certain combinations of organizational values or cultures disseminate better perceptions of integrity than others and as such, render enhanced employee responsiveness to CSR initiatives. The remarks of Trevino et al (1999, pp.131) draw attention to various factors that are involved. The latter part of the quote may explain the lag in participation in CSR activities that this research has observed.

'What helps most are consistency between policies and actions as well as . . . ethical leadership, fair treatment of employees and open discussion of ethics. . . . What hurts most is a culture that emphasizes self-interest . . . unquestioning obedience to authority and the perception that the . . . program exists only to protect top management from blame.'

#### 4.4 Need for Ongoing Research

This study set out to explore the nature of Generation Y's attitude to Corporate Social Responsibility. The associated objectives were addressed by processes of secondary and primary research. The following two conclusions appeared to emerge.

1. GY's attitude towards CSR has a hybrid of altruistic and strategic influences.
2. GY's attitude identifies to a very limited extent with organizational CSR.

These are valuable insights which make a contribution to the debate surrounding the nature of morally correct motivations for engaging with CSR. Additionally, given that employees are important organizational stakeholders who may dictate to a large extent the success or failure of CSR initiatives, they may also better equip academics and practitioners to make judgements of the utility and impact of CSR policies (Ellis, 2009.)

However, it must be noted that the reliability of these findings is inherently limited as this has been a small and modestly resourced study, carried out by an inexperienced researcher. The generalizability of results is further compromised by the sampling method that was employed during the primary research phase.

Nevertheless, CSR remains a very important issue within the modern business world and Generation Y is populating the workforce in ever greater numbers. Therefore there is a strong need for further research into the nature of their attitude towards the construct. Mindful of the conclusions of this research, suitable directions for further study may include:

- A deeper exploration of the nature and relative strength of GY's altruistic and strategic motivations for CSR, having seen that regard for both interests appears to pervade this sample. Although the origins of motivation could be explained as inconsequential and a means to the same socially beneficial end, there is a need for greater knowledge of this interaction as it could be used to generate greater employee commitment to future CSR initiatives.
- An expansion of social identity theory to relate to the challenges posed by GY, since the outcomes of this study suggest that the extent to which it identifies with the organization and its objectives is very limited. Clearly, this presents a

less than ideal circumstance for businesses, which may compromise their overall effectiveness. Therefore, moving forward, there is a need to establish how this situation can be improved.



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