

# Study on the convergence of Romanian corporate values with socially desirable values

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**Abstract:** Our study consists in a dual perspective on corporate values, which relates core corporate values expressed by Romanian companies with corporate values deemed desirable by the Romanian society. To assess the corporate values expressed by companies, the corporate websites of ninety Romanian companies have been surveyed to collect the statements of core corporate values, which were then content analyzed and classified according to their meaning in thirteen general categories. For the purpose of assessing the corporate values desired by the Romanian consumers, a questionnaire was developed based on the categories of values previously identified, and was further sampled to male and female Romanian citizens of all ages. The questionnaire asked the respondents to choose four corporate values (the average number of corporate values expressed by companies) which they considered desirable in the organizational culture of Romanian private and state-owned companies. Based on the observed results, meaningful conclusions and potential recommendations have been formulated.

**Keywords:** consumer values, social values, questionnaire-based research, social responsibility.

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## Social and corporate values

Considered from the perspective of social sciences, values and their influence upon human behavior represent a topic much discussed. Rokeach (1968 in Kreitner, 1983) defines values as abstract ideals that shape an individual's thinking and behavior. Hofstede (1984) holds the view that values are broad tendencies to prefer certain things over others, and they have a plus and a minus side, such as good versus evil, beautiful versus ugly, and normal versus abnormal. Values are acquired very early in an individual's life, tend to become deeply ingrained and even hidden in the individual's subconscious and as such

are very difficult to observe or change. Randolph and Blackburn (1989) argue that values are so deep-seated in an individual's personality that they can only be inferred from individuals' behavior and their expressed attitudes.

Values are at the core of personality and they are a powerful, though silent, force affecting behavior (Randolph and Blackburn, 1989). They are basic and pervasive standards by which people evaluate end-states of existence and modes of conduct (*idem*). The need to recognize the distinction between means and ends has led behavioral scientists to consider values from two perspectives. Rokeach (1968, in Randolph & Blackburn, 1989) contends that values can be either terminal or instrumental. Whereas terminal values are related to ends to be achieved such as family security, social recognition or personal accomplishment, instrumental values relate to means intended for achieving desired ends, such as honesty, courage or ambition. An instrumental value is an enduring belief that a certain way of behaving is appropriate in all situations (Kreitner, 1983). A terminal value, on the other hand, is an enduring belief that a certain end state of existence is worth striving for and attaining (*idem*). Terminal values reflect what a person is ultimately striving to achieve, whereas instrumental values reflect how a person intends to achieve that. Simply stated, instrumental values help achieve terminal values.

In regard to decision making, people tend to perceive things differently because their instrumental and terminal values are different. Behind two different responses to the same situation are different values or, more fundamentally, different operative philosophies. An operative philosophy is a system of values inferred from one's actual behaviour, but not necessarily from one's stated intentions (Kreitner, 1983). Kreitner (1983, p. 596) identifies eight alternative business philosophies stemming from one's operating philosophy:

- 1) Social Darwinism is based on the assumption that natural selection, when left unimpeded, guarantees improvement in human character. Survival of the fittest becomes the central idea on which social Darwinism is based.
- 2) Machiavellianism is based on the assumption that the end justifies the means. The emphasis is thus placed on terminal values and the belief is held that economic necessity and expediency prevail in public business life, morality being a private matter.
- 3) Ethical relativism assumes that morality is defined by the relevant community's responsible expectations and not by self-interest. One's own actions are viewed from the perspective of a disinterested observer and social approval becomes the norm.
- 4) Pure legalism is based on the assumption that laws are not morally binding. Law is perceived as being a bothersome hurdle and not a moral guide and that the question of good versus bad becomes an ethical one, and not a legal one.
- 5) Moral legalism assumes that moral people follow the letter of law. Law is perceived as commanding moral respect because it constrains the anarchical side of human nature through the provision of rules.

- 6) Social responsibility entails taking initiative voluntarily. It assumes that a business is capable of cleaning its own house through socially responsible self-regulation which in turn implies less need for outside interference in internal business matters.
- 7) Social accountability entails taking initiative because someone is watching. It is based on the assumption that objective outside observers must police organizational decisions and actions to ensure social responsibility.
- 8) Pragmatism implies following the most rational course of action. As an inherently rational matter, ethics is basically a problem solving process, and moral and social progress results from autonomous scientific choice within a framework of free-enterprise capitalism.

Each of these business philosophies stems from the common aggregate of individual operating philosophies and individual sets of values that are held by each and every member of an organization. This inevitably raises awareness of the fact that even though values tend to have a very powerful individual character, values can also be held at group level. The values shared by the members of an organization, which shape the behaviour and characterize the activity of the organization as a whole are called corporate values.

As they relate to organizations, values are broadly referred to as corporate values. Corporate values delineate widely shared cultural values that tend to characterize the entire activity of an organization (Brătianu and Vasilache, 2008). Each member of an organization has his own personal values that guide his behavior but organizations are able to operate efficiently only when shared values exist among its members (Gibson et al., 1997). It is therefore important for an individual's set of values to promote consistent behavior across situations.

Thompson et al. (2004) define corporate values as the set of beliefs, business principles and ways of doing things that are incorporated into an organization's operations and the behavior of its members. In their view, corporate values guide an organization pursuit of its vision and as such they should be tightly connected and reinforce the organization's strategy and operating practices. Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) refer to corporate values as being concepts or beliefs pertaining to desirable behaviors or end states, which guide selection and evaluation of events and behavior, and are ordered by relative importance. In the simplest terms, corporate values define the way an organization operates (Johnson et al., 2008). Corporate values are important constituents of organizational culture.

The importance of corporate values has been particularly emphasized by Collins and Porras (1996) who argued that companies enjoying enduring success adhere to a set of principles called core values and have a core purpose that remains fixed while their business strategies and practices endlessly adapt to the changing circumstances. In their view, the key determining factor in achieving superior performance and long-run success is attributed, at least in part, to strong core values that guide an organization. As defined by them, core

values are the essential and enduring tenets of an organization (Collins and Porras, 1996, p. 66). Core values are truly central values that do not change in time and require no external justification; they are a small set of timeless guiding principles that have intrinsic value and importance to those inside the organization. Collins and Porras (1996) emphasize the fact that companies tend to have only a few core values, usually between three and five, because only a few values can be truly core, meaning so fundamental and deeply held that they will seldom change, if ever. If a company articulates more than five or six values it most probably means that core values are confused with operating practices, business strategies or cultural norms.

Johnson et al. (2008) define core values as the underlying principles that guide an organization's strategy and stress the fact that core values express the way an organization actually is, and should not be confused or replaced with the values an organization aspires to possess. Although this statement may seem to state the obvious, the reality of business practice provides numerous examples in which the actions of an organization are in sharp contrast with its stated values. Acknowledging this discrepancy that exists between organizations' statements of values and their practical behavior, Lencioni (2002) identifies four categories of values that can exist at the organizational level:

- *Core values* are the deeply ingrained principles that guide all the actions of an organization and serve as cultural cornerstones. Core values should never be compromised and should provide a source of distinctiveness.
- *Aspiration values* are those that an organization would want to have but currently lacks. These are the values most commonly confused with core values.
- *Permission-to-play values* simply reflect the minimum behavioral and social standards required from any employee. They do not vary much across organizations and thus do not distinguish a company from its competitors.
- *Accidental values* are those values that arise spontaneously without being cultivated by leadership and take hold over time. They usually reflect the common interest or personalities of the organization's employees.

Failing to distinguish between these categories, substituting one for another or simply communicating a set of values for the sake of public relations can bring significant disadvantages to an organization. Empty value statements create cynical employees, alienate customers and undermine managerial credibility (idem). However, when properly practiced and adhered to, values can set apart an organization from its competitors, clarify its identity and guide an organization's strategic and operational decision making process as well as the behavior of its employees.

Another possible classification of corporate values is provided by Kreitner and Kinicki (2004) who argue that it is important to distinguish between values that are espoused and values that are enacted. Espoused values are the

explicitly stated values and norms that are preferred by an organization. Enacted values, on the other hand, represent the values and norms that are actually exhibited or converted into the behavior of an organization's members. Whereas espoused values are explicitly communicated within the organization and on the company's website, enacted values are readily observable and can be inferred from individuals' behavior. Since espoused values represent aspirations that are deliberately communicated to employees, managers hope that espoused values will directly influence employee behavior. Unfortunately, aspirations do not automatically produce the desired behaviors because people do not always "walk the talk" (Kreitner and Kinicki, 2004). Reducing the gap between espoused values and enacted values is thus of utmost importance because it can significantly influence employee attitudes and organizational performance.

Conclusively, most classifications of corporate values have been made as a consequence of acknowledging the fact that not all stated values are really reflected in practice. But regardless whether they are misstated or not stated at all, regardless of how right or wrong they can be considered, corporate values exist in every organization and represent a powerful force shaping organizational behavior and organizational culture. An increasing number of companies worldwide adopt formal statements of corporate values. As indicated by a global research on corporate values conducted by The Aspen Institute and Booz Allen Hamilton, in 2004 approximately 89% of the major companies worldwide had a written statement of corporate values. This study revealed, among other findings, the fact that companies' values practices vary significantly by region and the top three most important values included in the corporate value statements at the international level were ethical behavior and integrity, commitment to customers, and commitment to employees, in that order. Yet at the same time, corporate scandals continue to hold the front pages of newspapers and thus invoke profound skepticism about business ethics as well as irony regarding the corporate hypocrisy which seems to govern the contemporary business environment.

As mentioned before, values can reflect desirable end states of existence or desirable modes of behavior. Consequently, they have a desirability component and as such associations between measures of social desirability and values often occur. Long considered one of the most pervasive response biases, the topic of social desirability has been studied in relation to individuals' tendency to present a better image of themselves in the eyes of society. More specifically, in test taking situations, individuals tend to overestimate the importance they assign to socially desirable characteristics or activities and underestimate the importance of less desirable ones according to culturally derived norms and standards (Arnold and Feldman, 1981; Ganster et al., 1983). This tendency of individuals has been attributed to the need for social approval and acceptance, and the belief that this can be attained by means of culturally acceptable and appropriate behaviors (Crowne and Marlowe, 1964 cited in Arnold and Feldman, 1981).

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According to Mick (1996) socially desirable responding in test taking or reporting situations can be either a response set or a response style. Whereas the response set reflects a temporary reaction to a situational demand such as time pressure or expected public disclosure of answers, the response style occurs when individuals consistently engage in socially desirable responding across time, situations and assessment instruments. Although social desirability responding has the advantage of ensuring convergence with society's expectations, it has the downside of not being always aligned with personal traits or values, which in turn implies faking, deception and dissimulation.

The present paper forwards the assumption that the inconsistencies between stated corporate values and actual organizational behavior could stem from companies' tendency to engage in socially desirable responding with respect to their expressed corporate values. In other words, the belief is held that companies tend to express corporate values that are concurrent with the desires or expectations of society but do not necessarily reflect the values from their organizational culture. This topic has already been tackled by Ferrando (2009), who undertook a study on organizational values of Spanish companies and their relation to corporate branding and social desirability, and found that with some limitations and depending on the industry in which they activate, companies may express corporate values that reflect socially desirable values.

### **Research methodology**

#### **Research objectives and hypotheses**

The purpose of the present research is to analyze to what extent the core corporate values expressed by Romanian companies are related to the values considered desirable by the Romanian society as consumers. It does that by establishing the profile of Romanian private and state-owned companies in terms of expressed corporate values and then comparing it with the corporate values desired by Romanian consumers. Thus, the objectives of this research are: to determine and analyze the corporate values expressed by private and state-owned Romanian companies, to establish the relative frequency and associated degree of importance of corporate values deemed desirable by Romanian consumers, to compare the findings and then test if the values expressed by Romanian companies are significantly different from the values desired by the Romanian society.

The research question is: "Do Romanian companies engage in socially desirable responding in respect to their expressed corporate values?" The working hypothesis, and the possible answer to the research question is that companies tend to express corporate values that concur with society' expectations but do not necessarily reflect the values within their corporate culture, meaning the values that really guide their behavior.

The limitations of this study lay in the fact that even if we find a high level of correspondence between the values declared by companies and the ones desired by society, this does not necessarily mean that those particular values

are aligned to the corporate culture of the companies. A more thorough and comprehensive study would also assess the companies' internal environment to establish the extent to which the espoused values are actually enacted.

If, on the other hand, the hypothesis is found to be incorrect and the corporate values expressed by Romanian companies are significantly different from the corporate values desired by the Romanian society, the value of the study lays in the thorough exploration of consumer desires in terms of corporate values, which could provide the basis for further recommendations.

### **Research design**

The present research starts by analyzing the corporate value statements publicized on the websites of the biggest forty five private, respectively the biggest forty five state-owned Romanian companies in terms of turnover, as reported for the year 2013. A descriptive study is thus intended to make the profile and further comparison between private and state-owned companies in terms of declared corporate values. For this purpose, we conducted an analysis by means of the internet through which the official corporate websites of all the companies under research were surveyed in order to collect the statements of core corporate values. After collecting and recording all the corporate value statements encountered in the websites, we performed a semantic content analysis and categorized them based on their underlying meaning in thirteen generic categories. For instance, a corporate value which has been included in category "commitment to employees" is "best people – continuous training programs for our employees help us to become one of the key players in the market". In an attempt to be more objective, the value categories established by one of the authors were then reviewed by the other authors, the final emerging categories and their associated corporate values being established as a result of this process.

The companies that did not have a statement of corporate values posted on their websites were excluded from the analysis. Although references to certain practices and beliefs which could have been categorized as values were sometimes encountered on the companies' websites, these were discarded from the present research since we considered it was inadequate to make inferences or assumptions with regard to what the core values of a company are. Therefore, the present research accounts for the explicitly stated core corporate values of the companies, only. Since the intended use of the companies' statements of corporate values was other than the completion of the present research, this is considered secondary data. The investigation technique used for collecting the secondary data was intentional sampling, as the companies were chosen according to their turnover, based on specific rankings. The methods employed for summarizing the data were frequency distributions and tables and the graphical data representation method used for presenting the data consists in the bar chart.

The study, however, goes beyond a mere description of Romanian companies in terms of corporate values and takes on an explanatory character

by trying to account for the factors that influenced or determined the occurrence of the results observed in the descriptive part. It does this by advancing and testing the hypothesis that Romanian companies espouse values that are desired by the Romanian society, as consumers. In the investigation process, since no secondary data regarding socially desirable Romanian values was available, a questionnaire was constructed to collect primary data. The investigation technique employed for collecting the primary data was simple random sampling since every possible collection of units was equally likely to be selected, and the methods used for gathering the data consist of personal and e-mail administration of questionnaires.

The questionnaire was built based on the categories of values previously identified in the content analysis of the companies' value statements. The essence of the questionnaire was a multiple choice opinion question which listed all the identified value categories and asked the respondents to choose four values (the average number of values expressed by companies) which they considered desirable in the corporate culture of private, respectively state-owned Romanian companies. The ordinal scale was employed as a metrics, since the respondents were requested to order the chosen corporate values according to their perceived importance from 1 to 4, where 1 was the maximum. The questionnaire also included five demographic questions which can be classified as follows: two binary factual questions recorded the gender and living environment of the respondents, one numeric open ended question recorded the age of the respondents, and two multiple choice factual questions recorded the education level and occupation of the respondents. Except for the open ended question, the nominal scale was employed as metrics, since a list of discrete variables listed possible answers from which the respondents had to choose.

After collecting the primary data, we recorded and processed it by means of specialized software for data analysis. Absolute frequency distributions, graphs as well as tables have been employed as means to summarize the collected data. The graphical data representations employed to present the data consist of pie-charts, histograms and bar charts.

#### **Data analysis and interpretation**

Content analysis is the qualitative method used for analyzing the secondary data which set the departing point of this study. Content analysis is an unobtrusive technique that allows analyzing relatively unstructured qualitative data in view of identifying underlying meanings, symbolic qualities, or expressive contents. As originally defined by Berelson (1952 cited in Krippendorff, 2004), content analysis is a research technique employed for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of communication content. Content analysis implies a systematic reduction of text or other communication material to a standard set of statistically usable signs or symbols representing the presence, intensity or frequency of various relevant characteristics (Shapiro and Markoff, 1997 cited in Krippendorff, 2004).



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Although unitary in its underlying sense, content analysis can be classified in a variety of categories, the most relevant being pragmatic, semantic and sign-vehicle content analysis (*idem*). Pragmatic content analysis entails classifying signs according to their probable causes and effects. Semantic content analysis implies classifying signs according to their meanings and can provide frequencies with which certain objects, characterizations or particular characterizations of objects are referred to. Sign vehicle analysis classifies content according to the psychophysical properties of the signs (*idem*). Recognizing and establishing patterns of implied meanings lies at the heart of content analysis. In the simplest terms, content analysis entails the study and quantitative description of the content of communication. Important to be mentioned is the fact that content analysis is not restricted to written material because images, sounds, signs, symbols and even art can constitute the object of analysis provided they convey a meaning outside of what can be directly observed. The specific category of content analysis that was employed in the context of the present research is the semantic content analysis, which implies categorizing text according to its underlying meaning.

As far as the quantitative methods of data analysis are concerned, given the fact that the use of basic descriptive measures of central tendency and dispersion such as mean, median, mode and standard deviation requires no further explanation, a brief description of hypothesis testing technique will be further made. Hypothesis testing is a fundamental mechanism for decision making which lies at the heart of inferential statistics i.e. a set of procedures used to make predictions about the whole population by studying the properties of a population sample (Mitruț et al., 2003). The purpose of hypothesis testing is to enable researchers to answer questions or find explanations to various phenomena by developing hypotheses and using statistical evidence to test them. All statistical hypotheses consist of two parts, a null hypothesis and an alternative hypothesis. The alternative hypothesis (denoted  $H_1$ ) is constructed first and it states the expectation or theory to be tested. Then the null hypothesis (denoted  $H_0$ ) is derived as the opposite of the alternative hypothesis. It is the null hypothesis that is actually tested, not the alternative one. Therefore, the emphasis is placed on determining whether there is enough sample evidence to reject the null hypothesis or the evidence does not support the rejection of the null hypothesis and as a consequence is taken as evidence in favor of the alternative hypothesis. Because individual tests are rarely conclusive, it is usually not said that the research hypothesis has been "proved", but only that it has been supported (Black, 2010).

The hypothesis of the present research is tested by means the nonparametric  $\chi^2$  (chi square) test. The purpose of this technique is to test for significant differences between the observed distribution of data among categories and the expected distribution based on the null hypothesis (Emory, 1985). The chi-square test basically compares the distribution obtained from the sample data with known or expected values expressed in the null

hypothesis. In order to arrive at a decision in a hypothesis testing situation using the chi-square test there are some steps that must be followed (Mituț and Șerban, 2006). The first step consists in formulating the null and alternative hypotheses. The second step is to select the significance level ( $\alpha$ ), meaning the accepted probability to be wrong. The third step is to establish the observed absolute frequencies ( $o_i$ ), meaning the frequencies obtained from the sample. The fourth step consists in computing the expected frequencies ( $e_i$ ) based on the distribution from the null hypothesis. The fifth step is the computation of the  $\chi^2$  statistic according to the following formula:

$$\chi^2 = \sum_{i=1}^k \frac{(o_i - e_i)^2}{e_i} \quad (1)$$

The sixth step consists in comparing the computed values of the  $\chi^2$  statistic with the critical value of the  $\chi^2$  statistic, which is determined based on the number of degrees of freedom and the significance level. The final step entails deciding upon the rejection, if  $\chi^2$  calculated is greater than  $\chi^2$  critical, or acceptance, if  $\chi^2$  calculated is smaller  $\chi^2$  critical, of the null hypothesis. Obviously, the order of the above mentioned steps is not binding and the interpretation of the results is highly dependent on the context, nature of the problem inquired as well as on how the research question is formulated.

#### **Corporate and social values analysis**

The study is constructed around thirteen generic categories of corporate values, which we identified after concluding a semantic content analysis of the sampled Romanian companies' statements of corporate values. These categories have been assigned generic names synthesizing the underlying meaning of the corporate values encompassed.

The category generically termed *commitment to customers* comprises corporate values whose meaning synthesize a focus on customers and a commitment towards fulfilling their needs and expectations. Expressing a general concern for employees and a focus on human capital, the values included in the category *commitment to employees* have slightly different meanings for private and state companies. Whereas state companies uphold a plain belief in the principle of equal chances, private companies recognize employees as being their greatest asset and support the professional as well as personal development of their employees.

The category labeled *creativity and innovation* includes corporate values which share the common meaning that creative and innovative thinking fosters continuous development and can be source of competitive advantage. The corporate values included in the category *dynamism and flexibility* express the common belief that commitment to flexibility, dynamism, and adaptation not only insure adaptation to continuously changing market circumstances but also stimulate openness to change and proactive attitudes.

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Entailing a general commitment towards economic growth and profitability, the corporate values included in the category *economic performance and efficiency* are referred to in slightly different terms by private and state companies. As such, state companies generally term efficiency their commitment towards achieving significant levels of performance in support of the national economy whereas private companies term performance their concern towards increasing the companies' value and attaining attractive profits for investors. As its very name implies, the category *environmental responsibility and sustainability* encompasses values expressing concern and respect towards the natural environment as well as dedication to actively promote sustainable development as a sign of respect for future generations.

The category generically termed *ethics* encompasses corporate values referring to assumed professional ethics and moral standards such as integrity, honesty, reliability, trust, seriousness, transparency, as well as respect and loyalty towards partners and clients. *Professional competence and development* is yet again a category of values that although has the same underlying meaning both for state and for private companies, implies certain differences related to the manner of expression. Consequently, the commitment towards professional preparedness, development and excellence is referred to by state companies as competence whereas private companies refer to it as professionalism.

Commitment to ensuring a high quality of products and services rendered as well as the engagement to evaluate own performances based on the highest quality standards, is the central meaning behind the category suggestively named *quality*. The values included in the cluster *safety and security of operations* indicate an undertaking on behalf of the companies expressing it to ensure safety in consumption as well as security in production by running in safe conditions all the processes related to their activity. *Social responsibility* refers to the companies' involvement in programs aimed to support the surrounding community as well as their commitment towards being responsible and respectful to people and society in general.

The meaning of the category of corporate values termed *team spirit and collaboration* is focused around the idea of team work, active involvement, cohesion, as well as shared goals and achievements. Central to the category labeled *tradition and experience* is the meaning that the future actions and plans of a company draw much on its established tradition and are based on the experience accumulated during the past years of its existence; the past is evoked as a reassuring and guiding light for the future.

The sample considered consists of ninety Romanian companies out of which forty five are privately owned and forty five are state-owned. These are the top companies in terms of turnover for the year 2013 and have been chosen based on rankings provided by Ziarul Financiar, a Romanian financial newspaper. The private companies have turnovers ranging from a minimum of 90.09 million euro to a maximum of 464.45 million euro and come from varied industries such as construction and construction materials, pharmaceuticals, petrol, transport, IT, fast moving consumer goods production and distribution etc. The

state-owned companies have reported turnovers ranging from a minimum of 3.9 million euro to a maximum of 760.3 million euro and consist of producers as well as providers of utilities such as electricity, gas and current water, transport companies, industrial producers, plants and power stations etc.

In absolute terms, the number of companies having a statement of core corporate values publicized on their websites was disappointing both in the case of private as well as state-owned companies (see Table 1). However, the proportion of Romanian private companies having an explicit statement of corporate values (35%) was slightly higher as compared to the state-owned companies (26%). Consequently, it might be useful to test whether the nature of ownership has an influence upon the companies' interest in formally stating their corporate values. The chi-square test of independence will be employed for this purpose.

**Table 1.** *Company ownership and existence of values statement*

Statement of values Nature of Ownership	Statement of values		Total per rows
	Yes	No	
Private	16	29	45
State	12	33	45
Total per columns	28	62	90

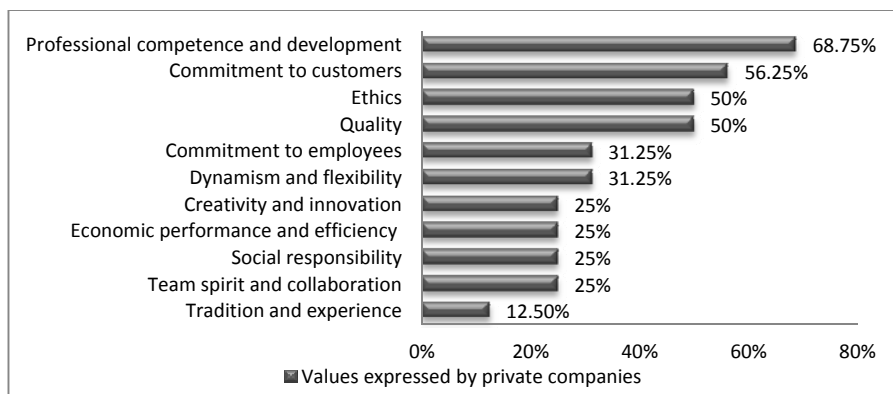
The null hypothesis is that company ownership is independent from the existence of a statement of corporate values. In other words, whether or not a company has a statement of corporate values does not depend on the nature of its ownership. The alternative hypothesis is that companies' explicitly stating the corporate values depends on the nature of their ownership. The conclusion reached after conducting the test is that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected since the computed value of  $\chi^2$  (0.83) is smaller than the critical value of  $\chi^2$  (3.84). Consequently, it can be asserted that the nature of ownership does not influence the decision of the typical Romanian company to publicize a statement of values. Typical Romanian companies are thus expected to display the same behavior in respect to explicitly stating their corporate values, regardless of whether they are privately or state-owned.

Based on the number of companies expressing commitment towards the previously defined categories of corporate values, the subsequent section presents the profile of the typical private as well as state-owned Romanian company, in terms of expressed corporate values.

As displayed in Figure 1, professional competence and development is the most frequently declared corporate value as far as Romanian private companies are concerned, being expressed by 68.75% of the companies under research. At the other end of the continuum is tradition and experience, which is expressed by only 12.5% of the sampled Romanian private companies. Worth emphasizing is the fact that a greater proportion of companies (56.25%) express commitment to customers as compared to the proportion of companies

(31.25%) that are committed to employees. This finding suggests that the typical Romanian private company has a stronger outward focus rather than an inward orientation thus placing an emphasis on fulfilling customers' needs. Ranking third in the list of corporate values expressed by private companies, ethics and quality are adhered to by an equal number of companies (half of them) which suggests that the typical private Romanian company is as likely to be committed to ethics as it is to quality. Another comparison which provides an insight into the organizational culture of the typical Romanian private company is the one between dynamism and flexibility, which is expressed by 31.25% of companies, and creativity and innovation, which is expressed by 25% of companies. This in turn, suggests that Romanian private companies are more inclined to adapt to the changes in the business environment rather than to produce or at least influence them. Based on the most expressed corporate values, it can be inferred that the typical private Romanian company is committed to ensuring a high level of competence and professional development, is focused on fulfilling the needs and expectations of its customers, adheres to professional ethics and moral standards, and ensures the quality of products sold and services rendered.

**Figure 1.** Corporate values expressed by private Romanian companies



As far as Romanian state-owned (Figure 2) companies are concerned, 66.66% of the companies under research express commitment towards professional competence and development as well as towards social responsibility. As compared to the companies' commitment to environmental responsibility and sustainability, which is expressed by 41.66% companies, social responsibility and concern for the human factor rather than the natural one, seem to represent the direction towards which most state-owned Romanian companies are oriented. Adherence to ethics ranks second in the list of values expressed by state-owned companies, being maintained by 50% of the companies studied. Closely following, economic performance and efficiency, safety and security of operations, as well as team spirit and collaboration are

valued by an equal proportion of 41.66% state-owned companies which suggest that the typical state-owned Romanian company is equally oriented towards all these aspects. Whereas commitment to customers is declared by 33.33% of the sampled state-owned Romanian companies, commitment to employees is the least acclaimed corporate value among state-owned companies, being supported by a modest 8.33% proportion of the sample. This sharp contrast suggests that the human factor within state-owned organizations is highly disregarded as compared to the concern for customers and external constituencies. Quite surprisingly, the proportion of companies expressing commitment to creativity and innovation (25%) is greater than the proportion of companies that express commitment to dynamism and flexibility (16.66%), fact which would imply that the typical state companies is more likely inclined to lead change rather than adapt to the changes in the environment.

Figure 2. Corporate values expressed by state-owned Romanian companies

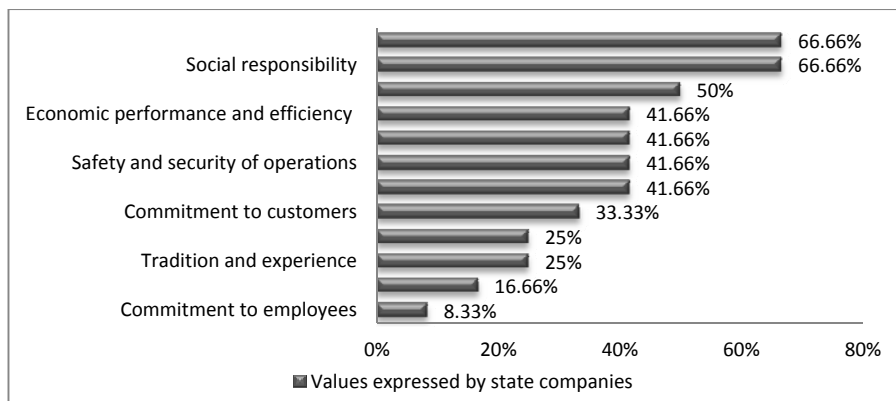
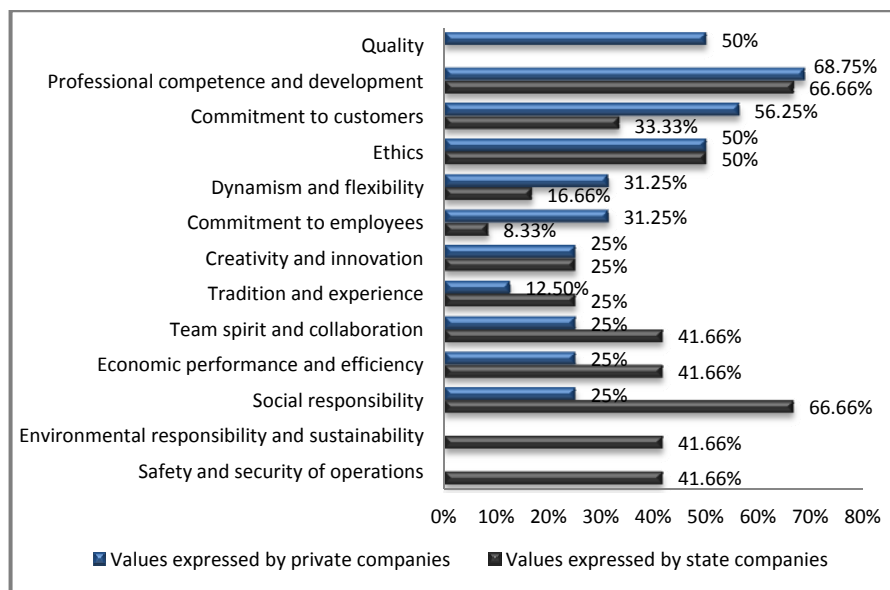


Figure 3 depicts the comparison between private and state-owned Romanian companies in terms of their expressed corporate values. Nevertheless, before proceeding with the comparative analysis, the most important aspect to be emphasized is the fact that whereas quality is a corporate value that has been expressed only by private companies, environmental responsibility and sustainability as well as safety and security of operations have been expressed only by state-owned companies. The similarities between the private and the state business sectors in terms of expressed corporate values are centered on professional competence and development (68.75% private, 66.66% state), ethics (50% private, 50% state), and creativity and innovation (25% private, 25% state). In all other respects, the differences are significant. For instance, the number of private companies greatly outweighs the number of state companies when it comes to expressing corporate values such as commitment to customers (56.25% private, 33.33% state), dynamism and flexibility (31.25% private, 16.66% state) and commitment to employees (31.25% private, 8.33% state). State companies, on

the other hand, are dominant from a quantitative point of view in respect to expressing values such as social responsibility (66.66% state, 25% private), economic performance and efficiency (41.66% state, 25% private), team spirit and collaboration (41.66% state, 25% private) and tradition and experience (25% state, 12.5% private).

**Figure 3.** Comparison between the corporate values expressed by private and state-owned companies



In conclusion, whereas the typical Romanian private company is more likely to be committed towards customers and employees, quality, and dynamism and flexibility, the typical stated-owned Romanian company is more likely to show commitment towards social and environmental responsibility, safety and security of operations, team spirit and collaboration, tradition and experience, and economic performance and efficiency. Although state-owned companies seem to hold an advantage over private companies from a quantitative point of view, this is a highly debatable subject if analyzed from a qualitative perspective because the question of which corporate value is better, more important or more appropriate can represent the topic of endless debates.

The second part of this study aimed at analyzing the corporate values desired by the Romanian society, as consumers. For this purpose we have distributed three hundred questionnaires to a sample as representative as possible for the Romanian society in terms of age and gender. However, approximately half of them were never returned so the actual working sample consists of one hundred sixty one respondents. The average age of the typical person in the sample is 28.43 years, the ages varying from 17 to 61 years. Thus, in terms of age the sample is not representative but it does include an

important segment of the consumer population. As depicted in Figure 4 the highest frequency of response has been recorded for persons aged between 20 and 30 years, which in turn suggests that awareness/interest concerning the subject of corporate values is more widespread within this age group as compared to the older generations.

Apart from age, the other demographic variables employed were gender, living environment, level of education and profession. With regard to gender, out of the 161 respondents, 64% are females and 36% are males. Furthermore, 89% of them live in the urban environment, whereas only 11% reside in the rural area. The level of education indicates that most respondents have graduate studies (50.3%), being followed by those who graduated high school (24.2%) and those who have a postgraduate degree (19.9%). Additionally, 3.1% of the respondents have graduated some form of technical school and only 2.5% have graduated secondary school. The education level of the sample is therefore relatively high being concentrated around more advanced studies. With respect to occupation or profession, 78.9% of the respondents are employed, 10.6% are still attending university or school, 4.3% are business owners, 4.3% are freelancers, 1.2% are retired and only 0.6% are unemployed.

Demographic inquiries have an important role because they offer a clear image about the profile of the Romanian consumer around which this study is concerned. Nevertheless, since questionnaires were initially sampled to a heterogeneous sample, it can be deduced that this is not only the profile of this research respondent, but it is the profile of the typical Romanian person that possess knowledge/interest regarding the subject of corporate values. Thus, the typical Romanian person that is aware of the subject of corporate values is aged between 20 and 30 years, lives in the urban environment, has superior studies, and is employed or still attending university. In our view, companies should take measures in order to raise the level of awareness that consumers have in respect to corporate values, by advertising and other means that are sure to reach all categories of consumers. This has the great potential of bringing not only social benefits but real economic benefits to the companies that will thus manage to transform corporate values into distinctiveness criteria in respect to competitors.

In this section of the paper we analyze the corporate values deemed desirable by the Romanian society, as indicated from the questionnaires, in a manner similar to the one employed for the analysis of the values expressed by the companies. More specifically, even though the questionnaire respondents indicated the desirable corporate values in order of their perceived importance, no account will be held towards the level of importance assigned to them and the corporate values will be analyzed solely according to the frequency of choice. This is done in order to maintain consistency and allow for further comparisons between the two sets of data.

Figure 4 displays the corporate values deemed desirable for Romanian private companies according to the proportion of respondents choosing them. Quality is positioned first in the ranking of corporate values desirable for private companies, being indicated as such by a definite majority of 68.30%



respondents. Professional competence and development ranks second, being identified by 44.10% of the sampled persons as a corporate value desirable in the organizational culture of Romanian private companies. By comparing the proportion of people who identified commitment to customers as a desirable value for private companies (42.90%) with the proportion of people who opted for commitment to employees (37.90%) it can be concluded that private companies are expected to be more oriented towards customers rather than employees. Ethics accounts for 39.10% of the respondents choices, being thus ranked the fourth. Whereas creativity and innovation is deemed desirable by 34.20% of the persons in the sample, dynamism and flexibility accounts for a smaller 28.60% percentage of choice, the typical Romanian private company being thus expected to innovate rather than to be flexible and adapt to changes. Another notable finding is that little interest on behalf of the respondents has been shown towards corporate values such as social responsibility (9.90%) and environmental responsibility (8.10%) as compared to the corporate values referring to economic performance and efficiency, which have been indicated by 33.50% of the respondents as being desirable for private companies. This finding is quite odd, given the fact that it comes from the perspective of the consumer, because it basically suggests that private companies are expected to be more profit oriented rather than responsible towards the community and the environment.

**Figure 4.** Corporate values desired for private companies



As far as state-owned Romanian companies are concerned (see Figure 6), the first ranked corporate values considered desirable by Romanian consumers are quality, indicated by 52.20% of the respondents, and adherence to ethics, closely following with a 51.60% proportion of choice. Further on, economic performance and efficiency ranks third with a percentage of choice of 39.10%, whereas safety and security of operations is considered a desirable corporate value for state-owned Romanian companies by 37.90% of the sampled persons.

By comparing the proportion of responses that have been assigned to social responsibility (36%) to the proportion of choices accounting for environmental responsibility and sustainability (19.30%), it can be concluded that state-owned Romanian companies are more expected to be responsible towards the community and people in general rather than being responsible towards the environment. An interesting observation can be made by comparing the proportion of people expressing their desire for state companies to be committed to employees (28%) with the proportion of people deeming desirable commitment to customers (21.10%), which suggests that Romanian state companies are expected to be have more concern towards employees rather than an outward focus on customers. Another meaningful comparison can be made between dynamism and flexibility, which is desired by 19.30% of the respondents, and creativity and innovation which is the least desired corporate value accounting for only 11.20% of all choices, which would suggest that state companies are not expected to be very innovative but rather be flexible and dynamic. Team spirit and collaborations is the second least desired corporate value as far as state-owned Romanian companies are concerned, accounting only for 14.30% of the respondents' choices.

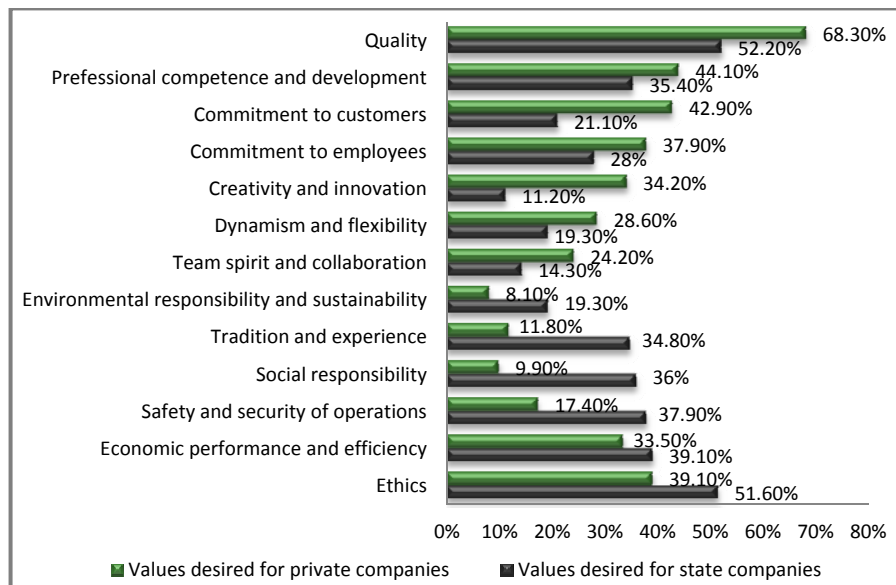
**Figure 5.** Corporate values desired for state-owned companies



By comparing the corporate values desired for private companies with the corporate values desired for state-owned companies (see Figure 6), it can be noticed a clear tendency of the respondents to associate certain corporate values with either the private or the state sector. As such, whereas commitment to quality is a corporate value which appears to be desired more for private companies, adherence to ethics is desirably more expected from state-owned companies. The most definite respects from which private companies are expected to surpass state-owned companies are related to corporate values such as commitment to customers, which is twice as much desired for private companies than it is for state-owned companies, and creativity and innovation

which is desired for private companies by three times more than it is for state-owned companies. As far as state companies are concerned, a double number of respondents think that state companies to be committed to security of operations and environmental responsibility, and three times as much respondents, indicate social responsibility, and tradition and experience as corporate values desirable for state companies. Professional competence and development, and economic performance and efficiency are considered desirable by comparable proportions of respondents for the private, respectively for the state sectors. Conclusively, whereas private Romanian companies are desired to be more committed towards quality, customers, employees, and creativity and innovation, state-owned Romanian companies are desirably more expected to be committed towards ethics, safety and security of operations, social responsibility, tradition and experience.

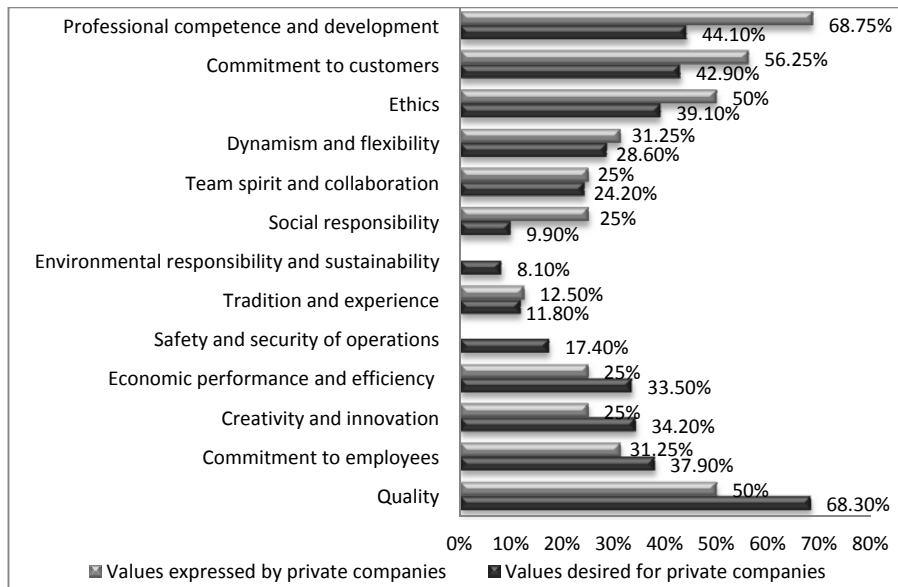
Figure 6. Comparison between corporate values desired for private and state companies



As depicted in Figure 7, by comparing the corporate values expressed by Romanian private companies with the corporate values deemed desirable by Romanian consumers, it can be observed that the areas where these two converge are related to corporate values such as dynamism and flexibility, team spirit and collaboration, tradition and experience as well as commitment to employees. In all other respects, the discrepancies are rather significant. For instance, whereas 68.75% of the private companies express commitment towards professional competence and development, only 44.10% of the respondents consider it desirable. Other corporate values in respect to which more private companies than people expect or desire express their

commitment are social responsibility, ethics and customer orientation. Commitment to quality is, however, a corporate value deemed desirable by 68.30% of the Romanian consumers but expressed by only 50% of the private companies sampled. Other areas in which private companies fall short of people’s desires are related to corporate values such as creativity and innovation, and economic performance and efficiency. Although environmental responsibility and sustainability is the least desired value for private companies, accounting for only 8.1% of the respondents’ choices, not a single Romanian private company in the sample expressed concern towards this aspect. The same applies for safety and security of operations, with the only difference that it was deemed desirable by a more significant proportion of 17.40% respondents.

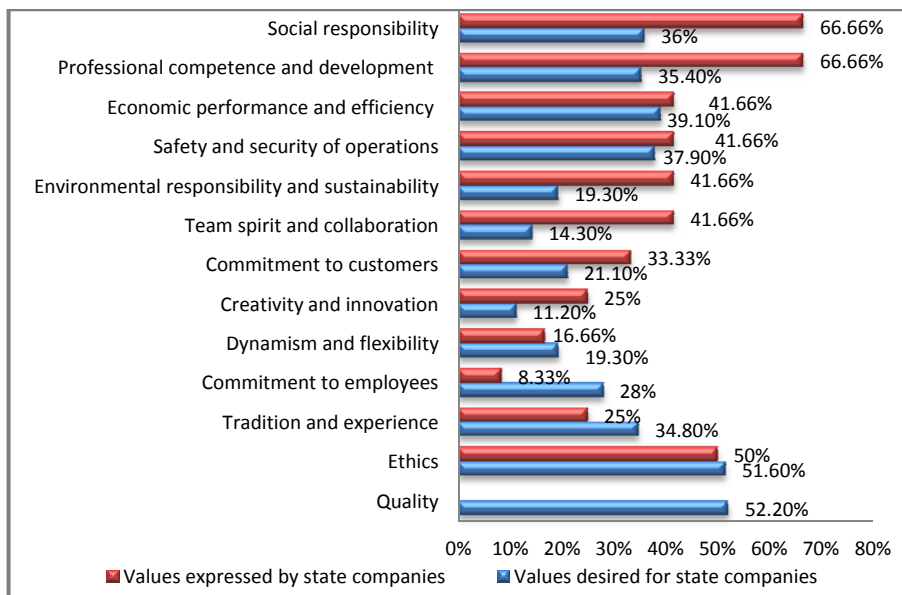
**Figure 7.** Comparison between the corporate values expressed and the corporate values desired for private companies



As far as Romanian state-owned companies are concerned, by comparing the corporate values expressed by the companies with the corporate values desired by the sampled Romanian consumers, it can be noticed that the areas in which the two are approximately congruent are economic performance and efficiency, safety and security of operations, dynamism and flexibility, and ethics. This basically means that these corporate values are almost as much desired by society as they are expressed by state companies. Nevertheless, a significantly larger proportion of state companies declare to be socially responsible (66.66%), and committed to professional performance and efficiency (66.66%) as compared to the proportion of respondents considering these values desirable (36%, respectively 35.40%). Other respects, from which

state companies can be said to exceed people’s desires or expectations, regard corporate values such as environmental responsibility, team spirit and collaboration, commitment to customers, and creativity and innovation. Nevertheless, the areas in which state companies fall short of people’s expectations are related to corporate values such as commitment to employees, and tradition and experience. As described up to this point, the typical Romanian state-owned company seems to be quite responsive to society’s desires but there is another aspect which might make a difference, namely quality. Commitment to quality ranks first from the perspective of the typical Romanian consumer, accounting for 52.30% of the sampled respondents’ choices. However, not a single Romanian state company in the sample expressed quality among its corporate values.

**Figure 8.** Comparison between the corporate values expressed and the corporate values desired for state companies



The descriptive part presented up to this point provides an interesting, yet more or less conclusive insight into the question of whether expressed corporate values reflect desirable values. However, answering the research question demands a more rigorous approach to data analysis and this will be done by means of conducting some tests of statistical significance. The chi-square test for percentage comparison will be employed for this purpose. The null hypothesis is that Romanian companies express corporate values in proportions that are equal with the ones in which Romanian consumers desire the corporate values. Simply stated, Romanian companies express corporate values desired by the Romanian society. The alternative hypothesis is that the

corporate values desired by the Romanian society are significantly different from the corporate values expressed by the Romanian companies.

After conducting in parallel two tests, one for the private companies and one for the state-owned companies we reached the conclusion that the null hypothesis is rejected in both cases. Based on sample evidence, it has been proven that in 95% of the cases both private Romanian companies, as well as state-owned Romanian companies express corporate values in proportions that are significantly different from the ones desired by Romanian consumers. Consequently, the working hypothesis of this paper, the one that Romanian companies express corporate values that are desired by the Romanian society has been rejected. The value of this study thus lays in the potential for extensive exploration of Romanian consumers' desires in respect to corporate values. The following paragraph provides an in-depth qualitative analysis of socially desirable corporate values by taking into consideration the levels of importance assigned to various corporate values.

In expressing their choices with regard to the four most desirable corporate values within the organizational culture of Romanian companies, the questionnaire respondents also ranked them in order of their perceived importance. Up to this point, the analysis of the collected data has been made only from the perspective of absolute frequency of choice of a particular corporate value, thus disregarding the level of importance ascribed to it. In this section of the paper, however, an account will be made of the level of importance assigned to the chosen corporate values, thus enabling a more comprehensive analysis to be made.

Table 2 lists in alphabetical order the categories of corporate values and indicates the frequency with which a certain level of importance has been assigned to each of them by the respondents, both for private companies as well as for state-owned Romanian companies. The levels of importance are denoted from 1 to 4, where 1 is the maximum importance, and reflect how important it is for the private and state companies in the view of the respondents to be committed to the indicated corporate values.

**Table 2.** Matrix of corporate values' importance for private and state companies (as identified by the respondents)

Corporate value	Assigned importance	Private Companies				State-owned Companies			
		1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
Commitment to customers		12	15	28	14	5	9	14	6
Commitment to employees		7	15	21	18	7	15	18	5
Creativity and innovation		7	17	19	12	3	4	5	6
Dynamism and flexibility		5	11	14	16	2	12	5	12
Economic performance and efficiency		17	16	13	8	24	11	13	15
Environmental responsibility and sustainability		0	1	6	6	2	4	11	14
Ethics		14	16	13	20	27	21	21	14
Professional competence and development		23	26	9	13	14	20	12	11
Quality		64	20	15	11	41	20	14	9
Safety and security of operations		5	12	2	9	11	16	18	16
Social responsibility		2	1	2	11	14	16	15	13
Team spirit and collaboration		4	7	15	13	1	3	10	9
Tradition and experience		1	4	4	10	10	10	5	31

The intensity of the color, in a convention of the chart of temperatures type, indicates the frequency of the answers indicating a certain level of importance assigned to a corporate value, the more intense, the more frequent.

As far as commitment to customers is concerned, the distribution of responses per levels of importance is similar across the private and the state sector. As such, whereas the most frequent level of importance assigned to this corporate value is the third, followed by the second, the least frequently assigned level of importance is the fourth. In absolute terms, the number of respondents choosing it altogether is, however, higher for private companies. On average, commitment to customers has been assigned a 2.64 level of importance for private companies and a 2.62 level of importance in the case of state-owned companies. Although commitment to employees has been indicated by most respondents on the third level of importance both for private and state companies, it can be observed that the distribution of responses in the case of private companies is more concentrated around the lower levels of importance, whereas in the case of state-owned companies the distribution converges towards the highest levels of importance. The average level of importance assigned to commitment to employees is 2.82 for the private companies and 2.47 for the state-owned companies, which suggests that people consider more important for state-owned companies to be committed to employees.

As indicated by most respondents, creativity and innovation ranks on the third level of importance for private companies, whereas for state-owned companies it is deemed the fourth most desirable corporate value. Having an average level of importance of 2.65 for private companies and 2.78 for state-owned companies, creativity and innovation appears to be a corporate value towards which private companies are expected to express more commitment. Dynamism and flexibility is considered by most respondents the fourth most important corporate value towards which private companies should express commitment, and has an average level of importance of 2.89. With an equal proportion of people considering it the second, respectively the fourth most important corporate value towards which state companies should express commitment, dynamism and flexibility has been assigned a 2.87 average level of importance. These findings suggest that dynamism and flexibility is slightly more desired for state-owned companies.

Indicated as such by the majority of respondents, economic performance and efficiency ranks first in terms of importance, both for private and state-owned Romanian companies. With an assigned average level of importance of 2.22 for private companies and 2.30 for state companies, economic performance and efficiency is considered, however, relatively more important for private companies. Worth noticing is the fact that environmental responsibility and sustainability has not been assigned by any of the respondents the first level of importance as far as Romanian private companies are concerned. In addition to that, the distribution of the responses around the lowest levels of importance as well as the very low number of choosing it

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altogether, are indicators of the fact that environmental responsibility is not considered an important value for private companies. The situation is however different when it comes to state companies, fact indicated by an average level of assigned importance of 3.19, which as compared to the 3.38 level assigned for private companies, suggests that state companies are expected to be more responsible towards the environment than private companies.

Whereas in relation to private companies ethics has been assigned by most respondents the fourth level of importance, in relation to state-owned companies ethics has been ranked on the first level of importance. The fact that ethics is considered a more important corporate value for state companies than it is for private companies is also supported by the 2.27, respectively the 2.62 average levels of importance assigned for each sector. Although the distribution of respondents' choices places professional competence and development on the second importance level both for the private and the state sectors, by comparing the 2.17 average level of importance assigned for private companies with the 2.35 average level of importance assigned for state-owned companies, it can be concluded that professional competence and development is deemed more important for private companies.

In the respondents' views, quality has a first level of importance both for private as well as for state-owned Romanian companies. On average, quality has been assigned a 1.75 level of importance for private companies and a 1.89 level of importance in the case of state-owned companies, which indicates that commitment quality is considered slightly more important for private Romanian companies. Whereas most respondents assign safety and security of operations a second level of importance in the case of private companies, the situation is different when it comes to state-owned companies, where most respondents assign it the third level of importance. In the respondents' opinion, it is therefore desirable for private companies to be more committed to safety and security of operations as compared to state-owned companies. Marked by the biggest difference in the average level of importance assigned (3.37 private, 2.47 state), social responsibility is definitely a corporate value towards which state-owned Romanian companies are expected to be more committed. As far as team spirit and collaboration is concerned, the distribution of responses is similar across the private and the state sectors, most respondents assigning it a third level of importance. However, as compared to the 3.17 average level of importance ascribed to the state companies, the 2.95 average level of importance assigned for the private companies indicates that team spirit and innovation is expected to be more encountered in private enterprises. Finally, although tradition and experience has been most frequently assigned the fourth level of importance both for private and for state companies, by comparing the 3.02 average level of importance assigned for state companies with the 3.21 average level of importance assigned for private companies, it can be concluded that tradition and experience is a corporate value considered more important for state-owned Romanian companies than it is for private companies.

Overall, based on the average levels of importance assigned, the corporate values deemed the most important for private Romanian companies are quality



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(1.75), professional competence and development (2.17), economic performance and efficiency (2.22), and safety and security of operations (2.54). As far as state-owned Romanian companies are concerned, the corporate values considered the most important are quality (1.89), ethics (2.27), economic performance and efficiency (2.30), and professional competence and development (2.35). At the other end on the continuum, the corporate values indicated by the sampled Romanian consumers as the least important are environmental responsibility (3.38), social responsibility (3.37), and tradition and experience (3.21) for private Romanian companies, and environmental responsibility (3.19), team spirit and collaboration (3.17), and tradition and experience (3.01) for state-owned Romanian companies.

### Conclusions

One the most important findings of this research resides in the fact that state-owned Romanian companies express no commitment towards ensuring quality of products sold and services rendered. This may be due to the fact that most of them enjoy a monopolistic position on the market, but as the national business environment develops and the contemporary consumer becomes increasingly demanding and disposes of higher income levels, state companies might lose their privileged position, with consumers switching to other companies for which quality is a real concern. This is the case of Posta Romana whose services are replaced by a continuously increasing number of people with the ones of private couriers. Consequently, it is not our personal belief, but also the belief of 52.20% of the sampled Romanian consumers that state-owned Romanian companies should be committed towards quality; however, much remains to be done on their behalf regarding this aspect.

The profile of the Romanian private company in terms of expressed core corporate values has been found to be different from the profile of the Romanian state-owned company. As compared to state-owned companies, the typical Romanian private company is more likely to be committed towards ensuring high quality of products and services, and is focused on fulfilling the needs and expectations of its customers; it recognizes employees as being the greatest asset, supports their professional and personal development and is committed towards flexibility and dynamism to ensure adaptation to continuously changing market circumstances. The typical state-owned company, on the other hand, is more likely to be responsible towards the natural environment and society, as well as to ensure safety in consumption and security in production; it shows commitment towards achieving economic efficiency in support of the national economy and bases future actions and plans on its established tradition and accumulated experience.

Romanian consumers also make a distinction between the corporate values considered desirable for private companies and the corporate values considered desirable for the state-owned companies. From the perspective of Romanian consumers, the typical Romanian private company should be committed towards achieving high levels of professionalism and competence,

as well as ensuring high quality of products and services; it should show concern for employees by supporting their personal and professional development, and should focus on customers by fulfilling their needs and expectations. As indicated by Romanian consumers, the typical state-owned Romanian company is also expected to show commitment towards quality but in addition to that, it should also ensure safety and security of operations by running in safe conditions all its activities and production processes; most importantly, it should assume high moral standards and adherence to ethics, and should attain high levels of economic efficiency in support of the national economy.

The research has identified the level of importance that Romanian consumers attach to various categories of corporate values. Based on the corporate values considered the most important, there can be identified several areas in which Romanian companies could improve their performance in order to respond to consumer wants and desires. Recommendations will be presented in this sense. Important to be mentioned is the fact that even though the recommendations stem from corporate values, they are not made with the view of changing companies' corporate values, but are made with the view of changing business priorities and operating practices in order to ensure congruence with customer desires and wants. From this perspective, the present research has a similar purpose to a marketing research aimed at identifying consumer wants and expectations regarding business practices.

In order to meet consumer wants, private Romanian companies should focus their efforts towards improving the following areas (in order of decreasing importance):

- Quality. The efforts of private Romanian companies should be directed towards ensuring and continuously improving the quality of products sold and services rendered, as well as towards raising the quality standards against which their entire activity is evaluated.
- Professional competence and development. Attaining professional competence and development requires that all the employees of private companies should be highly competent professionals, with extensive knowledge and skills in the field. Furthermore, continuous professional development and adaptation to changing circumstances should be ensured.
- Economic performance and efficiency. Resource maximization, high performance indicators and constant profitability levels are required to ensure the growth and development of private Romanian companies, which in turn creates employment opportunities, minimizes risks for investors and employees, and helps the companies become reliable partners.
- Safety and security of operations. Private Romanian companies should ensure safety in consumption as well as security in production in order to protect the welfare of employees, customers and society at large.

In order to ensure customer satisfaction, state-owned Romanian companies should focus their efforts on improving performance in the following areas (in order of decreasing importance):

- Quality. The efforts of state-owned Romanian companies should be directed not only towards ensuring, but also towards continuously improving the quality of their sold products and rendered services. Furthermore, the standards against which quality levels are judged should be revised and raised periodically to ensure congruence with international standards.
- Ethics. State-owned companies should be guided by transparency, trust, integrity and honesty in conducting all business activities as well as in establishing relationships with internal and external constituencies.
- Economic performance and efficiency. The economic results of state-owned companies directly contribute to the state budget. As such, profitability and economic efficiency are expected from state companies not only for the purpose of supporting the national economy but also in order to protect the interests of employees and other stakeholders.
- Professional competence and development. State-owned companies should represent reputedly known specialist in their field of activity. Within such companies, a high level of knowledge, preparedness and skillfulness should not only be maintained, but also continuously improved.

As it can be noticed, the areas considered important by Romanian consumers are similar across the private and the state business sectors. Quality, professional competence and development, and economic performance and efficiency are expected both from private as well as from state-owned Romanian companies. The differences lay in the fact that whereas private companies are desirably expected to ensure safety in consumption and security in production, state-owned companies are expected to adhere to ethics and moral principles in conducting their activities. Responsiveness to customer wants increases the customer satisfaction level, which in turn can only bring benefits to a company. However, the choice of whether to adapt business activities to ensure congruence with customer expectations remains at the latitude of each individual company, fact which explains why some companies are better than others.

The fact that Romanian companies express corporate values which are not congruent with the corporate values considered desirable by society is a reality which cannot be judged as being right or wrong. However, based on the corporate values deemed desirable by Romanian consumers, areas for business improvement have been found and recommendations have been made to help adapt business practices priorities to consumer wants.

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