

THE IMAGE OF ROMANIA IN THE WORLD, OUTLINED BY SUCCESSFUL ROMANIAN BRANDS

Gabriela ZAI^{a*}

^a *The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania*

ABSTRACT

There are many ways of promoting the image of a country outside its borders. One of them is through the promotion of successful brands from that country. As they are sold outside the country, they can lead its name to actual fame. In Romania there are many brands that have succeeded in entering external markets and, as such, have started helping promote the image of the country abroad.

KEYWORDS : *country image, country of origin, promotion, Romanian brands, Romania*

1. INTRODUCTION

Recently, more and more policymakers have reached the conclusion that the reputation of a country is a national commodity and that its image is a strong weapon in the context of a growing competition for resources, exports, attracting tourists etc. (Angheluță, 2016)

In the process of reaffirming itself on a European and international level, our country faces several problems, including the way in which national values are promoted abroad and the perception that European citizens have about Romania. Internally, things are not going that well either, especially since Romania's image is created by each of its citizens. However, if the promoted image is to reflect reality, we ourselves must first of all know our country.

2. MANUSCRIPT

When discussing the image of a country, we are referring to the perception of reality, about culture and cultural differences, about national identity. Nowadays, the image of a country holds a crucial importance in the field of international relations, as well as in commercial relations, investments and tourism. However, we must not forget that the image of a country is considerably influenced by its prestige, and its prestige is an extremely sensitive commodity: it accumulates over the years and can be lost in a matter of seconds. Over the last decades, scientific research regarding the question of a country's image has evolved, from an approach that studied the role of the country's image in the success of products exported from that country to an approach that studied the image of the country as a tourist destination, and eventually turning to a holistic approach – including various aspects and theories from different fields – that comes back to country marketing (Angheluță, 2016). The image of a country changes for the better when it has solid and consistent brands. (Nicolescu, 2008). In order to spread a positive image it is necessary for the brands to be close to the consumers, thus strengthening their commitment to the respective brand. (Platon, 2014) However, one must take into consideration the fact that, due to frequent changes in the business and branding environment, the brand manager is forced to respond with adequate instruments and plans. (Fisher-Buttinger & Vallaster, 2008; Ceptureanu et al.,

* Corresponding author. E-mail address: gabrielatutzai@gmail.com

2017). Due to the large palette of aspects that contribute to the creation of a national image, one must mention that the image of the country is, or should be, the primary responsibility of any government. However, politicians are not the only ones who can promote the country- individual citizens can do it too, and especially firms/companies that have succeeded in externalizing their affairs. As suggested in our PhD thesis, an especially important resource for promoting Romania's image abroad are the successful Romanian brands that have managed to make themselves known on a European level, or even internationally, which is commendable given the fact that we live in a country where competition is becoming increasingly fierce and consumers are more and more careful about how they spend their money. Unfortunately, although known Romanian brands exist, abroad our country is currently quite seldom associated with influential brands and does not capitalize enough on the effect that the brand's country of origin has on the behavior of the modern consumer. (Nicolescu, 2008; Ceptureanu et al., 2017).

In a society where internationalization has become an axiom for companies worldwide, the fact that Romanian companies have managed to enter and establish themselves in international markets is all the more important. The most famous Romanian brands abroad come from various fields of activity. The top 10 successful Romanian brands known and recognized by foreigners include DACIA, PETROM, ARCTIC, ANTIBIOTICE, RCS&RDS, SIVECO, BITDEFENDER, FARMEC, JOLIDON, MUSETTE. **ARCTIC** is one of the most powerful and performing Romanian brands, the leader of the local electric appliances market. In its 47 years of existence, the company has evolved on a yearly basis, becoming the greatest electric appliance producer in Romania. The investments made by the Turks from Arcelik have transformed the company in the second largest refrigerator factory in Europe, with the majority of the goods produced at Arctic Găești being exported in over 60 countries in Europe, Africa and Asia.

DACIA, the main car producer in Romania, was founded in 1966, when the Mioveni Automobile Factory was created. It has grown ever since and become an established brand not only in Romania, but also abroad, thus significantly helping boost Romania's image in the world. The externalization happened especially in 1999, when the company was taken over by the French group Renault.

Last year, sales reached 584,219 units, which means a 6% growth from 2015. The majority (545,000 units) of the cars produced last year by Dacia were sold abroad, while in the country only 38,861 were sold. Most of the cars sold abroad were sold to countries in Europe, as can be seen in the figure below.

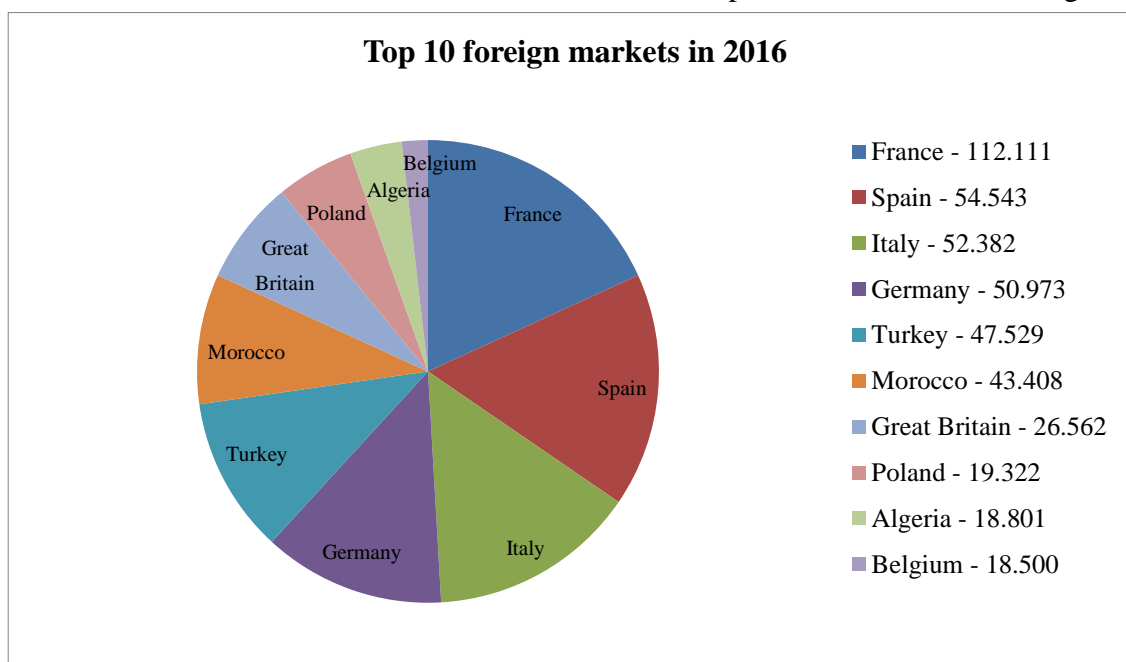


Figure 1. Top 10 Dacia foreign markets in 2016

Source: <https://www.dacia.ro/descopera-dacia/noutati/2017/rezultate-comerciale-2016.html>

With regards to the models, on the Romanian market the best sold model was the Logan (including the Logan MCV), with over 18,500 units sold, followed by the Duster (over 7,300 units sold) and Sandero (approximately 7,100 units sold).

ANTIBIOTICE IAȘI has transformed, over the years, in a performing and competitive company that has established itself both internally and globally. On the internal market, in 2016, the company had a portfolio of 140 generic drugs covering 12 therapeutic areas, while internationally it made its presence felt in 76 countries worldwide.

An analysis of the presence on international markets can be found in the figure below.

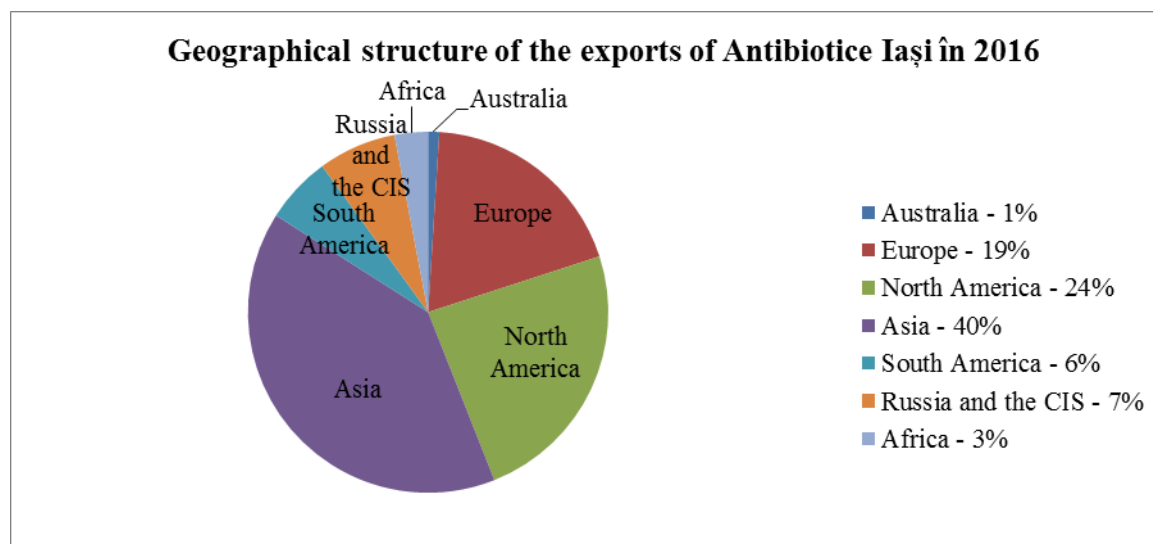


Figure 2. Geographical structure of the exports of Antibiotice Iași in 2016

Source: https://www.bvb.ro/infocont/infocont17/ATB_20170406151046_Raportare-IRIS.pdf

OMV PETROM. Petrom S.A. is the biggest oil and gas company in Romania. It was founded in 1991 and taken over in 2004 by OMV. The company currently has a mixed ownership and is present on the oil distribution market in Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Bulgaria and Serbia, by making use of a network of almost 780 stations, operated under two brands: Petrom and OMV.

RDS&RCS is a company founded in 1994. It developed rapidly and currently is the top television and internet provider in Romania and one of the most important telecommunication services operators in the region. Under the brand DIGI, the company delivers services in Romania, Hungary, Spain and Italy.

SIVECO was founded in 1992 and is the first Romanian software company. Ever since, it has evolved constantly and is now serving more than 1700 clients in countries on four continents.

BITDEFENDER, a company that offers cybersecurity solutions, founded in 2001, has a portfolio of over 500 million clients in 150 countries, which makes it one of the most widespread Romanian brands in the world.

FARMEC is the first and most important Romanian cosmetics companies. Its history dates back to 1889. It is also one of the most important cosmetics producing companies in south-eastern Europe. To this day, the country has been constantly modernized and, consequently, it has evolved, with the added support of its own distribution network. On a national level, FARMEC stores can be found in Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Bucharest, Brașov, Pitești, Constanța, Focșani and Iași.

JOLIDON is a company based in Cluj that produces underwear and swimsuits for both the Romanian and foreign markets. Founded in 1993, the company has rapidly transformed into a successful brand that is recognized internationally. Today, Jolidon encompasses a variety of underwear, swimsuits and beachwear brands and is present in over 20 countries worldwide. In most of these countries it has its own retail stores, while in others it sells its products in specialized stores. With regards to its own stores, the company owns 90 stores in Romania, 33 in Italy and 10 in France.

MUSETTE, the Romanian bag and shoes brand that is recognized worldwide, was founded in 1992, and three years later it opened its own factory. Its first stores across borders were opened in 2010; however, the company sells its products in other stores as well. The first stores opened beyond borders where in New York, Sofia and Luxembourg. They were followed by stores in Hungary, Israel, Mongolia and Lebanon; the climax was the opening of the stores in Vienna and Paris.

3. CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion, one can say that the benefit Romania gains from these worldwide known brands is huge, because a country is very strong if it has strong brands that position it favorably on international markets (Popescu, 2013). At the same time, the fact that Romanian brands are recognized worldwide boosts Romania's international image immensely.

Another conclusion is that the number of internationalized Romanian brands needs to grow. The more recognized, appreciated and numerous they are, the better Romania's image will be.

An aspect that has to be mentioned is that not only the brand that can promote a positive image of the country, but the people too. Therefore, we feel it is necessary and useful that the citizens of the country promote as good an image of it as they can. As we have shown in our PhD thesis as well, we think that Romania is us, that each and every one of us is responsible for the way in which the country is perceived abroad.

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