

**"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University, Iasi**  
**Faculty of Economics and Business Administration**

**STRATEGIES FOR THE PROMOTION OF WINE  
PRODUCTS ON FOREIGN MARKETS**

*DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY*

Scientific Coordinator,  
Prof. Univ. Dr. Constantin SASU

PhD Candidate,  
Ștefan MATEI



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## INTRODUCTION

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In the words of the American writer Ernest Hemingway (1932, p. 14) "Wine is one of the most civilized things in the world and one of the most natural, brought to the greatest perfection; it gives more satisfaction than any other product senses that can be bought ". In contemporary society, a good wine is essential in certain important moments of life. Being the result of one of the brilliant ideas that changed humankind, wine is today synonymous with good taste, refined gastronomy and culture, giving to the connoisseur the quality of "sophisticated man". In this picture outlined in pastel colours we begin our incursion into the world of wine leaning especially on a new academic field that has its origins in this liquor, i.e. "wine economy".

*Wine* is a complex good, almost enigmatic. Like a diamond, he has several facets: supplier of a subsistence living and luxury item, good associated with healthy living, but consumed in excess can lead to death, a symbol of status in society but also a drink of rural origin produced with a huge load of religious and cultural symbolism, but at the same time can be associated with a hedonistic and depraved behaviour, a fashion item, experience and cargo alike.

Compared to other goods, wine is a product so emotionally charged. Although it can be characterized by an extraordinary complexity, unlike other goods more sophisticated and difficult to handle, wine is an approachable product from an intuitive point of view and can be fully appreciated only through our involvement with all available senses. Being a product so special, the communication that would accompany the wine should be on the measure.

Except for the unwelcoming and unfriendly area of agriculture, in general in Antarctica, on every continent we meet scions of grape-vines, this being the plant with the largest expansion around the globe. The wine, a fruit of the plant in question has proved its extraordinary importance not only to the individual but to rational nutrition and increasing the national income of a cultivator country (showing the upward trend in the share of horticultural crops in agricultural production in the world economy). Thus, in terms of benefits (economic or social nature) and the characteristics these possess and which distinguishes it from other agricultural products or drinks, wine has become, over time, a subject of interest to economists.

In the production activity and marketing of wine, a winery (be it a company with thousands of employees or a small business or entrepreneur with

initiative) should adopt and assume the risk of very important decisions related to sales volume, price sensitivity the perception of the brand, promoting its wine for sale etc. (all the elements of the marketing mix). In these circumstances, it is extremely important for wine producers to understand the configuration of a marketing strategy and the implications and opportunities involved in the implementation work they perform.

A wine company cannot expect to sell its product only because it creates an attractive price, he puts and makes it available to consumers in the target market through various distribution channels (more or less close to the consumer). These companies must communicate with wine consumers about the product they offer. Precisely from this derives the importance of promotional mix, as part of the marketing mix for a wine company.

In this context lies also the motivation for choosing this research theme. On the one hand, as an affiliate of academic environment, I wanted to meet the need for knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of the wine sector and the manner in which he has adapted to the challenges of contemporary society (by applying strategies specific to the marketing mix). Thus, we aim to provide relevant answers to questions and situations that arouse great interest in literature, but also in academic circles. However, as the employee of a grapevine, I wanted to respond to the need of traders in the wine industry to know and understand how does the promotional mix work (as important component of the marketing mix), and implications and opportunities posed by its implementation in the wine business and that in order to compete effectively on a somewhat saturated wine market. Only thus can a wine company to offer products that live up to the expectations of those consumers available and able to purchase.

## PURPOSE, SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND ASSUMPTIONS OF RESEARCH

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*The aim* of the research is to identify, describe and analyze the tools, techniques and strategies specific to promotional policies used by entrepreneurs of the wine industry in foreign markets in order to take the most appropriate decisions to optimize marketing and commercial activity. We intend to analyze existing literature recommendations made by certified persons in the field and to evaluate the effectiveness of their applicability in practical terms, to identify those best practices to follow. We intend also to hold talks with representatives of the wine industry in Romania (wine producers also distributors of wine) and specialists (critics and sommeliers and wine bloggers) to refine the research results.

In order to achieve this goal, we have established some guidelines under the form of the following *specific objectives*:

1. to analyze the conventional promotional techniques specific to the promotional policy mix and their application in the wine industry;

2. to determine and analyze the specific common techniques for promoting wine industry;

3. to describe and analyze the implications of specific practices in marketing mix of wine activity;

4. to evaluate qualitatively and quantitatively the vintages sector globally and in Europe;

5. to evaluate qualitatively and quantitatively the vintages in Romania;

6. to identify and analyze the portfolio of promotional tools to which wine producers call to promote and sell wines on a foreign market.

*Research hypotheses* from which we started are:

H1. Global wine sector is part of a growing trend;

H2. The wine sector in Romania is on increase;

H3. In addition to traditional promoting tools, in wine marketing there are distinguished also a number of specific instruments of promotion (these being used especially when it is desired the penetration of foreign markets);

H4. Cotnari SA company uses different promoting tools and techniques when entering foreign markets;

H5. The consumer of wine products is becoming more educated and seeks unique experiences;

H6. Romanian wine companies are particularly focused on the promotion of the product and less on the production cycle.

## STRATEGY AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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The research makes use of an inductive strategy, cross-sectional and case studies. Applied research is an inductive strategy that involves specialists' opinions in the wine selection and combined equally, referring to the qualitative and quantitative analysis (through the study of literature and applying questionnaires). The strategy is transversal because it seeks the dynamics of wine sector in several geographical areas and time (continents, countries, groups of countries, geographical regions). The research also requires strategy case studies (research addressing several examples of Romania and Europe, focusing finally on the Cotnari SA case). According to Mărginean (2000) research strategy can be described by the following attributes: non-experimental (because it does not seek to control certain variables), non-comparative (because, for the last chapter in particular, there are no studies of the same nature which can be carried out comparisons), with a single method (the of the opinion poll), discrete (because we wanted to study the phenomenon from outside), non-interactive and quantitative.

Regarding research methodology, a significant part of the work took into account fundamental research, but also incorporated the results of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the wine sector also its dynamics worldwide, in Europe and in Romania (by leaning on the company Cotnari SA). In order to measure economic logic we use tools such as induction and deduction. Also we use comparisons and phenomenological interpretation, quantitative, but also qualitative.

In the last part of the research we considered the "survey" and "interview". The main research instruments, which were reflected in the opinion poll questions, took the form "of the questionnaire". These marketing tools allow us to target market segmentation and subsequent identification of the typology of wine products required for each segment, the pattern of the marketing plan and promotional strategy and marketing of quantifiable targets. Second research tool that allowed us to address the purpose of the second part of the research took the form of "group interview" (or focus group). Through this research instrument we previously checked the mentioned questionnaires (by submitting them in group discussions).

## STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER

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Regarding the structure of the paper, the thesis is divided into six chapters.

In the first chapter of research, *The mix of marketing in the wine sector*, we proposed the analysis of the specific practices implications of marketing mix in the wine field by focusing attention on the following topics of interest: the emergence and development of a wine (or 'wine -economics') in contemporary society, applying marketing techniques by entrepreneurs in the wine industry to adapt to current challenges, the approach wine as a product of the marketing mix in the vineyard, price and distribution strategies in the field in question, and various tools, techniques and methods to promote wine products.

The second chapter, *Main coordinates of the promotion policy in wine industry*, was designed to shape our logical framework with the most relevant milestones of promotion policies. Without going into too much detail, leaving the reader to discover what this paper aims to show, the most relevant aspects that were treated in this chapter refer to: objectives, importance and characteristics of policies, an analysis of conventional promotional techniques specific to the promotional mix policies, and promotion mix used in the wine industry.

The third chapter, *The analysis of the specific techniques used to promote the wine industry*, is focusing, strictly speaking, on the most common and recommended promotional techniques used by wine-growing companies. Reviewing it briefly, the chapter addresses issues such as the profile of wine consumer exposed to promotion strategies, the process of creating a promotional strategy in the vineyard, wine tourism (wine industry specific promotional technique), associating wine with celebrities and web- marketing strategies in the wine industry.

Therefore, the first three chapters highlighted the fact that the wine industry benefits from a widely diversified portfolio of tools, techniques and strategies to promote wine in the markets and it would be almost impossible for a single company, be it highest on the market, to focus on the full range at the same time. Thus, companies must decide what promotional tools and techniques approach, based on the wine company philosophy and mission and the cost-benefit analysis results. The promotion activity can be quite costly for a company, but when it is done properly, the return on investment can be very high. The challenge that this raises is the high difficulty of measuring the

effectiveness of a special promotional strategy, and this especially when market conditions are constantly changing, and wine companies are forced to adapt and reinvent themselves in terms of promotion strategies adopted.

In this context it was necessary the fourth chapter, *qualitative and quantitative analysis of the wine sector at global and European level*, which has allowed an incursion in the wine sector worldwide and in Europe, stopping us on the following items of reference: the most important historical and modern aspects of the wine sector, the most relevant advantages wine products possess in contemporary society, an analysis of the development of wine-growing in the world and in Europe as well as factors / events that have affected this dynamic, some investigations in production and consumption of wine in the world and in Europe and quantitative analyzes and qualitative interpretations on the evolution and structure of international wine trade globally and in Europe.

The fifth chapter, *Developments and Prospects of the wine sector in Romania*, leads us to the case of Romania and shows the wine sector developments and prospects in the country, focusing in the following directions: a brief historical excursion in Romanian viticulture, examining the extent and configuration of the vineyard area in Romania and its dynamics, evolution and influence factors in the production and consumption of wine in Romania, and also the international trade generated in Romania of such wine products.

In the sixth chapter, *Research of strategies to promote wines to foreign markets*, we intend to draw the line and answer to the following research question: what is the portfolio of promotional tools that calls for wine producers to sell wines on a foreign market? This research question is open to interpretation, and the answer should be provided according to the "colour hat" [thinking] that we want to wear at a time: a) the one of the foreign wine producer who promotes and sells wine products on the Romanian market, or b) the local producer of wines that promotes its wines to foreign markets and distributes them beyond the border of the country. In this sense, this chapter was structured on two levels: 1) on the one hand, we have proposed the identification and interpretation of strategies and tools to promote imported wines to Romanian market; 2) on the other hand, we wanted to identify and research, for Romanian wines and those produced by Cotnari SA, those instruments and promotion strategies used on external markets. Thus, for the first study, a questionnaire was applied in the NE region of Romania (in

Botosani, Iasi, Suceava and Bacau) but also in the on-line environment in January - March 2015. The sampling of this analysis included males and females aged over 21 years, urban origin, contained on the whole range of training levels. There were applied in total 2000 questionnaires, but following their analysis, were declared as valid and complete a number of 1839 such marketing tools. To achieve the second study (this being the second part of the research), the questionnaire was applied to a number of 500 people at trade fairs and vineyards exhibitions abroad at which Cotnari SA company took also part (in Spain Italy, France, Moldova, Germany and England) and in the on-line environment during the period January 2015 - March 2015. There were applied 500 questionnaires in total, but after analysis, there have been declared as valid and complete (referring only to those respondents who said they are consumers of alcoholic beverages) a total of 463 such marketing instruments. Here were also embedded the research findings using group interviews (focus group). Focus group conducted involved a structured interview with three representatives of the company Cotnari SA, through which we found out views, opinions and beliefs about the promotion that Cotnari SA conducts on the local market and the foreign one. The interview took place in December 2014 during which there were verified the questionnaires too. Therefore, not only this chapter objectives have been achieved, but we have also succeeded in formulating 10 recommendations which they consider to be more than useful in the creation and / or strengthening the promotion strategy of producers and distributors of wine (domestic and external alike), thus increasing their exposure to local and external markets.

The paper ends with the overall conclusions in which we intend to summarize main ideas and findings drawn from the research conducted.

## **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

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According to one of the most popular myths in the wine industry, "a good wine is sold by itself". Unfortunately, although this expression is pleasant hearing and tell the stories often found at the mouth of the wine cellar or autumn festivals, reality confirms the opposite. For the act of sale to take place, the wine and the consumer must meet, but perhaps more importantly, the consumer must be aware of the existence of the product. In this context, the strategy of promoting a company's vineyards may ensure success and survival on the market or may shorten the product life cycle or worse than that of the company. From our point of view the promotional mix is the most important component of the marketing of wine.

The present research has shown that communication and promotion policy of a company comprises a plurality of internal and external measures acting on its knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards the performance of the enterprise market. We can deduce, therefore, that the purpose of any promotional policy, regardless of the nature of the industry in which the company operates, is to influence either directly or indirectly the buying attitude of the target market, and this can make it through information, belief or reminder about the products or services of the company. But it is important to remember that, when setting up their promotional mix, a company should consider the following: a) promotion policy objectives (economic or psychological); b) the target audience (consisting of public to which it is addressed); c) purpose (in relation to the selected audience); d) the available financial resources (which the company has at its disposal in the means of promoting engagement).

Also in this part we have seen which are the communication tools a company can make use routinely, their implementation and what do these involve. In summary, they are: advertising (institutional and product advertising), sales promotion (including coupons, premiums, loyalty programs, samples, contests, and presentation points), public relations (media relations, corporate communication and activities lobby) and personal selling (prospecting, presentation planning and preparation and contract), to which we can add a fifth category, namely direct marketing.

Regardless of the configuration of promotional mix or portfolio of promotional tools used by a company, the policy to promote the latter is meant to present the company, its products and services on the one hand, and on the other to provoke series favourable changes in mentality and consumption habits of customers. It is to be noted that the success of efficient policies to promote is subject to satisfying the following requirements: be strong enough to be appealing and credible. The force promotion policy will ensure manifestation of a relationship of authority to the target audience, its attractiveness will enable the consumer to distinguish it from the multitude of marketing messages and its credibility will determine the acceptability from the public due to the calibration of policy content promoting the consuming society's value system.

Each of these components of the company's promotional mix includes a set of tools and techniques of action, but nevertheless these work together in achieving the strategic goals of the enterprise. Whatever the promotional activities, the homogeneity or heterogeneity of techniques which they suppose their action in time, the economic effects they cause, or other variables, a modern company should always have regard to their complementarity. A wine company wishing to obtain market performance and to outperform the competition must use these promotional mix components in a manner not isolated, but to incorporate them into a cohesive promotional and operational policy, capable of contributing significantly to achieve its strategic objectives. Given the increasing competition in markets as a result of globalization, including in wine industry, the promotion policy of a company is, not infrequently, a very important strategic element which determines the success of that company on the market or may guarantee failure.

If wine marketing was the least explored, at least in recent decades, the same we can say about the wine industry market segments, and this can be blamed on main concern on which wine producer has turned attention, namely the product. Given the orientation towards product of the winegrowers, less or no attention was paid until recently, the wine market and consumer behaviour and traits. Only in recent decades the research has had into attention the vineyards market segmentation and wine consumer behaviour. In this regard, McKinna (1987) was among the first researchers who examined the applicability of the wine market segmentation process, it identifies four market segments with an exploratory qualitative study, which is based on expectations regarding the product and risk aversion. That study allowed the identification of

four categories of consumers of wine: connoisseurs, aspirants, consumers of alcoholic beverages (including wine) and consumers of new wines. This study, and this typology, were the basis of almost all the research that were later made regarding market segmentation (and Spawton Edwards, 1990; Spawton, 1991; Hall and Winchester, 2000b; Bruwer et al., 2001; Bruwer and Li, 2007, are just a few eloquent examples).

Since the promotional instrumentation was identified and the target market segment also, we proceed to build a promotional strategy. This is closely linked to other component aspects of marketing mix (being an integrated part thereof). Like other components of the marketing mix, promotional strategy development is a complex activity difficult to achieve but possible, of maximum responsibility for decision-making bodies of the company. Given that this activity includes a financial effort from the company (and not a small one most of the time) it should be assessed also the effectiveness of this effort. For this reason it requires a strategic approach to the whole promotional activities, activities to be carried out in close connection with the wine company's overall strategy and vision.

The literature in this field has identified three main forms of promotion policy strategy: the strategy of attracting (PULL strategy), strategy for pushing (PUSH strategy) or a combination of both. The strategy for which a company will eventually opt depends on the market nature of the product (wine market) and product life cycle stage (launch, growth, maturity or decline). Whichever you opt for, the final decision will have an impact on the pattern of promotional mix.

Regarding the process that a wine company should travel in order to build its promotional strategy, the research literature is quite heterogeneous, in the sense that there are several approaches to the number of steps required to be taken. Kotler et al. (2009) proposes to develop an effective communication strategy; a company should go through a process in six phases. According to CBI Center (2011), developing a successful promotional strategy (with efficient and cost-above-average results) it supposes a new step process. And Munteanu (2006) believes that a successful promotional strategy must be conceived and organized by a realistic timetable, coherent, adaptable also well-founded program which involves 10 stages covering a methodology closely interdependent.

Without stopping only on a methodology, it should be stressed that developing a promotional strategy involves a high degree of knowledge of economic and social environment, to the competitive market and its mechanisms, consumption behaviours, ways of action of competitors or business partners, as well as the specifics and effects of various promotional tools. A company (including one acting in the vineyard) has a handy set of policy options when designing their promotional strategy. The promotional strategy for which a wine company will opt, will include a mix of shares and subordinated means to the global marketing policy objectives of the company and constructed so as to contribute to their successful (adapted, of course, the external environment and product specification wine).

Achieving this study allowed us to identify a diversified palette of strategies, techniques and promotional tools, each of which has a range and a certain ability to communicate different aspects of the wine consumer, but only a few are distinguished from all others by efficiency and cost-benefit that it brings to a wine company and by the attribute that they have at European and global trend. It should be noted such the approach of the wine producing companies of promotional techniques such as wine tourism (wine industry specific promotional technique), associating wine with celebrities and web-marketing strategies in the wine industry.

The chapter entitled "Quantitative and qualitative analysis of the wine sector worldwide and in Europe" has allowed us a picture of the wine sector worldwide and in Europe by highlighting, inter alia, dynamic wine-growing areas, production, consumption and trade wine. In addition to this, the chapter "Developments and Prospects of the wine sector in Romania" outline the situation and development of the Romanian lands in wine industry, starting with a brief historical excursion in Romanian viticulture and ending with an analysis of the wine-growing areas, production, consumption and Romania's international trade with wine products. In conclusion we can say that although we have at hand the determinants of successful culture of the vine (such as climate, soil or exhibition) and that we can make to expand our crops, we notice a decrease in the last 14 years of wine-growing (viticulture specializing rather on the cultivation of grapes for wine and less for the table). With a heritage so rich it could be harnessed more effectively to achieve prosperity.

The last chapter presented, in addition to socio-economic and demographic profile of the Romanian consumer of imported wines and foreign

to Romanian wine (including Cotnari wines) the impact of various promotional tools (identified by us in the literature and in practice and evaluated through questionnaires) at which wine producers and distributors appeal to inform the public about the existence of the product and to determine him to proceed to purchase it. Considering the results of questionnaires (Romanian and foreign consumers), inside information provided by the three interviewed in focus groups, field observations, discussions with other producers and distributors of wine, suggestions offered by various specialists in the field, wine critics, wine bloggers and the findings drawn from the literature, we formulated 10 recommendations which they consider to be more than useful in the creation and / or strengthening the promotion strategy of producers and distributors of wine (domestic and external alike), thus increasing their exposure on local and external markets. These recommendations are listed below and can also be the starting points of future research directions for those who want to make a foray into wine marketing:

1. it is necessary a collaboration with other manufacturers also distributors of wine in networks or clusters (especially to penetrate a foreign market).

2. it is required a greater presence of wine producers to profile events (fairs, festivals, exhibitions and contests / competitions).

3. it is necessary an increased involvement of the wine producers in the practice of wine tourism (to attract foreign consumers on Romanian land).

4. wine producers should invest more in research, development and innovation as well as consumer education.

5. Romanian wine producers should enter a foreign market with competitively priced wine (and Romania has an advantage in that direction).

6. Romanian wine producers should target their further promotion strategy for the online environment, including on social media.

7. Romanian wine producers could promote externally by creating a country brand (to reduce individual costs and more easily penetrate foreign markets).

8. Romanian wine producers should pay special attention to wine labelling and packaging (by brand image, these two having a significant weight in the decision making process of the wine consumer).

9. wine producers (local and those from Eastern Europe) could be guided towards the opening of pubs also of wine (or wine bars) - which

represent an important asset in the balance sheet of wine companies in the US and some Western European countries.

10. Romanian wine producers should go to multiple European funds to promote their products outside (requiring support from the state).

Following the completion of this study, we believe that the purpose of the research was achieved. We managed to identify, analyze and evaluate a wide range of successful strategies, techniques and promotional tools, each of which has a range and a certain ability to communicate different aspects of wine consumers, both domestic wine market but especially in the foreign market.

**Research limitations** relate to the sensitivity of the questionnaire participants to declare certain matters relating to alcohol (maybe a taboo for some interviewees), the only research focus on the NE region of Romania (in Botosani, Iasi, Suceava and Bacau) in terms of time limits also budgetary restrictions, research or elements relating to design or the necessary logistics.

**Future research** directions could include an in-depth analysis of the market in Romania (applying questionnaires in the largest cities in all regions of the country) or a more detailed analysis on several companies of wines (thus complementing the results obtained by analyzing company Cotnari SA). Hence, the extension of the study in several regions or the entire country would highlight results with greater applicability, but also a comparative study with other similar countries.

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