

# THE EVOLUTION OF THE LARGEST COMPANIES OPERATING IN ROMANIA IN THE PERIOD 2016-2020

Sorin-George Toma<sup>1</sup>  
Ștefan Catană<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

*In the age of globalization, companies around the world are operating in a highly competitive business environment. Possessing a huge capacity of concentrating wealth and power, they represent key actors in the economic world and significantly influence the way both the national and global economic systems evolve. The paper focuses on the analysis of the evolution of the largest companies operating in Romania in the period 2016-2020, in terms of turnover. A quantitative research methodology was deployed based on secondary data research. The results of the paper show a dominance of the same business organizations in the top of the largest companies acting in Romania.*

**Keywords:** *company, turnover, business, Romania*

**JEL Classification:** L29, M00

## 1. Introduction

For almost four decades the Berlin Wall distinctly separated two economic and political regimes: the socialist system and the capitalist system (Ariely et al., 2019). It was said that “the Wall itself stood for the isolation of the region, shut off from a world society and economy” (Mark et al., 2019). Gorbachev’s rise to power in the Soviet Union dramatically changed the political landscape of Eastern Europe (Smith, 2018). The fall of the Berlin Wall, a symbol of the division of Germany and the capitalist and communist blocs during the Cold War, represented a turning point in world history (Mason, 1992) and a “touchstone of global memory” (Harrison, 2019, p.7) that transformed a hated edifice into an image of freedom and hope.

After the collapse of communism, the East-European countries followed different paths of economic development. However, all of them agreed on the need for the shift from a centrally planned economy to a market economy, privatisation, free competition, and liberalization. Their efforts to overcome economic backwardness led them to design and implement vast processes of transformation to build functional economic systems in a globalized world economy.

Under the communist regime, Romania adopted the Soviet planning economic system based on rapid industrialization (Teichova, 2018). The 1990s witnessed the emergence of the roots of the market economy in Romania. On the one hand, Romanian and foreign entrepreneurs appeared and launched their businesses. Like their famous American counterparts, such as Sam Walton, Jeff Bezos or Mark Elliott Zuckerberg (Săseanu et al., 2014; Toma et al., 2017; Grădinaru et al., 2020; Catană et al., 2020), many Romanian entrepreneurs succeeded in establishing their successful companies and became true business leaders. Thus, many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) were created especially in the commerce and services domains. On the other hand, numerous big state companies were privatised or went bankrupt. Therefore, numerous business organizations became private within the Romanian economy.

This paper intends to focus on the analysis of the evolution of the largest companies operating in Romania in the period 2016-2020, in terms of turnover. The methodological approach is based on a quantitative method. The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The

---

<sup>1</sup> Professor, Faculty of Administration and Business, University of Bucharest, tomagsorin62@yahoo.com

<sup>2</sup> Ph.D., Faculty of Administration and Business, University of Bucharest

next section presents the literature review. It is followed by the research methodology. The following section deals with the examination of the largest companies operating in Romania. The paper ends with conclusions.

## 2. Literature review

During the time, the concept of company has gained attention from a plethora of people such as researchers and practitioners. It has emerged a long time ago and been studied from various perspectives. Without an agreed-upon definition, the company is:

- “an association of persons for the purpose of carrying on a business or trade and in which the liability of the members is either unlimited or limited, and if limited either by shares or by guarantee” (van Meeuwen Jr., 1918, p.59).
- “the legal entity that exists to generate profits from commercial activities” (Vernon, 2002, p.43).
- “an association of people formed into a legal entity for the purpose of doing business” (Chartered Management Institute, 2004, p.90).
- “a corporate enterprise that has a legal identity separate from that of its members; it operates as one single unit, in the success of which all the members participate” (Law, 2006, p.114).
- “a business organization, a group of people organised to buy, sell or provide a service, usually for profit” (Collin, 2007, p.73).
- “a business that sells goods or services” (Brookes, 2011, p.96).
- „a business [organization](#) that makes or [sells](#) goods or [services](#)” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2021, p.1).
- “a legal entity formed by a group of individuals to engage in and operate a [business](#) - commercial or industrial - enterprise” (Kenton, 2021, p.1).
- „an [organization](#) that [produces](#) or [sells goods](#) or [services](#) in [order](#) to make a [profit](#)” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021, p.1).
- “a business organization that makes money by selling goods or services”/ “a group associated for some purpose, as to form a [commercial](#) or [industrial firm](#)” (Collins Dictionary, 2021, p.1).
- „a business organization that makes money by producing or selling goods or services” (Oxford Learner’s Dictionary, 2021, p.1).
- „a business organization that makes, buys, or sells goods or provides services in exchange for money” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021, p.1).

The above-mentioned definitions show that the term company represents a complex concept. Even though there is no consensus concerning what does a company mean, some of its main characteristics may be emphasized as follows:

- A company constitutes a business organization.
- A company represents an association of persons/people organized into a legal entity.
- The main purpose of a company is to generate profit through commercial activities.
- A company makes money by producing and/or selling goods and/or services.

Most of the companies are joint-stock companies and limited liability companies. In this respect, Romania represents a valuable and interesting example. In recent years, Romania implemented several business regulatory reforms that made starting and running a business easier such as (World Bank, 2020):

- It has allowed voluntary value-added tax registration, which is less time
- consuming than mandatory registration.

- It has designed and accomplished a less costly tax policy for companies.
- It has improved the quality of land administration.
- It has reduced the time needed to obtain a clearance certificate from the
- fiscal administration agency.

The key actors within the Romanian economy are especially multinational and transnational corporations (e.g., Renault Group, OMV Group, Ford Motor Company, Lukoil Group), which are designing and carrying out global strategies, and competing worldwide in an increasingly turbulent environment (Toma, 2013; Toma and Marinescu, 2013; Toma and Marinescu, 2015; Toma et al., 2015). Their evolution in Romania is analysed in our paper.

### 3. Research methodology

In order to accomplish the aim of the paper, the authors utilized a research methodology based on gathering, analysing, and synthesizing numerous data from several secondary sources of data through desk research. On this line, they identified and collected information from articles, reports and books found in electronic databases and libraries.

### 4. Results and discussion

This section of the paper analyses the evolution of the ten largest companies operating in Romania in the period 2016-2020, in terms of turnover. In 2016, Automobile-Dacia dominated the top of the largest companies operating in Romania by turnover (Table no. 1). Located in Mioveni, Argeş county, Automobile-Dacia SA is part of Renault Group (France).

**Table no. 1. The ten largest companies operating in Romania by turnover in 2016**

No.	Company	Turnover (Mlei)
1	Automobile-Dacia	20,765.0
2	OMV Petrom Marketing	14,401.9
3	OMV Petrom	12,523.0
4	Kaufland România	9,691.4
5	Rompetrol Rafinare	8,774.3
6	Rompetrol Downstream	8,202.4
7	British American Tobacco Trading	8,178.8
8	Carrefour România	5,673.7
9	Lidl Discount	5,577.9
10	Lukoil România	5,365.6

*Source: Ziarul Financiar, 2018*

The above-mentioned ten largest companies operate in different domains as follows:

- six companies (OMV Petrom Marketing, Rompetrol Downstream, Kaufland România, Carrefour România, Lidl Discount, Lukoil România) were from the retailing sector;
- two companies (OMV Petrom, Rompetrol Rafinare) were from the petroleum refining industry and distribution;
- one company (Automobile-Dacia) was from the automotive industry;
- one company (British American Tobacco Trading) was from the tobacco industry.

In 2017, Automobile-Dacia kept the first position at the top of the largest companies operating in Romania by turnover (Table no. 2).

**Table no. 2. The ten largest companies operating in Romania by turnover in 2017**

No.	Company	Turnover (Mlei)
1	Automobile-Dacia	23,143.5
2	OMV Petrom Marketing	15,064.0
3	OMV Petrom	14,764.8
4	Rompetrol Rafinare	11,192.8
5	Kaufland România	10,086.6
6	Rompetrol Downstream	8,873.2
7	British American Tobacco Trading	8,870.6
8	Star Assembly	7,328.1
9	Carrefour România	6,748.9
10	Lidl Discount	6,510.0

*Source: Ziarul Financiar, 2019*

The above-mentioned ten largest companies operate in different domains as follows:

- five companies (OMV Petrom Marketing, Rompetrol Downstream, Kaufland România, Carrefour România, Lidl Discount) were from the retailing sector;
- two companies (OMV Petrom, Rompetrol Rafinare) were from the petroleum refining industry and distribution;
- two companies (Automobile-Dacia, Star Assembly) were from the automotive industry;
- one company (British American Tobacco Trading) was from the tobacco industry.

In 2018, Automobile-Dacia remained the largest company operating in Romania by turnover (Table no. 3).

**Table no. 3. The ten largest companies operating in Romania by turnover in 2018**

No.	Company	Turnover (Mlei)
1	Automobile-Dacia	24,728.012
2	OMV Petrom Marketing	17,871.675
3	OMV Petrom	17,817.366
4	Rompetrol Rafinare	14,115.915
5	Rompetrol Downstream	10,929.740
6	Kaufland România	10,889.960
7	Ford România	10,552.812
8	British American Tobacco Trading	9,534.748
9	Lidl Discount	7,788.918
10	Lukoil România	7,519.233

*Sources: Ciriperu, 2019; TopFirme, 2019*

The above-mentioned ten largest companies operate in different domains as follows:

- five companies (OMV Petrom Marketing, Rompetrol Downstream, Kaufland România, Lidl Discount, Lukoil România) were from the retailing sector;
- two companies (OMV Petrom, Rompetrol Rafinare) were from the petroleum refining industry and distribution;
- two companies (Automobile-Dacia, Ford România) were from the automotive industry;
- one company (British American Tobacco Trading) was from the tobacco industry.

In 2019, Automobile-Dacia kept the first position at the top of the largest companies operating in Romania by turnover (Table no. 4).

**Table no. 4. The ten largest companies operating in Romania by turnover in 2019**

No.	Company	Turnover (Mlei)
1	Automobile-Dacia	24,671.026
2	OMV Petrom	19,793.585
3	OMV Petrom Marketing	19,117.465
4	Rompetrol Rafinare	14,750.359
5	Kaufland România	11,877.240
6	Rompetrol Downstream	11,824.192
7	British American Tobacco Trading	10,744.299
8	Ford România	10,305.952
9	Lidl Discount	9,765.132
10	Dedeman	8,217.343

*Sources: Ciriperu, 2019; TopFirme, 2019*

The above-mentioned ten largest companies operate in different domains as follows:

- five companies (OMV Petrom Marketing, Rompetrol Downstream, Kaufland România, Lidl Discount, Dedeman) were from the retailing sector;
- two companies (OMV Petrom, Rompetrol Rafinare) were from the petroleum refining industry and distribution;
- two companies (Automobile-Dacia, Ford România) were from the automotive industry;
- one company (British American Tobacco Trading) was from the tobacco industry.

In 2020, Automobile-Dacia remained the largest company operating in Romania by turnover (Table no. 5).

**Table no. 5. The ten largest companies operating in Romania by turnover in 2020**

No.	Company	Turnover (Mlei)
1	Automobile-Dacia	18,298.973
2	OMV Petrom	14,795.525
3	OMV Petrom Marketing	14,519.721
4	Lidl Discount	12,862.968
5	Kaufland România	12,835.836
6	Ford România	12,377.912
7	British American Tobacco Trading	11,367.821
8	Rompetrol Downstream	9,274.596
9	Dedeman	9,081.995
10	Carrefour România	9,019.087

*Sources: Nicolae, 2021; TopFirme, 2021*

The above-mentioned ten largest companies operate in different domains as follows:

- six companies (OMV Petrom Marketing, Rompetrol Downstream, Kaufland România, Lidl Discount, Dedeman, Carrefour România) were from the retailing sector;
- two companies (Automobile-Dacia, Ford România) were from the automotive industry;
- one company (OMV Petrom) was from the petroleum refining industry and distribution;
- one company (British American Tobacco Trading) was from the tobacco industry.

In sum, the analysis of the evolution of the ten largest companies operating in Romania in the period 2016-2020, in terms of turnover, leads to the following main outcomes:

- The multinational and transnational corporations (e.g., Renault Group) obviously dominated the Romanian business environment.
- Automobile-Dacia preserved its first position during the whole analysed period. Ford Romania, another company from the automotive sector, was among the top performers in the period 2018-2020.
- In the pre-COVID19 pandemic, most of the companies achieved better results. The year 2020 brought a sharp decrease in the value of their turnover, in most cases.
- The companies from the retailing sector dominated the top of the ten largest companies. They were followed by the companies from the automotive industry and the petroleum refining industry and distribution.

## 5. Conclusions

Since the end of the communist regime in December 1989, the Romanian economic system has fundamentally changed from a centrally planned economy to a functional market economy. Many private companies appeared in Romania both national and foreign.

The paper shows that the top of the largest Romanian companies operating in Romania in the period 2016-2020, in terms of turnover, has been dominated by multinational and transnational corporations. In this respect, Automobile-Dacia, part of Renault Group, has maintained its first position during this period.

## 6. References

1. Ariely, D., Garcia-Rada, X., Godker, K., Hornuf, L., Mann, H., 2019. The impact of two different economic systems on dishonesty. *European Journal of Political Economy*, 59, pp.179-195.
2. Brookes, I., ed., 2011. *International Business English Dictionary*. Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers.
3. Cambridge Dictionary, 2021. *Company*. [online] Available at: <<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/company>> [Accessed 11 November 2021].
4. Catană, Ș., Grădinaru, C., Toma, S.-G., 2020. Sam Walton, a visionary entrepreneur. *Network Intelligence Studies*, 16, pp.113-117. [online] Available at: <[https://seaopenresearch.eu/Journals/articles/NIS\\_16\\_2.pdf](https://seaopenresearch.eu/Journals/articles/NIS_16_2.pdf)> [Accessed 3 November 2021].
5. Chartered Management Institute, 2004. *Dictionary of Business & Management*. London: Bloomsbury.
6. Cirișeriu, D., 2020. *Top 100 cele mai mari companii din România. Un sfert din business, în mâinile lor*. Ziarul Financiar, 11.11.2020. [online] Available at: <<https://www.businessmagazin.ro/actualitate/afaceri/top-100-cele-mai-mari-companii-din-romania-un-sfert-din-business-in-19738645>> [Accessed 9 November 2021].
7. Collin, P. H., 2007. *Dictionary of Business*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. London: A & C Black.
8. Collins Dictionary, 2021. *Company*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/company>> [Accessed 9 November 2021].
9. Grădinaru, C., Toma, S.-G., Catană, Ș., Andrișan, G., 2020. A view on transformational leadership: The case of Jeff Bezos. *Manager*, 31(1), pp.93-100. [online] Available at: <[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Stefan-Catana/publication/349380465\\_A\\_view\\_on\\_transformational\\_leadership\\_The\\_case\\_of\\_Jeff\\_Bezos](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Stefan-Catana/publication/349380465_A_view_on_transformational_leadership_The_case_of_Jeff_Bezos)>

- e\_of\_Jeff\_Bezos/links/602d907792851c4ed57bf413/A-view-on-transformational-leadership-The-case-of-Jeff-Bezos.pdf> [Accessed 3 November 2021].
10. Harrison, H., 2019. *After the Berlin Wall: Memory and the Making of New Germany, 1989 to the Present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  11. Kenton, W., 2021. *What is a company?* [online] Available at: <<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/c/company.asp>> [Accessed 10 November 2021].
  12. Law, J., ed., 2006. *A Dictionary of Business and Management*. 4<sup>th</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
  13. Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2021. *Company*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/company>> [Accessed 11 November 2021].
  14. Mark, J., Iacob, B. C., Rupprecht, T., Spaskovska, L., 2019. *1989: A Global History of Eastern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
  15. Mason, D., 1992. *Revolution in East-Central Europe: The Rise and Fall of Communism and the Cold War*. New York: Routledge.
  16. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2021. *Company*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/company>> [Accessed 1 November 2021].
  17. Nicolae, R., 2021. *Topul celor mai mari companii din România: Industria auto este lider, dar cu frână de mână trasă în 2020*. Wall-Street, 09.08.2021. [online] Available at: <<https://www.wall-street.ro/special/retailarena/275173/topul-celor-mai-mari-companii-din-romania-condus-de-industria-auto.html#gref>> [Accessed 11 November 2021].
  18. Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2021. *Company*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/company?q=company>> [Accessed 11 November 2021].
  19. Săseanu, A.-S., Toma, S.-G., Marinescu, P., 2014. Feminine leadership and organisational culture. *Manager*, 19(1), pp.144-150.
  20. Smith, P., ed., 2018. *After the Wall: Eastern Germany Since 1989*. New York: Routledge.
  21. Teichova, A., ed., 2018. *Central Europe in the Twentieth Century: An Economic History Perspective*. New York: Routledge.
  22. Toma, S.-G., 2013. *Economia Întreprinderii*. București: Editura Universității din București.
  23. Toma, S.-G., Marinescu, P., 2013. Global strategy: the case of Nissan Motor Company. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 6, pp.418-423. [online] Available at: <<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2212567113001573>> [Accessed 2 November 2021].
  24. Toma, S.-G., Marinescu, P., 2015. Strategy and change. *Manager*, 21(1), pp.145-150. [online] Available at: <<http://manager.faa.ro/en/article/Strategy-and-Change~818.html>> [Accessed 1 November 2021].
  25. Toma, S.-G., Marinescu, P., Grădinaru, C., 2015. Strategic planning and strategic thinking. *Revista Economică*, 68(5), pp.168-175. [online] Available at: <<http://economice.ulbsibiu.ro/revista.economica/archive/68515toma&marinescu&gradinaru.pdf>> [Accessed 1 November 2021].
  26. Toma, S.-G., Marinescu, P., Grădinaru, C., 2017. Successful entrepreneurs: Mark Elliott Zuckerberg. *Manager*, 26, pp.157-162.

27. TopFirme, 2020. *Top firme din România după cifra de afaceri, 2019*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.topfirme.com/cifra-de-afaceri/>> [Accessed 11 November 2021].
28. TopFirme, 2021. *Top firme din România după cifra de afaceri, 2020*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.topfirme.com/cifra-de-afaceri/>> [Accessed 11 November 2021].
29. van Meeuwen Jr., L. F., 1918. *A Concise Encyclopaedia of Business Terms*. Hague: G. Delwel. [online] Available at: <[https://www.dbnl.org/arch/meeu022conc01\\_01/pag/meeu022conc01\\_01.pdf](https://www.dbnl.org/arch/meeu022conc01_01/pag/meeu022conc01_01.pdf)> [Accessed 10 November 2021].
30. Ziarul Financiar, 2018. *Top 1000 cele mai mari companii din România*. Bucharest: Ziarul Financiar.
31. Ziarul Financiar, 2019. *Top 1000 cele mai mari companii din România*. Bucharest: Ziarul Financiar.
32. World Bank Group, 2020. *Doing Business 2020: Romania*. [online] Available at: <<https://www.doingbusiness.org/content/dam/doingBusiness/country/r/romania/ROM.pdf>> [Accessed 12 November 2021].