

**“LUCIAN BLAGA” UNIVERSITY OF SIBIU  
FACULTY OF ECONOMIC SCIENCES**

**DOCTORAL THESIS  
ABSTRACT**

**EUROPEAN UNION INVOLVEMENT IN  
CHANGING THE ECONOMIC  
PARAMETERS OF COMPETITION  
ENVIRONMENT**

**(Case Study- Automotive market in Romania)**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>List of scientific articles published during PhD period</b>	3
<b>List of Tables</b>	4
<b>List of Graphs, Diagrams and Figures</b>	5
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	6
<b>PART I: NOWADAYS STATE OF KNOWLEDGE</b>	
<b>I. THE REFLECTION OF THE COMPETITION-DEVELOPMENT RELATION IN THE ECONOMIC SCIENCE</b>	
1. Economic theory's development regarding competition and its'role	11
1.1. "PreSmith" period	11
1.2. Adam Smith's view on the developing role of competition	12
1.3. Competition and the theory of outlets	16
1.4. A false oxymoron: competition in Marx	17
1.5. Neoclassical approach on competition	18
1.6. Walras and Pareto- a new dimension of competition	19
1.7. The New Keynes'competition and market economy Paradigm	20
1.8. Alternatives for perfect competition	22
1.9. Competition and the "New french economy"	24
1.10. Contemporary American Liberalisms	24
2. Competition dimmensions- the developing role	28
2.1. Competition Functions	30
2.2. Types of competition	31
2.3. Market, central institution of economic development	37
2.3.1. Economic market definition	37
2.3.2. Relevant markets: market power	39
2.3.3. Market definition in practice	41
3. Conclusions	44
<b>II. EUROPEAN UNION COMPETITION POLICY</b>	
1. Competition Policy- a fascinating history	46
2. Competiton policy in the UE. Conceptual delimits	50
3. Competition policy. Economic approach	52
3.1. The importance of economic analysis for the competition Protection policy	53
4. Block exemptions- form of competition policy in automotive sector	56
4.1.Competition environment evolution of the automotive sector in the light of Regulation No.1400/2002	57
4.2. Automotive sector's evolution in times of crisis	59
4.3 Competition policy in the automotive sector from July 1st 2010	65
5. Conclusion	71

<b>PART II: PERSONAL INSIGHT AND CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	
<b>III. COMPETITION POLICY AND COMPETITIVENESS IN ROMANIA</b>	
1. Introduction	73
2. Competition Policy. Regulation and enforcement	74
2.1. Competition policy enforcement in Romania	74
2.1.1 Agreements between undertakings	75
2.1.2 Abuse of dominant position	78
2.1.3. Economic concentrations	80
3. Competitiveness and competitive advantage	82
3.1. From the competitive advantage to sustainable competitive advantage and adaptative imperative	87
3.2. Firms' competitiveness	90
3.3. Firms competition strategies	95
4. New approaches on competitiveness and competition policy	99
5. Conclusions	110
<b>IV. AUTOMOTIVE MARKET IN ROMANIA</b>	
1. Oligopoly automotive market in Romania	112
1..1.Content and structure of the oligopoly market	112
1.2. Market working mechanisms	120
2. Market strategies post EU accession	127
3. Conclusions	133
<b>V. AUTOMOTIVE OLIGOPOLISTIC MARKET OF ROMANIA- GOING GLOBAL?</b>	
1. Historical evolution of the automotive market	134
1.1. Automotive Industry's role in Romania and automotive production internationalizing	137
2. Competition's tools: price, advertising and commercial publicity	142
3. Conclusions	160
<b>VI. ROMANIA'S AUTOMOTIVE MARKET AND EUROPEAN UNION'S ROLE IN ESTABLISHING NEW EXIGENCES</b>	
1. Romanian players on the automotive market and their evolution	162
2. Competition Flows, means and mechanisms after accession	170
3. Romanian and foreign investment in the automotive sector	182
3.1. Romanian automotive market of 2013. Where at?	189
<b>CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS</b>	205
<b>REFERENCES</b>	211
<b>APPENDIX 1</b>	217
<b>APPENDIX 2</b>	218
<b>APPENDIX 3</b>	219
<b>APPENDIX 4</b>	220

**Key words: competition, competition policy, competitiveness, competition environment, automotive market**

*Where there is no competition, there is no subject of  
Economic analysis.*

(J.S. Mill)

### **Relevance and topicality of thesis**

From the earlier stage of trade economy competition appeared as an economic reality and from Adam Smith onward competition study generated a rich scientific economic literature. Economists throughout time have studied the birth, evolution and market characteristics without ignoring the role and place of competition. Although there were, and still are, numerous views regarding competition, economic literature agree upon its developing role and the present research states the complete function of competition for economy and market success. Mankind is in a continuous search to go beyond its own bonds, to develop competences and to achieve perfection in one or another field. For each and every firm competition has a developing role that helps it adapt to the business environment and leads to progress. We are starting from that idea that competition leads without doubt to progress it needs to be studied, stimulated and above all kept within fair-play limits.

From a historical point of view competition is strongly connected with the market birth and evolution, and market was born long before competition. Market is the “arena” where competition takes place, and as the “arena” developed, so did competition. Depending on the policies, competition can be free on the market or can be abridged. Continuous development of competition led to a competition environment characterized by the complexity of relations. Because competition was seen as a continuous “struggle” it implies rapid moves and rapid decisions are also needed. In the competition struggle economic interests come first and from this struggle always some came out as winners and some as losers, and for this reason is extremely important to know the structure and intensity of competition, to know what is the key to success, the forms it takes place, because these are the grounds for assessing survival chances,

connecting with the reality primary objectives and adopting the best competition strategies. As market achieved new dimensions and turned itself from a local, national market, to a European, Common and even Global market competition had to adjust and adapt.

Starting from this type of arguments the present research joints the literature of competition and proposes to responds the requests of inform, assimilate and promote the triad competition environment-competitiveness-common policies.

### **Thesis objectives and goals**

The research has as objective composing a unitary frame for competition theory and for global and sector competition strategies, also focusing on the competition policies, anticompetitive practices and the factors that distort competition in an emergent economy. The paper is oriented towards discovering the particularities of Romanian economy and spreading the ideas about competition and market function, searching for solutions for enhancing Romanian automotive firms competitiveness within European Union.

One of the goals of the study is to refine the current apprehension on the automotive industry and its corresponding market, especially in the context of European Union accession. Another goal is to identify the role played by the European Union in the change of the automotive market parameters, furthermore developing by economic-mathematical modulation ways of improving performance on the automotive market.

### **Research methods**

In the two parts in which the paper is structured the methodology used combines methods specific to economic theory: retrospective and perspective, ideas filiations, economic idea genesis, perennality, contrastive analysis a.s.o with methods specific for quantitative analysis such as :scenario, SWOT analysis, empirical data analysis, international comparison method, economic-mathematical modulation method and so on. Very important were used study cases for a better understanding of the background particularities.

The analytical method helped us to capture the essence on competition phenomena and competitiveness by analyzing the scientific approaches on the matter.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis highlights the quality of the competitiveness content and its corresponding environment and evaluates the quantity of automotive industry internationalizing process.

The dynamic analysis reveals the changes regarding the competition and its content in time from the “struggle” perspective to “competition advocacy and “soft power”.

The induction method permitted us a particular to general analyze of the automotive sector, moving from the real aspects of the market towards a scientific generalization and drawing important conclusions.

The deduction method reasoning from the general to particular helped us explain the competition phenomenon on the automotive oligopoly market whilst the descriptive method was used for a better understanding of competition, competitiveness and the automotive market specific.

Synthesis helped us settle the connections and interdependences between the competition phenomenon, its elements and particularities while the synthesis of the theoretical approaches regarding competition, competitiveness and competition policy helped us build our own, unique perspective on this important triad.

The research used data coming from the specialized institution and organizations and from their national and international analysis reports. The theoretical and scientific background of research was based on the study of fundamental works of the great economists in economic history that essentially help clarify competition aspects. Nevertheless were studied reports and studies coming from prestigious national and international organisms, research articles presented in International Conferences and specialized press articles. An important accent is on the study of legislative basis of competition reglementation within European Union and Romania as well.

### **Significance of the study**

According with the goals and objectives of the thesis, the research aims to contribute the development of the vast competition field theoretical and empirical study by means of actions and interactions from market players and “outsiders” (such as State and Government or European Organisms), highlighting one of the most important economic sectors: the automotive one. Also the study is hoped to generate further research in developing models of optimizing market performances in the high economic sensitive automotive sector.

## Synopsis of the thesis

The thesis is structured in two parts: **Nowadays state of Knowledge** and **Personal Insight and contributions**, both according to its goals and objectives. The **first Chapter: *The reflection of the competition-development relation in the economic science*** first part is dedicated to an historical analysis of competition views and perspectives starting with Adam Smith and his predecessors, then Marx, Neoclassics, Walras, Pareto, Keynes, going to the Alternatives to perfect competition, the New French Economy and the Contemporary American Liberalism. The second part of this chapter deals with *The Developing role of competition* and proposes a tailored approach of competition reality, starting with competition functions, going to the *Types of competition* and until the *Market, as the central institution for competition development*. Are then presented a series of definitions for the market, the differences between the geographical market and the relevant market, the market power and finally market definition in practice according with the: correlations and price elasticity of demand, transport flows and other qualitative data.

The **second Chapter** refers to the *European Union Competition Policy*. The chapter starts with the fascinating history of competition policy from the Sherman Act in 1890 and , on the European continent, the Cartel Law in Germany, 1923, following then to the *Competition policy in EU*, its economic approach and the importance of an economic analysis for the competition protection policy. A very important part of this chapter refers to *Block Exemption Regulation*, a special form of competition policy for the automotive sector under study and to the impact of economic crisis over this sector.

The **third Chapter** deals with *Competition Policy and Competitiveness in Romania*, starting from the regulation and enforcement of competition policy in Romania and aspects regarding: agreements between undertakings, abuse of dominant position, economic concentrations and going to the vast field of competitiveness and competitive advantage. Highlighting the switch *from the competitive advantage to the sustainable competitive advantage and the imperative adaptative* we then turn our attention to the competitiveness of firms and the strategies they use for better market positioning, or better yet, market supremacy. In the last part of the chapter a very interesting *approach on competitiveness and competition policy* refers to the “soft power”, “competition advocacy” and the benefits of monopoly triggering a paradigm shift on the competition and its policy issue.

The **fourth Chapter** presents the content and structure of the *Automotive market in Romania*, the market working mechanisms and the *market strategies after EU accession*, moving toward a very realistic, empirical analysis of this economic sector evolution. As a natural succession, the **fifth Chapter** starts by asking a decent question: *Automotive oligopolistic market of Romania going global?* The key for answering this question is in the *Historical evolution of the automotive market* and in this *Industry's role and the automotive production internationalizing*. And this is because it is our strong belief that the past provides important information about the future. Always! The past is, as we might say, the best prediction about the future. We then bring into light *competition's tools*: price, advertising and commercial publicity and see what are their influences determined on the automotive market.

The **last chapter**: *Romania's automotive market and European Union's role in establishing new exigencies* starts with the *evolution of the Romanian players* on the automotive market, followed by the flows, means and mechanisms of competition after EU accession. For a complete apprehension of the subject we then analyze the *Romanian and the foreign investment in the automotive sector*. As for 2013 we lack official data for the automotive sector in Romania, we used *mathematical modulation* to have a complete picture of the market structure and its characteristics. In the section regarding *Romanian automotive market of 2013. Where at?* we underline the role of a correct perception of the market and its structure. Starting from the methodology used by state authorities and professional associations we propose a new method for segmentations the automotive market and the importance of the niches in this market using the example of Dacia, that is the main local producer. For a more complete image we developed a growth matrix for the three best sold models of Dacia Brand, furthermore analyzing the perspectives from the matrix results. Moreover, we conducted three types of analysis for the automotive market: a SWOT analysis, a PEST analysis and Porter's five forces analysis for a very detailed picture of Romanian's automotive market.

Without having proper theoretical notions regarding competition and in the absence of the information regarding competitors' profile and activities as well as the blur of competition "arena's" image can affect the well development of market economy mechanisms. This is why the study of competition should be the cornerstone of every economic and political agent activity and above all the triggering factor in establishing goals and competitive strategies. From this point of view the thesis aims to prove the importance of discovering local automotive economy

characteristics and promote the economic ideas concerning competition and market working. Competition analysis both at a national as well as at an international level should become- in this world of continuous change- a axis not only for all the economic decisions but also for the social and political once as well.

As a corollary of all the above mentioned the research is oriented to capture, without pretending by far that has elucidated all the analyzed issues, the main aspects about competition as a influence vector of market working mechanisms in a very change sensitive market, that is automotive market.

The scientific intercede started from the basic idea that competition is undoubtedly a factor of progress, and for this reason must be studied, stimulated and mainly kept in the lines of fairplay .

No matter the time and the researcher, competition was always considered a mean of maximising welfare, a developing step for economics, society and mainly humanity. Along with the assesment of the utopy of „pure and perfect competition” come the need of rules. It always has been a fine line between regulation and state intervention and, even nowadays economistst still wonder from time to time „how much State is needed” and what happens if state’s intervention leads to the opposite effect of not safeguarding competition but discouradge it.

As we have seen, competition has a twoface nature: being both a state and a behavior. The „classic” acception of competition argues that it is a behavior, a continuous combative behavior, a battle that as any other battle ends with winners and losers. It is therefore essential that every trader knows both the structure and the intensity of competition, to find and explain the causes of major competitors success, and then to use this knowledge and assimilation to evaluate the chances of survival and the "key to success" . Competition favors the entry of new firms in the market, encourages initiative in business, rewards the good, efficient and punishes the weak, ineffective ones. In an ideal market economy firms react quickly to changes in the structure of demand and new market entry, adapting and adjusting their strategies and market position. It can be easily seen that competition only provides a proper bussiness environment and this is why keeping competition fair is vital. At the question of „what came first: the market or the market economy?” economists answered that market was first and the market economy game is about competition. As the market evolved, competition evolved too, always depending on the adopted policies, unliashed or quite the contrary.

When focusing our attention on competition policy we could see that its main objective is to maximize social welfare, and the welfare implies progress, economic, social, human. Highlighting the benefits of regulation in this area we still kept in memory the arguments of the opponents of interventionism. If we were to look at the two big model creators systems: the American and the European one, we might say that unlike the American, Sherman Act based system, the European one is better time-adjusted and well oriented towards future expectations. All over the world, nowadays there are 133 states having competition legislation and competition authorities, and this is the best prove of the importance of the subject.

Throughout the research comes our strong conviction that without competition there can not be a favorable climate for businesses to grow and contribute to the full functioning of the economy. Thus, competition is the factor that determines success on the market. At the same time, one can not neglect its social importance in the continuous search of people to overcome their own limitations and improve skills.

So, trying to answer the fundamental question: what is needed to create the legal and institutional framework to allow normal development of competitive relations between firms? We took a step backwards and look at importance of competition policy in the market economy. Markets today are animated by companies eager to grow as much and as quickly, and this is a strategic weakness that attempt to increase the size of firms, diminish their competitive advantages through compromise.

When looking at contemporary economic globalization trend and the studies regarding the issue of competition, comes out that the rules by which the principles of free competition operate have changed. The consequence of this finding is that it requires a tailored approach of this competition reality and closely linked to: reducing the possibility of interference of states, contributing to competitiveness, diversification of competition combat strategies. Globalization fundamentally changes the nature of competitiveness as companies are increasingly difficult to compete in an effective manner in the context blurring trade barriers between countries, the trend towards extinction monopolies and market niches, lack of increased demand in developed countries associated with decreased birth. All this leads to a tightening of conditions of competition in the absence of clear differentiation of firms and products becoming more similar, the consumer still having as reason for the decision to purchase only the price, more that the notion of "loyalty to the brand" consumer has become obsolete.

Competition policy always had as goal the prevention of monopoly on the market by regulation, coercion and punishment. Nowadays we are facing a “paradigm shift” in antimonopoly regulation as the model: structure-conduct-result is let behind and concepts as “soft power” (Knyazeva I.) or “competition advocacy” (Knyazeva I.) are brought to light. So it comes natural the main objectives of competition policy and competition organisms change from the “big four”: dominant position abuse, cartels control, mergers and acquisitions control, institutions control to more complex, comprehension able ones. We are facing a tendency to industrial convergence and cross market emergence promoting flexible business models in an economy of knowledge. Of vital importance is high collaboration between firms and the only sustainable advantage is the capacity of change management, increasing efficiency and innovation. The trend is to a systemic change of forms and nature of competition in the context of a paradigm shift of competition principles and regulation.

As we have proved even the essence of competition tends to change as it becomes less a struggle for market shares and more a cooperation and collaboration with the goal of creating additional value for consumers and companies and market extension in a cross-sector competition in multi-level systems.

If the “classical” view saw competition more or less as a battle, nowadays research understands the competition phenomenon more as cooperation so that it creates for consumer added value, so that the ability to offer value is increasing.

The competition of our times highlights the absence of a linear dependence between market structure and the level of competition. So, if in the past years we learned that “monopoly is bad for competition”, now we understand that a big market concentration does not exclude intense competition, this is “monopoly is not necessary bad for competition”. Of great importance is the company’s social position: because the innovative process of the firms is more oriented to the consumers and their satisfaction is the key to market success.

We could clearly understand that the pure competitive equilibrium is utopist as the life cycle of products is shortening, so the trend is to a dynamic competition model determined by the increase of the material actives, the change of consumers conduct and the development of economic agents conduct. Market share is no longer fault as long as social benefit eliminates the criminal aspect of the competition activity and the legislation no longer permits exclusive

systems distribution eliminating Block Exemption Regulations in most of the economic sectors, including the automotive one.

Getting closer to our own realities, Romania's Journal from 1993 when the Europe Agreement establishing an association between Romania and the European Communities was signed and their Member States, to the status of an EU member country and a market economy governed by competition rules was long and not infrequently difficult.

The reason for choosing the automotive industry for our **case study** is that this is one of the largest industries in the world, carrying a significant added value per employee, responsible for annual deliveries of durable goods of 17% and given the relationships it acts has great influence in other areas: relationships with automotive manufacturers on components for assembly, repair and spare parts plus other activities - technical research, banking and insurance, health care, defense, oil, gas, minerals, design of highways , construction, international tourism, film, television, marketing firms, organizing rallies automotive, tuning.

This industry stimulates international trade, economic growth, research and development of sustainable economies, thanks to the remarkable results achieved on market. Unemployment rates in the automotive sector are, in normal economic conditions significantly below average economy, significant financial effects resulting from taxes on engine being refocused on community - construction of highways, culture, health and education.

The EU involvement in the change of Romania's automotive market started once Romania became a member of the EU and the automotive manufacturers had to adapt their strategies taking into account the applicable European environmental and safety rules while considering the impact of the car tax, the fiscal strategy in the production and marketing of automotive. The ones managing automobile marketing start spending most of their time building a level of demand through the three analysed processes: obtaining customers, retaining customers and increasing the number of customers. As we stated, analysis of the automotive industry must take into account the elements inextricably related, namely environmental protection, economic growth and social equity. More and more manufacturers pay increasingly greater attention to their client ( as the contractual warranty on the automotive that is a

commercial argument about trust in the reliability of a model). Automotive companies allocate significant funds in activities of raising customer's loyalty with advertising and commercials.

The case study of Romania's automotive market proposed a multi-level analysis: from the internal producers perspective, from the whole market sales perspective, from the FDI perspective aiming to have a more reality close picture of this market. Furthermore a SWOT analysis was conducted to understand the specificity, structure and characteristics of automotive market. With the aid of computation we could overcome the lack of official numbers and determine the structure and concentration of the automotive market of 2013. At that point we identified the importance of changing the perspective on the automotive market and proper market segmentation, propose alternatives segmentation criteria and highlighting the importance and need of developing niches segments. Knowing that is better to be „a big fish in a small pond rather than a small fish in a big pond” and that the time of „give the customers what kind of color they want as long as it is black” (Ford) has passed, we proposed a method for targeting market leadership for the automotive players on the market.

In the need for a better understanding of the automotive market of Romania, apart from the empirical analysis, difficult, as we said, to some extent due to the absence of complete official data we proposed a scientific investigation for determining market distribution planning using mathematical methods integrated in general mathematic matrix of economic process. We addressed market growth rate, relative market share in a matrix that permits scientific prediction of the future of top three models produced by Dacia. Moreover we created a formula for computing the size of potential automotive market based on the total numbers of households, the total number of cars and the average age of the cars. From this perspective we concluded that the automotive park is old and has little change for getting younger as, for that to happen are needed sales summing 1.200.000 cars. Furthermore we conducted a three level analysis of the automotive market of Romania, that allowed as a overall perspective.

The research results lead us to the following **innovative aspects**:

1. Synthesis of the main points of view regarding competition in the classical and contemporary economy.
2. Synthesis of the conceptual approaches regarding competition, the competitive environment and competition policy

3. Argumentation of a new unique “paradigm shift” regarding competition and competition policy in the context of internationalizing.
4. Systematization of European Union policies regarding competition and the Romanian competition policy.
5. Synthesis of competitive advantages, sustainable competitive advantages and the imperative adaptative.
6. Analysis of the automotive industry in Romania before and after the European Union accession highlighting the European Union’s influence.
7. The actual Analysis of the Romanian automotive market, market structure and automotive market concentration.
8. Analysis of the automotive Romanian market from the whole market sales perspective and from the FDI perspective.
9. SWOT, PEST and Porter’s Five Forces Analysis for highlighting the specificity, structure and characteristics of Romanian automotive market ant its growth perspective.
10. Scientific investigation of market segments and the proposal of different approaches on the matter.
11. Development of a market growth matrix for the top three Dacia models and forecasting evolution and pathes to go from the results.

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