BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND SECURITY

STUDIES

The importance and securitization of the brand.
A comparative analysis of the Romanian and Turkish markets.

SUMMARY

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis addresses the issue of brand security, an increasingly valuable asset for companies in the globalized and digitalized world, from a comparative perspective, with a special focus on the Romanian and Turkish markets. The concept of brand security is defined as a complex and multi-layered phenomenon that includes not only the fight against counterfeiting and imitation but also the protection of intellectual property rights, product safety, supply chain security, cybersecurity, reputation management, consumer trust, legal compliance, and ethical values. The main aim of the thesis is to compare brand security practices, legal frameworks, consumer perceptions, and market conditions in Romania and Turkey, highlighting similarities, differences, strengths, and weaknesses; to evaluate the new risks and opportunities brought about by digitalization; and to propose concrete strategies and collaboration opportunities for enhancing brand security for companies and policymakers in both countries. The study also examines in depth the historical background of the commercial relations between the two countries, especially the advantages that emerged in Romania with the transition to a free market economy after 1990, the phenomenon of "suitcase trade," and its impact on brand security.

In accordance with this fundamental objective, the thesis aims to achieve the following goals:

- Establishing a theoretical framework for the definition of the brand and the concept of brand security, defining the relevant sub-concepts (types of brands, brand management processes, etc.).

- Conducting a comparative analysis of brand registration processes, anti-counterfeiting laws, consumer rights regulations, and general intellectual property protection frameworks in Romania and Turkey.

- Examining the internal practices of companies in both countries regarding brand security (brand protection units, employee training, risk assessments, the use of security technologies, etc.).

- Comparing the levels of awareness, perceptions, and attitudes of consumers in Romania and Turkey towards brand security, counterfeiting, and counterfeit products.
- Analyzing the historical evolution of commercial relations between the two countries, especially the emergence, development, economic, and social impact of the "suitcase trade" phenomenon, and its transformation in the context of current digitalization.
- Evaluating the impact of digitalization (e-commerce, social media, artificial intelligence, blockchain, etc.) on brand security (as risks and opportunities) and discussing the probable implications of the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act (AI law).
- Identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the Romanian and Turkish markets from the perspective of brand security, through examples of successful brands (case studies).
- Proposing concrete and applicable strategies for enhancing brand security at both the company level (best practices, digital strategies) and the public policy level (legal regulations, institutional collaboration).
- Identifying existing and potential collaboration opportunities between Romania and Turkey in the field of brand security and formulating recommendations for the development of this collaboration.

The fundamental hypothesis of the thesis is as follows: Romania and Turkey are two important Eastern European countries with deep-rooted historical ties, developing economic relations, and a strategic partnership. Due to common challenges such as counterfeiting and the impact of digitalization, these two countries have significant potential for collaboration in the field of brand security. Understanding the similarities and differences, through the adoption of best practices adapted to local conditions, can utilize this potential more effectively. Digitalization, by offering both new threats (online counterfeiting, cyberattacks) and new opportunities (artificial intelligence-assisted detection, growth of e-commerce), requires updated strategies. Cooperation between the two countries can enhance brand security, benefiting both companies and consumers, and can provide a fairer competitive environment.

In this thesis, a mixed methods methodology, combining quantitative and qualitative research methods, was adopted to examine the issue of brand security in a complex manner in the context of Romania and Turkey.

- **Literature Review:** An extensive literature review was conducted on brand security, intellectual property law, anti-counterfeiting, consumer behavior, Romania-Turkey commercial relations, digitalization, and artificial intelligence. Academic articles, books, theses, legal texts (laws, regulations, EU directives), international agreements, market research reports, statistics, and industry publications were analyzed.

- **Comparative Analysis:** The legal and institutional frameworks, company practices, consumer perceptions, competitive conditions, and ways of operating in Romania and Turkey, related to brand security, were systematically compared. The strengths and weaknesses of both countries were highlighted.

- **Qualitative Research (Interviews):** In-depth interviews were conducted with Turkish investors operating in Romania, brand managers, marketing experts, lawyers, public officials, and other relevant stakeholders (see Chapters 2 and 4). Through these interviews, rich and detailed data were collected on the experiences, opinions, perceptions, practices, problems encountered, proposed solutions, and future expectations of the participants regarding brand security. The interview data were evaluated using content analysis and thematic analysis methods.

- **Quantitative Research (Questionnaire):** A questionnaire study was conducted to measure the levels of awareness, perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors of consumers and/or businesses in Romania and Turkey regarding brand security, counterfeiting, and counterfeit products (see Chapter 3). The data from the questionnaire administered to a sample group of 100 people (50 Turkish investors, 40 Romanian traders, 10 Romanians in Turkey) were evaluated using statistical analysis methods (frequency analyses, comparisons, etc.). In addition, secondary data from questionnaires conducted by institutions such as Kırcı and LASİAD were used.

- **Case Studies:** The brand security strategies and success factors of brands that have been successful in the Romanian and Turkish markets (Dacia, eMAG, Arçelik, LC Waikiki, THY, Baykar, etc.) were analyzed (see Chapter 4).

This mixed methodology allowed both the identification of general trends and relationships through quantitative data and a deeper understanding through qualitative data, revealing different perspectives and obtaining a rich data set.

Chapter 1 (The Brand: Between Theory and Commercial Practice): This chapter established the theoretical framework of the thesis. Fundamental concepts such as brand, branding, brand identity, brand image, brand equity, and brand security were defined, the types of brands were classified from a detailed perspective, and the basic principles of brand management were explained. In addition, the historical background of commercial relations between Romania and Turkey was addressed, establishing the historical connection of the topic.

Chapter 2 (Turkish Investments in Romania): This chapter analyzed the Romanian market from the perspective of Turkish investors. The initial periods of Turkish investments in Romania, the period 1990-2005 ("El Dorado" era), the post-EU accession period, investor profiles, the advantages and disadvantages offered by the Romanian market (bureaucracy, labor force issues, the impact of EU membership, etc.), the difficulties faced by Turkish companies and the adaptation strategies they developed, were examined in detail based on primary interview data obtained from Turkish businesspeople living in Romania.

Chapter 3 (Romanian Trade in Turkey): This chapter focused on Romanian trade in Turkey, especially the "suitcase trade" phenomenon, which emerged after 1989 and is of great importance. The definition, evolution, economic and social impacts of suitcase trade, regulatory initiatives, informal practices associated with this trade, crises affecting trade (Russian crises, the impact of EU accessions, the pandemic), and the transformation towards e-commerce and micro-export models were analyzed using primary questionnaire data and secondary sources.

Chapter 4 (Comparative Analysis, Brand Security Strategies, and Future Perspectives): In this final and most comprehensive chapter of the thesis, the brand security environments of Romania and Turkey (legal regulations, company practices, consumer perceptions, competitive conditions, ways of operating) were compared in detail; the strengths and weaknesses of both markets were identified through case studies. Comprehensive strategies for enhancing brand security (international best practices, country-specific recommendations, the impact of current developments such as

digitalization and the EU Artificial Intelligence Act) were presented. Finally, the future of commercial relations between the two countries and the potential for cooperation in the field of brand security were evaluated.

The main findings and conclusions resulting from the thesis work are as follows:

- Brand security is a multidimensional concept of critical importance for the success and sustainability of companies in today's competitive environment.

- Romania and Turkey face similar challenges in terms of brand security (counterfeiting, imitation, online infringements, cyber threats) but also exhibit some legal, economic, social, and cultural differences. Romania's EU membership aligns its legal framework with EU standards, while Turkey, with its dynamic economy and specific regulations, presents a distinct structure.

- "Suitcase trade," which has historically held an important place, shaped the past trade between the two countries; today, however, digitalization and e-commerce are reshaping the future of commercial relations.

- Digitalization presents both significant risks (increase in online counterfeiting, cyberattacks, data breaches) and important opportunities (artificial intelligence-assisted monitoring and detection, market expansion through e-commerce, supply chain security with blockchain) for brand security. In this context, the importance of companies' adaptation to these new technologies (artificial intelligence transformations) from the perspective of brand security has been emphasized.

The European Union's new Artificial Intelligence Act (AI law) will significantly affect both Romania, as an EU member state, and Turkey, which is in a Customs Union with the EU and supplies goods/services to the EU market. Therefore, both countries will need to adapt to these new regulations.

There is significant potential for the exchange of information and experience, joint projects, training programs, and legal and institutional cooperation between Romania and Turkey in the field of brand security. This cooperation can contribute to enhancing brand security in both countries, combating counterfeiting more effectively, protecting consumer rights, and strengthening economic relations.

Ensuring and developing brand security is not a problem that states or companies can overcome alone but requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving the collaboration of governments, companies, consumers, civil society organizations, and all other interested parties.

In conclusion, this thesis examines in depth the definition and variety of the brand concept, emphasizes the importance of brand security in the specific context of Romania and Turkey, analyzes the current situation, and evaluates the new dynamics brought about by digitalization. It offers concrete strategies and collaboration proposals for both policymakers and the business world. The strategic partnership, the solid historical relations, geographical proximity, and common interests between the two countries constitute a solid foundation for building a stronger future in the field of brand security.

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