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DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP, BUSINESS
ENGINEERING AND MANAGEMENT



Studies of technology-based small and medium-sized family enterprises.

The case of the Romanian book publishing industry

SUMMARY OF DOCTORAL THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

The extremely rapid economic-social transformations, the speed of technological development and the intensified globalization in all fields are dominant elements of the beginning of the third millennium. In the studies of economic analysts, the current period is characterized by concepts such as post-industrial society or information society, and the current economy as a knowledge-based economy. This is considered the beginning of the third great economic revolution in human history, after the agrarian and industrial revolutions, in which intellectual capital replaces or enhances the physical and financial capital characteristic of previous stages.

Thus, the studies of the last decades focus on intellectual entrepreneurship as the engine of the knowledge-based economy and for which the concept of "technoentrepreneurship" was defined. These studies demonstrate that a significant percentage of new firms established in recent decades are knowledge-based technology enterprises founded by intellectuals, and a significant number of overqualified individuals operate in these firms.

In the current economy, knowledge is gaining significance through innovative ideas and technologies integrated into products and services, replacing the traditional mass production of material goods seen in the industrial era. The current context characterized by globalization, knowledge generalization and communication development, provides an infinite palette of opportunities for those with superior entrepreneurial skills and thorough knowledge, who can identify and turn them into successful businesses.

As material resources decrease and the conditions of access to them become more and more difficult, the importance of knowledge to overcome these limitations and maintain an upward trend in the economic evolution of humanity is noted. Thus, the process of intellectualization of work is generalized, with an emphasis on imagination and creativity.

The book publishing industry, closely linked to leading edge digital technology, is a good example of this. This industry is one of the most dynamic areas in terms of the incorporation of new technologies and the degree of intellectualization of the activity in most book production departments. These aspects, associated with the quality of leaders and the structure of the field, mostly focused on family businesses, ensure the high capacity of the industry to effectively counteract the consequences of economic crises.

In this thesis, the book publishing industry corresponds to CAEN code 5811 and is part of the publishing industry (CAEN code 581). Even if the Romanian articles talk about the publishing industry as the book publishing industry, in this paper these terms are distinguished. The publishing industry includes both book publishing and publishing of newspapers, guides, magazines, and periodicals, etc.

The paper focuses especially on the book publishing industry in Romania today, but also between the two economic crises of the last two decades.

Keywords: family business; the book publishing industry; technology; the succession process; succession of property; management succession; management practices; management conflicts; SWOT-type strategic analysis.

THE MOTIVATION OF CHOOSING THE TOPIC AND THE BOOK PUBLISHING INDUSTRY

The topic of the PhD thesis involves a detailed analysis of the book publishing industry and a pilot study of technology-based family businesses in Romania within the industry.

The motivation for choosing the research topic, as well as the industry, was due to several aspects, the most important being:

- the emphasis in recent years on the sector of technology-based enterprises that use or produce new, advanced, and emerging technologies;
- lack of data and studies on the particularities and problems specific to the industry;
- the affiliation of the book publishing industry to the cultural sector, as material support for most of the component branches, especially for the educational system, proving the importance of the industry's activity in the visibility of national culture;
- the intersection of the publishing industry and technology-based businesses, which can highlight how technology can be used to revitalize and transform traditional businesses. This topic can explore the ways in which the book publishing industry is adapting and innovating in the digital context;
- the complexity of the final product of the book publishing industry, which combines new technologies with educational and informative elements, artistic and entertainment ideas;
- the importance of the activity within the book publishing industry, mostly intellectual, developed by the elites in the field.

THE NOVELTY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

The doctoral thesis contributes to the knowledge and clarification of some important aspects of the small and medium-sized family businesses in the book publishing industry of the last decade, insufficiently researched in the studies of Romanian analysts of the field.

At the same time, the presentation of a synthetic situation of the book publishing industry in the current period (2020 ÷ 2023), of the new problems that have arisen due to the pandemic, the economic crisis, the explosion of energy prices and the imposition of sustainability policies, which the field must face.

Finally, an explanation of the internal and external influences on the book market in Romania is attempted, as well as its future evolution trends.

The focus of the study on enterprises in the book publishing industry, as technology-based family businesses, was carried out with the idea of outlining as complete a picture as possible of the field by exploring certain characteristic aspects, resulting from the interaction with digital technology and presented below:

- the distinct character of book editing and publishing, which combines educational, informative, but also artistic components and notions in a tangible (physical) product;

- the publishing field of book publishing is part of the category of fields with the most accelerated transformation in the last 30 years, an evolution that took place with the development of digital technology, telecommunications, and the Internet, as well as emerging applications;
- the determining influence of the expansion of the publishing field (through e-books) on the development of digital technology of smart devices (phones, tablets, laptops), but also of programs specialized in reading e-books, a fact that implicitly led to a new way of consuming books;
- the evolution of digital technology, smart devices and the "low end" markets for them, have led to their widespread use among the population, especially the young, allowing quick access to communications, entertainment, information and entire libraries of books on the same electronic device, always at hand;
- the increase and transformation of the way of book consumption along with the increase in the number of users of smart digital technologies from the segment of young generations (generations Y, Z, Alpha), a fact that allowed the organization of the online school during the Covid-19 pandemic;
- the convergence on smart devices of books with abbreviated versions, incorporating specific media elements.

All these elements outline a picture of the development directions of book publishing in the near future.

THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF A COGNITIVE NATURE ADDRESSED IN THE THESIS

In accordance with the previously presented elements, the objective of the thesis is to carry out a descriptive and exploratory analysis of the field of small and medium-sized family businesses in Romania, based on technology, with a focus on the book publishing industry as a representative sector, essential for countering the effects of globalization on culture national.

Considering the particularities of technology-based family businesses in the book publishing industry in Romania, the theoretical aspects pursued in the paper are of a cognitive nature and clarify certain concepts used in the study:

- formulating a working definition of family businesses starting from some considerations of the concepts of family, family members, etc.;
- the analysis of some characteristics of the publishing industry and technology-based family businesses in this sector, as well as the main factors that determine the level and evolution of the book market in Romania;
- analysis of the Romanian book market in the period 2012 – 2022;
- identifying the entrepreneurial nature of the management strategies and practices of publishers adopted to counteract the effects of the pandemic;
- the influence of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic on the activity in the book publishing industry and on the research activity.

STRUCTURE OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

The thesis structure comprises seven chapters that address topics of interest relevant to the current context in Romania.

The *first chapter* of the thesis presents the concept of "family business", along with its characteristics and definitions in the legislations of states with advanced market economies (USA, China, European Union, Romania). Based on these, the two important concepts, the research field, and the family business, are defined, forming the basis for the qualitative research in the thesis. Considering the current digital era and the impact of technology on the publishing industry and family businesses, the chapter outlines detailed classifications of technology-based family businesses, the new technologies adopted, and their current status in Romania. Since these are young SMEs, other important aspects related to the stages of the business life cycle, the growth phase, and the entrepreneurial behaviour of businesses are also presented, followed by corporate entrepreneurship in the case of large companies. Finally, one of the most crucial processes in the life of a family business, namely succession, is addressed, along with the challenges and successful implementation, as well as the strategies adopted for this purpose.

The *second chapter* outlines the research methodology of the doctoral thesis, including the environment and circumstances, research objectives, hypotheses, data sources, research methods, research stages, and the questions that the research instruments answer. These are followed by the description of the pilot study and conclusions regarding this chapter. In the end, the reader will understand the difficulties encountered during the research in terms of data collection and the reasons for conducting a pilot study.

Chapter 3 introduces the book publishing industry on a global scale and in Romania by briefly presenting its history and the value chain of printed book publishing. In this field as well, digitization and technology have made their mark, which is studied in this chapter, along with the qualitative leaps brought about by technological advancement and other important aspects such as the economic activity of the industry globally and in Europe, the industry's future and trends, and its impact on the environment. The chapter highlights the transformation of the Romanian book publishing industry over the past 30 years into an IT-connected industry, provides an overview of the industry's structure over the last decade, analyses import and export activities, and examines the book industry and consumption during the coronavirus pandemic. Chapter 3 marks the beginning of the practical part of the thesis, characterizing the book publishing industry in Romania and its associated publishers. It describes the current state of the publishing industry, along with the typographic industry, and its evolution over the last decade. In order to gain a clear understanding of the Romanian book industry, the figures and data presented in the chapter are complemented by three SWOT strategic analyses: one for the book publishing industry in Romania, one for the comparative analysis of the publishing industry over the last decade (2012 – 2022), and one for a nationally representative publishing house.

Chapter 4 is a complex chapter that addresses issues of the dynamics and strategy of family businesses in the book publishing industry in Romania during the period 2012 – 2022. Initially, a primary analysis of the responding publishers is conducted, divided into old publishers (established before 1999) and new publishers (established after 1999), in order to compare them in terms of management practices and growth stage. Based on the Greiner Organizational Development Model, a rapid estimation of the growth stage of old and new publishers is made by quantifying the management practices corresponding to the five phases of the growth stage in Greiner's diagram. Additionally, this chapter discusses changes in strategy throughout the life cycle in the analysed publishers and estimates the success of businesses based on economic results reported in the period from 2017 to 2022 by the publishing companies selected from Forbes Romania's top list.

Chapter 5 analyses the succession process in family businesses in the book publishing industry and the management conflicts that arise with this process. To better understand these two crucial aspects of family publishers, the chapter presents an analysis of the succession process and management conflicts in four publishing firms in contrast to four non-publishing firms to highlight the similarities and differences between them.

Chapter 6 presents studies on the impact of the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic on the field under study in the period 2020 – 2023, specifically on the Romanian economy (the state of the publishing industry), research objectives, methods, and the research process, as well as research areas. Subsequently, the general situation in the Romanian book publishing industry between the two major crises of the last decade - the global financial crisis (2008 – 2009) and the crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic (2020 – 2021) – is described and studied.

The final chapter of the thesis, *Chapter 7*, contains the general conclusions of the research, the main results, and the validation of the hypotheses (the general one and the nine secondary hypotheses), followed by recommendations for sectoral and managerial levels, as well as for the leaders of the publishers' associations in Romania. In this chapter, the contributions (original) of the research are presented, as well as its limitations and future research directions.

The present summary includes the original content of the doctoral thesis and presents in a concise form the content of the 7 chapters, the original contributions, as well as the list of works of the doctoral student, developed during the doctoral studies. At the same time, significant bibliographic references are presented, chosen from the more than 300 references used in the work.

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS

The interest given to the study of the field of book publishing in recent years was due to the fact that this sector of major importance in training, information and national education is very little present in studies, analyses, and statistics, both due to the lack of transparency of the publishers regarding the activity economic, as well as the insignificant percentage of the GDP - which makes it insignificant for the statistics at the national level.

A. The field of family business

A1. Identifying family businesses with a focus on technological family businesses, as well as the importance of entrepreneurial education in their development. (Stănciulescu, Scarlat, 2019; Stănciulescu, Scarlat, Cojocă, 2019; Stănciulescu, Scarlat, Ganciu, 2019; Stănciulescu, Scarlat, Stroe, 2019)

A2. A suggestive picture (*Figure 1.1*) of family businesses by technology level and activity area and some examples of activity areas for each technology level was designed.

B. Unitary definition of family businesses

B1. Definitions of family businesses from several economically developed states, as well as from Romania, were analysed and compared. (Stănciulescu, 2021)

B2. A number of observations were made on the differences, limitations, and ambiguities in the text of the definitions.

B3. A series of personal considerations were expressed on the questions related to the need for a unitary definition at the level of the European Union.

B4. A definition of family business has been formulated that incorporates the observations and common elements from the analysed definitions. (Stănciulescu, 2021b)

C. Book publishing industry

C1. A presentation of the book publishing industry in a global and European context was made.

C2. Four important stages (qualitative leaps) that have taken place in the book publishing industry in recent decades have been described. (Stănciulescu, Scarlat, 2020)

C3. An outline of the current book publishing chain based on digital technology was presented (*Figure A.6.1.* in Appendix 6).

C4. A diagram of the interdependence (*Figure 3.3*) between e-book production and the development of digital reading devices and smartphone applications was devised. (Stănciulescu, Scarlat, 2020)

C5. A number of issues and trends facing the book publishing industry today and in the near future (the impact of digital technology, environmental issues, and future development directions) were presented synthetically.

C6. A presentation of the book publishing industry in Romania was made from the point of view of structure, publishing activity, economic activity, book consumption and future trends of the field.

C7. A graph of the book market in Romania in the last decade was drawn up, accumulating and interpolating the data obtained from several studies, as well as a graph of the book import-export activity. (Stănciulescu *et al.*, 2020)

C8. A SWOT-type analysis of the industry over the past decade has been carried out, but the observations and conclusions are strictly qualitative, with insufficient data for an in-depth analysis. (Stănciulescu, 2021a; Stănciulescu, Scarlat, 2021b)

C9. A comparative SWOT analysis of the book industry from the beginning and end of the last decade was conducted to track the major changes in the book publishing environment. (Stănciulescu, 2021a; Stănciulescu, Scarlat, 2021b)

C10. An image was drawn up regarding the positioning of the book publishing industry in the SWOT space (*Figure 3.28*), in terms of strategic options in the two moments analysed (years 2012 and 2022, respectively).

C11. A SWOT analysis of a top publishing house (CAN), of national scope which has all the elements of a family business, professionally run as a result of the realization of management succession, was carried out. (Stănciulescu, 2021a; Stănciulescu, Scarlat, 2021b)

C12. An image was drawn up regarding the positioning of the CAN publishing house in the SWOT space (*Figure 3.30*), regarding the strategic options in the two moments analysed (years 2012 and 2022, respectively).

D. Analysis tools

D1. An interview guide (*Appendix 4*) and a questionnaire (*Appendix 5*) were drawn up with logically ordered questions, structured according to areas of interest of the research and with 5 predefined answers for the efficiency of completing and compiling statistics.

E. Empirical contributions

Empirical contributions resulted from the analysis of the data obtained from the leaders of the publishing houses included in the present study.

E1. A primary analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires completed by the leaders of the publishing houses, as well as from the analysis of the publishing houses' own websites, was carried out, the results being concentrated in the tables and figures in chapter 4.1.

E2. The management practices were analysed in terms of the age of the publishing houses and the analysed moments (before and during the Covid-19 pandemic), the growth phase of each publishing house being estimated (*Tables 4.4 – 4.7*). (Scarlat, Stănciulescu, 2021b)

E3. A comparative table of management practices from old and new publishing houses was drawn up (*Table 4.8*).

E4. A mathematical model was designed to estimate the growth phase from Greiner's analysis, quantifying management practices. The model was applied to all old and new publishers (*Tables 4.9, 4.10*) both before and during the pandemic, tracking changes in the growth phase. The calculated phases correspond to those previously estimated.

E5. A mathematical model was also devised to evaluate the success of a business by analysing its economic results over a certain period of time. The model is useful for assessing or self-assessing the competitiveness of a firm for which there is no inside data (black box analysis). This model is presented in *Tables 4.12 ÷ 4.22*.

F. Succession

F1. An analysis of the succession process was made within the analysed publishing houses, as well as a comparison of the particularities of the succession between 4 mature (old) publishing houses and 4 non-publishing companies (*Tables 5.3 – 5.7*).

F2. A table was made of the management conflicts during the succession process, recognized by the leaders of two publishing houses (*Table 5.5*), as well as by the leaders of the 4 non-publishing companies (*Table 5.8*).

G. The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the analysed publishing houses

G1. A table was prepared with the measures to counteract the effects of the pandemic in 11 analysed publishing houses (*Table 6.2*).

G2. A graph of the variation of the book market during the corona-virus crisis was presented (*Figure 6.1*).

G3. A suggestive representation of the changes in cultural consumption at the onset of the pandemic was made (*Figure 6.2*).

G4. Graphs were made (*Figures 8.5 ÷ 8.8*) that capture the situation of family publishing companies analysed during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In chapter 7, the research hypotheses were validated based on the analyses carried out in the thesis.

LIST OF PUBLISHED WORKS OF THE DOCTORAL STUDENT, ELABORATED DURING THE PERIOD OF DOCTORAL STUDIES

Year 2019

1. Ganciu, M.R., **Stănciulescu, G.D.**, Pipera, C.E., Barbu, A., Neghină, R.A., Mănescu, V.A., Militaru, G. (2019). Business process digitization: empirical findings of small and medium-sized enterprises from Romania. *The 9th International Conference of Management Perspectives in the Digital Transformation*, Issue 9, Bucharest, Romania, pp. 191-201.
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Year 2020

6. Niculescu, S., **Stănciulescu, G.D.**, Niculescu, A. (2020). Management Conflicts in Technology-based family Businesses. *FAIMA Business & Management Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp.33–43.
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Year 2021

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