Family business branding in Romania: A matter of identity, image, and reputation

MASTER PROJECT

THESIS WITHIN: Business Administration

NUMBER OF CREDITS: 30 ECTS

PROGRAMME OF STUDY: Strategic Entrepreneurship

AUTHORS: Motoc Adrian & Gîtman Andrei Mihai

TUTOR: Tommaso Minola, PhD.

JÖNKÖPING May 2019
Master Thesis in Business Administration

Title: Family business branding in Romania: A matter of identity, image, and reputation
Authors: Motoc Adrian and Gîtman Andrei Mihai
Tutor: Tommaso Minola PhD
Date: May 27th, 2018


Abstract

Background: Family businesses are shaping the world’s economy through contributions to establishing jobs, creating wealth, and competitiveness, correspondingly being influenced by the quality of the business environment. Family business branding is useful to understand how to leverage their unique resources and create a competitive advantage, these being shaped by the context. The historical events and economic factors of Romania are influencing the decision of family firms to portray their family in their branding endeavours in order to become more competitive.

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to understand the reasoning behind the Romanian family companies’ decision to promote their family aspect in their brand and how do family business identity, image, and reputation relate to the brand in the context of Romania. For guidance, two research questions were developed in order to gain valuable and significant insights for this thesis.

Method: Ontology – Relativism; Epistemology – Social constructionism; Approach – Inductive; Design – Exploratory; Methodological choice – Qualitative; Time Horizon – Cross-sectional; Strategy – Case-study; Data collection – In-depth Interviews; Sampling – Non-probability Purposive Samples based on criteria (eleven respondents); Data Analysis – Content Analysis.

Conclusion: From findings, it can be concluded that the context of Romania has a direct impact on family businesses and on how they are conducting their family brand promotion. Even though it is considered to have a positive impact, few Romanian family businesses actively market themselves as a family business. The predominant factors affecting the decisional processes, which are shaped by the contextual effects according to the three brand dimensions, have been comprised in a model of influential factors.
Acknowledgments

Our first, and foremost thank goes to Tommaso Minola PhD., for all the valuable insights he provided us, sharing his broad knowledge and experience, guiding us throughout the process of writing this thesis. We strongly believe that his support helped us in overcoming difficulties and his contribution carry a great impact over the final paper. We would like to thank also to our fellow colleagues who encouraged and provided us with important feedback.

Secondly, we would like to thank all the interviewed family business members for their participation and sharing their knowledge and experience, without whom we were not able to conduct this study. We are glad that they were open and able to dedicate a part of their busy schedule to us, being very supportive.

Lastly, we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all the family and friends who supported us during this thesis and also during our two years at Jönköping International Business School.

Dorim să mulțumim în primul rând familiei și prietenilor ce ne-au fost aproape și ne-au susținut în decursul acestor doi ani petrecuți la studii peste hotare. Fără ajutorul vostru acest lucru nu ar fi fost vreodată posibil. De asemenea, dorim să mulțumim tuturor participanților la acest studiu care ne-au susținut, dedicându-și puțin din timpul lor interviurilor. În ultimul rând, dorim să apreciem efortul comun depus în realizarea acestei lucrări, prieteniei noastre și memoria acestor ani de studii ce ne vor ajuta în viitoarele cariere.
# Table of Contents

1. *Introduction* ........................................................................................................................................ 7  
   1.1 Background ........................................................................................................................................ 7  
   1.2 Problem definition .............................................................................................................................. 9  
   1.3 Purpose ........................................................................................................................................... 10  
   1.4 Research questions .......................................................................................................................... 11  

2. *Frame of reference* ............................................................................................................................. 12  
   2.1 Family businesses .............................................................................................................................. 12  
   2.2 Institutional theory ........................................................................................................................... 13  
   2.3 Family business brand ....................................................................................................................... 15  
      2.3.1 Family business identity ................................................................................................................. 17  
      2.3.2 Family business image .................................................................................................................... 20  
      2.3.3 Family business reputation ............................................................................................................ 21  
   2.4 Family business brand promotion .................................................................................................... 23  

3. *Method* ............................................................................................................................................. 25  
   3.1 Research philosophy ......................................................................................................................... 25  
   3.2 Research approach ............................................................................................................................ 27  
   3.3 Research design ............................................................................................................................... 27  
   3.4 Research strategy ............................................................................................................................. 29  
   3.5 Methods .......................................................................................................................................... 30  
      3.5.1 Sampling strategy ......................................................................................................................... 31  
      3.5.2 Interview design ............................................................................................................................ 31  
      3.5.3 Secondary data .............................................................................................................................. 35  
   3.6 Data analysis ................................................................................................................................... 36  
      3.6.1 Content analysis ............................................................................................................................ 36  
      3.6.2 Analysis process ............................................................................................................................ 37  
   3.7 Ethical considerations ....................................................................................................................... 38  
   3.8 Trustworthiness ............................................................................................................................... 39  

4. *Empirical findings* .............................................................................................................................. 41
4.1 The family business brand communication .............................................................. 43
  4.1.1 The family business identity ................................................................................. 43
  4.1.2 The family business image .................................................................................. 45
  4.1.3 The family business reputation ........................................................................... 47

4.2 Family business context .......................................................................................... 50

5. Analysis ..................................................................................................................... 55
  5.1 Identity-related factors ............................................................................................ 55
  5.2 Image-related factors .............................................................................................. 58
  5.3 Reputation-related factors ....................................................................................... 60
  5.4 The model ................................................................................................................ 61

6. Discussion and conclusion ......................................................................................... 63
  6.1 Research questions ................................................................................................ 63
  6.2 Summarising Our Study ......................................................................................... 66
  6.3 Our study major contributions ................................................................................ 67
  6.4 Limitations and further research .......................................................................... 68

7. Reference list ............................................................................................................ 71

Appendix ....................................................................................................................... 76
  Appendix 1: Information sheet for research participation ........................................... 76
  Appendix 2: Consent form for research participation ................................................... 77
  Appendix 3: Interview questions .................................................................................. 78
List of Tables

Table 1: Interviewed companies' details ................................................................. 35
Table 2: Interviews Information.............................................................................. 35
Table 3: Family business branding communication................................................ 42

List of Figures

Figure 1: Research process (Source: Adapted from Saunders et al., 2009, p.108 and Easterby-Smith et. al., 2015) ......................................................................................... 30
Figure 2: The influential factors over family business branding from Romania ........... 62
1. Introduction

In the first chapter of this thesis, a general introduction of the research topic will be provided. This chapter begins with the background followed by the problem definition and the purpose of this research proving the significance of this topic. Furthermore, the research questions are stated.

1.1 Background

An integral part of every developed market economy is represented by the quality of the business environment, this also being an element for the long-term development of ventures, leading towards a sustainable increase in the living standard of the population and correspondingly in the economic performance (Murrell, 1992). This leads to the fact that the business environment in Central and Eastern Europe, including Romania, must be perceived through a historical context. Until recent times, the economies of these countries were based on large industrial enterprises owned by the state, using mass production procedures (McMillan & Woodruff, 2002). The transition from a socialist production system towards a market economy had started in 1990. During this period, the country had encountered several economic changes, out of which, the most significant is thought to be the privatisation of state-owned assets, leading to a formation of a business class without any proper foundation and knowledge (Murrell, 2003).

Entrepreneurship in the ex-communist countries from the former Soviet Bloc, such as Romania, was not always a legal activity, mostly being part of the grey economy (Smallbone & Welter, 2001). The conducted reforms resulted in the legalisation of private ownership, impelling the development of small family businesses in the transition economy (Murrell, 2003). The particular circumstances describing the environment had encouraged the existence of both formal and informal economic activities, as well as covert economic activities. After years of adopting political, economic and social reforms, in 2007 Romania’s economy and political status have proved to be good enough to be able to join the European Union. Despite the steady economic growth, it still remains one of the least developed countries in the European Union, with one of the lowest income levels (Eurostat, 2018). There are still impediments in the
development of ventures like political uncertainty, financing, infrastructure deficiencies, lack of skills and an associated stigma with the entrepreneurship (Dana & Dana, 2003).

European family businesses are aware of the current growth drivers, taking advantage of global economic opportunities and are gradually engaging in foreign markets, getting their brand recognised internationally. According to a European Union’s study, the companies who do not invest in foreign markets are failing to do so because of their lack of experience with internationalisation and lack of knowledge regarding marketing strategies, also the administrative environment and the adverse economic cycle of each country is influencing the family’s decisions to promote themselves inside and across borders (Eurostat, 2018). In the latter category Romanian family business fall, them being mainly characterised by a low integration into the European market and international business networks and low competitiveness (Murrell, 2003). This can be attributed to the fact that many businesses fall in the category of microenterprises, which are lacking the professionalism, directing the budget more towards the family, than the development of the company, correspondingly larger companies are showing a preference for exploitative and incremental innovations (Murrell, 2003; Pistrui, Welsch, & Roberts, 1997). These practices are hindering the creation of a family business brand that may generate a competitive advantage both nationally and internationally.

In a market invaded by renowned foreign brands that invest millions of euros in promotion, the Romanian brands are fighting fiercely to conquer the mind and heart of consumers and try to become leaders in their segment. The brand is not only a symbolic embodiment established by its creator, but also the image and impression consumers have on that product, service or organisation. Few entrepreneurs, business owners or business executives in Romania realise that their product, service, corporate or employer brands are important. The persistent problem is the low investment capacity in this area, as also in other ones, that would increase the competitiveness of Romanian companies. The assumption that by utilising the term ‘family firm’ like one of the key components of the organisational brand may generate benefits for the family company is supported by several theoretical and empirical evidence (Blombäck & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2012; Binz, Astrachan & Botero, 2018). However, we still have very little understanding of what drives or hinders the decision of using these branding opportunities in a restricted context. With this in mind, this project has been designed to shed a light and better understand why Romanian family firms choose to communicate their family business brand and which are the most significative contextual factors influencing their decision.
1.2 Problem definition

Almost thirty years have passed, bringing a historically unique experience in the economic field. The elapsed time has not yet proved to be enough in order to form a standard business environment, still being described by a high financial risk affecting the small and medium enterprises, which are undeniably characterised by family businesses. This venture type is playing an increasing role in the growth-oriented economies from Central and Eastern Europe (Pistrui et al., 1997). The role of family businesses in Romania has increased significantly, influencing and developing the economy. More than 40% of all enterprises are family businesses and are employing about a third of the workforce from the private sector, producing a significant amount of the nation’s gross domestic product (EY, 2017). It is clear that growth in this sector will have an imperative consequence for the development of the entire market. However, Romanian family businesses and their brands are not the ones that might go easily over Romania’s border. Therefore, despite the rapid development family businesses have combated during the past years, there is no Romanian company present in the top 500 family companies around the world (EY, 2019). Consequently, there are few Romanian family businesses acting across borders in different markets, but none is promoting its existing brand, or is aiming to foster it as being a family business one, while on the internal market only 66% of the companies communicate the fact that they are family businesses when endorsing their brand, compared to almost eighty percent in the global market (EY, 2017). This may raise some questions of how they are developing their family business brand in this specific context and how do certain underlying factors are being connected and interacting with the brand itself, in order to better understand what determined these decisions and how can family businesses from Romania can improve their brand by better comprehending the components of it and their interference with the environment.

Despite the fact that there are several studies concentrated on the entrepreneurship in transitional and emerging economies from the Central and Eastern Europe, the family business and its characteristics, such as the family business branding, are still largely neglected (Murrell, 1992, 2003; Pistrui et al., 1997). In Romania, there are few to none empirical studies investigating the family business, especially the branding perspective of these companies (Pistrui et al., 1997). Due to the lack of research surrounding this topic of family business branding, it is difficult for the companies to understand the benefits and values it may bring to their company and how to properly develop their brand. Taking into consideration the specific historical circumstances, Romanian family businesses differ in aspects such as age, being rather
new because of the historical implications, and their involvement in international business networks and growth plans is limited. Since most of the existing literature has been developed within an Anglo and North American context (De Massis et al., 2012), the research findings may not be entirely applicable to Romania, since there are differences in institutional environments, culture, lack of entrepreneurial role models, resources and historical development. This problematic has conducted us to raise these research questions and the purpose of this thesis.

1.3 Purpose

In consonance with the increasing interest in the family businesses and the role of context in management and entrepreneurship studies (Welter, 2011), we consider that further attention must be directed towards the national and regional context in which family firms are embedded. Europe as a cultural habitat and economic zone is in a phase of transition and transformation. Companies are now in a position where in order to grow they must align not only to the national requirements of the market but must also follow the European regulations and trends. This transition is generating new challenges and opportunities for family businesses in Europe.

This evolution of Europe has led to an increase in competition between companies for the customers’ attention, getting more and more intense all the time, crawling the markets and economy. However, the European Union is under such an economical pressure and emerging countries, like Romania, are trying to sustain their economic growth in order to move towards an advanced market economy (Sucala & Sava, 2015). Moreover, businesses are increasingly leveraging on building a long-term competitive advantage, investing in their marketing endeavours. Since the perception of family firms has changed to a better one in the past decade (Astrachan, Binz & Botero, 2018), they are leveraging on their unique resources as part of their competitive advantage, such as the family business branding, but Romanians seem to be still hesitant with their promotion. Hence, in order to fully comprehend how a family firm manages their brand, it is important to comprehend the rationale behind their choice to endorse the family business nature of the company and the contextual factors influencing this decision.

This study is addressing a gap in the literature emphasised by Astrachan et al. (2018) in correlation with the lack of research and understanding of family firm brands in Romania (Pistrui et al., 1997), by investigating the reasoning behind the Romanian family companies’ decision to promote their family brand and how the components of the family business brand
interact in a restricted context. Since in different regions of the world the family firms are the dominant forms of business, they usually adopt certain properties and philosophies as they grow within a specific national context (Gupta & Levenburg, 2012). This research will provide consequential insights on what is influencing the decision of portraying the family aspect in the business brand and the companies’ communicated messages, and how the development of a family business brand is being influenced by the specified context. Furthermore, the understandings may benefit family companies acting in similar emerging economies from the Central and Eastern Europe to better assess their business branding process and how the contextual factor may affect it. This will also provide new empirical data for researchers studying family businesses and their specific characteristics, better understanding the specific motives that drive their decisions in pursuing a family business brand.

In this research, by adopting an institutional theory perspective in correlation with an encompassing framework that captures a holistic view of the family business branding, we aim to shed a light on contingencies and boundaries of family business branding Romania’s family firms are encountering. Expanding on the considered context, we propose that an exhaustive perspective on the family business brand expects us to look past the unimportant physical appearances of it. Thus, in order to genuinely comprehend what shapes a family business brand, we took the approach of deconstructing the brand in three conceptualisations and draw from them, these being the family business identity, image, and reputation.

1.4 Research questions

In order to reach the purpose of this thesis, based on collected data from Romanian family businesses, the following research questions will act as guidance:

1. Why and how do Romanian family firms communicate or not their family brand?
2. How do the family business identity, image, and reputation relate to the business brand in the context of Romania?
2. Frame of reference

The second chapter encompasses a literature review related to the topic of the thesis. The frame of reference begins with the field of the family business, followed by the institutional theory and the family business brand. Additionally, the chapter elaborates on the three conceptualisations defining the family business brand. Finally, the family business brand promotion is discussed.

In the matter of this thesis, information about relevant literature has been collected through a systematic review. The Jönköping University library database, Primo, complemented by Web of Science and Google Scholar, has been the primary source of collecting data, based on the search words: family business, family business brand, identity, image, reputation, institutional theory, family business brand promotion. Moreover, in order to find significant articles within the field of research and connected to the purpose of the thesis, the snowballing approach has been adopted in tracing the citations. In order to ensure the quality of the articles, only the peer-reviewed and the ones included in the Association of Business Schools have been taken into consideration.

2.1 Family businesses

In spite of the problem of defining and characterising the family businesses, the literature appears to agree that a business, oversaw and owned by a family, is viewed as a family business (Sharma et al, 1997). Nonetheless, this is not the only perspective that characterises the uniqueness of a family-run company. What further defines the family business is the way strategies are being formed and implemented, together with the ownership patterns (Sharma et al, 1997). Also, the norms and values that are governing and defining the family business, not the size of the company, differentiate them from other companies (Fletcher, Melin, & Gimeno, 2012). Essentially, family businesses are distinctive due to the interrelation between the family system, ownership, and the management systems, though this degree may differ between firms.

Family businesses are being characterised by encompassing and combining the family’s and firm’s different social capitals (Flethcer et al., 2012). As the owner is highly involved in the decision-making process, this constitutes one more difference between family and non-family businesses, leading to an increased focus on maintaining the company, rather than focusing on the economic performance (Sharma et al., 1997). Moreover, their willingness to pursue both
financial and non-financial business goals may lead to unusual problems, caused by their desire to preserve their socioemotional wealth (Berrone, Cruz, & Gomez-Mejia, 2012). Nonetheless, several characteristics can generate both positive and negative outcomes, these being the common history of the family, their shared identity and the roles each take in the company (Fletcher et al., 2012).

When managed properly, the individualities of family businesses may positively influence business performances and decrease the failure rate (Wilson, Wright, & Scholes, 2013). The advantages constitute of the long-term orientation, ownership and governance focus, shared vision, sense of unity, strong identification and involvement, transgenerational wealth creation and continuity of leadership may prove to be imperative in building the family business brand (Hiebl, 2013). However, if not appropriately managed the same features can seriously damage the company. Issues such as nepotism, resistance to change, high tolerance for unskilled and inequality of rewards, together with the arising conflicts between the family members can lead to a less attractive business for the stakeholders (Zattoni et al., 2015).

Taking into consideration the corporate marketing perspective, the distinct characteristics of the family business may prove to have a significant influence in the communication and understanding of the corporate identity and the brand (Melewar & Karaosmanoglu, 2006). Involving a personal touch and leveraging on the familiarity aspect, the company may differentiate itself from the competition. Notwithstanding the extensive marketing literature, only recently, particular attention has been paid to family business marketing and the special circumstances surrounding this topic, such as branding, yet not including the characteristics of a certain context, as in one country (Blombäck & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2012).

2.2 Institutional theory

In this paper, we examine how the family business identity, image, and reputation relates to the establishment of a family business brand in the context of Romania. Consequently, in order to do so, we are required to take into consideration and to analyse the data in correlation with the institutional theory, to better depict the intertwined fabric of family businesses and the Romanian context. Another reason for choosing this mean of expressing the social structures can be defined by the fact other theoretical frameworks have failed to provide a conclusive interpretation of the family enterprises’ behaviour.
In that regard, the institutional theory provides a more suitable framework that will help the reader understand how institutional contexts influence the activities of family companies. Some researchers have been referring to the institutions in society as the provider of the ‘rules of the game’ (North, 1990; Scott, 1995). The institutions advocate definitions of social acceptability and encourage compliance with these recommendations via incentives and controls (Hira & Hira, 2000). These are putting pressure on companies to act in certain ways and produce desirable results (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Thereby, the institutions facilitate economic activities by clarifying and governing expectations, decreasing transaction costs, and increasing productivity of economic activities (Soleimanof, Rutherford & Webb; 2018).

In the span of approximately 30 years, Romania had a transition from a central planning system, that had its own logic and existed for decades, to a market economy (Ibrahim & Galt, 2002). In this process, there have been many institutional vacuums that had led to failure, in the attempt of restructuring large state-owned companies and the financial sector (Ibrahim & Galt, 2002). Nonetheless, the institutional transitions have occurred slowly and, in most cases, ineffective until 1997, when sharp beneficial changes have been implemented (Cornescu & Stroe, 2018). Moreover, family businesses, in this context of a transitioning economy, had the opportunity to leverage their domestic knowledge and networks to create new strategic partnerships and create opportunities for internationalisation as a result of international trade growth, increased foreign investments, and the entrance of multinational companies (Jøsrgensen, Hafsi & Kiggundu, 1986). Transitional institutions not only create certain advantages for family businesses to grasp but can also lead to stronger inertia due to rapidly reforming institutional contexts, such as Romania (Hira & Hira, 2000). Due to prior research on institutional theory, scholars have categorised institutions in two branches such as formal institutions and informal institutions. Jøsrgensen, Hafsi, and Kiggundu (1986) argue that, as a direct response to underdeveloped formal institutions, family firms have emerged in that particular context. Moreover, in a research conducted by Pistrui, Welsch and Roberts (1997) it has been observed that 94% of family firms have been funded by at least one family member and almost 90% of all businesses have at least one member of the family working full time within the enterprise, thus emphasising the role of family in both financing and developing the business. Family firms are more cost-efficient, flexible and more capable of taking opportunistic investments which take advantage of underdeveloped institutional conditions and incentives (Pistrui et al., 1997). All things considered, formal institutions within Romania have been generally ineffective in the first gradual institutional transition (that occurred from 1990 to 1996) which in terms have led to the
necessity of creating several informal institutions that are rigid to the overall change (Cornescu & Stroe, 2018).

Notably, the only informal institution that has been preserved in the communist period is represented by the family (Pistrui et al., 1997). Due to the necessity for security and survival, the entire society has relied itself upon family and personal networks. Another reason that led to the necessity in creating family systems that seek to integrate individuals into a larger family social network (main segments are represented by households, the kinship group, and the alliance network) is represented by the general distrust in the formal institutions (Pistrui et al., 1997). However, family businesses might leverage the cultural tradition that has been maintained within the institutional transition and refers to prioritising the group over the individual in survivability and growth advantages over non-family companies.

In view of the high level of interdependence between family and business in the case of family businesses, scientists are increasingly aware that national culture and ethnicity bear importance in understanding the strategic decision-making of family businesses (Litz, 1995). This is enunciated by approaching the family business in the context of Romania through the institutional theory perspective. Romania after 1989 has emerged as a nation of high uncertainty, social mistrust and economic hardship from communism and collectivism (Pistrui et al., 1997). Even with this economic boom that is undergoing in the European area, Romanians are still struggling to transform a crippled society, paralyzed by years of social and economic mismanagement into a more modern one (Pistrui et al., 1997). During the transition to capitalism, the cultural tradition that emphasises the group over the person remained with strong valences onto the society (Pistrui et al., 1997). The family is regarded as the only social institution remaining integral and functional that has survived the communist era (Pistrui et al., 1997). According to recent studies, the emergence of family business mostly fluctuates due to the economic environment or the legislative coercion from the government (Cornescu & Stroe, 2018).

2.3 Family business brand

As technological advancements are intensifying the global competition, companies must ensure a sustainable competitive advantage, one of the main resources being the development of a brand (Blombäck, 2009). Once a business is being recognised as a family owned one, it will generate an additional dimension to the stakeholders’ perception, increasing the brand’s
extensiveness through explicitly promoting the family involvement, as a feature of the company or products (Blombäck, 2009). Despite the fact that there is a fundamental shared characteristic between scholars and practitioners that endeavours to depict how family ownership can fill in as a differentiator between ventures, a general meaning of the focal concept, presently can't seem to arise (Binz et al., 2013; Blombäck & Botero, 2013). The absence of an amalgamating definition of the family business and concurrently the family business brand is proving to be a significant challenge to the advancement of field, leading to distinctive understandings and also, when it comes to family business brand, concerns regarding operationalisation and measurement, raising the difficulty level of combining research results and further develop the theory in this area (Tasman-Jones, 2015; Zellweger et al., 2012). An enveloping characterisation taking into account the knowledge collected during the course of the past decade and a more comprehending definition of what comprises the family business brand is required so as to move past what can even now be viewed as in a developmental stage. In the literature, the terms of identity, image, and reputation of the family business brand are being seen as similar and sometimes used synonymously, which led to an amassed confusion between the scholars and practitioners when scrutinising this phenomenon (Craig et al., 2008).

This paper focuses on three perspectives of the family business brand in connection to the literature. The first perspective is the identity view of the family business brand which emphasises on what family business owners and leaders accept to be valid about their venture, incorporating qualities they see as distinguishing variables of their business (Craig et al., 2008; Gallucci et al., 2015). The second perspective on the family business brand is the image and relates to whether and how the entrepreneurs depict the family idea of their business to partners inside and outside of the organisation (Beck, 2016; Blombäck & Ramírez-Pasillas, 2012; Botero et al., 2013). Furthermore, the reputation perspective on the family business brand catches the one of a kind views that the stakeholders perceive as to be the distinguishing factors for family firms in the market and different other settings (Binz et al., 2013; Blombäck & Botero, 2013).

In order to provide a more extensive understanding of the family business brand, a definition based on multiple perspectives had to be considered (Urde, Geyser & Balmer, 2007; Balmer & Gray, 2003). Thus, based on the deconstruction of the family company brand in three distinctive conceptualisations: the family business image, identity and reputation, it is being defined as “the formal and informal communication (image) of the family element of firm essence (identity), which includes the family’s involvement in a firm, and which lead to associations and expectations in the mind of stakeholders (reputation) that help differentiate these firms from...
others in the marketplace and other venues” (Astrachan et al., 2018, p. 4). These dimensions of identity, image and reputation are being considered, in a holistic sense, components of the family business brand and the branding process, providing a more comprehensive perspective of them (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Mazzei & Ravazzani, 2015).

In the subsequent section, we will present each of the perspectives as in to achieve a better understanding of what is known about these conceptualisations of the family business brand, to parse out each of the components, and to obviously verbalise what each view adds to our comprehension of the family business brand.

2.3.1 Family business identity

Within the academic literature, the topic of organisational identity has been highly debated and, according to most researchers, it gives the organisation a sense of continuity and distinction, as it depicts the business' collective behaviour and personality, which is established through the history and the values of the organisation (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000; Nag, Corley & Gioia, 2007). Furthermore, the organisation's values and beliefs are consistently expressed through the interactions between individuals from the company (Zellweger, Kellermans, Eddlestone & Memili, 2012; Zellweger, Eddlestone & Kellermans, 2010). An interpretive belief system emerged out of these interactions, providing the company and its individuals with a meaning for their part in this whole organisational mechanism (Gioia, 1998).

Organisational identity depicts how individuals develop a common comprehension of the organisation's internal processes, functions, and culture, but also how this is reflected back on the company and affects the conduct, methodology and changes of these individuals (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Organisational identity can, therefore, be viewed as a tool for making sense (Fiol, 1991; Weick, 1995), by providing the context in which members decipher and allocate significant meaning to superficial behaviour (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Notwithstanding, organisational identity has a significant capacity that guides how different organisations and also the members of a company should behave (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Organisational identity can, therefore, be viewed as a system that influences the conduct of the company’s members and provides them with an interpretative framework in which different behaviours occur (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). The organisation becomes an extension of the employee's
self through identification and embodies the perception of ‘uniqueness’ that an employee feels with an organisation (Ashforth & Mael, 1996; Dyer & Whetten, 2006).

Organisational identity is more than an organisation's subjective view, as it also embodies collective practices that describe the manner in which individuals in a company perform their everyday tasks (Nag et al., 2007). The organisational identity separates one business from another in the eyes of the company members and stakeholders through a unique set of convictions, values, and practices (Scott & Lane, 2000). This type of discourse applies specifically to family businesses, since they can develop unique identities not only by overlapping the family and business framework (Barnett, Eddleston, & Kellermanns, 2009; Sundaramurthy & Kreiner, 2008) but also by varying degrees of contribution and impact in family tasks (Tagiuri & Davis, 1992). The integration of the diverse beliefs that come from the family and the company, regularly connected to their common history, would thus explain how the organisational identity is distinctive. This view alludes to Klein, Astrachan and Smyrnios (2005) work, which suggests that the values of key individuals within an organisation - their politics, communication style, conflict management and centralisation or decentralisation preference - are an essential part of the organisational culture.

In fact, building up a family-based brand identity has been shown to positively contribute to firm growth and profitability through its impact on client-focused values (Craig et al., 2008). Similarly, a recent study by Memili, Eddleston, Zellweger, Kellermanns, and Barnett (2010) demonstrated that organisations that convey their family firm identity to external stakeholders have significant performance benefits. Along these lines the family firm can establish an ‘extended family’ of stakeholders who could bolster the principles of the family business such as loyalty, fairness and respect (Sorenson, Goodpaster, Hedberg & Yu, 2009), thereby empowering the firm to build a competitive advantage that enhances performance (Zellweger et al., 2012, 2010).

From multiple points of view within the academic literature, a strong family business identity can be created when family members feel a strong sense of belonging to the family firm, this feeling being often tied to the family members self-respect and self-esteem and the perception that the family firm represents an augmentation of themselves (Dyer & Whetten, 2006). Since family firm individuals are more likely to view their business as an augmentation of their family, they often make a huge effort to create and maintain a positive organisational identity (Dyer & Whetten, 2006). They understand that they can’t switch families if their family firm’s
image has been negatively affected, so they are highly motivated to protect the reputation of the company and also of the family (Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013; Zellweger et al., 2012, 2013). Researchers like Sundaramurthy and Kreiner (2008) have pointed out that kinship, a shared family name, common history, and familiarity have the unique potential to build up a strong identity in family firms, inspiring relatives to uphold the values and goals of the family company. Family firm identity can create a sense of oneness and shared destiny for family individuals, building shared opinions for them to rally around and leading the members to view the fulfilment of family firm commitments as a wellspring of pride (Sundaramurthy & Kreiner, 2008). When family members are exceedingly devoted to the business and the members believe that they have a common family responsibility to see the business prosper, they are highly motivated to contribute to the firm (Beck, 2016; Blombäck & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2012; Botero et al., 2013).

In addition, the company is likely to profit from the involvement and the participation of family administrators, as a result of a strong family firm identity (Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001). Actually, active participation and open communication will most certainly build an organisation's commitment and promote a sense of belonging (Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001). Firms with higher levels of interaction between family members, characterised as having family employees who share ideas, provide feedback and raise expectations of one to another, are more successful than those firms where family members do not communicate or exchange information (Kellermanns & Eddleston, 2007). Family members who collaborate and communicate frequently are more likely to develop a common view of their family business and further promote their brand (Sorenson et al., 2009). The mutual values and objectives between family members can, thus, facilitate discussions, speed up the decision-making process and build consensus on the organisation's strategic direction (Zellweger et al., 2012, 2010). A shared identity and a common view will undoubtedly improve the quality of the decision-making process (Mustakallio, Autio, & Zahra, 2002).

Ultimately, the family business identity consists of the identity of the owning family and one of the businesses itself. These are integrated to a various degree. Highly integrated family businesses, where the family is strongly involved in the company and shares with it values, goals, norms, and beliefs, are related with higher levels of identification and presumed to be more likely to recognise their family-owned status in their business promotion (Blombäck & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2012). Researches on this conceptualisation of family business identity regarding family business brand had taken a sender's perspective and described the factors that
may drive or hinder the promotion of the family business brand (Blombäck & Ramírez-Pasillas, 2012; Binz, Astrachan & Botero, 2018).

2.3.2 Family business image

The organisational image envelops the psychological affiliations that the managing individuals need others to hold about the association (Brown et al., 2006). Companies mean to influence through their both formal and informal communicated messages, in order to achieve the desired state of perception about the organisation, delineate its image (Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000). Therefore, a family business brand embodies, up to a certain extent, the guarantee an association makes to individuals dependent on the one of a kind data that the family business owners and managers convey about the firm in their endeavours to accomplish a differentiation on the market, established on the family feature of the firm, leading to a possible competitive advantage (Brown et al., 2006; Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000).

The image perspective on the family business brand incorporates the depiction of the organisations' family nature to internal and also external stakeholders, such as the manner by which the family is portrayed, how is it promoted (Parmentier, 2011; Binz, Astrachan & Astrachan, 2015), and how conspicuously the family is highlighted in the communicated messages (Micelotta and Raynard, 2011). The image perception of the family business in a sender-based one, emphasising on the manner by which family business owners depict the family idea of their association to their partners (Gioia, Schultz & Corley, 2000). Be that as it may, this perspective on brand centres around what senders do to oversee and develop their brand's message.

Drawing more on organisational identity theory, an organisation’s identity represents the focal point for the “reputation” and “image” constructs (Sageder, Mitter & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, 2018). Generally stable in its core, the organisation’s identity cements its characteristics in the minds of its members (Sageder et al., 2018). However, this identity does react to its environment (Gioia et al., 2000). Complementing the organisation’s identity, the image is representative as it reflects the impression that is projected to stakeholders outside the organisation (Dyer & Whetten 2006). This image can be projected if the company seeks to impart its image to the exterior on the basis of its identity (Brown, Dacin, Prattl & Whetten, 2006; Gioia et al., 2000). On the other hand, the ideal future image can also be projected internally and externally as a vision (Gioia et al., 2000). The family owners have a significant impact on the identity of a
family business, and consequently on its image (Zellweger et al., 2010). Family owners regularly participate actively within the administration of their businesses (Chen, Chen & Cheng, 2008), or they select and control the executives (Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013). The involvement of the family in the administration of the organisation accordingly contributes to the creation of its identity (Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013; Zellweger et al., 2012). Moreover, financial and non-financial difficulties will not only damage the revenue or invested capital, but also the reputation of the company and the family due to the overlapping interests of the family and the organisation (Dyer & Whetten, 2006; Miller, Le Breton-Miller & Scholnick, 2008). Family members who relate to the organisation see it as their own extension (Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013; Dyer & Whetten, 2006). In most cases, the name of the organisation is associated with the name of the family that owns it (Craig et al., 2008; Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013). The strong identification of family members with the organisation helps to create a unique family company image that can, in time, represent a competitive advantage and thus, support firm performance (Zellweger et al., 2012) and increase the loyalty of the customers (Orth & Green, 2009; Sageder, Duller & Mitter, 2015).

Previous studies show that the existing link between long-term orientation and performance is guided, to some extent, by the family business image (Berrone, Cruz, Gomez-Mejia & Larraza-Kintana, 2010; Block & Wagner, 2014; Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013). Despite the fact that research shows that an organisational identity can be partially impermanent and reinterpreted after some time since an organisational identity expands on the legacy and history of an organisation, it is impervious to some degree to alteration attempts (Gioia et al., 2000). Family firms with a long-term orientation might be particularly proficient at making a coherent and enduring image for their businesses (Zellweger et al., 2012; Le Breton-Miller & Miller, 2006). Family businesses that are patient and lean toward long-term investment strategies can choose to create a family company image in order to impart their stable family heritage and traditional values (Berrone et al., 2010; Block & Wagner, 2014; Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013). Possibly this is the reason why family businesses are more often regarded as reliable (Craig et al., 2008; Levenburg, 2006). Furthermore, the academic literature proposes that the long-term orientation will directly affect the family firm performance, subsequent to taking into account family firm image (Zellweger et al., 2012; Craig et al., 2008; Xi, Kraus, Filser & Kellermanns, 2015).

### 2.3.3 Family business reputation

The peoples’, or individuals’ outside the organisation general, long-term and unwavering assessment of an association's conduct after some time, defines the reputation of a company
Different stakeholders are choosing, organising and interpreting the promotion of family ownership, leading to the development of a distinct family business reputation (Dessi et al., 2014; Hauswald & Hack, 2013; Kahlert, Botero & Prügl, 2017; Lude & Prügl, 2016). The fact that stakeholders can perceive different meanings from the messages transmitted by the family and from the promotion of the family ownership criteria can be a thread for the proper understanding of the family business brand (Lude & Prügl, 2016).

The stakeholders on which prior researches have been focusing on, when it comes to family business branding, are the customers and employees (Beck and Prügl, 2015; Botero, 2014). The overall reputation, customer orientation, employer qualities and also the environmental and social responsibility of family business are being perceived superior by customers in comparison to non-family companies (Kahlert, Botero, & Prügl 2017). Moreover, customers associate relational qualities, such as the reliability and trustworthiness with family-run companies, preferring their products and services (Binz Astrachan et al., 2014). Family firms conveying the name of the owning family perform better financially in light of the fact that they are more client-oriented and socially responsible compared to non-family businesses, due to their desire to protect their family reputation (Kashmiri & Mahajan, 2010). The promotion of a family brand identity is fostering a customer-centric orientation and contributes positively to the company’s reputation and increase performance (Craig et al., 2008).

Nonetheless, family-owned employers are perceived differently from non-family employers, resulting in a different attractiveness level generated by the companies (Blombäck & Botero, 2013). Analysing job seekers, based on their individual preferences, the ones attracted most by family companies are those who cherish conservation, self-transcendence and organisational culture (Binz Astrachan et al., 2014; Hauswald et al., 2016). On the contrary, there are job seekers who consider family businesses as lacking professionalism and career opportunities, also being companies with limited resources and relying on nepotism (Ceja & Tápies, 2009). This indicates that people are associating different qualities with non-family and family owned businesses, most of them considering the fact that a company is family-run as being important in the employer context (Ritz & Waldner, 2011).

Family business reputation represents the overall perception hold by a family firm’s different stakeholders about the organisation and the portrayal of the family ownership, compared to non-family companies (Binz Astrachan et al., 2014). These beliefs are being influenced by an
assortment of factors, such as media and competitors, and cannot be entirely controlled by the firm (Beck & Prügl, 2015). This leads to the third conceptualisation in understanding the family business brand and how stakeholders can extrapolate from the promotion of family ownership.

### 2.4 Family business brand promotion

Based on a study conducted on more than one hundred family business from Switzerland, there is a positive relationship between the higher levels of family ownership and family expectations, and the promotion of a family firm image (Memili et al., 2010). Further studies conducted on similar samples consisting of the oldest family firms had confirmed the previous relationship and, furthermore, proved that companies owned entirely by the family are more likely to promote their family ties than the ones partly owned, and that the companies which are including the owning family’s name are more likely to promote their family background (Micelotta & Raynard, 2011; Smit et al., 2010). In a more recent study on 11 family business from Switzerland and Germany two supplementary family-related factors had confirmed the relevance of identity in the framework of family business branding and promotion, specifically the level of identification with and commitment to the business of the family members and the pride they take in the family’s legacy and accomplishments (Binz Astrachan & Botero, 2018). This strengthens the belief that the family firm image is based on important antecedents such as the family’s pride for their company, the social ties created in the community and their long-term orientation (Zellweger et al., 2012).

Despite the fact that family business branding exploration is not of a primacy, researchers have acknowledged several organisational antecedents affecting the family firm brand promotion. When it comes to companies’ size and age the smaller and older ones are more likely to put an emphasis on their family ties that the larger and younger ones (Micelotta & Raynard, 2011; Botero et al., 2013; Memili et al., 2010; Smit et al., 2010). One more factor influencing the promotion of family business branding, besides the difference between industries, is the difference between countries of origin, affecting the probability of unequivocally conveying the family business brand, which demonstrates that imparting family ownership might be seen distinctively in various social settings (Botero et al., 2013). Therefore, earlier research proposes that family firms are bound to take part in family business branding when they include the family name, the family ownership, their expectations are at greater levels and the family is identifying itself with the company and their heritage (Craig et al., 2008; Blombäck, 2011; Blombäck & Brunninge, 2013). Likewise, smaller and older family firms are also more likely
to promote the family nature of their companies, and there might be contrasts between industries and countries of origin when it comes to promoting the family business branding.

In order to depict the diverse constituencies that characterise them as owned and operated by the family, family businesses use different methods. According to Micelotta and Raynard (2011), there are three family business branding strategies, each having its own way of portraying the family and also the importance given to the family feature is different. The Family Preservation Strategy focuses on the family, the Family Enrichment Strategy on how to develop the companies’ offer, while the last one, the Family Subordination Strategy is concentrated on the organisation itself and how it communicates (Micelotta & Raynard, 2011). This led to the fact that companies may choose to be very subtle in promoting their brand as a family one, primarily ensuring that the accumulated experience and skills of their family will be passed down from generation to generation or going even further, disassociating from the family brand in order to create a separate identity for the company. At the other end of the spectrum, there are companies taking a very prominent portrayal of the family in promoting their business, personifying itself in the company (Micelotta & Raynard, 2011). Based on what element each company chooses to focus on when it comes to branding strategy if it is either the family, their offering or the organisation, the promotion of the family brand identity is conducted in various ways, with certain degrees.

When a family firm has settled on how conspicuously it needs to highlight the owning family (Blombäck & Ramírez-Pasillas, 2012), they can look over an assortment of choices regarding promoting the family business brand, such as textual, visual and audible ones. There is also a wide array of communication channels, going from traditional promotion and direct advertising to the new media, as in social media, public relations or sponsorships. Based on former studies, most of the family business chose to promote their brand and their family firm status through traditional communication channels, despite the fact that social media and internet-based approaches to achieve clients are far more popular between other companies (Verhagen, Boter, & Adelaar, 2010). In order to choose the most suitable channel and message, a market research must be conducted, as people may associate each organisations’ qualities differently, being attracted to different attributes, leading to the fact that promoting the family firm status may be perceived in a positive manner in one market, while in another may be neutral or even negative (Binz et al., 2013; Binz, Astrachan & Astrachan, 2015).
3. Method

In the third chapter, it is described the chosen research method and how the empirical work has been carried out. It includes the research philosophy, approach, design, and method. Furthermore, in this section, it is presented how the data was collected and analysed. In the last part, the ethics and the trustworthiness of the thesis are being depicted.

3.1 Research philosophy

The research philosophy portrays the knowledge creation process and the nature of that knowledge. Moreover, the research philosophy is comprised of the different assumptions through which the researcher views the world, helping to support the pursued research strategy and the intended methods. In addition to this, the researcher should not just understand the topic, but also the aspects of the research that are being investigated. Moreover, these aspects will highly rely on the chosen research strategy methods. (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009)

The understanding of philosophical issues is helpful for several reasons. In that sense, researchers are obliged to understand the basic issues of epistemology in order to have a clear grasp of the reflexive role that they must have in research methods (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Understanding the research philosophy is valuable in defining the design of this research (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015, Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009), incorporating essential evidence and how these will be gathered and interpreted, also providing good responses to the future research-related questions. By understanding the philosophical issues, it could help the researcher recognise which design will be the best fit and, furthermore, assist in creating new designs the researchers had no previous encounters (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the reasoning behind the Romanian family companies’ decision to promote their family aspect in their brand and how do family business identity, image, and reputation relate to the brand in the context of Romania. What this thesis is aiming to acknowledge and further develop required the involvement of different family business owners or managers to gain the sought for understanding. Us, as researchers, together with the interviewee are socially interacting humans, a fact that we are not excluding from the investigated reality, motivating the adoption of a relativistic stand in serving our purpose. The chosen ontological position takes into consideration the fact that knowledge is created by people
and their interaction, contradicting the existence of one universal truth (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Moreover, facts are depending on the researchers’ and involved people’s viewpoints, thus the emerging findings are relative, as people have a different knowledge, identities, and experiences, which are influencing their construct of reality (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

In correlation with the chosen ontology, the corresponding epistemology is that of social constructionism, which assumes that many different realities may exist, and they are constructed through social interaction and making sense (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Since the research findings are depending on the reality constructs of the individual owners, managers of family firms and the analysis of these findings throughout our own construction of reality as researchers, the social constructionism coincides with the purpose of this thesis and it is well-suited with the studies in the family business field of research (Nordqvist, Hall, & Melin, 2009). In their role as social actors, social constructionism, as research philosophy, seeks to understand the differences between humans (Saunders et al., 2009). The interpretative research generally starts from a general focus and is followed by the emerged themes out of the empirical data (Nordqvist et al., 2009).

Data in raw forms are referred to as quantitative data, which needs to be interpreted and analysed in by the researchers. Since this paper does not require high amounts numerical data, quantitative research would not fully fulfil the purpose of this thesis and therefore a qualitative approach would be more suitable (Saunders et al., 2009). It is increasingly important to find the quality of the participants in a qualitative research strategy rather than the quantity of the participants (Malhotra et al., 2012). It is necessary to summarise the qualitative data and categories in order to obtain and make sense of meaningful content from the data. Moreover, the qualitative data must be analysed through a specific conceptual framework. According to Stake (1995), all research depends on the researcher's interpretation. While the quantitative research is persuading to find and prove a relationship between the variables, the qualitative research aims to discover patterns in the relationship, which are not pronounced before the research is conducted (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). Therefore, persuading a qualitative research is in accordance with this thesis’ purpose.

As a starting point, a literature review has been conducted by using both a systematic review and snowballing approach, in order to gain a good understanding of the family business, family business brand, institutional theory and the context, further realising the existing gap in the
literature (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This has led to the identification of gaps in the existing literature about family business branding in a certain context, gaps which are further used in the development of the research questions. The carried-out literature review to aid in interpreting the data would either be supported or disputed by our findings and analysis, leading to the development of the field of study.

3.2 Research approach

The research approach is referred to the selection of a theory, that alludes to the implementation of either the deductive, abductive or inductive approach. In that sense, depending on the implementation, the research philosophy and strategy selection are vital as it will reflect how the research strategy is delineated (Saunders et al., 2009). The most used approach is represented by the deductive approach as it presents the most common aspects of nature and the theory-social research correlation. On the other hand, the inductive theory depends mainly on the theoretical outcome of the research (Bryman, 2012). However, this thesis will take an inductive approach, as the research process will be pending in the form of interviews between case studies, existing research theory and an application of institutional theory for this specific context.

The inductive approaches set created information as a foundation for knowledge elaboration, offering emerging theories, by assuming as less as possible before the data has been analysed (Saunders et al., 2009). Through these approaches, the observations may be linked to the theory by means of interpreting findings that have been generated from past experiences (Saunders et al., 2009). This is also in line with our purpose, as our main aim to gain a better understanding of the family business branding in Romania. Furthermore, it accepts that realities are socially constructed, thus getting in line with the social constructionist position and the fact that our data emerged from a social interaction between observed family businesses owners or managers and us as researchers. Therefore, we strongly believe that an inductive research represents the appropriate approach for our study. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the fact that by observing contradicting phenomena, the constructed knowledge may be invalidated (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.3 Research design

According to Bryman (2012), the aim of the research design is to solve the research objectives by providing a framework for sorting out the research activities and the collection of data. Based
on the chosen research design there are specific choices of what is going to be observed and how. In order to determine what, how and from where the data will be gathered in compiling the research, the research design is commonly adopted and assumed before the data is collected (Bryman, 2012). Additionally, the research design has the purpose of drawing the answers for the research questions by providing guidance on how the collected data will be analysed and used (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). We have to be very specific about the procedures necessary to obtain the critical data, in order to better structure or decipher the stated research problems. Moreover, a very well-formed research design will ensure that the management of the research project is efficient and effective. In that regard, the academic literature has identified and classified the research design in two categories, namely exploratory and conclusive (Bryman, 2012). On one hand, the purpose of the exploratory research design is to provide insights and understanding of metrics that are extremely difficult to measure and quantify or where the subject(s) cannot be measured using any of the quantitative approaches, regarding the comprehension of a marketing phenomenon. On the other hand, the conclusive research design aims at testing hypotheses, describing specific phenomena and examining specific relationships. The conclusive research tends to be more formal and systematised and requires data that is increasingly explicit, clear than the exploratory research (Malhotra, Birks & Wills, 2012).

This thesis intends to understand the reasoning behind the Romanian family companies’ decision to promote their family brand, as it is yet an unexplored area of research. To be able to provide a deeper understanding of the mentioned topic, we will be using the exploratory research design. In addition, this research will try to understand and how the components of the family business brand, the family business identity, image and reputation interact in a restricted context. This type of research design is useful as it does not require structured or defined problem information and it aims to explore and understand this context and (Malhotra et al., 2012). The exploratory design approach applies to areas that lack significant knowledge and what are not yet fully explored. This exploratory research design in correlation with the qualitative research will answer ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions, further encouraging and motivating the decision to use it, as it is aimed at gaining insight into phenomena from new perspectives (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

Because of the lack of previous research on the topic and in order to generate a comprehensive understanding and a basis for a better detailed future research, we considered valuable to carry out an exploratory qualitative research. A qualitative approach could, therefore, be considered
more suitable for such issues as the qualitative research approach enables researchers to get closer to the participants and access sensitive information (Malhotra et al., 2012). In addition, a qualitative approach to research also enables the holistic dimensions to be obtained and a bigger picture of a whole phenomenon in a specific context to be drawn or completed (Malhotra et al., 2012). We believed that face–to-face interviews would provide the most valuable information, since the paper takes into consideration personal thoughts, thus adding a sense of confidence between us and the interviewed persons. Some general questions were provided based on our principal themes since the information to build questions on was scarce. Laddering-up and down questions where used encouraging the interviewees to speak freely and not to limit their answers.

3.4 Research strategy

The research strategy significantly affects what is comprehended and what the researchers are investigating, contingent upon the applied research strategy. The research strategy selection is mainly guided by the nature of the research questions, the scope of the existing research and by other available resources. It is important to state that no research strategy is more or less good or important than other strategies, nevertheless what is of importance is that particular pursued research strategy will allow the research questions to be answered and fulfil the objective of the researcher (Saunders et al., 2009).

According to Saunders et al. (2007), the case study is: “a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context using multiple sources as evidence” (p. 139). In this paper we are looking at the components of the family business brand, the family business identity, image and reputation and how do they interact in a restricted context, the country of Romania. We also want to understand what motivates the family owners and managers to endorse their family aspect in their branding endeavours. The aim of the research is to find out how and why things happen (Saunders et al., 2007). In order to obtain a better understanding of the phenomena is highly important not to only the received message from the interviewed individual, but also to how they speak, their intonation, pauses, as it may provide information about what they consider to be important. Since people may exaggerate, lie, be confused, we have to interpret the data by looking at the contexts and other general views that may affect them.
The research strategy pursued in this paper is represented by the case studies. This involves using multiple sources of evidence in studying contemporary phenomenon (Saunders et al., 2009). The main reason for choosing this strategy is that it will enable us as researchers to further discover and explore the phenomena as the research is still being conducted. Moreover, the phenomenon cannot be studied outside the context where it naturally occurs (Saunders et al., 2009), this being in accordance with the choice of studying the Romanian environment. Adopting a case study will serve our purpose of gaining in-depth insights of the research context.

Figure 1: Research process (Source: Adapted from Saunders et al., 2009, p.108 and Easterby-Smith et al., 2015)

3.5 Methods

In this part we present the method we undertook in conduction our research, followed by the principles of ensuring research quality and the ethical implications. We firstly focus on the sampling strategy and the selection criteria. Secondly, we discuss the primary data collection method through interviews, further elaboration on the design of the interviews by providing an exhaustive description of the strengths and weaknesses of the selected method and design. We further present the data analysis strategy and the steps undertaken in this process. Finally, the principles ensuring the quality of the research and the ethical implication are detailed.
3.5.1 Sampling strategy

The sampling design adopted in this thesis will be a non-probability one, in the form of purposive sampling. The probability of any member of the population being sampled is not possible to be stated and unequal between the chosen ones. Also known as selective sampling, this technique depends on our judgment as researchers when selecting the right participants. It has the advantage of being time and cost-effective out of which a range of responses may result (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). On the contrary, it is prone to judgement errors from the researchers and further findings, although possibly being broad, will not automatically be representative (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

In accordance with the purpose of this study, the selection of the sampled companies needs to meet eligibility criteria in order to take part in the interviews (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). These being the following:

a. Companies are family firms that possess the specific characteristics: (i.e. the majority of decision-making rights are in the possession of one family)

b. The family business is based in Romania

c. The family business has a defined brand, based on the definition provided by the literature and the interpretation of the interviewers.

3.5.2 Interview design

Since the papers’ research purpose and questions require a qualitative research method, we have considered that semi-structured in-depth interviews are to be used in order to obtain valuable insights, draw different understandings and to answer the research questions (Malhotra et al., 2012). A qualitative research provides an understanding of how individuals actions are caused, this being a complex issue mostly considering the matter of chronologies than the cause and effect (Malhotra et al., 2012). This implies that decisions humans make are being influenced by history, this being one of the issues we are endeavouring to comprehend in this paper.

The empirical data will be collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews carried out in eleven companies. For exploratory studies, in-depth interviews are recommended (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The in-depth interviews provide a better understanding of the cases on an individual basis, uncovering main motivations and beliefs together with the
interviewee feelings and attitudes towards a specific topic. In-depth interviews may be of advantage in the search of opportunities, uniqueness, and new insights while conducting an exploratory research (Saunders et al. 2009). These allow the interviewees to share their own experience and stories and the interviewer to focus on these and make interpretations out of the conversation (Stake, 1995, Malhotra et al., 2012). We are able to discover hidden meanings and understand the motives behind their opinions, while guaranteeing to avoid social pressure and attributing the answers directly to the respondents, these being major risks in adopting the method of focus groups.

Nevertheless, in-depth interviews have both strengths and weaknesses. Taking into consideration the negative features of this method, it is time and effort consuming (Malhotra et al., 2012). The interviewer’s aptitude to formulate good questions influence the quality of the results from the gathered data (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Furthermore, there is the risk of unconsciously influencing the respondents and elaborating subjective interpretations that can lead to biases (Malhotra et al., 2012). Because the interviews require self-reflection, may become stressful for the interviewees, leading to an inability to express their thoughts and carrying a high emotional cost (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Moreover, because of the type of data collection and the focus on non-representative samples and since these do not allow statistical analysis, the achieved result cannot be generalisable to the whole population (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

Regarding the time horizons, due to certain limitation, it was not possible to conduct a long-term observation. This approach would have implied several meetings with the companies during a longer period of time. Thus, a cross-sectional research has been conducted to be able to measure multiple factors simultaneous and to examine potential underlying relationships among them (Saunders et al., 2007).

The timespan of an in-depth interview may be between thirty minutes or longer and may be conducted once or several times with the same subject in order to grasp a better understanding of the phenomena (Malhotra et al., 2012). In the beginning, the ethical issues must be discussed, together with the privacy concerns (Malhotra et al., 2012). The interview will start by stipulating and explaining the purpose of the study and what the participant will be able to gain from the process. Since the interviews will take place at the company's headquarter or offices, this will give us an opportunity to explore the environment of the firm. We may observe, for example, how the brand in depicted and portrayed inside the company and, how is being
displayed and how other stakeholders are interacting with it. This could further add value to the research (Malhotra et al., 2012). Furthermore, by using probing methods, such as laddering up or down we are able to provide significant responses and discover hidden issues (Malhotra et al., 2012).

It is further important that all the participant use the same format when recording the interviews, documenting the answers exactly how they were stated, not summarised and including all comments. All the information must be collected before closing the interview. The challenges of using in-depth interviews come from analysing and interpreting the collected data. It is difficult to observe how the participants express themselves and interpret their hidden messages. (Malhotra et al., 2012)

With regard to retain partial control over the explored topics and to circumvent losing the interviewees focus, we have developed a semi-structured interview, this being also the most widespread type of structure implemented in qualitative studies (Malhotra et al., 2012). In order to systematically answer the research questions, we have elaborated a mutual guideline for all the interviews, by using a topic guide in the preparation of the semi-structured interviews (Saunders et al., 2007). This is composed of informal topics and questions that can be addressed by the interviewer in no particular order. In the preparation of the topic guide, the research question, research design, and the sampling strategy have been revised in order to cover the purpose of the interviews and to conduct a valuable research. The comfort of the participants in answering the question and how they might understand and feel about a certain question has been taken into consideration. The question encourages open-ended answers, allowing the respondents to reflect on their experience, followed by probing and follow up questions (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The questions we used were based on the researched literature and also on information found on their websites regarding their brand and facts about the family.

In order to follow the ethical principles and to be clear and trustworthy about the research aim, we have provided informed consent to all the interviewees. The respondents’ consent for recording, transcription, translation, and analysis of the provided data was gathered. Being able to record the interview allowed us to direct our attention to the interviewee and his indirect communication (Saunders et al., 2007). Moreover, we have adopted the investigation triangulation in order to reduce the risk of individual bias, as the data has been collected in the presence of both researchers (Saunders et al., 2007).
Furthermore, in order to ensure the reliability of the interviews a pilot test has been conducted, as in to eliminate the problems that could arise during the interviews beforehand. The pilot test participant must be selected in accordance with the selection criteria from the same population and the entire questionnaire should be tested (Malhotra et al., 2012). After the completion of a pilot test with one family business several changes have roused leading to rephrasing and removal of certain questions. The pilot test resulted in the reformulation of two questions to be easier to understand and comprehensible. Moreover, it highlighted the need for better explaining the purpose of the study, the used terms because of the language barrier and differences, and according time for clarification questions from the interviewees regarding the study.

In order to answer the research questions of this thesis, the empirical findings are based on data collected through interviews with family businesses from Romania. The sample used in this research consists of eleven family firms from Romania, all of them fulfilling the selection criteria, further conducting one interview with a person from each company. The interviewers hold different positions in the companies, generally CEOs or companies’ department managers. Out of the 11 interviews, 9 were held with one member of the owning family and the total time reaching almost 10 hours, this being further detailed in ‘Table 2’. The interviews lasted on average 50 minutes and were conducted for only one time with each representant of the company. We choose companies acting in various industries, having different sizes and run by different generations, since our focus was on their brand (Table 1). Nevertheless, a greater number of companies have been contacted via emails and phone calls, but due to lack of time or appeal, they have declined to participate.

The location where the interviews were held was the offices of each firm, providing insights about the environment and the internal depiction of the family business brand. The language governing the interviews was Romanian since it is the native tongue of all participants. This decision allowed the participants to feel more relaxed and confident in providing valuable comments, not being constrained by the language.
Table 1: Interviewed companies’ details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Family Ownership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company A</td>
<td>Medium-sized enterprise</td>
<td>HoReCa</td>
<td>Family owned and managed, Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company B</td>
<td>Large-sized enterprise</td>
<td>Retail DIY</td>
<td>Family owned, Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company C</td>
<td>Medium-sized enterprise</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Family owned and managed, Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company D</td>
<td>Large-sized enterprise</td>
<td>HoReCa</td>
<td>Family owned and managed, Co.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company E</td>
<td>Small-sized enterprise</td>
<td>Manufacturing steel</td>
<td>Family owned and managed, Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company F</td>
<td>Medium-sized enterprise</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Family owned and managed, Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company G</td>
<td>Small-sized enterprise</td>
<td>HoReCa</td>
<td>Family owned and managed, Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company H</td>
<td>Small-sized enterprise</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>Family owned and managed, Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company I</td>
<td>Small-sized enterprise</td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Family owned and managed, Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company J</td>
<td>Small-sized enterprise</td>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>Family owned, Ltd.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company K</td>
<td>Small-sized enterprise</td>
<td>Tourism</td>
<td>Family owned, Ltd.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Interviews Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Interviewee role in the firm</th>
<th>Interview duration (Minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company A</td>
<td>First generation, CEO</td>
<td>54:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company B</td>
<td>Non-family member, CFO</td>
<td>58:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company C</td>
<td>First generation, CEO</td>
<td>55:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company D</td>
<td>Second generation, General Manager</td>
<td>43:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company E</td>
<td>First generation, CEO</td>
<td>48:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company F</td>
<td>Second generation, CEO</td>
<td>63:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company G</td>
<td>First generation, Marketing Manager</td>
<td>50:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company H</td>
<td>First generation, Sales Representative</td>
<td>51:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company I</td>
<td>First generation, CEO</td>
<td>65:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company J</td>
<td>Non-family member, HR Manager</td>
<td>55:00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company K</td>
<td>First generation, Accounting Manager</td>
<td>57:00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.3 Secondary data

The use of secondary data is another operative and economical method of obtaining useful information meant to clarify different aspects of the subject matter of the research and, unlike primary data, secondary data represents existing data stored in different forms (Saunders et al., 2007). This type of data has been collected for another purpose apart from the aim of this research. Secondary sources of information may be institutional and documentary, provided either by public institutions, national government bodies, and private companies, statistics,
online resources (Saunders et al., 2007). This information provides a background for the research.

Case studies typically involve multiple methods for data collection in order to ensure consistency and reliability of the information, thus using multiple sources can act as a way of triangulation (Saunders et al., 2007). In addition to the conducted interviews with family business owners and managers, secondary information has been collected from the companies’ web pages, articles, social media and other means of online presence the companies undertook. A critical mindset has been adopted in order to examine the origins and actual use value of the collected secondary data in order to minimise the possible bias interviewers may encounter. The criteria used in assessing information from external sources are the quality of information, the relevance of the information to the research needs and the cost of it (Saunders et al., 2007). The quality of the data has been further determined by the following three basic vectors: validity over time, accuracy and comparability. This research needs the latest data, but also make use of data from previous periods in order to better understand the problematics and further answer the research questions. (Malhotra et al., 2012). This data has been used to assess the presence of each company’s brand and the degree of family involvement in the branding process. Furthermore, we have correlated the secondary and primary data in order to minimise the risk of misinterpreting the information gathered from the interviews, helping secure the reliability of the interviews (Malhotra et al., 2012)

3.6 Data analysis

3.6.1 Content analysis

Since the purpose of this thesis is to understand the social roles of humans, integrating their interest in the study, the adopted ontology in this thesis is the relativism and the epistemological position is seen through the approach of social constructionism (Saunders et al. 2009). According to Nordqvist et al. (2008), it is highly relevant to adopt an interpretative approach when studying family businesses, as in to gain a wider understanding from multiple perspective starting from a general focus and further discover the themes from the empirical data gathered. The interpretive approach aims to explore a marketing phenomenon, not to test a hypothesis, thus it is sustained by several detailed small cases, such as the in-depth interviews with owners or managers of family firms from this thesis (Saunders et al. 2009). Therefore, in order to examine subjective information, it is conceivable to pick among a few distinct methodologies (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). The adopted data analysis technique in this thesis,
more exactly the qualitative content analysis, is a standout amongst the most broadly utilised systems of analysis according to Morse (2014). This demonstrates a few dangers, such as the fact that it relies upon the researchers’ aptitudes and their interpretation, while also tending to be tedious (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

Be that as it may, there are a few reasons supporting our decision. As a matter of first importance, content analysis is in harmony and coherent with the purpose of filling in the existing gaps in the literature (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Furthermore, since the aim is to research viewpoints past the physicality, which can't be profoundly investigated through insignificant perceptions, the content analysis proves to be the most suitable choice (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The content analysis permits incredible adaptability in the information investigation, change of codes or frames are being encountered more than once in the process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). This type of analysis is also related to the chosen method, the semi-structured interviews with probes being the most suitable ways of gathering data, enabling the collection of a decent amount of information (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Finally, content analysis enables us to lessen and sort out the gathered information in smaller content classifications, portraying the substance's implications methodically and in connection to our purpose and research questions (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

We have adopted in our exploratory study an inductive approach (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The content analysis technique can be utilised inductively or deductively, thus our decision of choosing the former approach is based on the research’s aim to gather information directly through the in-depth interviews, without forcing pre-arranged classifications or hypotheses in investigating the interviewees’ perceptions (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The codes and categories arose directly from the transcribed interviews. Moreover, the inductive category development is helping us to expand the current literature and build up new concepts out of the created models that describe the phenomenon (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

3.6.2 Analysis process

After the collection of both secondary and primary data, we have created a preliminary first coding in order to familiarise ourselves with the information and the direction of the research. We have analysed the data together to be able to maintain a continuous triangulation and a high degree of transparency between us, as to gain a deeper understanding of the provided data and to be able to trace back the generated codes. The emerged codes from each interview have been
discussed and agreed on between us in order to maintain the transparency, being further merged, re-arranged and adjusted. Furthermore, we have identified and framed the main categories based on the collected data and previously defined subcategories and codes.

Throughout the coding process, new codes have emerged based on new insights gained from the interviews. The coding process allowed us to point out similarities and differences with the family business branding. This process has continued for as long as new valuable formations were received (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008).

3.7 Ethical considerations

In order to provide a correct research from an ethical perspective, we took as guidance the ethical principles in business research provided by Bell’s and Bryman’s (2007). In qualitative research, the researchers often establish a relationship with the interviewers, working closely in order to obtain the best results and since the data collection includes contact with people, there is a possibility to misuse this research by taking advantage of these participants (Malhotra et al., 2012).

We have not endangered the respondents physical or psychological comfort, protecting them from any economic or social harm through privacy, keeping their identities secret and by maintaining a mannerly atmosphere, avoiding sensitive questions. Their participation was voluntary, having an informed consent and explanation of our research to reduce the unevenness of knowledge and power between investigators and participants. This informed consent protects their privacy, anonymity, certifying the ethical legitimacy of the research data, granting (Bell & Bryman, 2007). The participants’ anonymity is given by avoiding sharing traceable information of them and not disclosing their names. The collected data has been stored on a password protected hard-disk drive, non-accessible by third parties, as well as destroying the data with the closing stage of the study, guaranteeing the confidentiality of research data. By providing the participants with the result we have created reciprocity in the study.

Additionally, drawing from Bell and Bryman (2007), we are transparent and honest about our study’s purposes, methods, findings, and limitations. We are aware that the research process and thus our finding are being influenced by our involvement in the study. We elaborate on the limitations of this study in the respective chapter. We have avoided any deception about the nature of the study, did not receive any funding or have been affiliated to any of the companies, preventing any potential conflicts of interest (Bell & Bryman, 2007). We aim to protect the
research community’s and our integrity by being transparent about our ethical considerations and following ethical principles (Bell & Bryman, 2007), and to contribute to the academic discourse on family business branding.

3.8 Trustworthiness

In order to generate a trustworthy study and a high level of quality in our research, we have adopted the criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Credibility parallels internal validity and represents the findings reliability and truth level (Bryman, 2012). In addition, transferability ensures applicability of the findings in other contexts. Using qualitative research also requires a smaller sample group and a higher chance for participants to share the same characteristics (Bryman, 2012). Guba and Lincoln (1985) state that when findings appear in one context or maybe the same context at some other time, they are considered empirical issues. Therefore, it is important to make it possible for others to transfer the findings to other contexts in the database. Dependability takes the auditing approach of the research conducted, indicating that records are maintained throughout all phases of the research. Furthermore, confirmability ensures that the authors are not biased, acting in good faith and not indulging in personal values or clearly attempting to point out the findings of the research (Bryman, 2012). Due to the time limitation and access to supporting resources, we have to acknowledge that we were not able to fulfil those criteria to their full extent. However, we have addressed them as much as possible within the frame of our ability, since is in our best interest.

Considering the first criteria of credibility, which states that the collected data and the interpretation of them must be verified by various people involved in the research process, we have applied triangulation in several steps. Data analysis perspectives are from multiple researchers, so credibility can be assured. Triangulation will support this thesis as the research is led by two authors, thereby ensuring two different thesis perspectives (Bryman, 2012). Since we applied a social constructionist position, we made use of investigation triangulation to develop our interpretations and research findings, diminish the bias during the collection and assessing data processes (Hastings, 2012). Furthermore, by collecting secondary data about the interviewed companies, we have triangulated with our primary data, providing complementary understandings, such as information about the family business image and their branding promotion, further increasing the study’s credibility. Finally, since we have incorporated data from more than one company with different sizes and from different industries, we took into consideration the triangulation of perspectives (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).
Taking up the condition of transferability, the emerged finding should be applicable for the setting in which they are created and framed to a certain degree and, so they can be connected to elective settings, on the off chance that they do (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). By providing a good description of the context and the dependency of collected data, we argue for the implication of the context in our research problem and justify the purpose and the research questions. The context implications over the collected data correspond to the dependence of transferability and allow for judging if the result can be assigned to a different context or not (Guba & Lincoln, 1981).

The dependability concept argues that there are variances in the contexts in which data has been collected since these are continuously evolving. Thus, in order to generate stable finding and ensure the dependability of our data, we have provided thorough explanations of our research procedures and the chosen instruments. It is important that the readers understand our approach and are able to recreate the data collection in comparable conditions (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). Moreover, through the contextualisation of the data and findings and triangulation procedures, we address the criterion of dependability.

Finally, the fourth criterion of confirmability aims to avoid researchers’ biases, meaning that the data should match the drawn interpretations or findings. A qualitative research cannot provide an objective result; thus, it goes for confirmability by definition (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). The suggested methods to increase the study’s confirmability are triangulation, in order to avoid bias, and also reflexivity methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1981) The reflexivity methods are referring to the context recognition, the mutual influences and interdependent relations among context, process, and instruments of knowledge development, and the researchers themselves (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). We are illustrating our position regarding this study through the adopted research philosophies, demonstrating our role as researchers. Additionally, in accordance with Guba & Lincoln (1981) suggestions, the quality of our study is being determined also by our project supervisor and grader confirmability audit of the data interpretation and further findings.
4. Empirical findings

In the fourth chapter of this paper the empirical findings from the interviewed family businesses will be presented. The chapter is divided into two main parts according to the aggregated dimensions that followed from the coding process. It starts by presenting the family business brand communication, which includes the themes of family business identity, image, and reputation. Further, the findings of the family business context are presented.

As we engaged in this analytic process, we came to recognise the benefits of including rigorous within- and across-case analysis and to form patterns. Across-case analysis supported the identification of themes and relationships among themes that described the family business branding experiences with the entire range of interviewed families within the specified context. At the same time, within-case analysis enabled the development of themes taking into account particular factors that shaped the family business branding experiences of individual family members and the family unit as a whole. Moreover, within- and across case comparisons contributed to our ability to present the results of our analysis, by taking advantage of the richness of our data set and the complexity of these families’ experiences.

The purpose of this thesis is to understand how the conceptualisations of family business identity, image and reputation relates to the business brand in the context of Romania. By creating a codebook, we have grouped the information in two aggregated dimensions: The family business brand communication and family business brand context. In the following table (Table 3) we depict the main findings from the within-case analysis and represent the formed patterns which will be further discussed and presented from an across-case analysis according to the aggregated dimension of family business communication and the related themes. According to the colour used for highlighting each company, we evidenced those who promote themselves as a family business and portray their family with colour green, those who undertake a balanced approach in yellow and the ones who do not promote as family companies in blue.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aggregated Dimension</th>
<th>Family Business Identity</th>
<th>Family Business Brand Communication</th>
<th>Family Business Image</th>
<th>Family Business Reputation</th>
<th>Relevance of the family brand</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pride of the owning family</strong></td>
<td><strong>Depiction of the owning family</strong></td>
<td><strong>Family role</strong></td>
<td><strong>Level of family portrayal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Representation of owning family</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concept</strong></td>
<td><strong>High appreciation for past achievements.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Family is strongly integrated in the business.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Direct involvement; quality and stability insurers.</strong></td>
<td><strong>High level of family portrayal, being present in almost all communicated messages.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Present in the company logo. All family members are present throughout shared pictures.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company A</strong></td>
<td><strong>The company size is the reason for satisfaction.</strong></td>
<td><strong>There is no significant relationship between family and business values.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Drivers of innovation, providers of oversight.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Not present in all communicated messages.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mentioned in the media. Distant in their own promotion.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company B</strong></td>
<td><strong>Well pleased with community sustainability.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Family as communication facilitator.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Local employers; innovation driver.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Specific situations when presenting the firm.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Only the first-generation owners.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Business Identity</strong></td>
<td><strong>High level of family portrayal, being present in almost all communicated messages.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Association of the family name with the company. Members as brand ambassadors.</strong></td>
<td><strong>New media: website, social media. Printed materials in the store proximity.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Factor of identification and recognition.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Company and family overlap. Positive results.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company C</strong></td>
<td><strong>No specific role as a family. Sharing the ownership.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Not present in all communicated messages.</strong></td>
<td><strong>There is no evidence of the company being family run.</strong></td>
<td><strong>High traditional marketing. Inadequate online presence.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Related to the company not the family itself.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company D</strong></td>
<td><strong>Clear distortion between family and company.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Avoidance of family identification.</strong></td>
<td><strong>No representation of the family in their messages.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Traditional marketing through printed materials. No online presence.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Social media being the generator of negative reviews.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company E</strong></td>
<td><strong>The company has its own independent history.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The company is an extension of the family. Members as brand ambassadors.</strong></td>
<td><strong>New media: website, social media. Billboards in proximity.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Factor of identification and recognition.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Company and family overlap. Positive results.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company F</strong></td>
<td><strong>Separate entities</strong></td>
<td><strong>The family is the board of the company.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Local employers; long-term vision guarantors.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Small community, there is no need for further portrayal</strong></td>
<td><strong>The family aspect is missing from any representation.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company G</strong></td>
<td><strong>The family is the business owner.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Long-term vision.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Avoidance of family identification.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The family is absent from any messages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Printed materials, billboards and radio commercials.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company H</strong></td>
<td><strong>The family is the board of the company.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Local employer and long-term stability provider.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Increasing the level of family portrayal from the succession up to now.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The family is present only on the official website and not all the members.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Website, social media, radio commercial, printed materials.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company I</strong></td>
<td><strong>The company has its own independent history.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Local employer and community developer.</strong></td>
<td><strong>No motivation for family depiction.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The family is considered to be already known by the key stakeholders.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Printed materials, billboards and radio commercials.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company J</strong></td>
<td><strong>The family is the business owner.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Long-term vision.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Avoidance of family identification.</strong></td>
<td><strong>The family is absent from any messages</strong></td>
<td><strong>Printed materials, newspaper announcement, word of mouth. Third party online promotion.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Family business branding communication
4.1 The family business brand communication

The family business brand communication aggregated dimension includes how the family businesses are communicating their family aspect and which factors influence their decision. The themes comprised in this dimension have provided insights on the key factors influencing the family business brand communication. These were defined by the three conceptualisations which characterise the family business brand, meaning the family business image, identity, and reputation. These have been correlated with the emerged concepts drawn from the conducted interviews. In order to answer properly to the research questions, we were interested in the concepts characterising each theme, as these reflect the main reasons a family undertake in promoting their family business brand.

4.1.1 The family business identity

As previously discussed in the literature review, the organisational identity theory advocates the fact that a family business may differ in their tendency to promote the family aspect of their company towards the stakeholders (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). This depends on how strongly the owning family members are committed and identify themselves with the family business, factors highlighted in their efforts to promote the company’s brand. The identified concepts reflecting the identity are the pride of the owning family, the depiction of the owning family and the family role.

During the interviews, the respondents described themselves as being highly devoted and fervent workers, dedicated to the mission and vision of their business. The interviewees have compared their family companies with non-family businesses in order to motivate that they are more committed in relation with the company and the stakeholders, claiming that the involved feelings are higher and are reflected in the way the company and its communications are managed. When they are promoting their business brand, they are trying to transmit the values of the company, which are, up to a certain extent, the ones of the owning family, despite if they portray or not their family aspect in their brand.

“My father has created this company and now I am slowly taking over. We are responsible for this business, the employees and the (family) members involved. I am respectful and grateful for what my father has managed to create and proud to share that this whole firm has been
developed by one family. This is a reflection of our home and we promote this as it brings positive reactions.” – Company F

“Those (companies) managed by a board and shareholders do not share emotions, just shares. We have a lot of feelings involved, like true love and passion for what we are making ...” – Company G

There is a sense of pride across the owning families but is not based on the long-standing history of the company, since all of them are founded after the 1990, fact which characterise them as rather new family businesses. The members’ pride is grounded more in their achievements, or in the ones of the founding member. The interviewed family members are sharing their story, telling what they have achieved during a time of high uncertainty, in a damaged economy when people lost their trust, letting their customers and partners know what and how they have managed to succeed.

“We are proud that we have managed to create such a business and survived to tell the story with faith in our values and the fact that they will be seen as the truth by a confused customer. Saying that we are a family business helped us from the beginning.” – Company A

The role of the family is mostly claimed to be that of a guarantee for long-term stability and continuity. Interviewees stated that they are directly involved in the company and are active members of the team. Also, the employees are trusting them and their ethics, feeling the family as being closer and more involved in the business. Since some of them are local businesses, they have a high sense of responsibility for the community, as a large extent of their stakeholders are from their close proximity and rely on their business, them being one of the main income providers for many of the locals.

“We are the main employer in this village, and everybody knows us, our family. This puts quite some pressure on us, but we are also in the company and if we do not make it prosper is bad for all.” – Company C

“This town is generating business for us and we are trying to give back by growing and getting more and more people involved.” - Company J
As family companies, their aim is to ensure a higher quality for their products or services, superior customer experience, and customer orientation, and also a better treatment for their employees. They portray themselves as being more reliable and trustworthy in comparison to non-family businesses. Their ambition, responsibility, and passion for the family company is higher, making them do things differently, such as sometimes taking decisions based on feelings or working odd hours. “This is not a 9 to 5 job, more of a 24/7, it’s a lifestyle now” (Company C). This determination would later pass onto the employees, sometimes demanding too much from them, but it is accompanied by better rewarding and involvement, offering them help when needed. One of the companies claimed that their employees are aware of what they will be put up to when joining the company, all the hard work, and demanding tasks, but they keep fighting for a spot, as they know that they will be highly rewarded for their achievements, being valued and treated with respect. “They know that we are a family together with all of our employees…they grew with us” (Company F).

4.1.2 The family business image

A family business image is a function of how stakeholders perceive the company in regard to the messages it sends through names, logos, products, services and through self-promotion, including expressing its corporate vision. Stakeholders form their own perception of the company based on the communicated messages. The interviewed companies claimed that there are differences between what they are aiming to communicate and what it is being perceived by the public, this being often a problem of analysing the existence of a match between the transmitted message and the perceived one and adjusting the strategy accordingly. Stakeholders usually have already a certain perception of the company before interacting with it. Their opinion is different from one industry to another, based on the amount of information shared, what each organisation is communicating, interactions of other persons and the recognition of the visual symbols. The identified concepts reflecting the family business image are the level of family portrayal, representation of owning family and communication methods.

“Think of a burger from McDonald’s, everybody knows what to expect even if they never had one. It’s harder for us working in the HoReCa industry, we interact directly and a lot with the customer and if something goes wrong everybody will know it.” – Company D

Despite the fact that all the companies interviewed fulfil the characteristics of a family business, not all of them share this aspect. The managers responded that they do not endorse themselves
as a family company in their communicated messages, logo or products, keeping their family out of their promotion endeavours (Company B, D, E, I, K). They claim that many of their customers know already that they are a family company and that the word of mouth helps them in acquiring new customers. They do not feel the need to portray their family this much in relation to their customer as they fear overexposure and the stakeholders scrutinising every action of each family member. They believe that putting their family upfront will generate more burdens for their company, than bringing in benefits.

“People talk, and news travels fast, especially bad ones. This is a small community and everybody knows that we are a family. We do not need to put it on a billboard.” – Company H

“With all these social media, I do not want to get my family under a constant watch.” – Company E

Company E further claimed that, after an interaction with the company, one stakeholder may change their perception in better or worse. It recalled a bad experience a customer had with one of the family representatives who, displeased with the received treatment, posted on a social media platform the discussion which caused not only a negative reaction from other persons in relation towards the business but also towards the family itself. This being the reason why they have decided not to portray their family in their branding and keep this aspect on a low profile as much as possible.

There are also companies that take a more subtle approach to promoting their family aspect. They make use of certain situations to endorse the fact that they are a family business such as throughout special events or when presenting their company. The owners mentioned that they have started to communicate the fact that they are a family firm on their websites, claiming that customers associate this with a more personal business, who provides a better customer service (Company C and J). They are still in the incipient part of getting their brand centred around the family aspect and the creation of new messages this requires.

“We are saying that we are a family firm on our website ... customers are reacting to this and are more interested in our company.” – Company J

At the other end of the spectrum, there are few companies that purposely market themselves as a family business, saying that both customers and employees are perceiving it positively.
Communicating to their customers the fact that they are a family business relates to an increased level of trust and reassurance company A claims. Companies F and G believe that by sharing images with the owning family, gives the company a familiar face and generate different emotions for stakeholders, giving the opportunity for customers to identify the owners and empathise with them. They are taking very seriously and thoroughly their online and social media marketing strategy, highlighting their story in their brand, connecting their name to the family business. One example may be the fact that they have posts where there are the family members growing and working in the company over the years, thus giving the company a face and a stable and long-standing image.

The interviewed companies are promoting their business brand using a wide variety of communication channels. The traditional advertising is still present through outdoor billboards, in-store displays, and printed materials shared in the proximity of the physical location or where the targeted customer is situated, these being the ones that are currently the most cost-efficient according to most of them. TV and radio commercial were mentioned only by a large company and still these means are considered to be unable to bring the right benefits. The new media, such as social media, is being embraced by several companies and used to a large extent in order to communicate their values, while others are currently building on this or not using it at all, arguing that they find it hard to deal with the open criticism and the competition in an environment they do not know at all. Companies A, F, and G mentioned that they make use of any small local event or even larger scale ones where their business could fit in order to get more visibility and attract new customers. For the companies F and G, personal communication is highly important, them becoming brand ambassadors of their family business. This is how they want to assure the stakeholders that everything is done right, and they can trust the company in offering them high-quality products and services.

“Is different when the owners stand behind the brand and make sure that everything is done well, the clients are feeling it...” – Company G

“...we are the image of the company this is why we go in person to all events.” – Company F

4.1.3 The family business reputation

The main observation of the interviewed companies is that the reputation is different from the image, as it is built up over a great period of time, not being one’s perception at a specific
moment. In contrast with identity which is a product based on internal constituencies, the reputation is constructed by both internal and external ones. Most of the companies admit that in today’s market, branding is important, and the family business is closely linked to the reputation of the owning family, thus is imperative to protect the good name of the family. The identified concept reflecting the family business reputation are the community scrutiny, family publicity, and relevance of the family brand.

Company A stated their awareness of the fact that their company by itself or their products do not worth that much for what they solely are, but if associated with their family and what they are meaning to their stakeholders, being them the suppliers, clients, and the community, the perceived value is increasing. Their success lies in how they are being perceived by the community they are part of since they are located in a rather small town. Company A together with Company F and G are envisaging an approachable family image, with a human touch, contributing towards the social and economic development of the community. They are acting on behalf of a public relations strategy to align stakeholders’ expectations with their shared beliefs, thus improving their reputation.

“Of course, people know our name and who we are. This is why they are buying from us and keep coming back.” – Company G

“As time have passed and we have proved our quality people have noticed it and build trust. Now we have old customers who are promoting our firm just because they believe in us.” – Company F

The companies who stated that they do not promote their family in the business brand, claimed that they find it very hard to pay attention to their image and to be transparent (Company B, D, H, K). The concerns are related to public scrutiny and the long-term implications. One claimed that if there were to be some sorts of an outrage, the majority of people will point at the family, since they are representing the business, which will have an unwanted effect upon all the family members, being or being not directly involved in the business: “If something goes bad, we are to be blamed and everybody will know it, even if it wasn’t our fault.”(Company K) This was called by the Company K owner the “small-town effect”. Because of this, the owners tend to separate themselves from the business and grow the companies’ reputation through the quality of the products and not getting involved in the branding process at a personal level. By sharing the fact that they are a family firm, they become visible at an intimate level. Also, the Company
E owner mentioned that everything he or members of his family will be doing in their private lives will be linked to the company. The huge responsibility and being able to live with this proved to be a risk he does not want to assume.

For the Companies A, F and G, the situation is different as they claim that the family’s name reputation made the business grow and the fact that they have been always open about their background transmitted a positive image, more specifically the image of a family which people can trust and grew to admire. Company F has reached a point where they are thinking about a rebranding campaign in order to introduce the family’s name beside the company’s existent one since they believe it will make their status of a family more recognisable and to by putting an emphasis on their family reputation people will identify the company easier. Companies A, C F, and G consider to be highly important to signal that the company is family owned and run, a fact that is helping them to create a positive image to which people can relate to.

“Clients perceive us differently compared to other companies (non-family businesses) because we do not have that feeling of a corporation, people claiming that they are like between friends with us.” – Company G

“Being able to share the family aspect is tough, to be open and admit when you have problems, but this pays off, people gain trust and you may find yourself in a position where you can provide to the community and the community will help you back.” – Company A

On the question, if they believe that the family notion matter to their stakeholders, the companies actively portraying their family in their brand claimed that it definitely matters, having a significant positive impact on their relationships and financials, while the others told that it bears no reason. Company C mentioned that they are promoting their family background differently to stakeholder groups. When interacting with other firms they tend to keep out this aspect, since it will make them appear less professional and increase the risk for the others, in comparison to customers who are appreciating their regionalism and tradition, portraying their family giving people the sense of reliability.

“If you find yourself in a negotiation for a deal, the family aspect may raise some question of internal disputes that will lead to problems for both of the parties. If we do not fell as being advantageous, we usually do not portray our company as a family business to other firms.” – Company C
Up until ten to fifteen years ago, the family company itself was the main and most reliable source of information regarding their services and products and could control the content, amount and speed of distributed messages. Interviewed companies claimed that that the emergence of the internet and more specifically the social media platforms affected their ability to control the shared information as their reputation is no longer influenced only by their behaviour and communication, but also by what information their stakeholders are receiving from others. They perceive this as being a threat, having less to any control over the information shared by others through social media.

“There are good and bad comments, but the ones that carry the biggest impact are the negative ones...customers tend to follow them and decide not to interact with us. These affect our reputation. “ - Company I

“We are trying to satisfy all of our customers and we do not possess the necessary skills and capabilities to be able to reach out and respond to every rumour, thus we will not expand our promotion on other platforms until we do not have proper tools.” - Company K

4.2 Family business context

After the fall of communism in Romania, the family business context started to bloom. One reason for this is related to the fact that families have played an extremely important role within the Romanian businesses’ environment development, as it is the one informal institution that has survived the communist era. Additionally, through its role within the community, respondents have suggested that their family businesses have a clear advantage in the first stages of its existence compared to non-family companies, mainly as a result to high levels of mistrust surrounding the latter.

After 1990, the hasty reforms and the governmental interventions have hindered, to some degree, the emergence of private companies. As a consequence, most of the emerged companies have been self-financed from family funds, rather than other types of raising capital such as banks or different funding programmes. The interviewees stated that they have raised capital throughout the family in the incipient stages, later being able to access other funds to be able to grow. On the other hand, due to the ascension to the European Union and NATO, the access towards financial instruments has grown over time and now family businesses have more
flexibility and external types of funding are becoming more common in the funding stage. Due to this aspect members of a family are more likely to start a family business or grow the actual one.

“It all started when my wife and I decided to use some our savings in pursuing our dream to run a business. Since then, it has grown steadily to what you see now and much more.” - Company A

“After selling some family-owned assets my father decided to reinvest and build a company.” - Company F

“We are trying to receive funds through an EU Programme for regional development. Our company is a statement in the community and now it can grow.” - Company G

Family businesses in Romania have a very short history compared to the ones in Western Europe, and they are currently in the period of the first succession process. The new generations to come are more lenient and driven towards new ideas and principles. Company F which have dealt with the first succession have referred to sustainability and technology as prime drivers in branding, rather than the old traditions of their predecessors.

“We already are aware that the family is an important factor for our customer, as our services revolve around providing the best products and experience for clients, we try to promote ourselves as much as we can on our web-store, social media or in throughout locals. ... nowadays with all the trends for businesses to become more greener, we also sought the opportunity to capitalise on it and to encourage this type of behaviour not only in our family but also within the community by setting an example ...” - Company F

As traditions struggle to adapt to nowadays cultural fast-paced changes, the definition of family is itself under scrutiny. The identity values of the society in which Romanians live are increasingly being attacked and the family has become a target. The family is rarely seen restrictively as being based only on marriage. The family is often extensive, consisting of parents and children, but also of grandparents and other close relatives. The political debates between the traditionalists and the more modernist approach of what family and marriage means and how they are currently defined by the Romanian Constitution led to several discrepancies and confusions among people and business. The entire attention brought by the government
toward the family during the previous year had also an impact on those companies portraying their family aspect, the owners claiming that there were some negative reactions to their messages. On the contrary, one company who do not promote their family claimed that the traditional family defines our culture and other options must be hindered.

"This choice of ours is not against anyone and is part of my education. The fact that I believe that the chance to revive the Romanian people lies in the family that proclaims and educates their offspring in the spirit of traditional values and aspirations is part of my Romanian destiny, but others have different opinions and concepts of what family is." – Company E

Another observation that is referring to the Romanian context and has emerged from the empirical evidence is related to the lack of a bigger and more centralised hub for family businesses and family business experts. Company I mentioned the lack of knowledge about family firms in Romania, being no specific central database or some analysis conducted on this specific type of companies. They are in the first stage of the succession process and looking for consultancy or some guidance from other companies, but this is still hard to reach, thus they are turning to family relations for advice. Only Company J has stated the example of the first civil society for family companies, the Family Business Network Romania, which they have interacted with. This initiative has been created with the sole purpose of connecting and helping out all of the family businesses within the country, but since its opening in 2012, it hasn’t reached yet its purpose, claims the owner.

“Nowadays we are trying to include it (family image aspect) in all of the marketing channels that we use, and it seems that this recommendation has brought us more business, more trust during negotiations and other relations. … my father hasn’t promoted the family aspect from the start, due to the fact that it didn’t even cross his mind that it would impact our business in such a positive way and the environment was still uncertain he claimed. … When we decided to promote us as a family firm, we have turned to FBN Romania, since they had some conferences a while ago within the city. They gave us some recommendations and that was it.” – Company J

The companies who do not promote themselves as family businesses, Companies E, H, I, and K seems to be unaware of the advantages this may bring. Moreover, their marketing strategies are outdated, clinging to the traditional methods of printed materials, newspaper
advertisements, radio and TV commercials. These business owners haven’t been exposed or been knowledgeable of the opportunities that any of the other channels have.

Another interesting aspect that surfaced during the interviews is referred to as the inability of older generations to use efficiently the technology and the internet. Company D stated that they didn’t have any previous experience with the internet before, and the only recent encounter that they had dates from the recent decade where the internet had become a commodity and the adaptation to this was inevitable. Moreover, Companies J and K have also mentioned that due to the continuous innovations and automation of processes, it has become a lot harder for them to learn those new opportunities that new technologies bring.

“I don’t use that much social media or different tools to brand our company, the marketing that we have is done by another company that has posted our facility on their site. At the moment I’m pretty satisfied with the clients that we get from it...” - Company J

Another notable observation from our study is that the older the family business owners are, the more likely are not to be involved in branding on “newer” channels of marketing. They often feel “overwhelmed” by those types of processes and delegate a member of their family, in most cases the daughter or the son, to be in charge of the “online” image of the company.

“We usually brand ourselves (referring to as family businesses) through all the channels that we can pursue. I feel overwhelmed by all those new technologies and gizmos and applications and I do not get how to work with them.” - Company H

The last observation that has emerged from our study is referring to the governmental interventions and coercion. Company G and D have mentioned that they are looking to or have already access grants or loans from the government through EU funded programmes or through a national or local investment fund in order to grow their business. Moreover, there is a consensus among the interviewed complained that in the last period of time, due to the unpredictability of the governmental reforms and chaotic management, the business owners have become more reluctant in reinvesting their capital, as they are more likely towards savings. However, even with those being said, the family owners are still optimistic about their future and the one of the company.
“I am extremely certain that the family notion is important in our small community, as they can somehow relate to some degree to our company and the running family. However, if we talk more generally about family businesses, I feel they are underrepresented nationwide, and the current government isn’t helping that much ... they (referring to the current government) are drastically changing things overnight without even warning us about what’s going to happen.”

- Company C

“... as you can clearly observe on the market today everything so hectic and chaotic, and we have to rely more on ourselves, you can’t go on and trust that the system will help you ... even the actual government on doing things right without thinking how bad is going to affect our business” - Company E
5. Analysis

In the fifth chapter of the thesis, we will provide the empirical findings and its relation to the literature and frame of reference. The analysis follows the themes composing the aggregate dimension of family business brand communication, including the family business context. Lastly, the model of influencing factors is introduced as guidance towards answering the research questions.

5.1 Identity-related factors

Dyer & Whetten (2006) argued that family members with a strong organisational identification, up to a level where their individual identity and the one of the organisations is overlapping, tend to be devoted to the business and develop a common family duty to see the business thrive. Furthermore, in accordance with previous research, the family business represents an augmentation of the family members, making huge efforts to maintain a positive organisational identity (Dyer & Whetten, 2006). The empirical findings displayed that the sense of belonging is strong in Romanian families and affects how they portray their organisation to the public, shaping their external image and develop the reputation. The cultural tradition that highlights the importance of the group over the individual has been developed during the Communism era when people lived in common in standardised living spaces, the family becoming a place that raised trust and the group to become united. These aspects have still remained evident and are noticeable in each company’s identity.

Based on the empirical findings, the families are aware of their values and understand the importance of them but is not something documented and actively promoted. There is a common sense of pride between the family businesses which has its roots in the transition period and the fact that they have managed to overcome such a problematic period and become successful. Family firm identity can build shared opinions for the family members to rally around creating a sense of oneness and shared destiny for family individuals and leading the members to view the accomplishment of the companies’ commitments as a wellspring of pride (Sundaramurthy & Kreiner, 2008). This pride may be a source for success, influencing the role of the family, as a motive for continuity, being great also for providing trust in potential partners and closing sales, but it may have several shortcomings. One can be the fact that families becomes scared in asking for help as the succession problems are starting to occur and another
one can be the decision process as the leaders, most of them being those who started the business, are not asking for other opinions and consult with the team.

According to the literature, businesses that promote their family firm identity to external stakeholders have substantial performance benefits (Memili et al., 2010). Moreover, by promoting their values such as loyalty, fairness, respect and continuity can establish an ‘extended family’ of stakeholders which could reinforce them, resulting in a competitive advantage for the company that enhances performance (Sorenson et al., 2009; Zellweger et al., 2010). However, since only four out of eleven companies actively promote and portray their family in their family brand, the performance benefits are rather based on other factors. Despite not portraying their family in their brand, almost all the companies promote the values of loyalty, fairness, and respect which are characteristic for family firms. Companies identify themselves with the family business by having a strong sense of belonging to the family firm, sharing a common history and a family name, supporting the values and goals of the family firm, thus having a well-defined family business identity, but they do not want to advertise their family, portray it in their brand, as they fear the repercussions.

Managers and family business owners believe that their businesses have a distinct market identity defined by unique and sustainable values. Thus, respondents specifically mentioned that they do everything in their power to keep their employees, saying that they have a sense of responsibility for increasing the employment rate in the areas in which they work. Responsibility also extends to the desire to support local community initiatives, thus contributing to the overall development of the region in which they are located. The higher sense of responsibility for the community is also expressed in the literature, supporting that family companies are more inclined to be devoted to their stakeholders and to act accordingly to their wellbeing (Sundaramurthy and Kreiner, 2008).

Family businesses risk becoming closed in their community and too anchored in everyday issues. Although they are more flexible and creative than multinational companies, they can be lagging behind when it comes to market information and access to the latest operating methods and tools. All of this can lead to an increased temptation to involve external management as a way to keep up with the market.

One of the main challenges in developing a family business is to attract talent. Family businesses not only find it difficult to attract people to their organisational culture, but it often
proves difficult to integrate them as well as to maintain their long-term motivation. It seems that many of the best-prepared potential employees prefer to work in multinational companies, considered more stable and having more concrete career development opportunities.

The interviews exhibited that few of the organisations comprehend the significance of the employees feeling pride when working at the family firm. The owners discussed the significance of having satisfied employees talking in great terms of the privately-run company as a good employer, this factor further influencing their reputation in the community. Furthermore, potential workers should discover the privately-owned company as an alluring employer (Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013). Company E emphasised that it is important for their company to have employees with a decent and managed appearance since they will end up being the clients' perceived image of the business, being the first person they interact with, further affecting their brand. The family values are underpinning branding. In the process of implementing a family business brand, there has to be a strong and natural connection between the family, implicitly company’s values and the purpose and people’s behaviour, since the businesses are the engine of the brand. Therefore, employees particularly have to be aware that they are together with the family members brand ambassadors.

Five interviewed organisations said they deliberately showcase themselves as a family company, as those organisations believed is associated with something positive. The principal contention most of the organisations referenced was the way that family companies are closer to the client and more personal than non-privately-run companies. One company believed that by promoting their family aspect characterises their firm as being more real, having a face and a soul, particularly while prevailing with regards to conveying their business values. The companies that are promoting themselves as families stated that their personal aspect in an advantage over other companies. Literature support that branding is an efficient way o creating a competitive advantage and has an influence over recruiting and attracting new employees as also as other stakeholders. By promoting the family’s values through the company’s brand, businesses may find this to be advantageous in drawing in candidates who hold comparative qualities to the business' very own qualities (Blombäck & Ramirez-Pasillas, 2012). The exploration conducted by Binz Astrachan et al. (2014) infers there is a higher possibility for occupation candidates to apply for employment coordinating their very own qualities.
5.2 Image-related factors

According to the studies conducted by Zellweger et al. (2010) and Chen et al. (2008), the family owners have an increased influence on the identity and the image of a family business. This is sustained also by family business owners that have been interviewed, as they are using and participating in the strategies that aim to convey their family business image. Moreover, it has been observed that in companies A, F, and G by following up on different strategies to convey their message and by exploring and pursuing different channels simultaneously (both formal and informal) they have achieved the desired targets in image communication. Those empirical findings are also sustained by the previous study of Gioia et al. (2000) that has emphasised the fact that the management should be more focused not on preserving a fixed identity but rather on managing and balancing a flexible identity from the continuous change external image perspective. However, it has been observed that, contrary to the literature, family business owners even though they manage a shifting external image tend to switch to preserving a fixed identity when under external stakeholder scrutiny.

The image of the business, according to Dyer and Whetten (2006), represents the first impression that is projected on the stakeholders from the outer organisation. Based on the secondary data collected about the companies it has been observed that the stakeholders have developed already some feelings and preconceptions about the company and to some degree, the business owners are more inclined to take more control over the family business image rather than delegating it to someone with more expertise. From our findings, it has surfaced that the stakeholder’s opinion varies to some degree from one industry to another one, by how much information is communicated, by how much visibility the logo has and by the daily interactions with them.

As family business owners regard their organisation as their own extension (Deephouse & Jaskiewicz, 2013) we can also extend the affirmation to that the image of the organisation is as well a representation of the image of the owners. Moreover, according to the research conducted by Craig et al. (2008), the name of the organisation is associated with the family business owners. Our empirical findings suggest that due to their degree of implication and affiliation to the business, family owners tend to either promote their image more often or they keep a low profile, fearing the public criticisms that may be directed towards their business and their family also. Within our research, the interviewees do not always take in account the benefits of creating their family business image and they are satisfied at the moment with their minimal effort since
they are not aware of the competitive advantages that the image of their company might entail. Moreover, due to the viva voce, the family businesses gain new customers, in spite of the fact that they are trying to avoid being under scrutiny. The fear of community scrutiny and public denigration of the family business image has its roots in the Romanian traditionalist approach of the family aspect and its importance in building and sustaining a community, being also a pride issue.

In other cases, the businesses owners have changed their long-term vision and now they are just starting to portray their unique image as a family firm. According to our empirical findings, this is a direct result of on one hand the professional business consultancy or on the other hand by mere self-realisation. Additionally, has sequentially convinced the owners to include this aspect of their unique nature into their communication channels. In contrast to other family business owners that are leveraging their family brand image, mainly by imparting their values and legacy, when they are pursuing new customers. The empirical findings that have been analysed, in that regard, are in line with several past studies that are emphasising that a unique family business image can support firm performance (Zellweger et al., 2012), increase loyalty within the customer pool (Orth & Green, 2009; Sageder, Duller & Mitter, 2015) and are regarded as more reliable (Craig et al., 2008; Levenburg, 2006).

Not only that the family business image incorporates a depiction of the nature of a family organisation that is promoted to all the stakeholders, but also how the family is portrayed and promoted (Parmentier, 2011; Binz Astrachan & Astrachan, 2015) within the communicated messages (Micelotta & Raynard, 2011). As well as the literature, the empirical findings suggest that the family business owners that promote their image are doing it both within the community and nationwide by using a wide variety of channels (Traditional and New media). Notably, the more channels have interviewed companies pursued in promoting the family image, they encountered more benefits, than disadvantages. Despite that, the new media is not widely used because of the lack of education in this marketing area and the traditionalist view the first generation of owners have. Another reason is the late introduction of the Internet in Romania, the poor infrastructure that covers the country and the fact that half of the population doesn’t have access to the Internet (INS, 2018). These contextual impediments together with the personal ones hinder the family businesses to promote their company in the online environment, thus relying on the traditional means to endorse their image.
5.3 Reputation-related factors

Managers and family business owners believe that their businesses have a distinct market identity defined by unique and sustainable values which are further influencing the stakeholders’ perception through the transmitted messages. In accordance with the literature, the main focus of the families when increasing their reputation is on customers and employees, as they are the main receivers of the communicated messages by the company (Beck and Prügl, 2015; Botero, 2014). Companies are claiming that they have a sense of responsibility for increasing the employment rate in the areas in which they work. Responsibility also extends to the desire to support local community initiatives, thus contributing to the overall development of the region in which they are located.

Based on the empirical evidence, the process of growing the family business reputation is much more complex, as it is shaped by an interaction between the three perspectives defining the family business brand, the identity, image, and reputation. Companies are putting a lot of effort to match stakeholders’ expectations or, in case there is a negative reputation building up, to challenge their expectations, shifting them to a positive one. With respect to the level of control a family business may have over its image and reputation, both are influenced by the company’s behaviour and by its communication, moreover, what the stakeholders may hear from others carry a lot of prejudice over the firm and its reputation. Romanian companies who choose not to portray their family in their promotions and their brand are doing it mostly due to the high uncertainty and the lack of control over individuals’ opinions and the fact that the family business reputation is directly linked to the family reputation itself, affecting both ways. Based on the empirical data, the family factor can have negative effects on the company, as there are directly involved members in the firm and also uninvolved ones, but still related, whose actions may impact the reputation of the company. Furthermore, there is the reciprocal relationship, where the negative actions of the company, dependant or not on the running family, influence negatively the family relationships and reputation. Companies do not want another uncontrollable factor to interfere with the firm’s reputation such as the family, and also do not want their family’s private lives to be under the community’s scrutiny. This relates to the theoretical aspect presented by Lude & Prügl (2016), claiming that stakeholders perceive different meanings from the transmitted messages and the introduction of the family criteria in their promotions may have both positive as negative effects over the company and the family itself.
Reputation building is an exceptionally dynamic, cooperating procedure and reputation management involves cautious planning, precisely keeping track of issues that may turn into a peril to the company’s notoriety and quickly reacting at whatever point this is being tested. Since the rise of the internet and social media platforms, the source of information regarding product and services a company provides have shifted from the firm itself to the stakeholders and other persons from the virtual environment. According to Beck and Prügl (2015), these technologies are facilitating the sharing of experiences and knowledge and stakeholders’ search for information, are posing both a huge opportunity as also a threat for companies. The fact that there is still a reticence in using social media platforms is connected to the lack of knowledge about the way these works, the desire to maintain the tradition and the will to protect the family from criticisms. Romanian family businesses are slowly and cautiously moving towards the new media in promoting their brands, trying to maintain their reputation and keep up the same customer satisfaction.

Family businesses in Romania consider that they have a strong set of values and an increased responsibility towards staff and community initiatives. Although private owners and managers are considered stability generators and job creators, they feel that their role is not recognised and appreciated enough by public authorities. Throughout the Romanian family businesses this perception is strong, saying that the government should recognise the importance of family business to a greater extent. Based on the institutional theory and the former conducted economic studies, the Romanian formal institutions were thought to overcome the ineffectiveness generated by the institutional transition that had occurred in the first half of the 1990’s (Pistriu et al., 1997), but according to the empirical data, there is room for improvement. Owners and business executives would like to see government initiatives to alleviate the tax burdens by applying exceptions to charging incomes for reinvested profits. They also want simplification, predictability, and stability of legislation and a reduction in bureaucracy. Another government request would be to provide support for new markets through state guarantees, but also support for business development, networking, and marketing. Family business representatives would like state loans or tax credits to acquire new technologies that would allow them to increase their productivity and better compete.

5.4 The model

Based on our findings we have developed a model of the influential factors over family business branding encompassing the three dimensions of the business brand and the context of Romania.
We have highlighted the most important factors that affect the decisional process of families in persuading a family business brand or not, based on the empirical evidence and our interpretations of these, since it responds to our constructionist epistemology. One of the primary factors influencing the family business branding in Romania is the family role. As previously mentioned, the family is the only informal institution that survived the communist period and is deeply rooted in the way families run their firms and act. If the degree of identification with the family is high, there is more likely that the companies will promote themselves as family firms, leveraging on the perceptions of the family aspect has in the community. Another important contextual factor, specific for Romania, are the communication methods, which impedes the development and promotion of a family brand. The traditionalist view of the owners together with the lack of knowledge hinders the promotion of the brand through new media. The last factor which had a high rate of recurrence among the interviewers is community scrutiny. Romanian families have high self-esteem and a responsibility for the local communities, which may drive or hinder the promotion of a family brand, due to the need for transparency and high uncertainty of both family and community actions that may affect the company and the owning family members.

Figure 2: The influential factors over family business branding from Romania
6. Discussion and conclusion

In the final chapter of the thesis, we will provide answers for the two research questions and the purpose of the thesis. Additionally, the conclusion is followed by the contributions and relevance of the study. Finally, limitations and proposal for further research are suggested in order to foster the development of the discussion within the topic.

6.1 Research questions

With this study we are trying to address earlier identified gaps in the existing literature as we conduct an exploratory study. It has been pointed out that there is a lack of theoretical background on family businesses in Romania and the branding of family businesses, leading to the question of whether these companies are branding themselves as such and, if so, how and why in this context (Babin et al., 2017). The prior research within this field has been focused mostly on the western countries where family businesses are already experienced and more developed than their counterparts within Eastern Europe, more specifically: Romania (Botero, Cruz, Massis & Nordqvist, 2015). We have been able to observe a pattern based on our subjective interpretation of the collected data due to the adoption of a constructionist epistemology on this research. Within this research, family business patterns within Romania are presented as descriptive, as well as providing knowledge about how the family business identity, image, and reputation relate to the business brand in Romania context. Those patterns represented by the willingness of Romanian family firms to communicate their family business brand have shown that family business owners are reluctant to some degree in promoting themselves as such. Moreover, it has also been observed that family business owners are mostly not aware of the benefits that those processes of branding might entail. What is more notable, within our findings and the subsequent analysis, is represented and emphasised by the recurrence of small local communities’ knowledge about their characteristic of being a family firm, even though they are promoting themselves as a family business or not. Summing it all up, we have discovered that branding themselves as family businesses is not very popular among the family business owners that have been interviewed. Within our compiled analysis using the institutional theory, as a lens, it can be easily stated that the context of Romania has a direct impact on family businesses and on how they are conducting their family brand promotion. In that sense, we can state that the institutions, both formal (Hira & Hira, 2000) and
informal (Pistrui et al., 1997; Jøsrgensen et al., 1986), have a significant impact on family businesses behaviour in promoting and branding as such.

Babin et al., (2017) have repeatedly published calls for papers that should conduct investigations on the topic of branding, image, reputation and identity and other theories and approaches that might lead in creating a more holistic view on the antecedents and consequences of promoting the family nature of business. By pursuing this topic, it can lead to the exploration of the facets of family firm identity, family firm image, and reputation, as well as the relationship between the family and the business in a more specific context. With this in mind, we have further studied those aspects of promotion of a family brand in a context where there is an increasing gap in knowledge and, moreover, the relationship between those dimensions. Our study contributes to the existing literature by unravelling differences, similarities in, and new aspects about family businesses and branding in the context of Romania. In conducting this research, firstly we have taken two of the questions from the proposed ones in the call for papers from Babin et al., (2017) and secondly adapted them to the context of Romania in order to gain empirical findings of this environment. The main research questions of this research were the following:

Question 1: Why and how do Romanian family firms communicate or not their brand?

The empirical findings and the subsequent analysis reveal the fact that most family firms in Romania do not brand themselves as family firms. One of the main reasons for doing so is represented by the uncertainty of the impact that this process might entail. Moreover, it can be easily correlated to risk avoidance as they are not inclined in risking some exposure in order to gain more benefits. On the other hand, as some of them have already mentioned, family business owners are explicitly avoiding public scrutiny, in order for their families to retain some privacy in their day to day life. The institutions, both formal and informal, and historical prejudice have created to some degree the emergence of those motivations from the family business owners. Even though the family is one of the most important informal institutions, that have survived the communist period (Pistrui et al., 1997), it has nurtured some rather conservative views. In that regard, some may argue that those conservative views might reflect furthermore on the family business environment, but at the moment those views are themselves under re-evaluations, as the entire society is evolving at a high pace.
On the other hand, by focusing on the evolvement itself, we have also emphasised that, despite the fact that an important majority of our interviewees, six out of eleven companies, have decided not to promote themselves as family brands, there are also respondents that either promote themselves as such, three companies or they are trying to pursue this path, two companies. With these interviewees, it has been observed that they are actively pursuing new channels for promotion and are extremely open towards gaining more and more visibility in their stakeholders’ eyes. Moreover, they are more aligned with the nowadays studies and academic literature in the regard that they are more aware of what benefits entail branding as a family firm. For those small number of family business owners, the context has exerted the same way (as they mention it) but they have emphasised the error-prone that this type of thinking has.

Question 2: How does the family business identity, image, and reputation relate to the business brand in the context of Romania?

Within the existent literature, there have been several studies (Botero et al., 2015), analysed within the frame of reference, which already emphasised the strong link between the brand and its dimensions, namely business identity, image, and reputation. The empirical findings have been subject to rigorous analysis and classification and, as a result, all three dimensions have been assigned three predominant factors of influence which are shaped by the contextual influences (see Figure 2). Moreover, some interesting aspects that the academic literature hasn’t yet covered has been raised. In the context of the Romanian family businesses one of the most important factor that impact the relation between dimensions of branding has been emphasised within the family business image. In that sense, it has been noticed that the communication methods that have been used differ from company to company. Additionally, the main differentiation between those is accentuated by companies who are choosing new media channels versus traditional marketing. Another specific factor that impacts the relationship between the context and the business identity is represented by the family role within the business itself. This factor can be explained by an extremely important pattern that has emerged during the analysis as a majority of family firms tend to be very conservative and with a high degree of rigidity that has also a significant impact on the business.

The last factor that we would argue it is indeed due to this specific context is related to risk avoidance. In that sense, another pattern has emerged during the analysis and it emphasises the tendency of business owners that are reluctant in promoting the company as a family firm, is a
result of the fear that community scrutiny would be too much to bear. Family business owners believe that by promoting as such would expose the entire family to scrutiny, that could lead in some circumstantial cases to defamation. Moreover, they are extremely careful about the types of messages that they are convening but also of the involvement of family members within the business itself.

6.2 Summarising Our Study

The present study sets off with the research purpose to understand the dynamics of branding and family firms within Romania, from the perspective of the owning family. Based on this purpose we conduct a critical literature review presenting the current state of knowledge, exploring the field of institutional theory, family business research, focusing on branding and its dimensions, namely: identity, image, and reputation. Our literature review gives rise to the concepts of branding and both formal and informal institutions, highlighting a gap in the existing academic knowledge regarding how and why family business owners promote or not themselves as family firms. Further reviewing the literature, we have identified several benefits of using the identity, image, and reputation that the family business owners might leverage. Moreover, by analysing the formal and informal institutions, it has been emphasised the role of the family within the society but also the role of government policies and coercion. The existing knowledge suggests that these two categories of institutions are shaping to some extent the ability and the willingness of family business owners to promote themselves as family businesses. However, no previous study on branding and the relationship between its dimensions has been applied to this context. As a result, we have formulated two research questions that aim in bridging the gap between the current literature and the nowadays realities. We subsequently described and argued for an inductive approach to research based on a relativistic ontology and epistemology of social construction. We introduce the reader to our purposeful sampling strategy and semi-structured interview design from our approach and philosophical stands. We adopt the inductive approach to analyse the collected data, providing the reader with an explanation of the concept as well as a report on how the analysis was conducted. We also describe in depth how we collected data and to what extent we encountered difficulties in our pursuit of transparency. We also introduce our ethical considerations and how we make our study trustworthy. Using the content analysis, we point out what results emerge from our data, starting form codes, through sub-categories, categories, themes and concepts and finally defining major aggregate dimensions. In the following analysis, we highlight the importance of branding from the owner's perspective and how it influences the stakeholder’s
perception of the brand, the family business owners' perception of their own brand in general, and the owners' strategy in communicating their family business brand. At the end of our analysis, we identified several approaches from family business owners with respect to branding as family businesses, but also the reasons for not doing so, as well as some context-specific factors that have a significant impact on family businesses. We reflect on our findings and results of analysis in line with our philosophical, ethical and trustworthiness stands. The model created in this particular context is based on our interpretations and makes sense of the realities we interacted with, being in line with the social constructionist approach. Compared to the existing academic knowledge presented in the literature, we discuss the results of our findings and analysis, trying to point out strengths, weaknesses, and novelty. As a result, we point out which aspects are entirely new, which aspects confirm what has been discovered so far, and what contradicts current knowledge.

6.3 Our study major contributions

Our research suggests that the unique contextual factors that have shaped the Romanian society and business environment as a whole in the past decades have a significant impact on family business branding. This context can be perceived as a buffer between all of the factors that affect the dimensions of a family business brand (identity, image, and reputation). There are context-specific factors that create rigidities or fast adaptation for family firms and their pursued branding strategy. Starting from the nations’ lack of infrastructure that hampers the usage of a multitude of marketing channels and a general lower education of the customers. Further going to more local influences, Romanian family business has an important role within the community, being the main employers and developers, thus carrying a responsibility that may hinder the promotion of a family firm due to the increased visibility and public scrutiny or may drive this decision since it will be better perceived. Other contingent factors can be represented by the level of education, knowledge, and long-term vision of the business owners. Those factors can be easily correlated to the limitation in the perception of the all-around benefits that branding as a family business might entail, and the degree to which they are identifying and promoting themselves as such. Moreover, it can be argued that those limitations would, in fact, lead to missed opportunities and low visibility from important stakeholders. Even with such approaches business owners tend to stick to their already working strategies, leaving the trial and error process for companies that are more open in this regard. The Romanian family firms’ degree of rigidity and conservative views in regard to branding as family firms have created a rather hermetic environment within businesses than a more dynamic one. In the future,
managers should be more aware of their conservative tendencies and try to be more optimistic about the outcome of family branding that will entail. Another consequence of those two factors is represented by the adoption of new media channels (such as social media, YouTube, blogs and so on) in pursuing branding instead of using the traditional marketing channels (TV ads, radio, flyers, newspapers). Another reason for this would be the inter-regional technological gap that has been observed during the interview phase and to headquarters visit and sustained by the collected secondary data of the companies branding.

The last major contribution to the existing literature is mainly referring to the family role within the business but most importantly in branding. As a direct result of high conservative views, the roles of family members are accurately drawn to limit the actions in some aspects of promotion and branding. From our point of view, family business owners should overlook those precarious views and try to communicate more their family brand and values, in order to leverage the benefits that this unique trait entail. In doing so, family business owners could, in fact, increase their overall performances and increase their positive visibility in the eyes of the stakeholders. We recommend that family business owners should make an effort and use a trial-and-error approach in order to find the most suitable strategy when it comes to branding, but also, to be more open to the new communication channels that are available at this time.

6.4 Limitations and further research

As the purpose of the thesis is a relatively unexplored research area within the region, consequently there will be limitations to this study. One of the limitations is related to the lack of research within family businesses and branding in a specific region, specifically in Romania. Furthermore, other limitations are related to the fact of not being able to observe the use of their business values and culture in their day to day interactions with their stakeholders. In the event of further research, it would be an interesting topic if a longitudinal study will closely observe the evolution of family businesses brands in this emerging economy.

Due to the nature of the research and the region that is being focused on, this thesis was being conducted on various family businesses in Romania. We have contacted several family businesses out of which some declined to participate in the thesis. In order to identify if the results are further correlated to the company type, size or the internal organisation, it should be considered in further studies a research including a variation of non-family businesses and family businesses.
During this thesis two main factors were encountered, namely family business being less professionally managed and driven by financial rewards. These factors of the family businesses have been mentioned several times during the interview process and were not included in the analysis. Therefore, further research on how these factors would affect the family business branding should be considered. In order to understand how the family values permeate the family business brand within the company a study on current employees should be conducted. Furthermore, research concerning how potential employees are perceiving the employer brand of a family business is required. This in order to study how the employer brand of the family business is perceived by current employees and how the family businesses can develop strategies in order to communicate their image more effective with their help.

Due to the paths partaken in conducting this study, we have identified several limitations that have been taken into account. The shortcoming of using the relativistic ontology is represented by the fact that the truth, either be right or wrong, and justice is all relative. For us, it is very important to take into consideration all of the aspects and factors that influence the family business branding in Romania, but even so, some smaller factors might be overlooked in order to avoid saturation. In regard to the partaken inductive approach, the greatest weakness is that is limited, and our research will be influenced accordingly. We recommend, that additional studies should be conducted in order to consolidate or infirm our study. A complementary forthcoming study will not only enhance the academic literature but will also improve the holistic view on family firm branding by adding different perspectives of other family firms and contexts. Another dimension of our study that has been taken into account is represented the exploratory research, as it supplies qualitative information. We are aware that the interpretation of the findings has been under a critical point of view. In most cases, case studies entail weaknesses from a bias to the inability to replicate and the possibility of error in judgement. In that sense, we have intensively delineated from the researcher bias, Hawthorne effect, time intensiveness, error-prone and ethical issues by using different processes that would limit those weaknesses to a degree. In regard to our conducted in-depth interviews, we have attempted to carefully choose participants in order to avoid bias and, as a consequence, the vetting process has taken more time as some of the companies have been in the pool due to convenience.

With this study, we hope that future researches would pursue this topic for a longer period of time, in that sense, an ethnographic type of study would emphasise in more detail the evolution
of branding within this specific context. Additionally, we encourage for future studies the use of a quantitative approach in order to emphasise the perceived advantages or disadvantages for family business branding from the point of view of different stakeholders. Moreover, we also encourage the application of this type of study on different cultures to emphasise the differences that occur in those contexts.
7. Reference list

Botero, I. C., & Blombäck, A. (2010). Leveraging the family brand: Using brand management to highlight the advantages of family firms. 10th annual IFERA world family business research conference.


Eurostat, (2018). Downward trend in the share of persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU. Eurostat Press Office


Appendix

Appendix 1: Information sheet for research participation

We are students from Jönköping International Business School (JIBS), Jönköping University and we are involved in a Master’s degree program of study. We are currently conducting our research for the final thesis. The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how the components of the family business brand interact in a restricted context in order to explore context effects on the family firm brand. We want to tap into the knowledge and experience of one or two of your members and gain a preliminary understanding of how the family business identity, image, and reputation relates to the family business brand in the context of Romania. The results will be shared with you and your company and will provide new insights for family businesses which will prove to be helpful in the future.

In this project, the information will be gathered from participants through a face-to-face interview. These interviews will provide us with information to gain insights from family firms. We invite you to take part in this research project. If you consent, we will ask about your knowledge, understanding and attitude towards the topic of reference and your practical experience of that in the workplace. During this interview the topics that will be discussed are family business branding; family business branding image, identity, reputation; Romanian family business context. Your reflections and answers will contribute to our deeper understanding of this important aspect of organisations and their management.

This interview will be lasting between 45 minutes to an hour and it will be conducted for only one time, implying that you do not sign up for any supplementary commitments. This interview will consist of approximately 25 questions, which you are allowed to not reply with no particular reason. Adrian will be asking the questions and Andrei will be typing the answers on the computer. With your permission, the discussion will be recorded to facilitate accurate data collection. All audio recordings and transcripts will be kept in a secure place. Adrian and Andrei will be the only ones to have access to these recordings. The recordings will be totally erased after its utilisation. We do not expect that you will find the questions difficult or confronting in any way. However, if you find that the discussions make you uncomfortable, you may decide at any time to withdraw your consent without reason and without any disadvantage to you. The interviewer will answer any questions that you have about the research at any time before, during, or after the interview. The interview is completely anonymous, the name or the company name will not appear in the final thesis. The gathered data will not be used for any other purpose than the one of this specific thesis.

If you are willing to participate in this study, please complete the consent form. If you have any queries regarding this project, you may contact us at any time.

Sincerely,

Andrei Mihai Gitman
Adrian Motoc
Appendix 2: Consent form for research participation

This form indicates that I consent to participate in the JIBS administered Master’s Degree Research Thesis.

I understand the information provided and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this activity, realising that I may withdraw at any time without reason and without prejudice. I understand that my organisation has agreed to participate in this research and that my participation is voluntary.

I understand that all information provided is treated as strictly confidential and will not be released by the investigator. I have been advised on what the purpose of the project is and what will be done with the data upon completion of the research (including safe storage).

_________________________________________  _________________
Participant’s name  Date

_________________________________________
Participant’s signature

Participant’s email address: __________________________________________

(Retain the information sheet for your own information)
Appendix 3: Interview questions

Family business
1. How long have the company been a family business?
2. Why did you choose to promote/ or not the company as a family business one? Do you believe that family businesses have special characteristics?

Family firm identity
3. Who are you as a family firm and what makes you unique?
4. What are your core values and goals?
5. How important is the family aspect as part of the brand identity for the business and the family? Which aspect of the brand identity is likely to make a difference to our stakeholders?
6. What is the role of the owning family?
7. What is the family promise?

Family firm image
8. What associations do you make with a family business?
9. How do you want your stakeholders to see your company?
10. Do you portray the family? How and why? Why do/don’t you choose to use the expression of family business on your marketing channels?
11. How prominently is the family featured in business communication?
12. Are all the family members being portrayed?

Family firm reputation
13. What characteristics do different stakeholders associate with your family firm?
14. How do we want our stakeholders to see us? How do we portray the family?
15. Do you believe that the family notion matter to your stakeholders?

Family business brand
16. What aspects of the family nature of the firm do you want your stakeholders to know?
17. Do you differentiate between stakeholders in portraying the family firm?
18. Do you include family references in both messaging related to the organisation and the products or services?
19. Do you think that family-owned branding for business is significant for both potential clients and potential employees?
20. Did you find that this type of branding is effective in triggering specific emotions or behaviours in consumers and in marketing products?
21. What advantages do you believe that exists in using family ownership branding when it comes to specific industries?
22. How do you position yourself on the market while leveraging your family identity?
23. What is the family brand in your case, and does it differ in somehow and if it does then how?
24. Assuming a situation where a customer/business associate does not know about the company’s family ownership background and it comes out in a potential interaction. Does it make a reaction to the customer/business associate? If it does is it positive/negative or does it make any kind of reaction?
25. Do you think that stakeholders will value the notion of a family business or why do you think it may not appreciate it?