

ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF PARTICIPATION IN EXHIBITIONS ON THE

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Abstract

In the context of intensifying competition in agro-industrial markets and the need for strategic differentiation, the participation of companies in thematic exhibitions is becoming an essential tool for strengthening the brand image. Exhibitions provide a complex platform for interaction between producers, distributors and potential customers, facilitating the direct presentation of technologies, professional dialogue and public validation of innovations. In this context, the influence of presence at fairs goes beyond simple commercial promotion, significantly contributing to increasing the visibility, credibility and reputation of agro-industrial companies. The author examines how technical demonstrations, awards obtained, B2B relationships and media exposure influence brand perception, highlighting both the advantages of participation – such as strengthening trust, access to new markets and association with innovation – and the existing challenges, including high costs and the need for a coherent follow-up strategy. Overall, the study demonstrates that exhibitions are a key element in building brand image in the agribusiness, contributing to strengthening the positioning of companies in a competitive and constantly changing environment.

Keywords: brand, exhibitions, agribusiness, visibility, competitiveness, marketing, innovation.

INTRODUCTION

A company's brand image is the public's and business partners' perception of its value and reputation. In the agribusiness sector – which includes manufacturers and suppliers of agricultural machinery and equipment building a strong brand is essential to gain the trust of farmers and trading partners. Participation in international fairs and exhibitions has become a key B2B marketing tool, providing companies with the opportunity to showcase their products, interact directly with potential customers and strengthen their brand awareness in the market. In the context of the Republic of Moldova, a small economy with aspirations to expand into foreign markets, the presence of local agribusiness companies at international exhibitions is particularly important to increase their visibility and credibility in the face of regional and global competitors. This report analyzes the impact of participation in such exhibitions on the brand image of Moldovan companies supplying agro-industrial equipment, based on recent statistics, relevant case studies, evaluation of effectiveness as a branding strategy, and a comparison with the experience of other countries in the region.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The research is based on a combination of qualitative and analytical methods. The specialized literature from the Republic of Moldova confirms the central role of marketing strategies in developing the brand image of agro-industrial enterprises. Burbulea and Chișili (2022) highlight the fact that agro-industrial enterprises in the country increasingly use modern promotional tools to strengthen their competitive position in the market, emphasizing the importance of participating in professional events and exhibitions as part of the sector's marketing mix. The authors show that effective strategies include a visible presence in foreign markets, live demonstrations and communication of technological advantages – all of which are elements directly correlated with the theme of the present study, which analyzes the influence of exhibitions on brand image [1].

Also, recent literature on digital marketing, presented by Memet, Burbulea and Gangan (2023), reveals that brand image is strongly influenced by the ways in which companies communicate their

values and innovations in the online and offline environment. The authors emphasize the idea that consistent visual exposure and participation in visibility platforms – including exhibitions – contribute to strengthening public perception and increasing credibility, thus complementing the physical dimension of promotion with a digital one [2].

In the paper “Marketing the agroindustrial sector” (Burbulea, 2025), it is directly emphasized that fairs and exhibitions are traditional, but extremely effective, tools in agroindustrial marketing, as they allow for real-time demonstration of agricultural technologies, the creation of B2B relationships and professional validation through awards. All these elements are naturally associated with the strengthening of brand image – the central component of the current research [3].

At the same time, the holistic view of marketing, presented by Burbulea and Gangan (2022), provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding how participation in exhibitions functions as part of an integrated system of communication and market positioning. The authors argue that marketing strategies cannot be approached fragmentedly, but as a coherent whole in which physical promotion, digital presence, reputation and customer experience complement each other. Thus, exhibitions become essential nodes in the network of interactions between the brand and the public, contributing to the holistic perception of the company [4].

A documentary analysis of institutional reports on the participation of the Republic of Moldova in international exhibitions was carried out, in order to capture the evolution and scope of these events. The methodology also includes a case study applied to relevant Moldovan companies, such as Vadalex Agro and other local producers awarded at the Moldagrotech exhibition, to highlight the direct impact of presence at fairs on brand image. In parallel, a comparative method was used, through which Moldova's experience was compared to that of other states in the region, such as Romania, Ukraine and Armenia, in order to identify similarities and differences in exhibition promotion strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

- To understand the scale of the phenomenon, we present some statistical data on the presence of Moldovan companies in the agro-industrial sector at international exhibitions in recent years:
 - Number of events and participating companies: According to the Investment Agency of the Republic of Moldova, during 2019, participation in 22 international exhibitions was ensured to promote Moldovan exporters, including agricultural and agri-food fairs. These participations were financially and logistically supported under the aegis of the Country Brand of the Republic of Moldova, using a common stand with the “Tree of Life” symbol to present the national offer in a unified way. Such initiatives show the institutional commitment to helping local companies be present on foreign markets.
 - Exhibitions organized abroad (“Republic of Moldova Presents”): During the period 2017–2023, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) of the Republic of Moldova, together with the Investment Agency, periodically organized exhibitions with the generic name “Republic of Moldova Presents” in cities across Romania. Over 600 Moldovan companies from various sectors (including agri-food and agricultural equipment) participated cumulatively in these promotional events held in Iași, Brașov, Ploiești, Baia Mare, Cluj-Napoca and Bucharest. These foreign exhibitions, held as an extension of the national Made in Moldova fair, offered local companies the opportunity to exhibit their products and equipment directly to consumers and partners in Romania, with benefits in increasing the notoriety of Moldovan brands abroad. For example, in 2023 alone, CCI had planned 5 editions of “Republic of Moldova Presents” in different regions of Romania, facilitating our companies' access to thousands of visitors and potential clients from the neighboring country [5].

- International exhibitions hosted in the Republic of Moldova: Even domestically, the Republic of Moldova organizes international exhibitions specialized in agriculture, such as MOLDAGROTECH (an exhibition of machinery, equipment and technologies for the agro-industrial complex) and the related FARMER fair. These events attract both local companies and numerous foreign exhibitors, being a platform for presenting novelties in the field to the local public. For example, the autumn edition of MOLDAGROTECH 2019 (organized together with the FARMER fair) was attended by over 400 companies from 20 countries [6], exhibiting tractors, combines, soil processing equipment and other modern agricultural equipment. Similarly, the most recent MOLDAGROTECH edition in October 2024 registered over 200 exhibiting companies from the Republic of Moldova and countries such as Romania, Ukraine, Italy or Austria [7]. This consistent international presence at Chisinau fairs indicates the increased interest of specialized companies in the Moldovan market, but also the opportunity for local companies to measure their strength alongside well-known foreign brands.
- • Participation in thematic trade fairs abroad: In addition to general exhibitions, Moldovan companies have also been present at niche international events in the agribusiness sector, often with the support of international projects. For example, an EU-UNDP-supported program in 2014 prepared and financed the participation of economic agents from both banks of the Nistru River in the INDAGRA agricultural fair (Romania) and the InterFood & Drinks exhibition (Bulgaria) [8]. The aim was both to promote exports and to strengthen cooperation between Moldovan and Transnistrian enterprises, demonstrating that fairs can also serve as an instrument of economic diplomacy. More recently, in 2023, the CCI and the Investment Agency provided substantial financial support (up to 300,000 MDL) to Moldovan companies to participate in Indagra Food 2023 in Bucharest, one of the largest agri-food fairs in the region [9]. The national "Tree of Life" stand at Indagra allowed companies from the food and agro-industrial sector of Moldova to promote their products and equipment alongside international exhibitors, increasing their visibility and connecting them with distributors and customers in the EU.

Overall, these statistics highlight that the presence of Moldovan companies at international fairs has become an increasingly widespread phenomenon over the last decade. Both authorities and development partners are investing resources to facilitate the participation of local companies in such events, recognizing the long-term benefits on brand image and the opening of new markets.

Case Studies – The Impact of Exhibitions on Brand Image

To concretely illustrate how participation in international exhibitions influenced the brand of Moldovan companies in the agro-industrial equipment sector, we present below some representative case studies:

1. Vadalex Agro – Strengthening its reputation through innovation at Moldagrotech

Vadalex Agro is one of the largest companies in the Republic of Moldova specializing in the sale of modern agricultural machinery, seeds and plant protection products. This company places particular emphasis on participating in major agricultural events in the country, considering them essential for the development of the business and customer relations. “It is important for our company to be present at various agricultural events, because this is how we develop. We have a beautiful collaboration and we know about 30-40% of the farmers in the Republic of Moldova, who are participating in the exhibition this fall,” say Vadalex representatives, referring to the company’s constant presence at the Moldagrotech fair [10]. Through its generous stand and the demonstrations offered, Vadalex manages to interact directly with farmers, obtain feedback on the equipment sold and strengthen its image as a reliable partner for farmers.

A concrete indicator of the brand prestige gained by Vadalex Agro due to its participation in exhibitions is the award obtained in the professional competition “Novelty of the Year”. At the Moldagrotech (autumn) 2019 edition, the company presented for the first time the Lemken EurOpal 9 4+1 plow – a cutting-edge agricultural technology – which brought it 1st place in the country in the innovation section [10]. The Novelty of the Year distinction awarded for the introduction of this high-performance machine not only generated positive publicity, but also positioned the Vadalex brand as an innovative leader in the agricultural equipment market. Subsequently, the company used this image capital in communication, emphasizing that it offers farmers tested and awarded solutions, which contributes to increasing customer trust in the brand.

2. “Novelty of the Year 2024” Award – exhibition recognition for a local agricultural equipment brand

The “Novelty of the Year” competition organized at each Moldagrotech edition continues to be a launching pad for local brands that bring new equipment to the market. In October 2024, the exhibition jury awarded the 2024 Novelty of the Year Award to a state-of-the-art tractor presented by a Moldovan agricultural equipment company. The tractor in question – considered the most efficient on the local market at the time – immediately attracted the attention of farmers: right during the exhibition, a farmer from the Sângerei district purchased the exhibited model, impressed by its technical capabilities [11]. The representative of the manufacturing company emphasized that the machine incorporates multiple automated functions, designed to reduce human errors and increase productivity, thus reinforcing the message of innovative technology associated with their brand. This public recognition of innovation – publicized by the specialized press and the Ministry of Agriculture – gave the winning company increased visibility and prestige in the eyes of customers. In effect, the brand benefited from official validation, being perceived as a pioneer of modern agricultural technology in Moldova. In addition, at the same edition, the jury also highlighted other innovative equipment on display (for example, an electric nut sheller presented by a local company) [11], a sign that local companies investing in new technologies can build a progressive brand image through the exhibition. Such awards and nominations obtained at fairs contribute to the positive differentiation of the brand on the market, being a publicly recognized certificate of quality and innovation.

3. Participation in international fairs – expanding the brand beyond borders

Last but not least, participation in exhibitions abroad has had a considerable impact on the visibility of Moldovan brands of agro-industrial equipment internationally. Although many Moldovan companies in this sector are importers and distributors (representing foreign brands of agricultural machinery in the country), there are also local manufacturers of agricultural equipment or technologies that have begun to seek export opportunities and external collaboration.

A telling example is the collective participation of Moldovan producers in the agri-food sector and processing equipment at the Anuga 2021 world fair (Germany), facilitated by a project of the Center for Import Promotion (CBI) from the Netherlands. In the Moldova Fine Foods pavilion at Anuga, Moldovan companies promoted their products and know-how, managing to conclude numerous trade contracts with foreign importers. Although the focus at Anuga was on food products (honey, processed fruits, etc.), Moldova's presence with an integrated national stand contributed to increasing the country's visibility as a supplier of quality agro-industrial products and technology. According to official reports, Moldovan companies took advantage of this fair to learn about the requirements of the EU market and establish valuable B2B contacts, and the success achieved confirmed that Moldova can compete through quality on world-class exhibition stages. Such results generate a halo effect on the brand image of the participating companies: they become more credible in the eyes of international partners, being associated with a national pavilion that has demonstrated performance.

Another recent case is the participation of Moldovan companies at the Indagra Food 2022 exhibition in Bucharest, where, together with the Minister of Agriculture Vladimir Bolea, Moldovan producers promoted food processing equipment and agri-food products. The presence of high-ranking officials at our country's stand sent a message of government support for local brands, increasing their media visibility and attractiveness. Similarly, the previously mentioned "Republic of Moldova Presents" initiative created brand bridges between Moldova and the regions of Romania: Romanian consumers were able to get to know Moldovan companies directly, which strengthened the reputation of these brands on the neighboring market. Many companies reported that following the exhibitions, requests from Romanian customers increased, a sign that international exposure and live tastings/demonstrations have a favorable effect on brand perception (being associated with authentic quality and innovation).

In conclusion, the case studies show that Moldovan companies supplying agro-industrial equipment can significantly improve their brand image by participating in fairs and exhibitions, whether local with an international character (such as Moldagrotech) or events abroad. The benefits are felt both internally – through increased notoriety and loyalty of existing customers – and externally – through professional validation (awards, distinctions) and through opportunities to access new markets, which gives the brand an international dimension.

CONCLUSIONS

Participation of agro-industrial equipment suppliers in international exhibitions has proven to be an effective strategy for strengthening brand image, especially in the context of the Republic of Moldova. This analysis highlighted several major conclusions:

- Increased brand visibility and awareness: Exhibitions offer Moldovan companies a showcase to a wide and qualified audience, amplifying brand visibility beyond conventional channels. Through presence at stands, live demonstrations and direct interaction with potential customers, companies can quickly increase their awareness. Figures show that the majority of visitors to fairs are decision-makers and new prospects for exhibitors, which means real opportunities to expand the customer base and increase brand name recognition.
- Improving the image of trust and quality: Participation in prestigious international events and, especially, obtaining awards or distinctions (such as the "Newness of the Year" competitions at Moldagrotech) gives companies valuable external validation. Brands are perceived as innovative, competitive and quality-oriented. The presented case studies (Vadalex Agro, 2019 and 2024 awards) illustrate how such recognitions have raised the profile of the respective companies in the market, increasing their trust capital among customers and partners.
- Developing business relationships and customer loyalty: Exhibitions not only contribute to attracting new contacts, but also to strengthening existing relationships. Face-to-face meetings with current customers at the stand, discussions about results and needs, hospitality gestures and personalized attention – all of these strengthen the bond between the brand and the customer. Participating Moldovan companies reported that the fairs allow them to obtain direct feedback and adapt their offer to market requirements, which improves customer satisfaction and, implicitly, the brand's image as a responsive and long-lasting partner.
- Access to new markets and association with global trends: By participating in exhibitions abroad (Romania, EU, Asia), Moldovan brands are exposed to a wider competitive environment, learning to communicate internationally and align themselves with global standards. This can positively differentiate them domestically – a brand seen at international fairs also becomes aspirational for domestic customers, who associate it with success and compliance with modern trends. At the same time, by participating alongside companies from

other countries, our companies benefit from image transfer: for example, the national stand at a renowned fair gives them part of the prestige of that event. Examples such as the Moldovan pavilion at Anuga or Indagra, where our companies appeared in the exhibition catalog alongside Western brands, contribute to the legitimization of Moldovan brands in the eyes of global buyers.

- Confirmation of effectiveness as a marketing investment: Although expensive, trade fairs bring quantifiable benefits. Most exhibitors believe that the sales generated and contacts established fully justify the investment, and in the case of branding, the benefits are manifested through indicators such as increased traffic on the company's website after the fair, press mentions, partnerships initiated and, last but not least, the buzz created around the stand (some companies organize raffles, demonstration events, press conferences at the fair, amplifying the media impact of their presence). All of this contributes to an important reputational ROI: an image capital that can be subsequently used in marketing and sales campaigns.

In light of the above, we can conclude that for companies in the agro-industrial equipment sector in the Republic of Moldova, participation in international exhibitions is not only opportune, but almost indispensable for creating and maintaining a strong brand image. In an industry based on trust, technical performance and long-term relationships, fairs are the stage on which these values can be demonstrated in a concentrated manner. The final recommendation for Moldovan companies is to develop strategic plans for participation in exhibitions – selecting key events (both regional and global) and preparing them professionally – and to continue collaborating with relevant authorities and associations to maximize the impact of these presences. Through perseverance and consistent presentation, Moldovan agro-industrial brands can become recognized and respected not only locally, but also among the international business community, associating themselves with the image of a modern, innovative and competitive agro-industrial Moldova.

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Recomandat

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