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Approaches regarding the competition in Romanian sugar market

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Abstract

This paper proposes an economic instrument designed to assess the competitive nature of the sugar industry in Romania. In the first part of the paper is presented the theoretical background underlying index (HHI) and its calculation methodology. Then comes the results of a first application of this index for a total of 10 plants in the sugar industry, the robustness of these results is discussed. We believe HHI is a proactive tool that may prove useful competition authority, in its pursuit of continuous monitoring of various industries in the economy and in the internal decision-making on resource allocation institution (Peacock, and Prisecaru, 2013).The starting point of our research is to free competition in the European market with competitors much stronger than Romanian plants, plants that produce at a price lower than the domestic ones. In our study we will see if it is a concentration of production in factories around the strongest in Romania, concentration accompanied by the collapse of those who could not resist the market.The market concentration, competition policy, we will follow using the HHI index, for evaluation of impact analysis on existing trade, the number and size of competitors, protecting existing sales structures, avoiding disruptions in the competitive environment, etc.

*Keywords:*competition, private labels, e-commerce, retailer, manufacturer, raw sugar, refined sugar

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1. Introduction

As an EU member state, Romania has a significant agricultural potential and processing compared to other Member States, but the level of organization, excessive fragmentation, inadequate funding, etc., do not contribute to achieving a level of performance appropriate to may face competition from increasingly powerful in this area.

The formation of prices in each link of the food chain, linked to the evolution of imports and the purchasing power of population is directly reflected both the economic operators participating in the production and marketing - farmers, intermediaries, processors and retailers - and especially the final consumer.

In light of these considerations, we try to capture this material during some of the problems facing the Romanian sugar industry from the point of competition. Our study focuses on three issues that competition analysis is based on the sugar market food: the concentration of manufacturers, private label, and e-commerce. Romania is currently under the influence of a set of global development factors, including the globalization and regionalization are substantial.

Observe and agree that at some point the market concentration is a fact. We will examine whether it is positive or negative for competition and consumer welfare in the sugar market in Romania in 2008-2013.

On the one hand, concentration is a good thing if retail companies brought better logistical solutions that have improved the lifestyle of the consumer product choice.

The second problem, which we will discuss is the own brand products.

These products are beginning to have an impact on competition, especially because they often provide cheaper alternatives for the consumer. Some Member States have now reached a share of almost 50% in volume. An analysis in 2011 showed that the level of penetration meant, in some cases, a significant reduction in the rate of brands, while products sold exclusive first-tier brands have kept their market share.

2. Methodology

We use this classification guidance, to have an image in the food market in Romania in general and sugar. Specifically it is a simultaneous evaluation of all these indicators correlated to have information on the state of competition in the market. Also, we can identify certain risks of behaviours that can negatively affect the state of competition.The table below the two categories of indicators that we use and that we will perform below.

Table 1Indicators used to assess the state of competition

Sectorial indicators	Sugar market indicators
Number of enterprises in the sector	Evolution rates of profitability (ROE / ROA)
Rate mobility sector	The incidence consumer complaints
Import penetration	Barriers to entry
Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI)	The performance of the product
The average turnover / employee	in the Other sector specific indicators
The differentiation of the products sector	
The presence of economies of scale	
Rates concentration (Concentration Ratio- CR)	

Source: Report on the state of competition, 2012, the Competition Council

Number of enterprises in the sugar industry in Romania is taken from data known by the Trade Registry in 2008-2013.

*Rate mobility sector.*Evolution of the number of sugar factories provide information on existing barriers to entry and competitive pressure existing in the sector.

This indicator can also provide information on developments in competition in this sector of the Romanian food industry, as the intense mobility.

Import penetration rate. The imports are higher the greater the competitive pressure on the market.

Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI)

We use in our analysis HH index is most commonly used to measure the degree of market concentration. Its value ranges from 0 (perfect competition) to 10,000 (monopoly).

$$HHI = \sum_{i=1}^{N} Si^{n2}$$

where N - is the number of the enterprises active in the market.
Si - is the market share of firm i.

However, there is no universally accepted levels of its inclusion of a market in the following categories:
- concentrated weak market,
- concentrated market environment,
- highly concentrated market.

The table below shows the levels used by the European Commission or the Department of Justice - Federal Commission Comet - USA.

Table 2

Degree of concentration	Value HHI	
	European Commission	DoJ-Antitrust Division + Federal Commission Comet
reduced	< 1000	<1500
environment	1000 – 2000	1500-2500
Great	>2000	>2500

Source: Report on the state of competition, 2012, the Competition Council

It should be stressed that HH index indicates a market structure at one point in time. This index may provide a distorted picture highly dynamic markets, where significant changes of structure in short time.

Moreover, in markets where there is potential to differentiate products, ie with a wide assortment, HH index can provide erroneous information on the actual development of competition.

The average turnover / employee sector

Turnover / employee is an indicator of average productivity in the sector. This indicator varies depending on the specific industry and also does not take into account the profitability or subsidies, but has the advantage of ease of calculation (public data) and that provides insight on the dynamics of economic activity in a sector.

The differentiation of the products sector

The differentiation of products on the market can be measured in relation to two dimensions: differentiation by features (horizontal) and differentiation through quality (vertical). Although the differences between the two dimensions are not always obvious differentiation through quality is determined by unanimous perception of consumers, while distinguishing features is the result of the existence of distinct and subjective preferences among consumers of a product.

2.1. Measure economies of scale

Economy of scale is an economic concept that provides information about the optimal size of a firm in an industry. The basis of this concept is the idea that every industry is characterized by a certain technology, that possibility (limited) to convert raw materials into final products.

3. Results and Discussions

In the EU sugar industry is based on a highly organized chain, from raw material to ensure its processing. Production is strictly regulated by the Commission for Agriculture in Brussels, the allowances allocated to each country, the raw material price and the reference price of sugar.After 2007, Romania, as a European country, sugar implement the new policy to avoid distortion on the European market. Currently, in Romania sugar produced under quota production, ie. an amount that cannot be exceeded. In the negotiations with the Commission in Brussels, were fixed odds as 110,000 tons of sugar beet and keeping 329,000 tonnes of white sugar refining imported raw sugar.

The calculation of the allowance was legal in the EU, but the sugar beet quota is below its potential Romania. The raw sugar imports to domestic production virtually abolished.So, as a member of the European Union Romania occurs only in the allowances received, thus becoming dependent on imports of white sugar. Thus, in Romania, contracting, manufacturing, transportation, receipt and payment of beet intended for industrialization will comply with the conditions set out in the sugar beet industry agreement.From the viewpoint of the small producer of sugar beet, entering the European market quantities of sugar at prices much lower (0.5 euro / kg in 2011) than domestic sugar production costs led to the accumulation of stocks indigenous sugar which ultimately forced were sold at prices that did not cover costs (Figures 1 and 2).

Table 3 Evolution and beet production area sugar in Romania during 2007-2012

Specification	UM	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Area	thousands ha	28,7	20,4	21,3	21,7	18,8	29,4
Average production	Kg/ha	26065	34564	38296	38036	35103	26204
Total production	thousands to	748,8	706,7	816,8	837,9	660,5	770,4

*Source:*www.madr.ro

The question is: It aims to eliminate sugar factories in Eastern Europe in favor of the West? Romania is just a sugar outlet? Employers say that the liberalization of sugar raw sugar sugar production is accompanied by the inability to buy sugar from quality suppliers, all quantities of sugar possible to export to Europe already, for years, long-term contracts (15 -20 years) Western factories.

In 2012, sugar beet production was 770,000 tons, obtained from 29,000 hectares, according to Table 3. Romania imported in 2012 nearly 491,000 tonnes of cane and beet, while exports totaled just over 101,000 tonnes. (Figure 1).
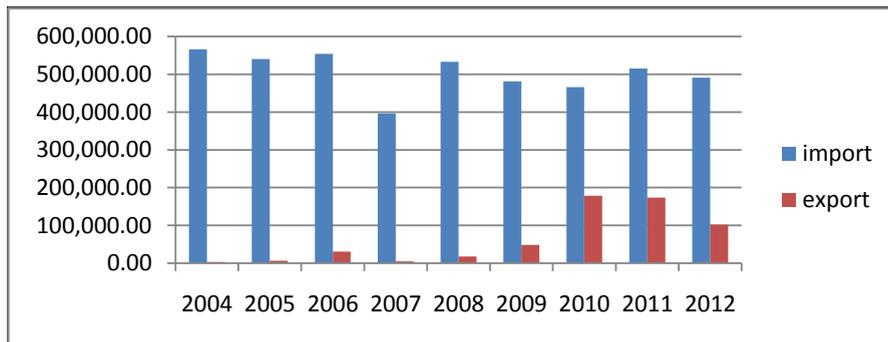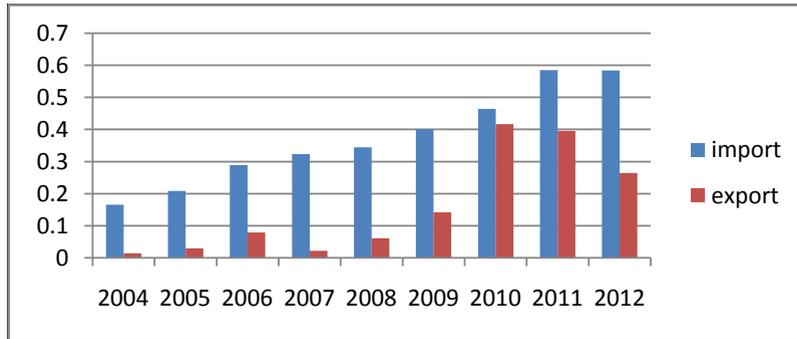

*Source:*www.madr.ro
Fig. 1 Intra and extra sugar cane or beet sugar and pure sucrose, in the period 2004-2012

At this point, specialized market problems become acute. In addition to running factories restructuring programs, allocation of allowances and implementation framework agreement inter-professional sugar beet production - which applies to the European Union, it raises the question of raw sugar for refining know the market, its price?

In favourable areas beet cultivation (BOD, LUDUŞ, Oradea, Romania) processors have already concluded partnerships with farmers, investing together to improve the quality of sugar - purity, colour etc. - And the amount of production costs with the EU.To solve the problems of domestic sugar market were applied support measures for sugar beet producers in 2009. This support is value much lower than they receive European farmers, and for this reason is not fair competition.

Fig. 2. Intra and extra sugar cane or beet sugar and pure sucrose, in the period 2004-2012euro / kg

Sugar Employers proposed to reduce the value added tax (VAT) on sugar, a measure which would be close to European standards. In Austria, sugar VAT is 10%, and an alignment to this standard would be a real support for Romanian producers.In 1989, in Romania there were 33 sugar factories, located in the territory inadequate in the sense that they were not correlated with production capacities of their areas planted with sugar beet, meaning production costs vary from one factory to another. Without this support, and beet processing plants began to experience difficulties getting bigger. Domestic industry lost to cane the early '90s, when customs duties on imported sugar. The relief lasted only a few years, but enough to put on the stocks of sugar factories, otherwise very tempting for rehabilitation of steel.

This has led to the following situation: a closed factory = share lost. The market continued to require sugar, so low-priced imported Romania, delaying the viable economic and factories extremely favourable beet cultivation areas (10).In 2005, the most important players in beet sugar factories were Ludus (25,500 tons), Oradea (23,600 tons), Bod (10,300 tons) and Roman (10,500 tons). In terms of refining sugar from imported raw sugar production was provided by the manufacturer Lieşti (125,800 tonnes) Ship (47,700 tons), Oradea (18,500 tons) and AGRANA Group (258,000 tons).

Production share received by our country after 2007 was well below the existing production capacity in January 1991 was sugar refining capacity of 600,000 to 700,000 tons in 1991 and Romania could become overnight one of the most feared European sugar market competitors. A country of Romania's agricultural calibre, with a land ideal conditions for beet cultivation and processing base with a potentially could also upset the major European businesses.Of the 33 existing plants back more than 21 years, currently only 2 May processed sugar from sugar beets, and two of a sugar beet and raw sugar - Roman and Oradea. Four were already closed.

The average number of employees in the sugar industry has evolved in the same direction in relation to the number of units, but with a negative impact on the average size units. The tendency to reduce the average size of a unit specializing in sugar production continued, so that in 2013, a total of 7 units had 0-9 employees, and only 3 units have more than 250 employees (Table 4).

Table 4: Economic developments in the sugar sector size class in Romania in 2008-2013

Class size	Number of agents					
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
0-9 employees	7	6	10	9	6	7
10-49 employees	6	3	3	4	5	4
50-249 employees	5	5	3	2	5	3
Over 250 employees	2	3	4	4	2	3
Total	20	17	20	19	18	17

Source: www.insse.ro, query tempo online

Mobility rate is very low in sugar industry, given a quota of 110,000 tonnes of sugar beet and keeping 329,000

tonnes of white sugar refining imported raw sugar. The lack of raw materials for the manufacture of sugar and sugar import competitive pressure from sugar cane led to restrict the activities of Romanian food industry. In the period 2008-2014, in Romania have worked three major sugar producers, and the fact that there has been the emergence of new start-ups in processing food-getting-selling sugar from sugar beet, shows a reduced mobility practically manifested only fierce competition between the big players in the sector that processes imported raw sugar.Changes in the level and dynamics of the average size of units producing sugar from sugar beet are the effect of financial results they obtained.After raising production quotas in 2017, experts predict an increase in the concentration of the market as a whole by the investments they will make producers - processors - retailers on the market in Romania, which will deepen competition in the sector food.Romanian production amounts to about 430,000 tons of refined sugar, while the national annual consumption is about 550.000- 600.000 tonnes of white sugar. The difference between what is produced in the country and annual consumption, a minimum of 120,000 tonnes of white sugar is imported from the European Union. Table 5 presents the 2013 market dynamics sugar beet which amounts to about 181 million euros, with a stagnation of supply and demand for such products, production is limited by the quota system.

Table 5: The main producers of sugar beet Romanian market in 2013

Beet sugar producers under CAEN code 1081	Indicators					
	Turnover	Profit (LEI)	Loss (LEI)	Employees profit margin (LEI)	Productivity (%)	CA / employee
	75.387.212	-	2.087.349	206	-	365.957
	180.831.715	9.463.653	-	220	5.23	821.962
	544.012.238	1.959.978	-	271	0.36	2.007.425
TOTAL	800.231.165			1175		

Source: Data collected from the balance sheets, embossing own

Table 6: The main producers of sugar and raw sugar cane Romanian market in 2013

Beet sugar producers under CAEN code 1081	Indicators					
	Turnover	Profit (LEI)	Loss (LEI)	Employees profit margin (LEI)	Productivity (%)	CA / employee
	1,223,395,128	-	104,197,567	478	-	2,559,404
	279,064,751	1,183,520	-	36	0.42	7,751,799
	59,443,546	-	706,789	32	-	1,857,611
	48,452,849	-	5,135,815	312	-	155,298
	3,678,811	2,594,999	-	-	70.54	0
	1,083,420	-	1,555,709	25	-	43,337
	110,988	18,939,040	-	2	17,064.04	55,494
TOTAL	1.615.229.493			885		

Source: Data collected from the balance sheets, embossing own

Thus, Table 5 presents a dynamic market sales of imported raw sugar cane in 2013, which amounts to about 370 million euros, with an increase in demand for such products. On the Romanian market producers have their own brands, but the largest volume of sales is achieved through networks of stores, which in turn have their own brands. These sales through retail networks is achieved without advertising. Their share is estimated at 30-40% and is growing according to our surveys among producers.Major manufacturers will be able to keep a balance of sales and sales of own brand products through networks? Thus, the consumer will find increasingly fewer brands on store shelves and at higher prices than today.In conclusion, the two largest sugar beet processors showed positive results in the last 2 years. They say that during this period it takes increasingly more sugar beet, because raw sugar is very expensive and highly dependent on international scholarships price. In addition, sugar cane has the same yield and newly accredited increasingly more for ethanol production.

Table 7: Sugar production in Romania in 2008-2013

The main industrial products	Units	Years					
		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Sugar from sugar beets	Tons	130.899	93.998	99.342	85.037	103.687	143.890
Imported raw sugar	Tons	358.670	321.704	176.350	299.318	342.762	312.379
Total	Tons	489.569	415.702	275.692	384.355	446.449	456.269

Source: www.insse.ro , tempo query online

The changed strategic approach and encourage the cultivation of sugar beet, which has all the advantages for farmers and for the processor. For 2011, the price per tonne of beet went from 26 euros and the largest company in Romania started negotiations with farmers and the price offered was 35 euros / tonne. The trend is the increase in both the price per tonne and the cropped area. Given that the reference price largest is now applied to other companies and is contained in a binding contract signed culture establishment.
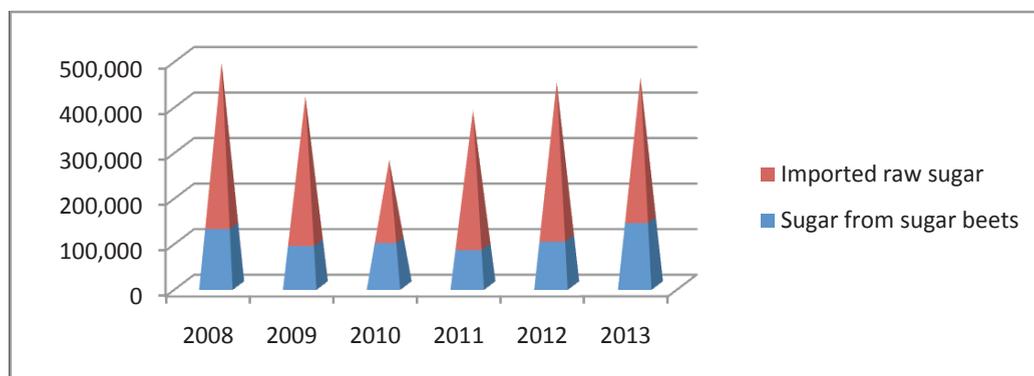
Source: www.insse.ro, tempo query online
Fig. 3 The evolution of sugar production in Romania in 2008-2009

In Romania, import sugar market in 2013 amounted to a volume of 300 thousand tonnes (imported) + 140 thousand tonnes (from domestic production). The results showed a penetration rate of imports practically competitive pressure in a market in which consumption had been provided only from domestic production. The chart above is a slight downward trend in imports, as national and global economic environment, which affected the purchasing power of the population.

Table 8 Sugar consumption in Romania in 2008-2012

The main food and drinks	1990	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Sugar (kg)	27,3	24,3	24,8	23,4	23,7	22

Source: www.insse.ro , tempo query online

Despite the diversification of consumption in Romania, 2012, in the structure of household consumption expenditure indicate a share of food expenditure in total consumption expenditure of 36.2% on total households, varying between 34.8% and 41, 2% over the five categories studied: households of employees, employers, farmers, unemployed and pensioners. These weights are found in the poorest countries of Europe. Compared to the average EU annual sugar 38-39 kg / capita, Romania has a lower consumption, around 22-23 kg sugar / capita. To measure the degree of market concentration, shown in the table below Herfindahl-Hirschman pointer (HHI). Thus this research results in Romania, market sugar producers of sugar beet (Table 9) is a market with a low degree of concentration (<1000) according to the levels allowed by the European Commission.

Table 9 The concentration of sugar producers marketsugar beet Romania in 2013

Indicators	Turnover (lei)	Market share %	Si^2
Main producers under CAEN code 1081 "Manufacture of sugar"	75.387.212	3,7	13,69
	180.831.715	8,9	79,21
	544.012.238	26,9	723,61
Total	800.231.165	100	HHI= 816

Source: Data collected from the balance sheets, embossing own

Table 10 The concentration of sugar producers marketcane in Romania in 2013

Indicators	Turnover (lei)	Market share%	Si^2
Main producers under CAEN code 1081 "Manufacture of sugar"	1.223.395.128	75,74	5737
	279.064.751	17,28	298
	59.443.546	3,68	14
	48.452.849	3,00	9
	3.678.811	0,23	0,1
	1.083.420	0,07	0
	110.988	0,01	0
			HHI= 6058

Source: Data collected from the balance sheets, embossing own

In Romania market producers of cane sugar (raw sugar imports) is very concentrated (HHI = 6058): the first two competitors together hold 93% of market volume in 2013 (Table 10). In this market there is competition, co-efficient companies are less efficient companies (Table 9 and 10), because there are consumers who may prefer assortment of less efficient companies. Substitutability is inversely proportional to the degree of product differentiation. Romanian market is dominated by sugar differentiated products, products having more types differentiated by certain characteristics (quality). Between these types occur at the same time a certain degree of substitutability.

Table 11 The evolution of turnover of the main players in the Romanian retail sector in 2013

Indicators	Turnover RON	Profit (RON)	Loss (RON)	Employees (thousand)
The main players in the retail sector under CAEN code 4639	7.260.679.847	331.021.465	-	577
	4.289.031.026	144.301.868	-	640
	2339.955.235	55.113.401	-	383
	2.300.730.369	-	90.560.511	425
	2.273.251.625	-	303.773.707	493
	2.194.126.524	557.896	-	725
	1.456.261.116	26.873.037	-	328
	1.359.002.194	2.178.995	-	434
	819,338,441	-	4,469,583	403

Source: Data collected from the balance sheets, embossing own

3.1. The average turnover / employee in the sugar industry

In Tables 5 and 6, we present the sugar industry companies, which have about 2,100 employees, representing

0.02% of the employees in the economy, but for roughly 78% of turnover in the sector.According to statistics, the areas in which entrepreneurs have the highest values are aggregated turnover of wholesale trade (55.2 billion lei turnover in 2012, or 30% of the total, 429 companies), construction (15.2 billion lei turnover in 2012, or 8.3% in total, 160 companies), retail, agriculture and food.Changes in consumption habits of the population occurred in the sugar market were essential elements in increasing the share of private labels of major retailers, whose production was provided by the first two producers. First, acquired over the years more production capacity and local brands, with the stated goal of becoming a local leader in this segment.According to statistics, in Romania, the level of labor productivity, measured by turnover per employee (decreasing) order is wholesale fuel sales, supply goods industry, transport, retail (L. Lupu, M. Voicu, 2006). Following investigations, we can highlight the importance of initiating training programs in managerial communication within organizations (Pănişoară, IO, 2003).

3.2. Market Indicators

Evolution rates of profitability. Some authors believe that increased profitability is the effect of consumer satisfaction. At one time the company may resort to a decrease in earnings to increase customer satisfaction. Ensuring customer satisfaction through improved quality, superior design, adequate training of personnel, product variety will lead to an increase in costs, which reduces the profitability of the company.

The financial crisis, job instability has led consumers to be more concerned about their future employment and hence the frequency of purchase and consumption. Decline in sales of food, is a phenomenon that directs hypermarkets to promote their brands. Customers refuse to consider buying products "Premium" because they decide to buy cheaper brands and products have a more rational attitude towards promotion (Ion Gr. Ionescu, 2013).

The retail sector is the winner because of the possibility of adapting to changing buying behaviour. The economic crisis of 2011 led to large retail chains in Romania to accelerate the introduction of their products and brands to move to an aggressive marketing designed on customer needs, which led to an increase in sales by 90%.Private label products are a cheaper alternative for customers, especially in this economic climate unfavourable.

Consumer Complaints are an indication of the quality of services or goods from one economic sector. Starting from the assumption that a competitive environment stimulates innovation and improved quality of services, we may use customer complaints within a measure (indirectly) the intensity of competition in a particular sector. In addition, the existence of a large number of dissatisfied consumers may signal manifestation of market power of suppliers of goods / service providers. Products sold by supermarkets and hypermarkets in Romania as "own brand" are increasingly preferred by Romanian (according to a study Mednet, in 2010). Thus, 91.6% of Romanians who have purchased any product under its own brand declares that such products will buy in the future, a sign that private labels gaining ground.

4. Conclusions and Proposals

We consider that a decrease in market shares of large companies in the sugar market, reduce the value of the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI), which suggests an increase in competition in this market. Market shares of efficient companies will decrease because fewer consumers will be able to accept an ample assortment offered by them (due to increased differentiation). At the same time, increase the company's market power, something which translates into an increased rate of profit (or margin between the selling price and cost of production).The largest network of hypermarkets on the Romanian market aim to broaden the range of products sold under their own brands. Although short-term producers may benefit from these contracts, while you can get to reduce investment in own brands producers by limiting development budgets, innovation and promotion. In the current conjuncture of crisis, the final consumer might fairly quickly orient to these products, especially if they are considerably cheaper than the other. Looking and in terms of producers, they will be led by financial difficulties, not to invest as much as in previous years in advertising and marketing budgets at the expense of falling sales of private label goods.Consumers accept trademarks retailers when they provide a quality approximately equal to that of a national brand differentiation is determined only by the price, usually being sold its own brand at lower prices.

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