



Market

Cărturești is often referred to as a bookshop. However, with its involvement in many different fields and sectors (books, music, films, tea, exhibitions, as well as numerous cultural events), Cărturești cannot be directly compared with the other players on the market, and could be perhaps better considered a 'cultural venue' rather than a shop.

The book market in Romania is still underdeveloped. Due to the low average level of disposable income available to individuals, only a small percentage of the population reads one book per year and an even smaller percentage ever buys one. The number of dedicated



bookshops has witnessed a sharp decline (from 876 bookshops in 1998 to 450 in 2005 - Source: Capital, November 2005), mainly due to the closure of formerly state owned outlets.

The music and film market is in an even more delicate position. Progress towards reducing piracy has been made in recent years, but the percentage of original product sales is still small compared to other European countries. In spite of this, there have been recent improvements and the market is slowly growing.

In addition, the Romanian cultural scene is characterised by a long recognised shortage of dedicated selling spaces. Cărturești answered an existing need of a market that is growing but is also becoming more diverse and sophisticated, and thus managed to create a demand for similar outlets (given the number of copy-cat stores that followed in its footsteps).

Achievements

Cărturești is not about awards or market share. Cărturești was from the beginning concerned with reversing the downwards trend of book-buying and book-reading in an era when the main concerns of a society busy rediscovering itself were mostly practical and material.

Its main achievement consists in offering a new perspective onto the "book-related world". Cărturești's wish was to make the whole experience of buying a book richer; a trip to Cărturești may be seen as more than simply fulfilling the practical role of buying a book, but as a more complete experience altogether; by adding the pleasure of drinking a cup of tea, listening to good music, browsing thorough magazines. The end result is hopefully a more engaging and aesthetically fulfilling experience and, as indicated by the public's response, more adapted to modern lifestyle needs.

Cărturești has undoubtedly become one of the engines behind the rapid growth of the cultural market in the last few years of Romania's history.

Additionally, Cărturești has paid much attention to architecture, interior design,

lighting and visual identity, so that each Cărturești shop has a unique design concept behind it, created by renowned Romanian architects and designers, or by young emerging artists. This preoccupation with every detail has raised the standards of design and customer service for all the other players in the market.

This modus operandi did not remain unnoticed and Cărturești succeeded in encouraging publishers to pick up the challenge and invest more in marketing (book quality, design, promotion etc).

From a different perspective, Cărturești has had a major contribution in making tea a popular drink among Bucharest's population again. It can be argued that Cărturești re-introduced tea drinking as a pleasurable and relaxing activity and conceivably created a market for premium loose tea in Bucharest.

In just a few years, Cărturești has become the top choice for top products. Artists, architects and designers come here for the professional books they need; students look for the best selection of books for their studies; connoisseurs come for the hard to find music CDs and art-house films; the general public visits the shop for the latest novels or records; and tea lovers come for one of the best selections of tea one can find in Romania.

After six years of activity, Cărturești today boasts six different locations spread across a number of cities, has a flagship position in its category and receives demands for franchising the concept.

Thus, Cărturești succeeded in attracting the young trendsetters of Bucharest's fast growing urban culture, giving them a forum where they can feel free to learn, to get in touch with each other, to experiment, to create projects and events together. Some of these projects took place on Cărturești's premises.

Hundreds of different cultural events have taken place in Cărturești during the last three years. Book and music launches; small concerts; photography and painting exhibitions; architecture and urbanism presentations; film



projections; social and cultural debates; they all take place continually inside Cărturești, mainly in the tea-rooms, which were specially designed to be able to host such events. Cultural figures such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Ibrahim Ferrer, Pascal Bruckner and numerous other foreign and Romanian artists have passed through Cărturești for press conferences and book launches.

History

At the end of 2000, when the book market in Romania was in sharp decline and the opening of a bookshop hardly seemed a wise move, a small Cărturești bookshop was opened in the centre of Bucharest.

Good books, well-chosen music, a cup of fine tea and hard-to-find films were all part of the whole that was to become Cărturești. The idea attracted attention and the bookshop was particularly well received by the public. Cărturești earned its recognition, as well as the public's affection through the careful selection of the most valuable cultural products, the quality of the tea offered, the personalising of services (searching for or ordering books on request, making recommendations etc.) and through constant attention to customers' feedback and preferences.

After only three years, a second Cărturești bookshop opened in a beautiful nineteenth century building, part of Bucharest's historical heritage, a house that belonged to the old and famous Sturdza family. This time, it was one of the largest bookshops in Romania, covering over 500 sqm (of which only 250 sqm were initially used). It has also been the largest capital investment ever made in a Romanian bookshop. The architecture and interior design project for the whole space is the work of Șerban Sturdza, one of the most valued Romanian architects today.

By the beginning of 2006, Cărturești bookshops were present in three major Romanian cities: three in Bucharest, two in Timișoara and one in Iași. A co-operation brand called Casa de Ceai (The Tea House) was also opened in Brașov.

Product

Cărturești is more than just a place to go when you want to find a book or a CD. Even the slogan of Cărturești makes customers expect more than just books - "carte, ceai, muzică, dichis" - which could be translated as books, tea, music, and "je ne sais quoi". The idea of "dichis" ("je ne sais quoi"), with its bohemian resonances of the golden age of Bucharest between the wars, was intended to suggest the difference, that magic hat from which Cărturești pulls out the small things that surprise and enchant the public.

Cărturești provides a different shopping experience; looking for a book is now part of a more complex process, which implies sampling the atmosphere, enjoying the pleasures of communicating with people, indulging in discovering something one did not previously know about. The completeness of the experience when visiting Cărturești is certainly helped by the fragrance of aromatic tea that is

on sale and also served in the tea-rooms, where a large selection of fine teas from all over the world are carefully prepared and are served in fine China cups.

Cărturești, "the product", is based upon four pillars:

- Front desk service quality - both the behaviour of employees in maintaining professional, direct, informal and pleasant relationships, as well as their human qualities
- Location quality and distinction - architecture, interior design, and convenient opening hours, seven days a week
- Great selection of books, music and films - looking for what is outstanding in each domain, what is hot, hip and breakthrough
- The creation of spaces for projects, exhibitions, public debates in the form of the tea-rooms - a modern arena for the exchange of ideas.

Recent Developments

The recent development of the network (four new Cărturești stores opened in just six months) required new logistics. In order to better administer and supply over 40,000 titles per year to more bookshops around the country, significant improvements have been made to the IT system and a new logistic centre and warehouse was opened in Bucharest at the end of 2005.

At the beginning of 2006, the loft in Bucharest's main store was opened to the public. This practically doubled the available space and allowed for a significant diversification of the products on offer.

The requests received for franchising the concept gave rise to a process of elaborating the franchise procedure.

Promotion

Almost all of Cărturești's promotion has been through word of mouth. In the media, Cărturești can be found in editorials and testimonials, rather than in formal advertisements. The investments in quality and concern for each and every detail have delighted customers, who had an essential contribution in the success and even the development of the brand.

Cărturești believes in ethical branding and marketing and doesn't push products based on any criteria other than merit recommendations and promotions are based on Cărturești's understanding of the customer need rather than on economic and financial incentives. Cărturești's promotion has always been indirect (by promoting books, albums, artists, art collections, concerts, events), informal and often playful, usually avoiding the direct promotion of the brand itself.

Concerned with the current reshaping of the urban scene and its sometimes unplanned and un-coordinated development, Cărturești furthered its participation in this area by organising a public contest for the design of its bookshop in the Anador Centre in Bucharest. The main aim of this competition was to attract public attention to the importance of using professional design in relation to public spaces, instead of haphazard development.

Brand Values

Cărturești is an urban brand, an intelligent and stylish part of the urban community looking for alternative ways of fulfilling their intellectual and



lifestyle needs. An experimental and avant-garde laboratory brand, built on intellectual vision and values, Cărturești is a flagship of the culture industry.

Cosmopolitan and informal, authentic, unconventional, fresh and innovative, obsessively seeking to further its purpose, namely the creation of a physical and mental space dedicated to those who place emphasis on cognitive development and educational needs, Cărturești is a modern and sophisticated brand. The ability to understand and share the sentiments and aspirations of a well-defined target makes this brand a key reference point for urban culture.

Last but not least, Cărturești is a responsible brand, deeply engaged in the life of the community.

Cărturești is a flexible, permissive, open concept that is being developed and contributed to by each member of staff, its partners, and even the general public.

www.carturesti.ro



THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT

cărturești

- › Every day, Cărturești receives emails with invitations and requests to open bookshops in the sender's city. Some of those who write also give suggestions for the buildings they have in mind for Cărturești. The bookshop has been invited to all the major cities in Romania, but also to Sofia (Bulgaria), Chișinău (Republic of Moldova), Budapest (Hungary) and even London (UK). This is how Iași and Timișoara got their Cărturești
- › Cărturești was initially called Cărtărești, but following a request from Mircea Cărtărescu (a renowned Romanian writer), the name was changed so that the writer wouldn't receive so many congratulatory calls and questions. The name Cărturești came from the idea of a village of books, or book-people
- › The Cărturești bookshop on Arthur Verona St. quickly became a symbol of Bucharest's cultural life, being now part, officially and unofficially, of many guided tours through the capital of Romania