

MARKETING COMMUNICATION ON THE LAUNCH OF A NEW BRAND OF ELECTRIC CAR. THE CASE OF DACIA SPRING

Laura MARCU¹, ORCID: 0000-0003-2474-3450
Sebastian Constantin RADULESCU², ORCID: 0000-0002-9051-363X

Abstract: *Although the electric car market is growing and has great potential, in the context of changes adopted in more and more states regarding environmental protection, competition is already strong. Each major car manufacturer has sought to create its own electric model, which it can position as well as possible on the market, based on unique technical, functional, economic features, and the campaign to launch new products has become the key element of positioning marketing. In this context, we intend to analyse the launch campaign of the electric car bearing the brand of the Romanian manufacturer Dacia, highlighting, on one hand, the message and, implicitly, the strengths retained in positioning and, on the other hand, the main means of communication used. The article combines the use of statistical data from secondary sources to present the global and national context of the electric car market at the time of the launch of the Dacia Spring electric model and the case study based on the content analysis of the materials used in the communication campaign.*

Keywords: communication, electric cars, launch campaign, Dacia Spring, world market.

JEL code: L62, M16, M31, M37, O33.

Introduction

The electric car market has expanded continuously in almost all class segments, from space-saving compact mini cars, sedans, sports models, family break casts, to classic SUVs, the electric range comprising different bodies and power engines.

The major manufacturers of cars with internal combustion engines, diesel and gasoline, have expanded their offer to include different models of electric cars, for different categories of users. For cars built for maintenance service, fast food delivery cars, to parcel delivery and cars built for taxis, there are a lot of sectors where electric cars are already active, being considered ideal, especially in the city.

Thus, the number of electric vehicles produced increased significantly, and sales growth was supported by technological advances and public policies to reduce carbon emissions and to diminish the use of fossil fuels, but also by the effort of manufacturers to offer products that meet more diverse categories of customers.

The electric car market is on an upward trend, the emergence of new models is more than appropriate, and manufacturers have already begun to compete to benefit the interest of buyers. In this context, the launch of a new electric model is particularly important for its positioning market, but also in the perception of specialists and the general public. As a result, manufacturers are

¹ Associate Professor PhD, Valahia University of Targoviste, Romania, email: laura_marcu_uvt@yahoo.fr

² Postgraduate student, Valahia University of Targoviste, Romania

DOI: 10.29302/oeconomica.2021.23.1.13

looking for the most effective strategies for launching new electric models. One such case is that of the Dacia Spring car, a premiere for the Romanian manufacturer who set out to associate its first 100% electric car with a unique image on the market. In order to highlight the communication strategy chosen for the Dacia Spring model (under the motto "electric revolution") we will resort to a case study, so as to detail the set of means of communication that the manufacturer gradually used (during the pre-order period, before launch and on the occasion of the official launch).

The study is complemented by the presentation of statistical data obtained from studies and reports on the electric car market; this analysis aims to understand the competitive context in which the new car is launched and the strengths that the manufacturer has chosen to highlight its product. Also for this purpose are presented comparatively the promotion campaigns of two of the brands of electric cars in the mini class, already existing on the market at the time of launching Dacia Spring, and which are important competitors on the Romanian market, and can be purchased through the Rabla Plus program.

The electric car market: under the sign of a continuous innovation with multiple implications

Appeared more than 100 years ago, electric cars were quickly considered a silent means of transport, easy to handle and with simple mechanics. At the beginning of their appearance on the market, they experienced a growing popularity, so that later the interest towards them decreased considerably. As a result, at the beginning of the 1900s, this type of car dominated the market, while at the end of 1935 they were a rarity on the streets of those times, so that today they become popular and required again.

From a technical point of view, electric cars developed as a product following innovations that marked the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of which we can evoke: the first electric car, but with non-rechargeable batteries (created by Robert Anderson), the electric vehicle built by the American Thomas Davenport in 1845 (and similar to an electric motor locomotive), the lead-acid battery (Gustave Trouvé, 1859), the solution to increase the energy storage capacity and lifespan (Camille Faure), the electric car with rechargeable battery presented by the Frenchman Gustave Trouvé in 1881 at the "Exposition Internationale d'Électricité" in Paris (the prototype of today's electric cars), the electric car proposed overseas by the American William Morrison (1881), large-scale production by Pope Manufacturing Company (USA, 1897) providing electric taxis for New York City, the prototype proposed at the 1900 Paris Motor Show by the young Ferdinand Porsche (a vehicle equipped with two 2.5 hp electric motors directly integrated in the front wheel hubs, without intermediate gears, belts, chains and differentials for power transmission). As a result, by 1990, the electric car already reached its peak: out of 4,191 cars produced in the United States, more than 30% were powered by electric motors, representing about a third of all cars travelling on the streets of Chicago, Boston and New York.

The turning point in the rise of electric car is marked by the appearance of the Ford T model mass-produced by Henry Ford (1908) which will tip the scales in favour of gasoline vehicle, quickly available on a large scale and much more affordable. After 1920, the electric vehicle ceased to be a viable means of transport, which was determined by several factors such as the desire for vehicles to travel longer distances, more power, but also the availability of gasoline and diesel in those years. In addition, manufacturing costs were lower for petrol cars, and oil was low in price at the time, becoming the preferred fuel for automobiles and industry worldwide [mobile.de, 2020]. As a result, more and more gas stations have appeared, being more accessible, cheaper and easier to use. Eventually, electric vehicles almost disappeared from the market by the end of 1935.

The recovery of electric cars began in 1966, in the United States with the recommendation of Congress to build electric vehicles so to reduce pollution, supported by the favourable attitude of public opinion in the context of the oil crisis of the 70s. Since 1990, California has required US

manufacturers to sell at least 2% zero-emission vehicles by 1998, with the threshold rising to 5% in 2001 and 10% in 2003, followed by other regions [avere-france.org, 2014].

This is the context that makes the period 1990-1996, car manufacturers to focus on the development of a high-performance electric vehicle, with increased autonomy, but also with low manufacturing costs. From 1996 to 1999, several thousand electric cars from different manufacturers appeared on the market, such as Ranger EV (Ford), Altra Ev (Nissan), Ev Plus (Honda), Rav 4 EV (Toyota) and S-10 EV (Chevrolet). At the same time, General Motors, in response to the California emission reduction law passed in 1990, tried to set up General Motors Electric Vehicle, and Electric Vehicle 1 (EV1) was the first compact electric car with a range of approximately 160 km, which was manufactured in a total of 1,117 pieces, 800 of which were sold to several celebrities such as Tom Hanks or Mel Gibson, the rest of the vehicles being rented only to residents of Arizona, California and Georgia, and the model was improved in the following years. [wheelsjoint.com, 2020] Renault also launches the Kangoo Elect'road hybrid vehicle in France in 2003, but production was discontinued after only 500 units were sold.

Between 2005 and 2009, a new generation of electric vehicles appeared that were far superior to those of the past, with increased range, reaching higher speeds, such as the Tesla Roadster, which was unveiled in San Carlos, California as a revolutionary prototype in July 2006, generating an extraordinary response from people everywhere, so that the year 2008 brings numerous orders to the company [testla.com, 2010]. This model reached 100 km/h in just 4 seconds and developed 248 hp, and the declared maximum speed was 209 km/h [carfolio.com, 2006].

Mitsubishi i-MiEV launched in Japan on the occasion of World Environment Day, on June 5, 2009 was the first car produced by a major manufacturer in series with a 100% electric motor, intended for the world market, being part of the mini class, and its launch on the European market took place in 2010, when the serial version could be admired at Geneva Motor Show [Mitsubishi Motors, 2019]. At the same time, several small class cars appear on the market, such as Citysax, Think City, LUIS 4U, Stromos and Blue Car.

In Romania, the first 100% electric vehicle sold on the market was that of the Japanese manufacturer Mitsubishi i-MiEV, launched in March 2011, being a 4-seater mini class vehicle that developed a power of 49 kw and reached a maximum speed of 140 km/h [Stan, 2011].

In 2012-2013, Tesla launches in California Tesla model S, the first 100% electric luxury sports hatchback vehicle; in 2013 it was in the top of the best-selling electric cars in Europe, with a number of approximately 1660 pieces. It had a power of 310 kw or 416 hp, a range of 260 km and five seats [Edmunds.com, 2012]. The Renault ZOE is launched in Europe, a 5-door mini city vehicle with a power of 88 hp, a top speed of 135 km/h and a battery life of 210 km; in 2013 it was the best-selling electric vehicle in Europe with around 8,500 pieces, going from re-entering the market to the top seller in Europe in just a few months after its appearance [autorevolution.com, 2020]. Volkswagen launches the first 100% electric car standard with the Golf MK VII model, a compact class car that develops 136 hp and a range of up to 300 km, as well as the E-up model in the mini class that develops a power of 80 hp or 60 kw, with a range average speed of 120 km and a top speed of 130 km/h.

Between 2014 and 2020, due to the very high demand for electric vehicles, many models produced in series by major manufacturers appear on the market, such as: Smart Fortwo Electric Drive, Kia Soul EV, Peugeot e-208, Smart Forfour Electric Drive, Mazda MX-30, Jaguar I-pace, Renault Zoe, Audi e-Tron, Mini Cooper electric, Smart Forfour Electric Drive, BMW I3, Hyundai Kona electric, Kia e-Niro, Nissan Leaf, Opel Corsa-e, Volkswagen ID.3, Honda E, Mercedes EQC, e.GO Life, Tesla Model 3, and the list can go on with the many improved variants of models that have appeared in the past [autocar.co.uk, 2021].

Intensifying global competition in the electric car market

The market share of electric cars worldwide reached 2.6% in 2019, after being 2.4% in 2018 and 1.5% in 2017 [IEA, 2020, p. 44]. The global electric vehicle market is dominated by major brands such as Tesla, Wuling HG, Renault, Hyundai, Volkswagen and Nissan (Figure no. 1).

In an extremely dynamic market, a list of the main brands and manufacturers of electric cars on the world market, sorted by name from A to Z includes : Audi, Axiam, Arrival, Artega, - Baic, Bmw, Bolt, Belkommumash, Byd, Byton, - Changan Automobile, Chery, Chanje, Cake, Chevrolet, Ceely, Creat Wall, Chobus Industries, Citroen –Doohan Dong feng, Daf, Dacia – Ego, E –Fuso, Easymile, Emco, Estrima, EvoBus, Evum Motors, Evii, - Ford, Faraday Future, Framo, Freight Liner, Futuricum, -Gaius, General Motors, Geely, Govecs, Gogoro, - Honda, Hyundai, Heulez Bus, - Iseki, Iveco, - Jac Motors, Jaguar, JCB –KIA, Kamaz, Kumpan electric, KTM, - Lucid motors – Maxus, Man, Mercedes Benz, Melex, Micro Mobility Systems, Mitsubishi- Navia, Nok, Nissan, Niu, NIO -Opel- Peugeot, Paxter, Porche, Piaggio-Renault, Rmk Vehicle, - Saic, Skoda, Smart, Sang Yong, Solaris,- Tesla, Thor Trucks, Toyota,- Volvo, Volkswagen [e-autos.de, 2021].

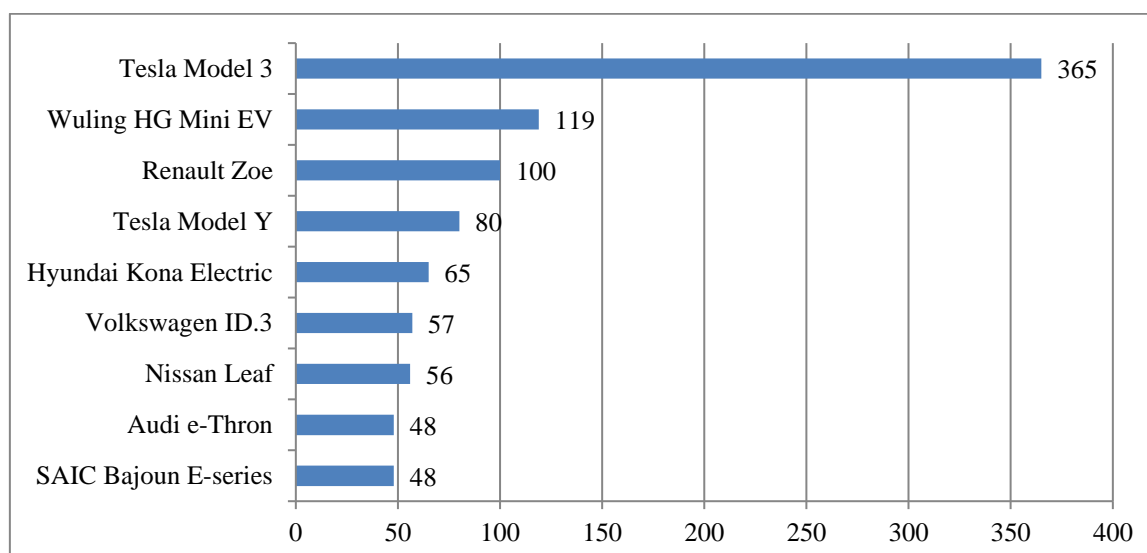


Figure no. 1: The best-selling electric vehicle models worldwide in 2020 (thousand pieces) [Carrier, 2021]

In 2019, the largest fleet of electric cars was owned by China, with 3.4 million cars (about 47% of the world total), followed by Europe (with 1.7 million cars, respectively 25% of the total) and the USA (1.5 million cars, ie 20% of all electric cars). In terms of sales of electric cars, the largest market is also held by China, with sales of 1.06 million cars in 2019, followed by Europe with 561,000 cars (where the main markets are Norway, Iceland, Netherlands, Germany, France, the United Kingdom) and the USA with 327,000 newly sold cars. [IEA, 2020, p. 44-45].

The market share of electric cars in total cars reached 2.6% worldwide in 2019, and by areas was 4.9% in China, 3.5% in Europe and 2.1% in US, while Japan's market share was only 0.9%. At the same time, among European countries, a higher percentage of electric cars in the total number of registered cars was reported in Germany (3%), Great Britain (2.9%) and France (2.8%) [Psenner, 2020].

As for the target audience categories, they tend to diversify as the supply of electric cars becomes more varied. Thus, if the first electric cars, in 1900s, had a range of about 100 km, manufacturers sought to increase the range to meet the requirements of the public. For example, the 2008 Tesla Roadster had a range of 400 km, while the 2014 model, Tesla Roadster 3.0 and the 2015

S Raven P100D model had a maximum range of 650 km. The middle segment currently includes vehicles with a range of between 200 and 400 km, at much more affordable prices than in the past.

The production of large electric cars manufacturers in different bodies, levels of equipment and power, makes this type of car to replace the classic heat engine cars, and to address all customers, of any class, as needed, from mini body cars, city hatchback, sedan, break, minivan, cargo vans, electric trucks, family cars, SUVs, luxury sports cars with powerful engines and even racing cars, up to cars specially equipped for companies car sharing, buses, taxis, etc., this type of car is addressed to both individuals and legal entities.

Tightening pollution laws and intensifying competition in the electric car market will lead to increased innovation in this market in the future. Among the trends assumed by the main manufacturers is the launch of large models (for example, Volkswagen's "family" ID models, such as ID.7 Buzz – an electric minivan electric that will be available in two lengths, the huge electric SUV ID.6 built on the platform Tuareg, or the development of a 100% electric convertible roadster [Toma, 2020, p. 7]), the creation of independent divisions dedicated to mobility and energy (in case of Renault, for example, there will be four divisions: Dacia and Lada, Renault, New Mobility & Alpine [Măgureanu, 2021, p. 8]), the launch of autonomous electric cars of all types (at the already known companies Tesla, Baic, Agro AI, GM Cruise and will be joined by the Chinese search engine Baidu which will sign a partnership with the local car manufacturer to produce intelligent electric cars: the car manufacturer will use autonomous driving technology developed by Baidu, which will contribute to the project with its artificial intelligence technology and mapping systems [He, 2021]).

The main competitors on the Romanian electric car market

Romania is a new but growing market for electric cars and customers are increasingly open from year to year to this sector due to the evolution of technology and the desire to adapt, but also the promotion and involvement of authorities worldwide and of the European union, regarding the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 [Tomoiağa, 2019]. For example, the Romanian state encourages the purchase of electric cars by making available the Rabla Plus program, in which buyers receive a subsidy in the form of an eco-label up to 10,000 euros which can be combined with the 1,500 euros from the classic scrap program when purchasing a new 100% electric vehicle [Dragotă, 2021]. The buyer benefits from this ticket without the money coming directly into his physical possession, the value of the eco-voucher being reduced directly from the purchase price of the new electric car at the time of purchase. At the same time, the infrastructure is constantly evolving, which contributes to an even greater increase in the demand for electric vehicles in this market.

In 2020, the demand for electric cars was higher than the supply, the manufacturers not being able to fulfil all orders, and despite the pandemic, sales in this market were not affected. Thus, by the end of 2020, 2,111 100% electric cars were registered in Romania, compared to 2019 when 1,322 cars were registered, in 2018 the number being 560 electric cars [Dinescu, 2020]. This evolution is due to the increase in the value of the eco-label offered by the state, but also to the diversification and appearance of numerous models from several producers on the market.

Although owning an electric car is somewhat another challenge, especially in countries such as Romania (lack of charging stations especially in rural areas and small towns, lack of authorized services, still high purchase price of over 15,000 euros, with ecovoucher), they can be a convenient choice for some buyers especially due to the long-term benefits. Legislation, the desire to breathe cleaner air, simplicity of use, simplification of worries regarding mechanical problems, reliability, exemption from tax liability (imposition, free parking in some parking lots), long-term guarantees (5-8 years), can be the main arguments in the decision to purchase an electric car by a Romanian.

Cheaper, better, more spacious, more practical, quieter, easier to maintain, depending on the brand, power or design, smaller or larger, Romanians tend to choose cars carefully before making a decision on the purchase of a car, being a rather large investment and at the same time a long-term financial effort.

From the top three, of the best-selling electric cars in the first nine months of 2020 in Romania, one can see a preference for electric cars with hatchback body in the mini class with medium prices, from the range of Renault, Skoda and Volkswagen [Alecuc, 2020].

According to a Ernest & Young study presented in 2020, most Romanian respondents (60%) said they were willing to buy an electric or hybrid car in the future, in case of a good offer, the main impediments to switching to an electric vehicle being considered the purchasing price still high (for 75% of Romanians it is still a barrier) and the limited number of charging stations (27%) [EY, 2020].

Launch campaigns with impact on the Romanian market and buyers

Citigo-e iV is the first car of the Skoda manufacturer 100% electric, produced in series, being the promoter of Skoda iV models and marks the penetration of the Czech manufacturer on the electromobility market. The stated intention of the manufacturer was to increase the range of new products with the Škoda iV label to more than ten 100% electric models by the end of 2022 [Boleslav, 2019b].

The model was manufactured in the capital of Slovakia, and was presented for the first time on May 23, 2019 together with Skoda Superb iV which in turn is the first plug-in hybrid car of the brand, on the occasion of the 124th anniversary of its brand, at the international event (World Premiere) organized at the Bratislava Motor Show. As the main sponsor of the Ice Hockey Championship (IIHF), Škoda used the Bratislava sporting event as a setting for the presentation of the new electric models, this being a premiere, the sponsorship activity evoking the old connection with this sport. At the same time the emphasis is on sustainability and environmental protection videos with nature themes, videos with the national hockey team, but also videos with the presentation and explanation of the strengths of the new Citigo-e iV model such as: 260 km battery life, agility, due to the fact that it is a small car, futuristic interior design and quite low starting price. The event was also broadcast on TV, radio, internet but also in the written press. [Boleslav, 2019a].

Another communication of the presentation of the characteristics of the new Citigo-e iV model took place at the specialized car show in Frankfurt, where it could be admired by the general public and journalists from all countries at the IAA car show, in 2019, during September 10 - 22 at the A11 brand stand in pavilion 3.0, but also in the Netherlands during an event that also involved testing the car by the car journalists [Kipper, 2019].

A marketing campaign has been launched worldwide since September 3, 2020 under the slogan „Recharge Life”. Using suggestive messages and images that generate enthusiasm for the new Citigo-e iV, the multimedia campaign focused on the special moments people experienced, and addressed emotional topics such as: family, love, joy, community, trust and adventure, thank to individual mobility and presented the strengths Skoda iV electric and practical models. The key message of the campaign on all media channels was: „ŠKODA iV electric mobility is surprising, practical and people-oriented”.

The campaign focused on the strengths of the car, namely „Surprising, Small and Practical”, „Simply Smart”, „making everyday life more pleasant and easier, increasing the quality of life”; This refers to the facilities, but also the small size of the model that facilitates easier movement and handling through large cities. The campaign was broadcast on TV, in the press and on social media [Boleslav, 2020, Skoda, 2020].

In Romania, the highlighting of the product’s strengths was ensured by a mix of communication tools, among which we mention:

- Dedicated web page that includes the description of the model, the strengths, technical details, "stories" about the model, news, images and videos of the presentation with the model and that facilitates easier understanding of the strengths, but also how to use the car.
- Social networks: on the official Facebook page of Skoda Romania (the presentation of the advantages of owning this car, accompanied by representative pictures and links that refer to articles or to the main page of the website) and on the official Instagram *skoda_românia* (with pictures, questions and answers about the model, some details about the model, as well as links to videos with it).
- You Tube, on the official Skoda page: a video with the presentation of the car was broadcast live, an interview with the CEO of Skoda, videos with the presentation of the main features and strengths of the model but also the advertising clips.
- On television through commercials and presentation in the specialized car show Super Speed (Pro TV) in which the testing is presented and the main features of the model are explained.

The Volkswagen E-UP is one of the first 100% electric cars (along with e-Golf) produced by the German manufacturer, and is a class A mini city car with hatchback body, which was first launched at the car show at Frankfurt, in 2013 and subsequently improved [Smy, 2013].

An updated version of it was exhibited on October 10, 2019 at the Frankfurt International Motor Show (IAA), where it was promoted as a small electric car, a successful vehicle for everyday use, especially in the city, having numerous improvements over its predecessor, especially aesthetically, both externally and internally. The battery of the new model was totally upgraded (from 18.7 kwh as the old model had, to one with 36.8 kwh lithium-ion), the autonomy was significantly improved, up to 260 km [Bălăţeanu, 2019]. The new e-up version also became the first model of the brand to adopt the new redesigned logo (two-dimensional) that marks a new beginning in the era of modernisation. At the same time, the new models from the ID family were presented at the IAA car show. These are the new zero-emission vehicles such as: ID.3, the concept of the spacious ID SUV CROZZ, the new concept electric van ID- BUZZ, ID.VIZZION and a beach convertible ID. BUGGY. During the show, the general public and journalists were able to contact the models to test their interior/exterior equipment.

Just one week after the official presentation of the new E-up model at Frankfurt International Motor Show (IAA), to demonstrate one of its main strengths, namely the battery life capacity extended to 260 km, as well as the ability to meet any challenge, Volkswagen has sent its new E-up model to the famous long-distance racing event, organized in Italy, called „Mille Miglia”. This time the event was renewed because it borrows the original idea of the traditional long-distance car race, but it took place in an ecological version, only with electric and hybrid vehicles, the event now being called „Mille Miglia Green” [VW Newsroom, 2019]. The first edition of the competition took place between September 27-29, 2019, and participants had to be prepared to face other electric vehicles to prove their maximum capacity for autonomy, including in certain areas of unfavourable terrain, on the route Brescia-Mailand-Lainate, a distance of about 250 km; the new E-up as expected, faced the challenge, the event being covered internationally, the key information being available on the site dedicated to the event (<https://1000miglia.it/eventi/1000-miglia-green/>).

In Romania, the main ways of communication to promote this model were online advertising through the dedicated website, the social networks Facebook and Instagram, the YouTube channel and classic advertising (on television and print). The website was designed to highlight the three most interesting assets (Electric autonomy "to the destination", Connectivity via up+ smartphone, as well as "Electric" design), complete with model description; technical details, news; presentation images and videos. On the official Facebook page of Volkswagen România, the presentation of its main strengths (modern design, UP-degree of autonomy, connectivity) was made accompanied by small videos, representative pictures that emphasize freedom, movement and

youth, links to articles or on the main page of the website, as well as the offer through the scrap program that includes several models of the brand. The official Instagram page of Volkswagen_România included pictures, some details about the model and its main strengths, along with links to the website or videos on YouTube. The YouTube channel was used to broadcast the presentation live from Frankfurt show (on the YouTube page of Romania), videos presenting the main features and strengths of the model, commercials, as well as a campaign to inform and encourage the population about the virus covid-19 by a member of the board of directors of the Volkswagen brand.

Launch communication in the case of Dacia Spring

The Dacia Spring model marks the penetration of the Dacia brand on the electromobility market. It is a car with urban addressability, from the mini class, with the appearance of a SUV (crossover), due to the rather large ground clearance for its class, as well as the design and protection elements from the outside, being manufactured in a more updated version according to the model Renault City k-ze produced in China since 2019; the Spring model with the Dacia logo is also manufactured in China, by the Renault, Nisan and Dongfeng group, this fact being due to the existence there, of the best logistics for the production of an electric car [Damian, 2020, p. 11].

Among the main strengths of Dacia Spring are: the very low purchase price; it is easy to maintain; very large trunk; perfect car for the city; existence of special versions (Standard - the Comfort plus model; Business – intended especially for companies for fleets as well as a Cargo version for freight transport); very high ground clearance for his class; numerous facilities and an interesting design [Andrei, 2021].

The communication methods used at the launch of the new 100% Dacia Spring electric car include a wide development with a diversity of forms, made in several stages, and with a remarkable component of events, which emphasize the direct experience with the car, to attention is drawn to it, to increase its reputation and trust, but also to add value, the moment of communication of the launch being one of the most important events of a product, considered the “key to opening the doors” to its success. The main communication methods used for the launch of Dacia Spring, by categories, are:

a) Public Relations

The year 2020, due to the pandemic of covid-19 also marks the moment when the events were sustained more online than physically, as a consequence of the legislation to prevent the spread of virus, this requiring the adaptation of events for a safe conduct. So the remarkable moment of the Dacia brand, considered even historic, represented by the launch of its first electric car, took place for the first time in Paris, on October 15, 2020, in a virtual event, Renault eWays under the slogan “Electric Revolution” broadcast live on the official pages, where the car was exhibited and presented by the CEO of Renault Group, Luca de Meo [Dogaru, 2020, Barza, 2020].

At the same time, the car was presented for the first time on the official pages of Facebook, Instagram, You Tube and the official Dacia.ro website, where it was described as the most accessible electric model on the market, being a new Dacia revolution. On the site, the manufacturer described in the first phase, some advantages of the car, but also its features, the details being accompanied by representative pictures.

In relation to the press, the launch event in Paris was supported by a press conference, press release and specialized articles. Thus, the Renault eWays event broadcast online was doubled by a press conference a day after launch, with Romanian journalists, attended by Dacia marketing director Mihai Bordeanu and Marc Suss (director of Global Access program of Renault), along with other representatives of the brand, and where, to keep the public in suspense, only a few technical details and plans regarding the new car were presented. A press release has been distributed since March 3, 2020, being available to the general public on the official website dacia.ro; the press

release provides some information about the model, the year of availability on the market, as well as suggestive, animated pictures with the model [Dacia, 2020a]. Press articles on the new model have appeared in Romanian print magazines, such as "Auto motor și sport", "Auto bild" and especially in Romanian specialized or general online magazines. These were supported by information posted on the official page dacia.ro, social media pages, YouTube that were taken over in radio and TV news. In addition, the company's management gave interviews on the launch of the model, technical data and future plans.

A special action was the opportunity for the general public to participate in discussions with the director of Dacia and four other special guests on the clubhouse social networking page via live. The debate on "Auto talks" had as its theme the Dacia electric revolution. The announcement regarding the event was made on Facebook, on March, 29, 2021, after the launch of the pre-orders, indicating the time, date and live link. [Dacia, 2021c]

b) Integrated communication actions

In order to know in more detail the newly launched model, Dacia organized a communication and presentation event with the press, at the headquarters of Renault Bucharest Connected (Romania), in which the pre-series Spring business model was exhibited for one day, on December 8, 2020, 3 months before the launch of pre-orders on the official website. The event focused on the direct experience with the car for a first contact, to analyze, test and picture in detail the interior and exterior equipment closely, but without driving it. The car was exhibited on a rotating stand surrounded by TVs, representative panels and huge screens with videos and dynamic images, which facilitates the understanding of the strengths and how to use the model. The event was also broadcast on the official Instagram, Facebook and YouTube pages. [Scarlat, 2021, Loghin, 2020].

Another communication of the launch of Dacia Spring in Romania to bring the new model to the public's attention, took place in the form of a press conference, which emphasizes the direct experience with the car, immediately after launching pre-orders and announcing prices on the official website. After the pre-series car was tested on the roads in Romania by journalists, in order to communicate to the public their own opinions and technical data, on March 30, 2021 in a friendly place in Ploiești namely Lacul Verde Resort, where they were used forms of indoor advertising (screens, furniture and display with Dacia Spring), were presented and explained, through televisions, images and videos with all features, price and strengths of the new model, as well as some future innovations. Journalists, bloggers and vloggers were invited to the event, and later the information and videos was posted on social media, television, YouTube [Dacia, 2021d].

c) Advertising, a category that includes a series of video spots, images on online networks and a dedicated website, promotion through advertorials and special shows.

With the launch of pre-orders in spring 2021, on the official website, Dacia creates a short commercial with the new electric city model that contains messages about the need for the price of 100% electric cars to be accessible to all, which became possible thanks to appearance of Dacia Spring. The video was published on the official YouTube page Dacia Romania, Facebook and Instagram with links that refer directly to the configurator on the Dacia website [Dacia, 2021b]

Short videos with the model are added, designed especially for launch, but without containing details about it. Example:

- Mysterious short clip (teaser) before the launch in Paris, in which the car is only seen in the shadows with the headlights on, to arouse the curiosity of the general public until the moment of launch. Example: The video "The revolution is on the way" [Bolocan, 2020].
- The clip with the slogan "All-new Dacia Spring electric" being used in all car showrooms, but also as a small spot, launched on all social media channels immediately after the presentation in Paris. [Dacia, 2020b].

- Special clip before the launch of the Spring pre-orders (March 20, 2021): "Spring is coming for all", broadcast on all social networks, official page and You Tube. [Dacia, 2021a]

The most used method of communication chosen by the manufacturer was the official website of Dacia.ro, where there were interactive messages with questions, pictures and short videos, the communication of the launch of the model taking place in several stages, from the end of 2020 through the press release, then the launch of news related to the model, and then in the spring on March 20, 2021 the launch of pre-orders with car configurator.

Also from this category we mention:

- Appearance on car shows on TV and You Tube, with presentations and tests with specialized car journalists (Super speed, Promotor, Turatii.ro, Cavaleria.ro).
- Communication through Facebook and Instagram social pages, with pictures, videos, stories and links with information about the new model - Spring.
- Communication on the official You Tube page with short videos, pictures and links to the official Dacia page.
- Virtual test drive, published on the official You Tube page on May 19, 2021 to show an experience, what it is like to live, what are your strengths and how you would feel behind the wheel of the new electric Spring (through a virtual trip at the wheel of it) [Dacia, 2021e].

Conclusions

The success of the 100% electric model manufactured under the logo of the Romanian producer is due to the advantages of the car, but especially to the strengths of the communication campaign, given the manufacturer's ability to adapt even in pandemic conditions. Communication prove to be an integrated one by combining techniques and media channels with messages aimed at well-established categories of target audience (press, specialists, general public). We thus identified events with global impact and events at national level, evolutionary advertising campaigns, constant and intense information of the press and journalists, the provision of the model for testing, as well as a great openness to dialogue (online) with the Romanian public. The success of the campaign results from its balance sheet expressed by the number of pre-orders launched in March 2021. Thus, the requests to launch pre-orders on the official Dacia website were very numerous: in the first 4 hours after launch on the website, over 1,500 pre-orders, and over 4,000 pre-orders in just 8 hours, the platform crashing due to the large number of visitors and pre-orders (over 6,000 people tried to connect to it simultaneously) [Alec, 2021].

At the same time, the moment of launching the pre-orders of the electric model from Dacia was not a random one, spring in English suggesting an association of the season with the new car model and with the moment of launching the pre-orders as well as the chosen communication mode.

Moreover, the communication and launch of the Dacia Spring electric car is a very interesting one, they present and send for testing before sale, pre-series electric models, with medium endowments and equipment and with the promise that the series models will come up with several improvements along the way. This approach allowed the collection of feedback from journalists and the population in relation to any dissatisfaction and expectations of the launched model, as well as an integration of this feedback in order to improve the serial models.

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