

## INTERVIEW

# NAVIGATING IN THE COFFEE WORLD OF THE FUTURE

**MARIUS MELESTEU**, General Manager, STRAUSS ROMANIA

### **1** You are leading Strauss Romania for almost 12 years? What were your top achievements in your tenure?

From the very beginning the main objectives were to build solid organization and put the businesses on the path of continuous growth. The fact that we are the only international coffee business having factories in Romania focused our effort toward modernization through state of art production technologies, robots and digitalized supply chain. Building the e-com arm and preparing for a D2C approach much before pandemic brought us an advantage in the present times.

But most important were the increasing brands portfolio power. The acquisition of Amigo brand in 2014 followed by a continuous evolution and diversification of the brand led us to a clear leadership in Instant category. Doncafe is still solid number two in coffee and one of the most innovative brands on the whole coffee market.

### **2** These last two years were challenging for the hospitality sector. How did the evolution of COVID-19 pandemic affect Strauss' business in Romania?

The last two years were challenging for the AFH business. We are one of the leaders of the AFH channel, acting in Vending and HoReCa Business and our efforts in this period were focused on supporting our partners, distributors or clients.

We learn how to operate in a pandemic situation and we are now at the levels before the pandemic times. Building powerful brands dedicated for HoReCa, like Totti & BeanZ, gave us oxygen and a solid ground for fast recovery. Modernizing the machines park and increasing the distribution of top-tables solution helped us to assure continuity of our Vending business.

### **3** You have some very interesting brands in your portfolio. Tell us about the evolution of Doncafe and what are the next steps for this brand?

Having a mix of international and local brands was an advantage from the beginning and our robust portfolio accommodates regional brands like Doncafe, Brazilian brands like Amigo or international like BeanZ and Totti Caffè. The versatile positioning of the portfolio allows us to address the market targeting Retail and AFH with dedicated brands. BeanZ brings coffee directly from farmers, Doncafe Fresh is the freshest coffee on the market, Amigo is the Brazilian coffee since 1982 and Doncafe emotional positioning is fulfilling the needs of every coffee consumer.

Being number two on the coffee market brings pressure not only from the volume side but from the innovation funnel also. Doncafe Fresh, Doncafe Green, Doncafe Supremo 100% Arabica are coming in order to dynamize and create excitement for the



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*Coffee is an amazing alive industry and in order to stay on the growth the players will need to understand consumers needs and the key emerging trends sustainability and ecommerce.*

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coffee lovers. The whole range of beans is developed in line with a household espresso machine acquisition increasing trend and replication of the Horeca experience is in our target.

#### **4. Coffee consumption is increasing worldwide and in Romania as well. What coffee types do you think Romanians prefer?**

Two trends are in place right now: increasing number of espresso machines (automatic and manual) and 100% Arabica. The main category sold in Romania is still roast ground but the beans are growing fast with a lot of product diversification characteristics: origins, Arabica and dedicated blends.

#### **5. What other brands from your portfolio do you think will have a strong growth in 2022?**

All our brands are on the growth path. Amigo is increasing its leadership in Instant and is having a solid growth in Vending. Extension of the new Doncafe platform and the push of Doncafe Supremo 100% Arabica will bring growth in all the channels. Super-premium brands like BeanZ and Totti are bringing farmers and the sophistication of origins closer to consumers.

#### **6. Sustainability is a “hot” term these days when everybody is talking about reducing pollution and CO2 emissions. How do you think sustainability will impact your business and what tactics are you adopting to address this challenge?**

Strauss Romania is committed to practicing business with respect for social diversity, the environment, and an efficient and ethical supply

chain. We are really strive to embed sustainability practices into our core business operations.

Beside group sustainability initiatives, we took a lot of decisions to reduce our impact: decreasing the raw material for packaging with more than 60%, green energy through solar panels that sometimes covers 100% of the factory needs.

#### **7. Most companies are preparing for a hybrid work environment these days. How did you approach this challenge?**

The main focus these days is creating a safely environment for our employees and collaborators. We are striving to reduce the risk and along with that to create a flexible mix work from home-office in line with the legislation and pandemic rules.

#### **8. What advice do you have for Romanian managers in 2022?**

**Connect work to the big picture** – the world that we are living now is special and your employees needs support and autonomy with guidance.

**Build powerful brands** – a thing that never changes - more than ever consumers need guidance for choosing the right products.

**Be prepared for change** – creating a culture of adaptability will ease the impact of unpredictability.

#### **9. How do you expect the Romanian market to evolve in 2022?**

We have great minds, very good quality work force and ambition to succeed. The Romanian market will pick up the pace and I see a 2022 growth above the European average. The vibe of the EU resilience program along with a reduced pandemic impact will fuel the country development starting with 2022.



# Alex Niculae



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Q Grader



Barista  
pasionat de  
brewing  
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**E momentul  
să alegi**

# 100% ARABICA

