

# ACADEMIA DE STUDII ECONOMICE DIN BUCUREȘTI

Școala doctorală Marketing



## REZUMAT

**Cristian Dragoș GHEORGHE**

Titlul tezei de doctorat:

MARKETINGUL SPORTIV ȘI RESPONSABILITATEA SOCIALĂ.  
INTEGRAREA RESPONSABILITĂȚII SOCIALE ÎN CONSTRUCȚIA  
ȘI CONSOLIDAREA BRANDULUI UNUI SPORTIV

**Conducător de doctorat: Prof. Univ. Dr. Alin Stancu**

Comisia de susținere a tezei de doctorat:

Prof. univ.dr. Ioana Cecilia Popescu	- A.S.E.	Președinte
Prof. univ.dr. Nadia Pomirleanu	- University of Nevada, SUA	Referent
Conf. univ.dr. Oana Mara Stan	- Universitatea București	Referent
Prof. univ.dr. Alina Filip	- A.S.E.	Referent
Prof. univ.dr. Alin Stancu	- A.S.E.	Conducător de doctorat

București, Ianuarie 2026

## SUMMARY

This doctoral thesis, entitled “Sports Marketing and Social Responsibility. Integrating Social Responsibility in the Construction and Consolidation of an Athlete’s Brand”, sets out to demonstrate how social responsibility can be strategically integrated into the process of building and consolidating athletes personal brands. The topic is highly relevant, given the major transformations taking place in sports globally and locally, where athletic performance, although fundamental, is no longer sufficient to sustain a strong and durable brand. The thesis explores a relatively underexplored field in Romanian academic literature, yet one of increasing importance: sports marketing focused on building athletes personal brands through the integration of social responsibility. The research methodology included both quantitative and qualitative investigations. The first part focused on Romanian sports clubs and the ways in which they understand and apply branding strategies. Results revealed that most clubs are at an early stage, implementing fragmented marketing actions without a unified strategy and without coherent integration of social responsibility into managerial plans. The second part of the research examined fan perceptions of athlete brand attributes. The survey conducted highlighted that talent, fair play, social involvement, authentic communication, and fan relations are essential dimensions that define the perceived value of an athlete’s brand. These investigations allowed for the development of an innovative conceptual model of athlete brand attributes, demonstrating the interdependence between athletic performance, extra-sport dimensions, and fans’ perceptions of associated sponsors. The model confirms that an athlete is not only a performer but also an brand ambassador, capable of influencing consumer attitudes toward partner brands. Thus, social responsibility becomes a central pillar, as athletes engaged in social and community causes are evaluated more positively, generate trust, and increase the brand equity of both themselves and their sponsors. The thesis is grounded in extensive research and documentation in the fields of marketing, branding, and social responsibility, with the objective of creating an integrated perspective on how athletes brands are formed and consolidated. From a scientific perspective, it clarifies the link between sports marketing, personal branding, and social responsibility, extending existing models with relational and community dimensions. From a managerial perspective, it provides practical recommendations for athletes, clubs, and sponsors, focusing on the professionalization of marketing activities, the development of inspirational storytelling, and the implementation of social responsibility policies adapted to the specificity of sports. The

work also includes international and national case studies illustrating the power of sports branding. Examples such as Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, Roger Federer, or Gheorghe Hagi show that athletic performance must be accompanied by authenticity, communication, and social involvement in order to build a sustainable brand. In the Romanian context, the research confirmed that fans are increasingly attentive to these dimensions, expecting not only performance but also responsibility and community engagement from athletes. The thesis further addresses the ethical dimension of social responsibility in sports. In a context where athletes public exposure is amplified by media and social networks, the way they choose to engage in social causes directly influences the credibility and sustainability of their personal brand. Social responsibility is no longer perceived as an accessory to image, but as a defining element of athletes identity and a source of differentiation from competitors.

In conclusion, this thesis demonstrates that sports branding cannot be conceived without the integration of social responsibility. Athletes who combine performance with community involvement and authentic communication become not only champions on the field, but also moral and social leaders. This holistic approach strengthens fan trust, attracts sponsors, and contributes to the professionalization of Romanian sport. Through its results and proposed models, this thesis makes both a theoretical and a practical contribution, opening up new perspectives for the sustainable development of sports marketing.