



The Bucharest University of Economic Studies

Domain of doctoral studies:

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

SUMMARY OF HABILITATION THESIS

**Services in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities
in the International Business Environment**

Autor:

conf. univ. dr. Ana Maria MARINOIU

Faculty of International Business and Economics

Department of International Business and Economics

București

2026

SUMMARY

This habilitation thesis entitled "**Services in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities in the International Business Environment**" is a rigorous synthesis, elaborated from a structural-thematic and chronological perspective, of the main scientific, professional and academic activities carried out in the period after obtaining the title of PhD in Economics, in 2012. The thesis reflects the evolution and relevant contributions in the field of services in the context of digitalization, with a focus on the challenges and opportunities in the international business environment. At the same time, the document includes the strategic plan for the development of the university career, with a focus on teaching and scientific research directions.

The paper is organized into **two main sections** : *Part I. Specific contribution to the development of scientific research in the field of economics and international affairs*, through a multi-level approach to services in the context of the digital age and *Part II. Scientific, professional and academic career development* plans that reflect the commitment to continuous progress in the academic environment. These sections are preceded by a *summary* (written in Romanian and English) and an introduction that contextualizes the academic approach. The work ends with a distinct part – III. *Bibliographic references* – which includes the sources used in the documentation process.

The presentation of personal contributions to the research in the field is structured on four **development directions** that are part of a multidimensional analysis of the evolution of services in the context of an international business environment dominated by digitalization as follows: **D1** - *Analysis of the evolution of the services industry in the context of the transformations generated by innovation processes and the implementation of digital technologies* investigating the dynamics of the services industry, given the profound impact of innovation processes and the adoption of digital technologies on the structure and functioning of the sector; **D2** - *The analysis of the role of innovation and digitization of services in improving the competitive advantages of companies* examines the strategic role of digitization and innovation in strengthening the competitive advantage of organizations, by optimizing processes and creating added value; **D3** - *Exploring regulatory constraints and institutional challenges in the context of digitalization and internationalization of services* analyzes the institutional challenges and regulatory constraints

generated by digitalization and internationalization trends, with a focus on the adaptability of the regulatory framework to new economic realities and **D4 - Sustainability and Green Transition in the Tertiary Sector: Challenges and Opportunities for the International Business Environment** involves exploring the dimension of sustainability and the green transition in the services sector, identifying emerging challenges and opportunities for the international business environment in the context of a responsible and green economy.

Each of the four research directions is constructed in a symmetrical manner so as to highlight personal contributions on the structure and role of services in the context of international business. The analysis starts from the *thematic framework of the research*, continues with the presentation of *its own contributions* and is organized by research topics, depending on the typology of services addressed in the main works published after the conferral of the title of doctor in economics and selected to meet the eligibility criteria.

The first research direction on the evolution of the service industry in the context of innovation and digitalization analyzes the profound transformations that have redefined this sector as a central pillar of the global economy. The research highlights personal contributions in the field, through a series of scientific papers that address the phenomenon of servitization, dematerialized economy and structural transformations generated by technology. Two relevant case studies: customs clearance services (*Theme 1- Evolution of services in the era of digitalization: transformations, challenges and future prospects - e-Customs case study*) and educational ones (*Theme 2 - Trend of specialization of national economies in international transactions with services - case study export of university educational services of medicine*) – illustrates the applicability of the research in concrete contexts. The article on e-Customs analyzes the digitization of customs procedures, the introduction of electronic platforms and the impact on economic competitiveness, using indicators such as LPI and Doing Business. In parallel, the internationalization of education through academic mobility and the integration of digital technologies reflect the transformations in the public sector in the digital age.

The **second research direction** is based on a portfolio of five representative papers, published in journals indexed in the Web of Science database (Clarivate Analytics), with an AIS (Article Influence Score) score higher than 0.15, or chapters/specialized books edited by prestigious national or international publishers. These contributions are organized thematically within three distinct research themes, brought together under the integrative concept of innovation

and digitization of services, approached as strategic vectors for strengthening the competitive advantage of companies.

Theme 1 Companies and the strategic orientation towards innovation, technologization and digitalization as ways to improve competitiveness in the international business environment demonstrates that companies that adopt technologies such as AI, IoT, cloud computing and big data, expand their portfolio beyond physical products, offering integrated solutions based on digital services.

Theme 2 Increasing the competitiveness of companies through the digitization of services - Case study The efficiency of the supply chain through the use of artificial intelligence was chosen to demonstrate how, in order to remain competitive, companies must use the digitization of services as a strategic tool, not just an operational one, which allows the optimization of internal processes and the consolidation of the position on the market.

Theme 3 The impact of digitalization and automation on support and auxiliary services in the Romanian automotive industry: transformations in organizational structure, skills and labor relations includes the research carried out on the automotive industry in Romania that demonstrates how digitalization and automation are reshaping production, work and politics towards new forms that expand, transform and directly demand new capabilities in the service economy.

The third research direction comprises a synthesis of research results on exploring regulatory constraints and institutional challenges in the context of digitalisation and internationalisation of services applicable to two critical areas: *Electronic payment services - Theme 1* and *Energy services in the context of the transition to renewable energies - Theme 2*. In the first case, the regulation of digital payments in the European Union and Romania illustrates how institutional adaptation and regulatory harmonisation are essential to ensure interoperability, consumer trust and financial inclusion. In the second case, the governance of renewable energy services demonstrates how digital technologies, such as smart grids and data-driven platforms, require coherent regulatory frameworks to balance innovation, sustainability and security.

In the current global context, characterized by environmental pressures, climate change and the depletion of natural resources, sustainability and green transformation have become strategic imperatives for all economic sectors. Services, as an integral part of the modern economy, are profoundly influenced by these trends, especially in terms of digitalisation and

internationalisation. In the **fourth research direction**, we looked at how sustainability and corporate environmentalism shape digital transformation and global service scale-up, with direct references to academic work that was case studies for previous directions. Mainly, the analysis of sustainability and green transformation was carried out in two directions: *Theme 1* includes a definition of the fundamentals of sustainability and green transformation in the international business environment. *Theme 2* - makes a brief review of the personable contributions regarding the impact of sustainability and green transformation on the services analyzed as case studies in the previous chapters.

A distinct section within the habilitation thesis is represented by **Synthesis of the professional and academic path** highlighting relevant contributions in the field of economics and international business. My activity has been constantly carried out in three major directions: teaching, scientific research and continuous professional training.

The professional career in the field of economics and international business reflects a solid academic path, which began with the graduation of the Faculty of International Economic Relations within the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest, followed by deepening his studies through master's and doctoral programs focused on economics and international business. The activity, carried out over more than two decades, stands out for its constant involvement in the teaching process, scientific research and continuous training. The active participation in national and international conferences, academic debates and the publication of articles and specialized papers highlight the commitment to the development of knowledge in the field.

The significant contributions to the development of curricula and to the updating of university curricula confirm the concern for aligning economic education with the requirements of the global market and contemporary developments in academia.

Throughout my academic career, I have sought to build a coherent didactic architecture, in which each discipline taught (International Business Environment, International Services Transactions, International Finance, Institutional Framework for the Regulation of Logistics Services, International Tourism and International Economic Relations) contribute to the deep understanding of services in an international context. Through these courses, I aimed to create a bridge between theory and practice, adapting the didactic content to the realities of the international business environment and the challenges of digitalization.

The analysis carried out in the paper highlights my teaching skills and independent

research capacity, opening new methodological and scientific horizons. At the same time, it reflects my ability to lead interdisciplinary teams, contributing to strengthening the international visibility of the results obtained.