

## Summary

### Habilitation thesis

#### *Performance and sustainability in international business and global logistics chains*

Candidate:

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In a global setting where the success of international business is aimed at achieving both at economic performance and sustainable development, the corporate governance of companies raises substantial challenges. The habilitation thesis "*Performance and sustainability in international business and global logistics chains*" represents a synthesis of the main personal contributions and results obtained in scientific research in the field of *economics and international business*, in the period 2012-2024, respectively after obtaining the PhD title. Also, the personal plan for the future development of the academic career, at scientific, teaching and organizational level, is presented.

Synthesizing the main research directions addressed during the mentioned period, the most important scientific results were obtained in the field of "Economics and international business", in the following areas of scientific interest:

- *International logistics*
- *Performance in international business using new digital technologies*
- *Business sustainability, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development*
- *Complementary themes of interdisciplinary research*

From the last category, an interdisciplinary research direction is: *Performance in education in the field of economics and business administration*, representing a harmonious combination of the scientific and didactic components, being focused on the analysis and development of modern methods for education in the field of economic sciences, aiming at increasing performance and the adaptation of the teaching process to the requirements and current developments in the economic-social environment.

The research directions approached after the defense of the doctoral thesis were closely related to the didactic component, through the development of study materials for the subjects

taught within several faculties of the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest (Faculty of International Economic Relations, Faculty of Marketing, Faculty of Management, Faculty of Finance, Insurance and Stock Exchanges, Faculty of Cybernetics, Statistics and Economic Informatics). The disciplines that I have had in my *teaching portfolio* are part of the international business domain, with themes related to the *management of international business, international negotiation, foreign trade operations, international logistics, international business environment*, which I taught at bachelor's and/or master's level, at programs in *Romanian, English or French*. One of the research themes addressed, related to the effectiveness of the educational process, is particularly relevant to the teaching process. I believe that combining research interests, both on topics that are part of the curriculum content and on topics related to the way of teaching and interaction with students and master's students is beneficial, because both directions lead to a synergistic improvement of the didactic process as a whole.

The structure of this thesis reflects my activity in the academic and scientific field for the last 12 years and refers both to the main research directions and the results obtained, as well as to the administrative and institutional development activities carried out within the Faculty of International Economic Relations. Ever since I joined the Academy of Economic Studies, my activity has been carried out in 3 main directions:

- **The teaching process** - the development and adaptation of teaching methods in order to correlate them with the way of learning and relating specific to the new generations of students, but also with the requirements and expectations of employers from the business environment and/or public institutions.
- Development of the field of study through **research activity** – original contributions that extend the area of knowledge and/or proposals of methods/techniques/models/indices with practical applicability in the business area.
- Administrative and organizational activities, which support the **development of the higher education institution**, by increasing the visibility and attractiveness of study programs at the national and international level, as well as the presence of the university in prestigious academic rankings (active involvement in the elaboration of accreditation files, the organization the faculty conference and other conferences at the ASE level, involvement in the coordination of activities at the Center for Research in International Economic Relations

CCREI, the development of relations with the alumni community, responsible for work security, the promotion of international collaborations, etc.).

The structure of the thesis includes two components: *I. The main directions of research and results obtained in scientific, professional, and academic activity* and *II. Development of the academic career, research activity and coordination of multidisciplinary teams*.

In the first part of the habilitation thesis, I presented the most important results obtained through the research carried out after the defense of the doctoral thesis, respectively in the period 2012-2024. The content of the thesis is mainly based on a portfolio of 10 papers selected as the most representative for my research activity, 7 of which are taken into account for the calculation of the score required to support the habilitation thesis, respectively 2 books (published as the sole author), 1 chapter in a book (as co-author) and 4 articles published in ISI journals). During the thesis I also mentioned other results of research (articles published in ISI Proceedings indexed volumes, articles indexed in recognized international databases, papers presented and/or published at international conferences and chapters in collective volumes), in which the main themes of scientific interest or complementary interdisciplinary research topics were addressed, these contributions being useful for creating a more comprehensive framework of the results obtained during the research process carried out over a period of more than 12 years.

I synthesized the results of my research in three main chapters: *I.1 Performance in international business through efficient logistics chain management*, *I.2 Sustainability and resilience in international business. Principles of corporate governance and sustainable development* and *I.3 Performance in education in the field of economics and business administration: the use of modern teaching methods by incorporating new digital technologies with the aim of increasing the efficiency of the educational process*.

In the first chapter "***Performance in international business through efficient management of the logistics chain***", I presented a series of aspects regarding ways to increase the performance of international business. First, it is necessary to implement a high-performance management at the level of the logistics chain, by adapting specific strategies to changes in the business environment and by defining distribution strategies that effectively respond to customer requirements, which are in a continuous dynamic. To capitalize on the opportunities in the global environment, it is necessary to develop new methods for the design and optimization of logistics networks, and the proposals presented in the elaborated research papers represent original personal

contributions. An important trend that responds in an innovative way to the challenges in the business environment is the use of new technologies (Blockchain, Big Data, Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Computing) to digitize the activity of companies in general, and particularly the logistics chain, thus creating the conditions for a significant increase in performance in international business. All these technologies were presented, making a critical analysis of how they can be implemented in logistics chain management activities. An important part of the research aimed to carry out surveys to determine the stage of development of the logistics sector in Romania, analyzing the services offered and the degree to which new technologies are already implemented in companies in our country. Based on the results, we formulated several practical recommendations, which can be considered by managers, in order to select and implement the most suitable technologies to contribute to increasing business performance at the level of the Romanian market, but also at the global level.

The main personal contributions to the development of knowledge in the field, resulting from research carried out in the field of increasing business performance and international logistics, summarized in this chapter, are: the identification of the factors that determine the need to adapt logistics chain management strategies, the presentation of challenges and opportunities in the global environment and distribution strategies aimed at using all physical and virtual channels to create a synergistic experience for customers, developing new methods of designing and optimizing logistics networks. Part of the empirical research carried out focused on the analysis of the logistics sector in Romania and the stage of implementation of new technologies for the digitization of businesses and logistics chains, these representing contributions with practical applicability.

The second chapter of the thesis "***Sustainability and resilience in international business. Principles of corporate governance and sustainable development***" is focused on the synthesis of the most important research carried out on the topic of international business sustainability, with the presentation of the principles of good corporate governance, which aims at a sustainable business development, considering both the increase in performance and the need to protect the environment and society. In the first phase, the conducted research was divided into two main areas of interest: sustainable development in rural areas and sustainable development in urban areas.

Rural areas are generally the least developed from an economic point of view, according to the EU statistics and particularly in our country, and that is why it is necessary to promote business models that support the sustainable development of these communities, through ensuring livelihoods but also by preserving nature and local traditions. Agritourism is a type of business that supports both the development of agriculture and tourism in rural areas, thus promoting the preservation of local traditional identity and human health, through the production and consumption of natural foods. After reviewing the literature and presenting case studies from different countries, we performed an econometric analysis to identify the factors that favor the development of agritourism in Romania. Our research brought a series of original contributions to the development of the field of study related to the sustainable development of businesses and the promotion of entrepreneurship by proposing an econometric model for testing the impact of some relevant factors on agritourism entrepreneurship and analyzing the cumulative impact of these factors on the development of businesses in the field of agritourism in Romania. The conclusions show that the economic, social and touristic development of a region, positively influences the evolution of agritourism entrepreneurship in the area, and entrepreneurs are willing to invest especially in established touristic areas, which already attract a large number of clients and where there is potentially significant success rate. The development of resilient businesses in agritourism represents a viable option for supporting the sustainable development of rural regions.

The practical relevance of the study lies in formulating a series of recommendations that can be considered by local authorities to support the sustainable development of a region. Also, the research is relevant for investors who want to identify favorable areas for the development of a new business in the field of agritourism, and our model can be a useful tool in the decision-making process.

In terms of sustainable development in urban areas, an important sector is represented by green buildings. A direction of sustainable development of cities is represented by initiatives to build or renovate buildings, in accordance with the principles of minimizing resource consumption, using renewable and recyclable resources, protecting the environment, maximizing the reuse of resources, creating a healthy environment and non-toxic and quality assurance in the construction area. The research carried out was based on the application of a nationwide questionnaire and the results show that the green real estate market in Romania is still at small scale and there are major differences between the seven development regions of the country. Tax incentives and reductions

can explain, to some extent, the concentration of green buildings in the central and western parts of Romania. The development of buildings with low environmental impact is not only a necessity in the context of concerns about improving the quality of life, but also an impetus for investment in the current economic climate. More and more developers understand and implement the concept of green building, and more and more green buildings in our country meet more than the minimum certification requirements. Sustainable development is a concept that not only captures more and more interest from developers and builders but is also becoming a real necessity for Romania.

Another direction of research in the field of business sustainability refers to the concept of corporate governance. The purpose of introducing this concept is to ensure that a company operates in a sustainable, ethical, transparent, and responsible manner, while following the objective of increasing business performance and maximizing shareholder value. Good corporate governance practices play a crucial role in promoting and achieving sustainability goals within organizations.

An important original personal contribution in this field was proposing a conceptual framework for assessing the degree of implementation of corporate governance principles by using a new index, called the corporate governance index, and conducting empirical research to analyze how corporate governance rules are applied in the public and private sector in Romania. Other contributions to the development of the field of study in the sphere of implementing the principles of good corporate governance to promote business sustainability are: the identification and presentation of the most important European legislative provisions, the analysis of legislative frameworks from different countries (including Romania), the comparative analysis of legislative frameworks in Romania and Greece, the proposal of a new calculation method for a corporate governance index (the first index of this type at the time of publication, according to the literature review, empirical analyzes carried out on companies in Romania and Greece to assess the degree of compliance with the principles of sustainable corporate governance of companies).

The third chapter "*Performance in education in the field of economics and business administration: the use of modern teaching methods by incorporating new digital technologies with the aim of increasing the efficiency of the educational process*" is focused on the synthesis of research in the field of implementing modern methods in education and new technologies digital with the aim of increasing performance and adapting the teaching process to current requirements and developments in the economic and social environment.

Due to the awareness of the fact that it is necessary to adapt both the content of the subjects and the way of teaching to the new developments of the economic-social environment, especially on the technological component, which involves new ways of communication and carrying out commercial transactions, I collaborated with colleagues to carry out a series of researches, to identify the main modern teaching methods and techniques and to analyze their impact on the educational process. The COVID-19 pandemic forced a sudden shift to online teaching in universities around the world and in this context, we wanted to investigate the perception of teachers and students from several European countries on online teaching/learning technologies and the effectiveness of the process. This research explores new teaching methods with an emphasis on the application of new technologies and the use of the online environment for the development of the educational process, especially during the pandemic crisis, but also with possible applicability in the future. The main personal contributions refer to the identification of challenges and opportunities regarding the use of online teaching methods, the investigation of the effectiveness of online education, the critical analysis of online assessment methods and empirical research regarding the perception of teachers and students from several European countries on online teaching/learning technologies.

Another direction of research was related to the development of students' practical skills and decision-making capacity by using digital tools to carry out business simulation exercises. Graduates must be prepared to face the challenges of the business environment, and the educational system must be properly reconfigured to effectively respond to the training needs of the labor market. The first research in this area of interest focused on the identification of methods of teaching and interaction with students, aimed at helping them develop skills needed in the business environment and develop their ability to make decisions in a dynamic economic environment. Specifically, we conducted a research on interactive computer applications, which include simulation exercises used to supplement traditional education based on case study analysis. We analyzed each solution, presenting the functionalities and benefits of use in the educational process, as well as possible challenges in their implementation.

In order to deepen the knowledge in the field, we also carried out a research based on the application of a questionnaire, at the level of a sample of students and master's students in Romania, with the aim of measuring the degree of satisfaction of the students regarding the results of participating in business simulation exercises by creating some simulated enterprises with the help

of the IT solution Topsim, as an alternative learning method. The simulated company allows testing business decisions, applying them and learning by interpreting the results.

Following the research carried out, we concluded that business simulation technologies have an important impact on the new models of education in the economic field, with positive effects on preparing the students for employment opportunities or for the development of entrepreneurial skills. The interpretation of the results indicated that respondents believe that business simulation exercises help them apply theoretical knowledge to make business decisions and see potential implications, according to scenarios predefined by specialists in each field. In conclusion, the simulated company is a safe environment where students can test their business decisions and understand the effects in terms of profitability, market share or customer satisfaction.

The main personal contributions made through this research were: the analysis of current trends and opportunities regarding the use of digital tools in educational activities, the identification of computer programs that can be used for the development of practical skills, and the assessment of the extent to which the decision-making process in a simulation game is able to develop real managerial skills for students.

In the second part of the thesis, I synthesized the main coordinates of my professional training and presented my own perspective on the future development of my academic career, in the three main directions - teaching activity, scientific research and coordination of research teams, contribution to the development of the academic environment.

The professional results obtained so far in the academic and scientific field encourage me to continue research efforts by deepening the themes addressed, but also by affirming new directions both for individual research and for the coordination of multidisciplinary research teams, with the objective of increasing the visibility and the relevance of the results at national and international level. I also want to expand collaborations with professors from abroad, for exchanges of best practices and the joint development of research projects and papers, but also with specialists from the business environment, to increase the relevance of research topics and to bring students, masters, and doctoral students an applied perspective on the concepts discussed in the courses and discussions for the development of bachelor's, dissertation and doctoral theses.