

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION  
BUCHAREST UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES  
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF MARKETING**

**HABILITATION THESIS**  
**CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND CONSUMPTION  
DECISION – CONTEMPORARY MULTIDIMENSIONAL  
APPROACHES**

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## ABSTRACT

The habilitation thesis represents an important moment in the academic career, both in the present time and from the point of view of future endeavours.

Part I of the habilitation thesis is dedicated to the professional career, relevant scientific contributions, and recognition in the academic and professional environment. Graduation from the Faculty of Management within the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, in 2008, marked the continuation and deepening of scientific research in the field of Management, at the Doctoral School of Management within the Valahia University in Târgoviște, obtaining the Ph.D. diploma in 2012.

The year I graduated from the faculty also marked my debut in my academic career, obtaining a doctoral scholarship, becoming at the same time a doctoral assistant. From 2012 to 2014 I was an associate lecturer, and starting with 2014 I obtained through a competition the position of phd lecturer at the Faculty of Sciences and Engineering within the Valahia University of Târgoviște.

Also, since 2008, I have been working as an associate teacher at the Department of Marketing, Faculty of Marketing within the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. The courses taught throughout my academic career and up to now are as follows: Marketing, Marketing Research, Marketing for Services, Consumer Behaviour, Ecotourism and Rural Tourism, Hotel and Restaurant Management, Public Marketing, Tourism Economics.

Throughout my academic career, I have tried to respond to the dynamics of the academic and economic-social environment in a three-dimensional manner, namely didactic, scientific research, and recognition in the academic and professional environment.

From a didactic perspective, we constantly update the course and seminar materials related to the courses taught and approach the didactic activities in an interactive manner with the students in order to carry out an activity at the highest professional standards. Through my practical involvement in the socioeconomic environment in the field of Marketing, I complete and constantly improve my skills, so as to pass on to students the necessary skills to respond to the demands of the labour market. This also represents an opportunity to develop the university's partnerships with the economic and social environment.

From the perspective of scientific research, I have published as author and coauthor articles in Web of Science journals, in journals indexed in international databases, published books and participated in prestigious international conferences held in the country and abroad. All the papers published in Web of Science, in journals indexed in international databases, papers presented at conferences, and the books address interdisciplinary and multidimensional themes circumscribed to the specific area of marketing, which are of interest to both the academic and the professional environment and decision-making forums.

From the perspective of recognition in the academic and professional environment, I contributed to improving the international visibility of the university and promoted the university in the courses I held as a guest professor at universities in Kazakhstan and France, but also by participating in international conferences organised in Great Britain, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Cyprus, Bulgaria, Spain and Lithuania. I made a significant contribution to the strategy of improving the international visibility and to the development of the university's international relations, as the President of the 10th EMI Entrepreneurship & Social Sciences Congress held between September

10-13, 2024 in Târgoviște, which brought together participants from 4 continents and 20 countries, with over 240 participants in physical format.

The position of associate researcher at the Cedimes Institute, Marne, France, proves the concern to develop my scientific research skills but also to promote the university.

I was awarded the Diploma of Excellence for the most visible researcher of the Alexandria Faculty of Sciences and Engineering in the year 2024, which is a recognition of the activity carried out in the field of scientific research.

The second part of the habilitation thesis presents the achievements and relevant scientific contributions, structured at the level of two main coordinates, namely the sustainability of the consumption decision and consumer behaviour in different circumstances, exceptional or current.

The consumer and the sustainability of his decisions are contemporary concepts, which are of interest both to the academic environment and also to the authorities and the socio-economic environment.

The premise of the research focused on the interest of consumers and the promotion of ecological and organic products, as well as the behaviour of consumers in different circumstances, namely the Covid-19 pandemic and educational options. Thus, the decision to consume organic fruits and vegetables, the consumption of ecological products and the motivations underlying the purchase decision in different contexts, namely the Covid-19 pandemic and the educational environment, represent the directions on which the habilitation thesis is focused.

The first direction of research, the one concerning the decision to consume organic fruits and vegetables, analysed for domestic consumers can be useful both for decision-making forums in the political environment and for Romanian producers in the field, because currently there is not enough research on changing trends in the attitudes and intentions of Romanians to buy organic fruits and vegetables. To study the attitude and purchase intention of the Romanian consumer towards organic fruits and vegetables, we conducted a direct research through an online survey, based on a structured questionnaire, developed according to the purpose and objectives of the research. According to the purpose of the research, its objectives are to evaluate the points of view of Romanian consumers regarding the following aspects: the consumer's understanding of the characteristics of organic fruits and vegetables; personal needs and motivations to buy organic fruits and vegetables; external factors that influence the purchase decision; barriers to purchase; the attitude of Romanian consumers toward organic fruits and vegetables; intention to buy organic fruits and vegetables.

Using previous studies, the research conclusions are useful for adapting effective marketing strategies for organic fruits and vegetables in Romania and, at the same time, will support public policy initiatives to stimulate the demand and consumption of fruits and vegetables obtained from sustainable agriculture. By reporting on sustainable development, the study can be useful to decision makers in the agrifood industry, agrifood specialists and marketers, who will have to consider the sustainable food choice of consumers. Additionally, increasing awareness of the health benefits of organic fruits and vegetables, as well as marketing decisions in the agrifood industry, will support the production of organic agricultural products aimed at long-term healthy organic consumption.

The second direction of research is also approached from the point of view of the consumer, but from Generation Z, and relates to the consumption of ecological products. The main research question that guides this study is: What are the key drivers of Generation Z's purchase intentions for green products? To carry out the research approach, a conceptual framework was designed and empirically tested to explain the influence of the seven key factors (environmental awareness,

perceived value of the organic product, perceived quality of the organic product, intention to purchase the organic product, trust in the organic product, perceived ecological price and perceived availability of the organic product) on the intention to purchase eco products by Generation Z.

The results of the research reveal the increased interest of young people in purchasing green products, considering the protection of the environment. From a practical perspective, the findings have important managerial implications for business. Offering high-quality green products can not only improve corporate image, but also drive long-term customer engagement, especially among Gen Z consumers. This generation perceives green products as superior to conventional alternatives in terms of quality, reliability, and environmental benefits. The strong positive influence of perceived quality on purchase intentions, as highlighted by our results, underscores the potential of entities to align their product offerings with the sustainability values of young consumers. Such efforts can translate into regular purchasing patterns, even among students with tight budgets, further strengthening their commitment to environmentally conscious behaviour.

However, trust in green products is required to mediate the relationships between the different attributes of green products and the intention of green products. Consequently, transparent communication of the benefits of green products and how their consumption could protect the environment is recommended to help consumers understand how their own purchasing decisions could affect the well-being of future generations. The results may also be of interest to nongovernmental organizations in the field of environmental protection to understand how to target Generation Z in social marketing campaigns to increase their awareness of sustainable consumption and to transform students into environmental advocates alongside other age segments.

The third research direction addresses the motivations underlying the purchase decision in an exceptional context, namely the Covid-19 pandemic and educational products.

The Covid-19 pandemic has generated an increase in the popularity of online shopping as a result of restrictions imposed by the pandemic emergency and technological advances, but it has also generated changes in consumer behaviour. The research approach is based on the COVID-19 pandemic and makes its own contributions to the online shopping literature by combining several predictors and perceptions about online shopping derived from various existing theories. Relying on the regression model, the variables included in the research instrument reflected the hypotheses described in the literature analysis.

The survey was based on the main latent variables explained in the literature review, namely attitude, loyalty, behavioural intention, and perceived benefits of online shopping. The survey questions were developed based on items from the existing literature. The results contribute to research on consumer behaviour, both in academia and in business, with a focus on online purchase behaviour, as well as general knowledge of the progress of loyalty and intentions in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also adds value from a managerial perspective, as managers should consider the pandemic as a chance to gain new insights into consumer behaviour and focus on increasing perceived benefits to form favourable attitudes that lead to future intentions to purchase goods in an online environment and generate higher levels of loyalty. Supplementarily, the study extends two specific theories: the theory of Rational Action (TRA) and the technology acceptance model (TAM).

Regarding the study regarding the decision for educational products intended for current high school graduates-current students, the objectives of the research objectives were the following: to evaluate the causal relationships between the specific contextual design for each of the main interest groups; to measure the impact of perception on contexts in the decision-making

process; to identify and arguing for possible changes in the procurement decision-making process; to establish the most relevant context for the decision to choose for a certain study programme at university level. From a methodological point of view, we resorted to regression modelling and distributed questionnaire using Google Forms. The research results showed that each participant in the educational process can influence the perception of the study programmes and the candidates' choices for them. Although perceptions of top universities are important, personal factors such as aspirations and interests are crucial in choosing a degree programme. Almost all young people attach great importance to career opportunities and university reputation. Despite universities' efforts to socialise, students focus more on their individual needs. As for the decision-making process in choosing a study programme, students move from evaluating alternatives to obtaining information, and the perception of the competitive university context decisively influences this process. The relationships between the entities involved in the decision are interdependent, relevant, and valid. The study suggests a qualitative approach to better understand the complex process of choosing a college for students.

The research results also revealed that perception and personal factors influence students' decisions in choosing a study programme. Universities, faced with a competitive market, must anticipate demand and adjust programmes to remain relevant. Students' decision-making process is dictated not only by societal or university demands, but also by impressions of the institution's competitive environment. An adaptable and sustainable approach to educational offerings can make education more relevant to the needs of high school students, preparing them to make informed choices and contribute to sustainable solutions.

At the same time, the results obtained are useful for universities that should focus on educational marketing to dynamically adapt educational offers to the specific needs of young people and quickly adapt to meet current requirements in terms of innovation, digitalisation, and sustainability.

Part III of the habilitation thesis presents the future directions of academic development, on the following levels: research, didactic, and professional prestige.

At the level of research, for the Marketing discipline, I will focus on the development of current courses materials, which will partially contain the results of the research I have carried out, namely: sustainability of consumption in contemporary society - the decision to consume ecological products and marketing in the conditions of an increasingly digitalised world. For the courses I teach, I will develop practical application notebooks to meet the need for individual study of the students, as provided in the syllabus. I will also coordinate the students in the preparation of bachelor's and dissertation papers with a high scientific quality, indicating prestigious bibliographic references, validated theories and research results in the field that can be the starting point for the creation of papers with a scientific content suitable for the academic environment.

I will get involved in the organisation of student scientific sessions and I will encourage students to participate in them, highlighting the importance of acquiring skills in the research approach, necessary for the elaboration of bachelor's and/or dissertation papers, but also for the continuation and deepening of research within the framework of doctoral studies.

The second level, the scientific research activity will focus on the coordinates already considered in the previous researches, namely the consumption decision from the perspective of sustainability and the motivations of the consumer's behaviour in a constantly changing society. Among the future coordinates of research, I can enumerate the following:

- Elaboration of articles, individually or in research teams, to be published in Web of Science indexed journals. Among these topics, without being limited to that, will be the research directions

mentioned in the already published articles, respectively: the analysis of new variables and correlations between them for representative samples of organic fruit and vegetable consumers, including the multi-group moderation effect based on some sociodemographic variables and their influence on the relationships within the proposed model; extending the factors driving green purchase intentions to more sources of value creation or other components of the marketing mix designed for green products - these can be supported by technological advances on the one hand and psychodemographic changes, attitudes and behaviors of different generations on the other; analysis of the marketing of educational products offered by universities, in the context of globalisation and some requirements imposed by the dynamics of a society in a continuous process of digitisation and specialization.

- Participation and presentation of research papers at national and international conferences indexed on the Web of Science.
- Publication of marketing research articles that contribute to increasing the current number of citations.
- Participation in research projects, obtained through competition, in multidisciplinary teams, materialised by the publication of works in prestigious journals in the economic field.

The objective of the third level is to increase professional prestige, as follows: obtaining the didactic degree of associate professor and then the didactic degree of professor; obtaining membership of the Doctoral School of Marketing within the Bucharest University of Economic Studies; continued publishing of articles in prestigious international journals; participation in national and international conferences; continued participation in university activities; publishing books in the field; encouraging students in scientific research activity by participating in scientific sessions, participating, as a guest professor, in teaching activities in prestigious universities outside Romania.