

ACADEMY OF ECONOMIC STUDIES OF BUCHAREST



DOCTORAL SCHOOL: MANAGEMENT

**INNOVATION AND DIGITALISATION, ESSENTIAL FACTORS
IN STIMULATING COMPANIES' PERFORMANCE**

SUMMARY OF THE HABILITATION THESIS

CANDIDATE:

**University associate professor RALUCA-ANDREEA TRANDAFIR
OVIDIUS University of Constanta**

BUCHAREST

2024

Summary

The habilitation thesis developed on *Innovation and digitalisation, essential factors in stimulating companies' performance* is not only an academic exercise, it crowns a symbol of recognition of the work of over 20 years in the academic career and presents the most significant research achievements after completion of doctoral studies.

In an ever-changing world, a moment's reflection takes me back to the road I have travelled with satisfaction, to every moment of my career that has contributed to a success story. But behind every success, there is a man who remains true to his original mission: to inspire and guide new generations and the true value of education lies in the human connection, support and guidance he offers his students.

Developing an academic teaching career has involved a structured journey that has gone through several stages, each with its own demands and responsibilities. Unlike many other professions, an academic career is more than a job, it is a calling and a passion. Beyond the degrees and certifications earned, my career reflects dedication, perseverance and commitment to the field I work in. I have deepened each stage of my professional career and sought to consolidate my knowledge. From basic research during my undergraduate studies to my master's and doctoral studies, each level has involved additional complexity and specialization.

For me, the academic teaching career has been an ambitious path that I have travelled with great dedication and passion for knowledge and the desire to contribute to the development of students. Each step I have taken has involved taking on increasing responsibilities and offered me opportunities for personal and professional development. I believe that by engaging in quality teaching, innovative research and effective administration of academic activities, I have had a significant impact on the training of future generations of professionals. From the position of university preparator in 2004, I worked my way up the academic ladder to university associate professor, a title I obtained in 2015. I have followed a well-structured and diversified career path that has not only enhanced my profile as a university lecturer but also contributed to the advancement of my knowledge in my field. Continuous training and lifelong learning are essential in a dynamic and rapidly changing professional environment. Rapid technological progress requires constant updating of knowledge and skills to remain competitive.

My career trajectory and development in the academic community has led to the accumulation of experiences, knowledge and skills that have allowed me to advance into leadership positions and develop my management skills along the way.

Over the course of my career, I have developed the skills necessary to effectively manage teams, projects and resources. These skills include leadership, communication, strategic planning, decision making and problem solving skills.

From the position of International Student Exchange Coordinator in the Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences in 2015, I moved to Director of the Department of Relations with Public and Private Institutions at Ovidius University of Constanta, to Prodecan in the Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences in 2019 and the culmination of the recognition of my contributions by the academic community came in 2020 when I was nominated to the position of Prorector in the management of Ovidius University of Constanta, a position that opened additional opportunities for me to influence the strategic direction of the institution. Starting in July 2020, being Prorector with structural funds and the relationship with the socio-economic environment is a successful achievement in my career but it involves a number of strategic and administrative responsibilities and activities. This position within the university's management team is essential for the effective coordination of research, education and external relations activities, ensuring that academic and development objectives are achieved.

Since 2023 I have been appointed as a member of the National Council for Financing Higher Education (CNFIS), an advisory body to the Ministry of Education that develops methods for distributing public funds to state universities in Romania and promotes continuous quality improvement in the higher education system, ensuring equal opportunities for higher education for all citizens.

The story, begun twenty years ago, of a young idealist stepping into the academic community with a desire to bring about change and innovation has developed into this empowering thesis that surprises impact with a multiplier role of innovation management and digitalisation that has become a key direction in research.

The thesis, structured in three sections, summarizes scientific, professional and academic achievements as well as future goals for professional, scientific and academic career development. The section that concludes the thesis structure includes numerous bibliographical references that serve as a basis for the research themes developed in the published articles.

The positioning of own research in the field of innovation and digitalisation research focuses on the idea of the powerful tandem that can radically transform the profitability and competitiveness of a firm. Innovation and digitalisation are key to increasing a firm's profitability in the modern economy. By combining these two elements, companies can not only create new value, but also continuously optimise and improve existing processes. In an ever-changing world, long-term success will depend on firms' ability to integrate these practices into their business strategy, creating a solid foundation for growth and sustainability. By embracing a culture of innovation and integrating digital technologies, firms can become more agile, efficient and responsive to market needs. Long-term success will depend on the ability to combine these two elements to create sustainable value for both the firm and its customers.

Research work marked by four major orientations presents the main personal contributions developed in the areas of (1) Relationship management theory and practice and the moderating role of digital innovation on employee innovation behaviour; (2) Fostering privacy and security management through the adoption of blockchain technology; (3) The mediating role of digital banking in the relationship between social and financial performance in banking; (4) Innovation - the catalyst for turning sustainability challenges into economic opportunities.

The two concepts, innovation and digitisation, are interdependent and often mutually reinforcing. Innovation can stimulate digitisation by creating new technologies and digital solutions, while digitisation can facilitate innovation by providing tools and data to support the development of new ideas.

Academic career development involves a combination of teaching, research and involvement in the academic community. My future goals for a successful academic career reflect this diversity to support both academic excellence and contribution to institutional and social development. Obtaining the habilitation certificate reflects that I would have the ability to conduct independent research and would allow me to train and mentor future generations of PhD students. Mentoring young PhD students, I aim to be a role model, instilling in them the courage to experiment and embrace change. With this recognition, I would become even more motivated to continue the journey of discovery and inspiration, believing that the true power of knowledge lies in its ability to change lives and shape the future.