

OVIDIUS UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANTA

DOCTORAL SCHOOL: BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

**THE COMPLEX AND INTEGRATIVE APPROACH TO
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PHENOMENA: A
MULTIDIMENSIONAL PARADIGM IN BUSINESS
ADMINISTRATION**

SUMMARY OF THE HABILITATION THESIS

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SUMMARY

Scientific knowledge of the complexity of current economic and social phenomena must represent the starting point for their correct understanding, in order to substantiate appropriate decisions, which will ensure modern business administration, based on criteria specific to sustainable development.

The central element of the habilitation thesis is represented by supporting and demonstrating through the presentation of the results of representative published studies, that addressing economic and social phenomena, in their interconditionality, can constitute a strategy in business administration in a market economy, faced with multiple challenges. In this context, I also bring to attention the importance of developing and diversifying forms of collaboration between economic units, institutions, and organizations and the academic environment.

I structured the habilitation thesis entitled *The Complex and Integrative Approach to Economic and Social Phenomena: A Multidimensional Paradigm in Business Administration* into two sections, respectively: *A. Presentation of the main original published scientific results* and *B. Results aimed at the ability to coordinate research teams, to organize and manage teaching activities, to explain and facilitate learning and research. Projecting the future development of the scientific, teaching, and academic career.*

Section A. Presentation of the main original published scientific results

Within the thesis, I have identified four main research directions that encompass the published scientific findings: (1). Sustainability - a new paradigm in tourism business administration; (2). Knowing the attitude of residents towards tourism - an important aspect in business administration; (3). Researching the specific aspects of the seasonality of tourism activity and their role in business administration; (4). The transition from classical methods to modern forms of conducting didactic and professional activities and the impact in business administration.

The first chapter presents studies that bring attention to the orientation of the activity towards sustainable development and the impact on the administration of tourism businesses on the Romanian coast.

Tourism in coastal regions continues to expand, worldwide, largely due to the attraction exerted by the beauty of the landscape and the recreational activities offered to tourists. Coastal erosion affects all coastal areas with different intensities, and its effects can be severe. This phenomenon is also true for the beaches on the Romanian coast, where, in recent decades, dozens of hectares of beaches have been lost, and some areas have narrowed so much that they have become almost unusable for tourism, affecting the way of managing businesses and the results recorded by certain economic operators.

The study focuses on presenting the case of Mamaia resort, where, in 2012, a project was launched to reduce coastal erosion, and by the 2021 tourist season, the completed works resulted in the development of beaches that exceed, in some areas, 300 m wide. Even though the erosion reduction was solved, the works of this project unexpectedly attracted serious undesirable consequences for several categories of participants in the tourist activity: (1) for tourists: increased dissatisfaction with the new configuration of the beach, giving up their stay in Mamaia and focusing on other holiday destinations on the Romanian coast or in other countries; (2) for the local business environment: decreased tourist flows and financial results; (3) negative impact on marine ecosystems and, last but not least, (4) the image of the resort was affected. This case is remarkable, as it deviates from the typical results of coastal rehabilitation, in which beach expansion usually generates positive results, both in terms of environmental protection and for tourism purposes.

The results of the exploratory research, a selective survey, carried out between June 2022 and March 2023, highlight the negative perception of tourists regarding the expansion of some beach areas. The consequence: in the Mamaia resort, there was a decrease in tourist demand, reflected in the level of tourist traffic indicators, in the two years since the completion of the rehabilitation works. In 2022 and 2023, both the number of arrivals and the average length of stay in Mamaia were lower than the averages recorded on the entire Romanian coastline.

The case of the Mamaia resort demonstrates that large-scale environmental interventions can have a direct and negative impact on tourism, a vital economic sector for the region. Although addressing coastal erosion remains a legitimate concern, it is essential to adopt a balanced approach that protects tourism, but also ensures environmental sustainability. This case serves as a warning, highlighting the importance of ensuring that sustainable policies maintain ecological balance without undermining the local economy.

Through the theoretical approach in another study, we emphasized that tourism activity must contribute to sustainable development, integrating into the natural, cultural, and human environment and protecting the fragile balances that characterize many tourist destinations. An anarchic and speculative development of tourism can bring significant harm to the protection actions and the good use of natural and cultural heritage resources. Under these conditions, sustainable tourism may currently be considered as one of the major stakes of tourism development policy.

Another approach is highlighted by a study that aimed at the creation of cross-border tourist products and their contribution to the sustainable development of tourism in the Dobruja region, within the Romania-Bulgaria Cross-Border Cooperation Programme 2007-2013. The project aimed primarily at developing a successful partnership that would benefit tourism businesses, local and regional authorities, educational institutions, as well as institutions responsible for national heritage sites in the cross-border area. Through the project, a network of 50 tourist sites in Dobruja was created.

The second chapter presents a selection of studies through which we have developed the multidimensional approach to tourism activity and its impact on business administration. Tourism has a definite positive economic impact, but in business administration, importance must also be given to its negative secondary effects, especially those that target specific aspects for the quality of life of residents. At the same time, knowing the perception of residents towards tourism activity is important, because it can support or obstruct decisions regarding the evolution of tourism.

A study presented in this chapter aimed to understand residents' perceptions of tourism activity in a coastal city (Constanța), which hosts a large number of tourists during a short tourist season. The data, collected using a questionnaire as part of the direct research conducted, were used to create several indices, which were subsequently included in econometric models, to identify the factors that determine residents' acceptance and support for tourism. We demonstrated that residents' acceptance of tourism depends on several variables and calculated indices: the city development index, the impact on residents' quality of life, the sustainable development index, and the perceived intensity of contact with tourists.

I believe that the study is the first to attempt such an investigation in Romania, with previous efforts marginally addressing residents' perceptions of tourism. The research results showed that residents support the development of tourism in Constanța.

Two other studies contain research on aspects related to the safety and security of tourists and residents on the Romanian seaside. Their results allowed to outline the criminal profile observed within each analyzed locality/resort. These aspects can be useful both to representatives of the business environment, as well as to tourists and residents of these analyzed localities/resorts.

The third chapter focuses on the importance of knowing the specific (seasonal) evolution of tourism activity and the impact on business administration.

The results obtained in the study aimed at the comparative analysis of seasonality recorded in Romania and the European Union, during the period 2005-2016, allowed measuring the intensity and dynamics of seasonality of tourism activity in Romania, its positioning compared to the average calculated for EU countries, identifying specific aspects of the impact that resident and non-resident tourists have on the manifestation of seasonality of tourism activities in Romania, compared to the average trend recorded in EU countries.

The original element of the study is the use of research results both to outline Romania's tourism profile and to identify the link between the behavior of resident and non-resident tourists (from Romania and the EU) and the manifestation of seasonality in tourism activity.

Another study represents the comparative analysis of the seasonality of tourist activity in Romania and Bulgaria, countries with similar characteristics in terms of tourist offer, but which differ in the way of manifestation of the seasonality of tourist activity, an aspect highlighted by the evolution of some representative indicators for tourist circulation.

The interpretation, by cumulating the results obtained for each indicator used, represented the basis for defining the tourist profile of these two countries, but also for outlining the development strategies of tourism in Romania.

The last chapter contains studies on understanding the perception of the transition to online activity, its impact on teaching activities and business administration.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digitalization, normalized working from anywhere, brought changes to the way businesses, education, but also people's personal and social lives were conducted. In this context, online education and telework emerged.

A study aimed to understand the perception of Romanian employees regarding the use of teleworking in the post-pandemic period. The research results demonstrate that the modification of the legislative and contractual framework, working conditions, as well as the way of using information and communication technology in the post-pandemic era, generate a positive impact (albeit different) on the use of teleworking by employees. These are topical issues, with a significant impact on business administration.

Two other studies present the results of a desk research and two direct research on the experiment generated by the new Coronavirus pandemic, namely the replacement of traditional education with the online education model and vice versa, at the level of the Faculty of Economic Sciences, within the Ovidius University of Constanța.

The conclusion of the research is highlighted by the positive attitude of the respondents towards achieving a combination between the two forms of education, so that students can complete their academic training and combine it with practical professional activity. This change in perception should be taken into account in future strategies for configuring teaching activities in higher education.

B. Results regarding the ability to coordinate research teams, organize and manage teaching activities, explain and facilitate learning and research. Planning the future development of scientific, teaching, and academic career

In this section, there were presented relevant aspects of the research results obtained by participating in research projects (after receiving the doctoral degree), won through competition at national and international level, as project director or as a member of implementation teams; results from teaching activity in higher education; experience gained in university management, in evaluating and ensuring academic quality at the national level; contributions to the development of collaboration between academia and business; affiliation to professional and scientific associations; distinctions received.

I have also outlined future directions in the development of the scientific, teaching, and academic career. The 35 years of activity in higher education represent an accumulation of experience, but also a challenge to continue, at high standards, with more passion and responsibility.

Regarding scientific research activity, I am considering expanding some research topics addressed in recently published studies, but which will include new case studies and diversification of research methods; identifying new applied research topics specific to business administration in the Dobruja region, in the context of changes in the international economic situation. In this endeavor, I consider it appropriate to develop collaboration with specialists from different scientific fields, even from different universities or research centers for the development of transdisciplinary research topics.

At the same time, I intend to develop research topics in the area of teaching activity, focusing in particular on digital technologies implemented during the pandemic and how professors' new skills can be used to improve the educational process; identifying possibilities for integrating online components into university education, with the aim of creating a hybrid educational model that ensures accessibility, flexibility, and efficiency of educational processes.

In teaching activity, I will focus on diversifying and modernizing teaching methods in order to contribute to the training of highly skilled specialists, able to adapt to the future trends of the labor market and the knowledge society.