

BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE FOR DOCTORAL STUDIES
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC POLICY

HABILITATION THESIS - ABSTRACT

MANAGEMENT AND MARKETING CONTRIBUTION TO URBAN AND PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS` DEVELOPMENT

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The habilitation thesis entitled "Management and marketing contribution to urban and public organizations` development" highlighted the most relevant research conducted after the defense of the doctoral thesis in September 2005 and the attainment of the doctoral degree in January 2006. The thesis is structured into three sections: I. Academic, Professional, and Scientific Achievements; II. Plans for the Evolution and Development of Professional, Scientific, and Academic Career; III. Bibliography.

I. Academic, Professional, and Scientific Achievements

This section of the thesis presents a concise overview of the evolution of the academic and professional career, as well as the main research directions pursued after obtaining the doctoral degree at the Faculty of Management within the Bucharest University of Economic Studies.

Regarding my *academic career*, I have progressed through the ranks of the university hierarchy, becoming a full professor in 2015 at the Faculty of Administration and Public Management (FAPM), Bucharest University of Economic Studies (ASE Bucharest). Currently, I am responsible for teaching seven courses in the undergraduate and graduate programs introduced between 2006 and 2018 in the curriculum of the aforementioned faculty. These courses include Urban Marketing, Introduction to Public Marketing, Management of Cultural Organizations, Applied Marketing Strategies in Socio-Cultural Organizations, Competitive Urban Systems at the European Level, Urban Management and Marketing, and Marketing in the Field of Human Resources.

In terms of *professional achievements*, I am a member of the editorial team of the Public Administration and Management journal (since 2003), which is indexed in eight international databases, with SCOPUS being the most prominent among them. Additionally, since 2013, I have been a member of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Journal of Public Administration, Finance, and Law (JOPAFL), published under the auspices of "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iași. Furthermore, since 2005, I have been part of the organizing committee of the International Conference on Public Administration and Management, and since 2012, I have been one of the coordinators of the conference proceedings. As of 2022, I am a member of the scientific committee of the EU-PAIR Annual International Conference organized by the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration at "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iași.

Since 2009, I have been a member of the Romanian Association for Regional Science, the Regional Science Association International, and the European Regional Science Association. Additionally, since 2011, I have been a member of the Academic Society of Management in Romania.

Furthermore, I must mention that from April 2012 to April 2016, I held the position of Vice Dean of the Faculty of Public Administration and Management (FAPM) with the portfolio of Education, Continuing Education, and Student Relations. Since February 2018 and up to the present, I have held the position of Vice Dean of FAPM with the portfolio of Student and Socio-Economic Relations.

In terms of my *scientific career*, the most significant achievements can be summarized as follows:

- From 2001 to 2005, I worked on my doctoral thesis, which focused on studying the role of urban management in competition between cities.
- From November 2010 to March 2013, I pursued postdoctoral studies as part of the program "Performance and Excellence in Postdoctoral Research in the field of Economic Sciences in Romania." During this period, I studied methods of developing competitive cities through image and brand strategies.

The *scientific research results*, obtained individually or through collaborations, consist of the following:

- Author and / or co-author of 14 specialized books.
- Author and / or co-author of 11 ISI articles, five of which were published in journals with an impact factor greater than or equal to 0.1. One of these articles, classified as "red" by UEFISCDI and ranked in the first quartile according to Clarivate Analytics' classification, received an award in 2020.
- Author and / or co-author of 53 articles published in journals indexed in international databases.
- Author and / or co-author of 27 studies published in volumes of ISI indexed conferences or international databases, 8 studies published in volumes of conferences organized abroad, and 26 studies published in volumes of conferences held in Romania.
- Member of eight research teams for projects obtained through national competitions and seven institutional, social, or regional development projects funded by EU funds.
- Project director for a research project in collaboration with the business environment and member of 3 other research teams for projects involving the business environment.
- Scientific Secretary of the Center for Research in Administration and Public Services (established in 2006), with the mission of contributing through conducting studies to strengthen the capacity of public administration, covering various thematic areas such as public administration, urban management, public service management, e-governance, public management, etc.
- Member of the Scientific Council of the HRM METAVERSE CENTER Research Center (established in March 2023).

After obtaining my doctorate degree, I have focused my scientific research activities on **four main thematic directions**, namely:

Research Direction I: The Role of Urban Management in City Competitiveness

The first research direction naturally emerged from my research interests during the preparation of my doctoral thesis and was also driven by the utmost relevance of the topic, both globally and especially in our country. My contribution to this field has resulted in 18 articles and 6 studies published in conference proceedings indexed in the Web of Science or other bibliographic databases. Furthermore, the theoretical and practical results of my research in this direction have been synthesized in two specialized books. Additionally, my involvement in research projects aligns with this primary research direction, with notable examples including:

- The institutional research project "Analysis of Urban Planning in Bucharest Municipality from the Perspective of Sustainable Development Goals" was conducted from June to November 2022.
- The project "Research on the Development of Competitive and Smart Cities in Knowledge-based Societies" was carried out from 2006 to 2008.
- The project "Decisional Transparency - an Indicator of Good Local Governance" (where I also served as the project director) was conducted in 2009. This project provided the team with an opportunity to conduct a study that aimed to diagnose local communities (citizens, local public authorities, especially municipalities, and nongovernmental organizations) regarding the practice of decisional transparency as a defining element of good local governance, as well as the involvement of citizens in public decision-making processes.

The most significant theoretical and practical contributions for this research direction, analyzed in various works, include the following:

- Study of the specialized literature on the concept of urban management, its mission and objectives, the tools used (urban planning, urban marketing, and alternative financing), as well as the key areas that should be used to improve urban management.
- Identification and presentation of metropolitan areas in Romania, as well as cities with metropolitan development potential; study of the specialized literature on sustainable tourism and ecotourism concepts, as well as official documents that allowed determining the development potential of Romania's development regions in this field; analysis of urban planning in Bucharest in 2021; identification of trends in the specialized literature regarding integrated territorial investments (ITIs), the main characteristics of ITI implementation in EU countries, as well as the results of implementing this instrument in the Danube Delta area; presentation of projects that contributed to achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy successfully using European funds.
- Conducting comparative analyzes regarding the directions of action regarding urban marketing in Budapest and Bucharest; Identification of competitiveness indicator systems used globally and in Europe to measure the performance of urban areas; Examination of the level of competitiveness, as well as the main objectives and means of maintaining a certain level of competitiveness used by three capitals in Central and Eastern Europe (Ljubljana, Budapest, and Bucharest).
- Identification of the perceptions of both residents and tourists' perceptions of current practices related to the promotion of Bucharest, as well as ways and opportunities to improve this activity.
- Identification of factors that could support urban competitiveness growth or, conversely, could have negative effects on the level of competitiveness.

Research Direction II: The Importance of Branding Strategies in Increasing the Visibility of Countries and Cities

Within this research direction, I have contributed through 20 articles and 4 papers published in conference proceedings indexed in Web of Science or other bibliographic databases. In addition, the theoretical and practical results of my research in this second research direction have been synthesized in a specialized book.

Two sub-research directions have been identified within this research direction:

II.1 Country Branding

Within this sub-research direction, I have published 14 articles in journals or conference proceedings indexed in Web of Science or other international databases.

The theoretical and practical contributions to this sub-research direction consist of:

- Study of the concept of country branding, as well as the country brand indexes developed by practitioners in the field. Exploration of the notion of public diplomacy, the relationship between country branding and public diplomacy, and identification of public diplomacy projects coordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Research on the evolution of Romania as a tourist destination, including the identification of significant indicators such as target markets, visitor numbers, tourism revenues, the highest vacation budgets of foreign tourists who visited Romania, and tourist accommodation structures. Identification of attempts and failures to establish a coherent country brand, as well as the presentation of Romania's current tourism brand.

- Conduct comparative analyses to identify several models of successful country branding strategies (such as Australia, Greece, and the United Kingdom) that could serve as examples for Romania. Furthermore, I examined public diplomacy actions aimed at supporting the branding of economically developed countries (such as the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany) and countries in Central and Eastern Europe (such as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Serbia) based on fundamental aspects (allocation of financial resources, defining factors of foreign policy and public diplomacy objectives, promoted characteristics, stakeholder participation in the branding/image promotion process, use of new technologies, study of perceptions of foreign citizens, social and environmental issues, transfer of responsibilities).
- Development of relevant case studies presenting successful country branding strategies that could serve as best-practice examples for Romania (such as Thailand, Malaysia, Japan, Singapore, Bulgaria, and countries of the former Yugoslavia). In most cases, the promotional campaigns of countries with a significant number of tourists were presented and analyzed, focusing on the evolution of the brand, explaining the best practices applied by the responsible authorities, and evaluating the effects of the branding strategy in terms of increased number of tourists, tourism revenues, and international prestige of the country.
- The perception of residents of the capital city and foreign tourists about the image of Romania as a tourist destination was tested, as well as investigating the perception of young people in Bucharest about historical cities in terms of tourist offerings, infrastructure, and the potential they represent to promote the country brand.

II.2 Urban Branding

Within this sub-direction, I have published 10 studies in specialized journals and conference proceedings indexed in the Web of Science or other international databases.

The theoretical and practical contributions to this research sub-direction consist of:

- Studying the specialized literature on urban branding, identifying the elements of urban branding and the necessary steps for successful urban branding, researching the importance of tourism in urban development, and identifying areas with tourism potential in Romania.
- Conducting comparative analyzes that have provided data on several measurement tools for urban brands (Urban Brand Index, European City Brand Barometer and Global Cities Index) useful in analyzing how they can contribute to the construction of a strong urban brand for the city of Bucharest, studying successful branding strategies (Edinburgh, The Hague, Toronto, and Hong Kong) that could serve as models for cities in Romania.
- Developing case studies presenting the key elements of branding strategies of relevant cities (Vienna and Amsterdam) from a synthetic descriptive perspective, evaluating their quantitative and qualitative effects (increased number of tourists and overnight stays, enhanced destination prestige), and identifying possible options for Bucharest's marketing strategy, studying the general characteristics of the Brasov region, its tourism potential, and ways to exploit it (with a focus on the types of tourism practiced in the area and the tourism offer), as well as the region's tourism development strategy.
- Formulating possible marketing steps adapted to the local specificities of Bucharest, identifying relevant target groups, formulating possible ways to promote the city, and identifying success factors.

- Researching the practices of creating and using official tourism promotion websites of important urban areas in the EU to identify a set of best practices that would facilitate the transfer of necessary know-how in creating a tourism website for the capital of Romania.
- Identifying the perception of foreign tourists regarding the image of the capital city as the main urban tourist destination in Romania and a potential top destination in Southeast Europe.

Research Direction III: The Contribution of Cultural Organizations to Enhancing Urban Competitiveness

My contribution to this topic has materialized in 16 articles and 9 papers published in conference proceedings indexed by Web of Science or other international databases. Furthermore, the results of my theoretical and practical endeavors for the third research direction have been synthesized in a specialized book.

Within this research direction, three sub-directions have been identified:

III.1 Creative Industries and Their Role in Urban Development

The studies published within this sub-direction of research consist of:

- Identifying relevant data for creative cities in the UNESCO network and analyzing a ranking of the main cities in Romania based on the creative industries index. Presentation of examples of creative industries developed within the UNESCO Creative Cities network. Identifying interesting statistics regarding successful festivals worldwide and creating a classification of the main festivals in Romania.
- Assessing the perceptions of participants in three major cultural events in Romania (Art Safari, George Enescu Festival and Sibiu International Theatre Festival) regarding how they influence urban development and how the audience perceived the changes that occurred in the organization and conduct of these events in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

III.2 Cultural Organizations: Successful Urban Symbols

Several relevant articles in this research sub-direction have demonstrated that in recent years, the growing influence of culture in modern society, along with the increasing importance of tourism in the cities' basic economy, has led to the emergence of "emblematic cultural organizations." For example, the emblematic museum or theater becomes a must-see attraction for visitors to a city, and by deciding to extend their average stay in the city, more money is spent in that space. The emblematic cultural organization also serves as a stimulus for the development of urban tourism. A recent study found that 3 out of 10 tourists came to London for its museums.

The articles in this sub-direction aimed primarily at presenting emblematic museums (such as the British Museum, Prado Museum, Musée d'Orsay, Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao) from a marketing mix perspective and the perspective of visitors, to formulate best practices that cultural organizations in Romania could adopt from these giants to increase their number of visitors and, consequently, the revenue they bring to urban economies. Other research has analyzed the importance of emblematic theaters (such as the National Theater "I.L. Caragiale") or emblematic libraries (such as the "Carol I" Central University Library) for the capital of Romania.

III.3 Cultural Marketing and Its Importance in the Success of Cultural Organizations

Within this research sub-direction, 16 studies from 2007 to the present have focused on the following aspects:

- Studying the specialized literature related to cultural marketing, organizations in the field, the cultural marketing mix, and the importance of visitor studies in the performance of cultural institutions.
- Conducting relevant case studies regarding the application of the cultural marketing mix in various profile organizations in Bucharest (National Museum of Natural History "Grigore Antipa," National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, National Library of Romania, National Museum of Romanian History, Central University Library "Carol I," etc.).
- Analyzing visitors' perceptions of three iconic museums in the capital (National Museum of Natural History "Grigore Antipa," National Museum of Romanian History, National Museum of Art of Romania) regarding the level of information, opinions on exhibition quality and collection attractiveness, as well as the level of perceived satisfaction.
- Evaluating the level of interest of theater spectators in general and studying their preferences regarding performances and programs held at the Odeon Theater.
- Identifying the role of the "Calea Victoriei" Foundation in Bucharest's cultural landscape, the perception of the quality of events and courses organized by the foundation, and the effectiveness of promotional activities in terms of sales.
- Analyzing how the use of social networks by employees of the six most visited museums in Bucharest contributes to the creation/improvement of the organizations' brand image and determining the impact of accessing these networks on increasing the number of visitors.

Research Direction IV: The Importance of Marketing in Educational Organizations

The last research direction regarding the role of marketing, especially in promoting universities, stems from my responsibilities as the Vice Dean of FAPM (student relations and coordinator of promotional campaigns) and the specific nature of the disciplines I teach. This new direction has become necessary considering the emerging trends in the field of education: internationalization, the younger generation's orientation towards social media platforms, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted the imminent need for digitalization of universities and the creation of the necessary infrastructure for conducting distance learning activities.

To study the application of the marketing concept in Romanian universities, I have co-authored four studies in specialized journals or conference proceedings. Additionally, within this research direction, I have been involved in implementation teams for institutional development projects aimed at enhancing student internship stages and improving the quality of undergraduate and graduate programs in the field of administrative sciences.

- "Sustainable Partnership for Student Internship (Future Stars)" (2020-2023)
- "Internships for Students in Economics and Public Administration (ECOPRAC)" (2020-2021)
- "Responsibility, Originality, Sustainability, and Ethics. Familiarizing at-risk students with the values of a high-performing, competitive, and inclusive academic environment" (2019-2022)

- "Improving the Quality of Bachelor's Programs in Public Administration. Quality in Public Administration/C.A.P. growth and development through enhanced study programs" (2014-2015)
- "Student Internships - A Step toward Professional Integration" (2011-2013)
- "Improving the Quality of Master's Programs in Public Administration" (2010-2012).

The theoretical and practical contributions to this research direction have focused on the following:

- Studying the specialized literature on educational marketing, the marketing mix in the field, the importance of branding for universities, and the role of social networks in promoting educational institutions.
- Identifying ways to promote universities online during the elements of the pandemic, examining the marketing mix for three of the most important faculties in Bucharest that offer undergraduate programs in "Public Administration," analyzing the evolution of the ERASMUS program internationally from 2018 to 2021, as well as the participants in this program from FAPM.
- Verifying the efficiency of online marketing as a solution to improve university promotion and identify marketing strategies in higher education targeting potential candidates.
- Identifying the opinions of students enrolled in undergraduate or master's programs in "Public Administration" regarding the marketing mix.
- Identifying and analyzing the main motivational and demotivational factors affecting students' decision to apply for an Erasmus+ scholarship, determining the main benefits of Erasmus+ mobility according to students' opinions, and identifying the main sources of information for students regarding admission requirements and Erasmus+ mobility opportunities. Formulating a set of recommendations to increase its visibility.
- Determining the expectations of FAPM students about internships.

II. The second part of the habilitation thesis presents the **plans for the evolution and development of my own professional, scientific, and academic career.**

In terms of *academic development*, my short-term, medium-term, and long-term objectives are related to improving the content of the courses taught in undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as developing research activities in the field. Additionally, my objective is to prioritize strengthening the student-professor partnership by increasing student participation in research and extracurricular activities, encouraging them to actively participate in all relevant debates they are involved in.

Furthermore, in the upcoming period, my main *research directions* include the following. Identifying strategic options to improve the competitiveness of cities/countries, particularly through the use of specific branding and tourism tools; Analyzing the importance of online marketing in promoting cultural organizations; Examining sources of competitive advantage for cultural organizations; Studying internal marketing and its role in employee retention in the public sector; Additionally, I intend to study the latest global trends related to the following concepts: urban governance, smart cities, urban resilience, urban sustainability, and sustainable urban tourism.

III. The last part of the thesis includes 370 **bibliographic sources** associated with the first two parts of the thesis. Most of these works consist of reputable academic publications published by prestigious publishers or in internationally recognized journals.