

HABILITATION BOARD DECISION ON THE NOMINATION FOR APPOINTMENT TO ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Masaryk University	
Faculty	Faculty of Economics and Administration
Procedure field	Business Management
Applicant	Ing. Dušan Mladenović, Ph.D.
Applicant's home unit, institution	Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University
Habilitation thesis	Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) Through the Lenses of Information Seeking, Sharing, and Forwarding

Board members

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Assoc. Prof. Marco Galvagno, Ph.D. (Department of Economics & Business, University of Catania)

Evaluation of the applicant's scholarly/artistic qualifications

Dr. Mladenović meets the criteria set forth, most of them by a wide margin. He has contributed to 18 articles indexed in WoS, his cumulative contribution to them is at least 5 (required minimum is 1). WoS and Scopus currently record 193 citations of his articles (excluding self-citations, the required minimum is 3), while the response to his scientific work is rapidly increasing: he contributed to five WoS-indexed articles published in 2024 and these five have received more than 30 citations to date. Out of these five articles, the applicant was the first author in three cases, one of which is labeled as "highly cited paper" by WoS (the article received enough citations to place it in the top 1% of the academic field of Social Sciences). On top of that, WoS indexes more than 100 verified peer reviews written by him. He also serves as editorial board member in three renowned journals. Some of applicant's articles were published in journals belonging to the first decile in their field.

Dr. Mladenović has received ECON MUNI Dean's Award for Extraordinary research results (2023), MUNI Rector's Award for extraordinary research achievement for young scholars (2023), two awards from the Government of Serbia (the Fund for Young Talents, 2012, 2016) and an award from the European Commission (2011).

Dr. Mladenović has an extensive network of international collaborators spanning from United Arab Emirates through Croatia, Serbia, Italy, France, Austria to UK. Next to multiple shorter stay abroad, he has completed a month-long internship at Swansea Business School, UK.

Dr. Mladenović currently participates in a large-scale pan-European research project within Horizon scheme: *Situation-aware Orchestration of Adaptive Architecture (SONATA)*.

Conclusion: The applicant's scholarly/artistic capabilities **meet** the requirements expected of applicants participating in a habilitation procedure in the field of Business Management.

Evaluation of the applicant's pedagogical experience

Dr. Mladenović has been regularly teaching in the field of Business Management since 2016. He has been lecturer, seminar tutor, and lately also guarantor of many courses. Most of them were focused on marketing (Digital Marketing, International Marketing, Marketing 1) or methodological issues (Business Research). He has substantially contributed to some of them; for example, the course Strategic Digital Marketing was introduced by him.

Dr. Mladenović has supervised 50 successfully defended bachelor and diploma theses. Also, he has participated on number of teaching aids. The applicant is regularly evaluated as above-average teacher (source: anonymous student opinion polls within MUNI Information System).

Dr. Mladenović has received or participated in several projects focused on improving teaching skills or courses. Lately, he has received an Erasmus+ project *Strengthening the international dimension of universities in South-East Asia through the development of micro-credentials and their recognition*, in which he leads a consortium of ten institutions with a budget nearly EUR 1 mil. In addition, he took an active role in another Erasmus+ project *EDUCating for Positive Management* and was involved in several MUNI-funded projects.

Conclusion: The applicant's pedagogical capabilities **meet** the requirements expected of applicants participating in a habilitation procedure in the field of Business Management.

Habilitation thesis evaluation

The habilitation thesis by Dušan Mladenović explores the dynamics of Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM) through the frameworks of information seeking, sharing, and forwarding. The research comprises six peer-reviewed papers categorized within these central themes, offering an in-depth examination of eWOM's impact on consumer behaviour. The thesis addresses the increasing importance of digital consumer communication and presents conceptual and empirical insights, highlighting sectors such as hospitality, tourism, and marketing. By utilizing models like Media Richness Theory and the Stimulus-Organism-Response framework, Mladenović offers a comprehensive view of eWOM engagement and its implications for businesses and consumer decision-making in digital environments.

The thesis provides a substantial contribution to the field, particularly through its structured exploration of eWOM's multifaceted nature. The inclusion of empirical data strengthens its practical relevance, while the conceptual discussions, such as the development of "metaWOM" within the Metaverse, demonstrate innovative thinking. Nevertheless, the evaluation reveals areas for improvement, particularly the limited sample sizes and the thesis's primary focus on a select few industries and demographic groups. Expanding the research to include a broader range of sectors and contexts could further enhance its applicability. Moreover, the thesis successfully underscores the need for strategic management of eWOM and highlights emerging research areas, such as virtual environments and blockchain for review authenticity, which merit continued exploration.

The thesis was reviewed by Assoc. Prof. Hongfei Liu, PhD (Southampton Business School, University of Southampton), red. prof. dr. Maja Konečnik Ruzzier (Faculty of Economics,

University of Ljubljana), Paulo Duarte Silveira, Ph.D. (Instituto Politécnico de Setúbal). The reviewers praised the comprehensive theoretical framework, the author's research contributions, and the high-quality publications in respected journals, meeting the field's criteria, including Q1 and Q2 rankings. The reviewers highlighted the applicant's role as the lead author in multiple articles and acknowledged the methodological rigor and the practical implications of the research findings. They also pointed out the necessity for further exploration of emerging technological trends in eWOM and suggested broadening the scope of future studies to address identified research gaps. Ultimately, the reviewers concluded that the thesis fulfilled the academic requirements expected for habilitation in Business Management.

Conclusion: The applicant's habilitation thesis **meets** the requirements expected of habilitation theses in the field of Business Management.

Secret ballot results

Number of board members	5
Number of votes cast	5
Number of votes in favour	5

Board decision

Based on the outcome of the secret vote and following an evaluation of the applicant's scholarly or artistic qualifications, pedagogical experience and habilitation thesis, the board hereby submits a proposal to the scientific board of the Faculty of Economics and Administration of Masaryk University to

☒ appoint the applicant associate professor of Business Management.

☐ terminate the procedure.

Date: February 4th, 2025

prof. Ing. Martin Kvizda, Ph.D.

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