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**Article**

## Conceiving, Writing and Publishing a Scientific Paper. An approach in the context of economic research

Amfiteatru Economic Journal

**Provided in Cooperation with:**

The Bucharest University of Economic Studies

*Suggested Citation:* Brătianu, Constantin (2016) : Conceiving, Writing and Publishing a Scientific Paper. An approach in the context of economic research, Amfiteatru Economic Journal, ISSN 2247-9104, The Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Bucharest, Vol. 18, Iss. 43, pp. 726-732

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/169031>

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Book review

CONCEIVING, WRITING AND PUBLISHING A SCIENTIFIC PAPER  
An approach in the context of economic research

**Constantin Brătianu**

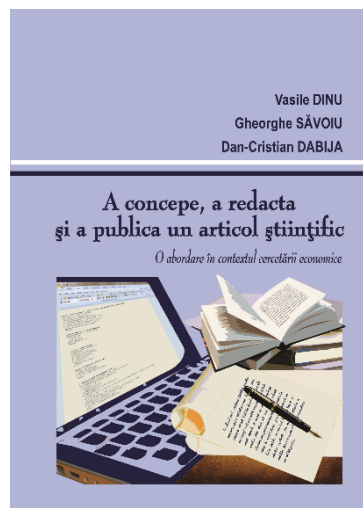
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**Please cite this article as:**

Brătianu C., 2016. Conceiving, Writing and Publishing a Scientific Paper. An approach in the context of economic research . *Amfiteatru Economic*, 18(43), pp. 726-732

Scientific research is a complex process that ends up with a results dissemination stage. This dissemination of results can be accomplished through several methods and practical tools aimed at meeting a number of objectives that are usually defined by the research program. One of the most frequently formulated objectives in the last decades is the writing of papers that can be published in prestigious research journals, particularly in the mainstream journals of that research field. Drawing up such papers implies meeting a series of content, structure and language requirements that must be known and well-understood. The fulfillment of such requirements calls for the existence of competences based on the knowledge acquired from the literature and from the practice of writing a research paper.

In the world's top universities, such competences are developed through a series of courses and applications introduced into the academic *curriculum*. However, the universities' offer of such courses and applications has been scarce in Romania, which is a serious handicap to undergraduates, doctoral students and researchers who must go into fierce and highly selective international competition to publish their research results. To overcome these challenges, the ASE Publishing House has recently launched the book *Conceiving, Writing and Publishing a Scientific Paper*. The book was written by Vasile Dinu, Gheorghe Săvoiu, and Dan-Cristian Dabija, professors with remarkable academic performance, and especially with valuable experience in evaluating research papers for highly prestigious international journals. The authors' undertaking represents a



premiere for the economic literature in Romania and materializes a considerable intellectual effort on behalf of doctoral students, researchers and academics who are keen on publishing in high-visibility international journals with indisputable indicators.

The book is divided into five chapters, each focusing on one of the fundamental dimensions of the process of conceiving, writing and publishing a scientific paper. The book has a logical and coherent structure, which enables the presentation of a rich content of practical ideas and recommendations needed to understand the complex process of producing a scientific paper. There is considerable merit in the authors' overcoming the temptation to come up with recipes and simplistic sketches on how to publish research papers, choosing instead the explanatory approach supported by arguments and illustrated with many practical examples from their own experience. The authors put forward a number of good practices and approaches in conceiving, writing and publishing a scientific paper in the field of economics and business administration.

**Chapter 1** – *Economic research and communication of its results, in the general context of scientific research.* This chapter introduces the reader to the universe of science and scientific research. The authors put forward some fundamental concepts that are needed to understand the phenomena typical of this field that is essential to the human society. Not coincidentally, the modern society has been identified as a knowledge-based society, because knowledge represents the gist of the whole human activity and the knowledge resulted from this complex activity becomes a strategic resource in the competition between companies. Quite a few decades have passed since the knowledge economy started to dominate the traditional economy based on tangible resources and national or regional markets. Since it has become a global phenomenon, today's competition intensifies and diversifies mostly on account of an increasingly turbulent business environment undergoing rapid changes and featuring innovations hard to anticipate. Therefore, the new strategic thinking focused on gaining competitive advantage and on creating sustainable business models. That which gives these processes consistency and significantly helps reduce uncertainty in anticipating the future is the innovation strategy which is based almost entirely on fundamental and applied scientific research. Consequently, the authors explain the content of this paradigm or multi-paradigm and present the synthetic cycle or the simplified approach to a piece of scientific research.

An entire sub-chapter was dedicated to the modern economic research and to highlighting the new alliances between the classical field of economics and its adjacent disciplines, thus constantly generating new *econodisciplines* in an inter-, trans-, and multidisciplinary flow. For instance, one would hardly have envisaged the scientific investigation of behavioral finance, behavioral economics, neuromarketing, economic engineering or econophysics. It is only through a proper understanding of the new scientific developments that one can perform valuable

research into these interface fields that integrate economic research into contemporary existential complexity.

The economic research, regardless of its specific domain, is characterized by an entropic process made up of four successive stages: (a) obtaining the necessary data and information for the scientific investigation; (b) the careful selection of the research methods and the metrics used for results interpretation; (c) the clear formulation of the working hypotheses, the necessary tests, and the operational models to be used; (d) the proper use of law and paradox in the economic research. All these stages are brilliantly explained by the authors. Changing the perspective, this chapter also deals with the cyclic model of modern economics research, consisting of: the primary cycle of research inputs – outputs, the secondary cycle concerning the strategy to be followed by an author, the tertiary cycle of inference and scientific control, and the quaternary cycle focused on the results of economic research. The last sub-chapter is focuses on the communication of the research results, an iterative and coherent topic that permeates the entire book.

**Chapter 2 – Structure and citation optimization of a scientific paper.** This chapter focuses on the generic structure of scientific papers and on the practical ways of increasing their visibility after publication. Although there are thousands of valuable journals in economics in which researchers publish their research results and each journal has its own vision of the publication process, there is a general consensus about the overall basic structure of a potential paper, as well as a set of minimum requirements to be met for including it in the peer review process. Therefore, the authors dwell on these generic elements that are essential in the design and elaboration of a scientific paper: pre-text elements, text elements and post-text elements.

Although they seem simple at times, the rules outlined in this chapter should be studied carefully because many authors disregard them. As editor and reviewer for a number of international journals, some of which are included in the famous *Web of Science* and *Scopus* databases, I have often seen papers that failed to comply strictly with these elements of structure and proper presentation of the qualitative and quantitative results and, as a consequence, many of them were rejected. It is important for an author to know how to better present his or her research findings using tables, diagrams or graphics of various forms to facilitate their understanding. Therefore I deem very important the authors' effort to explain and illustrate all these generic requirements concerning the editing of scientific articles.

What young researchers are expected to understand is that publishing articles should not be perceived as an end in itself but only as a practical way to disseminate the results of their research. If these results are of interest to the international scientific community, they are accepted and cited by other researchers. This establishes the basic truth that it is not important *how many* articles an author has published, but *how many times* those articles were cited by other authors. A quite recently created indicator to assess the citation process is the

Hirsch index, named after the man who developed it. The *H-index* is an author's largest *h* number of papers published, each of which has been cited in other papers at least *h* times. The authors explain in detail the practical calculation of this index and how it is used in major international databases, such as *Web of Science*, *Scopus*, *Google Scholar*, *Research Papers in Economics (RePEc)*. An extremely useful aspect is the authors' discussion about citations optimization strategies as a practical way of increasing the visibility of published articles. After all, it is important not only to *publish papers but also to get read and especially cited*.

**Chapter 3 - Writing a scientific paper.** This is an application-oriented chapter in that it explains practically how to write a scientific paper. It is important to emphasize that writing a research paper should be done using a scientific style defined by a number of features presented clearly and methodically by the authors. Scientific style differs fundamentally from the essayistic style in which the focus is on its attractiveness and linguistic metaphors rather than on clarity, accuracy, conciseness and argumentative logic. A good paper is one that is able to explain the purpose, methodology, and results of scientific research from a perspective clearly and carefully defined through the research hypotheses, limitations and outlook. Interpretation of results and the summing-up of the entire paper in a number of conclusions is also a fundamental writing requirement.

To these challenges are added those related to in-text citation and the writing of the final reference list of works used as source of ideas and arguments for preparing the manuscript. In this chapter, the authors present the requirements of the Harvard referencing style, one of the most commonly used styles in publishing articles in the field of social and human sciences, to which economics belongs. The authors' effort to provide an impressive number of citation examples so that the reader may easily understand and apply them is commendable. The chapter ends with some practical rules on typing research manuscripts and making tables and figures. The authors also make some recommendations with regard to punctuation rules which more often than not are disregarded. Given that international journals may differ slightly in their requirements, the authors will have to adapt the recommendations in this chapter to the specific requirements of the journal in which they want to publish their papers.

**Chapter 4 - Plagiarism, antiplagiarism legislation and research ethics.** This chapter presents an extremely important subject in the scientific literature, which is frequently met in Romania and brings prejudice to intellectual property: plagiarism. The authors provide an excellent overview of complex plagiarism phenomena as well as some explanations necessary for understanding and avoiding situations specific to these phenomena. The authors highlight from the very beginning what it means to produce an original paper and how it can distance itself from the highly diverse phenomena of plagiarism. The authors present the main types of plagiarism, which are defined in most academic codes of ethics: a) copying a text word for word, without reference to the bibliographic source; b) inadequate paraphrasing of a text fragment or simply reordering the words in order

to create a minimal differentiation from the original text; c) appropriation of research data, analyses and interpretation without indicating the original paper. Therefore, the authors stress the importance of admitting that an idea, a quotation, an image or a table was borrowed by indicating the correct and complete bibliographic source. For a better understanding of plagiarism and how it should be avoided, the authors present some key points from the legislation on plagiarism and recognition of intellectual property rights. At the end, some practical solutions to prevent and avoid plagiarism are presented, among which is the specialized software for identifying similarities between a manuscript and an original text from the literature. Promoting original creation in scientific research and the dissemination of results through publications must be made in compliance with academic ethics and by rejecting all forms of plagiarism.

**Chapter 5 – Publishing a paper in the field of social sciences.** This chapter helps us understand the universe of scientific publications and its structure mainly generated by modern computer systems and the internet. The authors present a number of ideas on the assessment of scientific performance in economic academia, in accordance with current legislation and international requirements. A description is made of the main international databases that index and sell thousands of journals in economics and business administration. Very useful is the information on Romanian journals in economics which attained international indexing performance, giving useful examples to all those who intend to publish the results of their scientific research.

I find truly innovative the idea of a hierarchy of journals in economics and how such journals can be accessed via scientometric indicators, such as, for example, the impact factors. I emphasize the authors' special effort to explain some complex meanings and interpretations of hierarchies and indicators by presenting practical, easy-to-understand examples. Emphasis is placed on some scientometric indicators and their calculation for some of the most important international databases as well as for UEFISCDI. At the same time, the authors analyze the major publishing houses and groups, Romanian ones included, that publish journals in economics and business administration. They also make some suggestions and recommendations on how to select the journals in which to publish according to the purpose pursued and the difficulties in accessing them.

At the end of this brief presentation I want to reiterate the idea of *uniqueness* and *necessity* of this work, as well as the authors' hard efforts to highlight processes and complex phenomena in a straightforward manner and with numerous practical examples that increase the book's usefulness. As I shift my attention from the authors to potential readers, I want to emphasize the idea of *opportunity* to peruse carefully and use successfully the wealth of ideas, explanations and examples presented in this book, seamlessly integrated into a coherent logic typical of great professors.

## Autori



**Vasile Dinu, PhD**, is Professor in the Department of Business, Consumer Sciences and Quality Management at the Faculty of Business and Tourism, Bucharest University of Economic Studies. He was awarded the title of Distinguished Professor by the Romanian Ministry of Education and the title of Professor Emeritus by the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. Vasile Dinu is the founder and editor-in-chief of the *Amfiteatrul Economic* journal, indexed by Thomson Reuters Web of Science in Social Sciences Citations Reports. The July 2016 Citation Reports for Vasile Dinu reveals a total of 41 published articles, with a Sum of the Times Cited of 214 (Sum of the Times Cited without Self-Citations of 196), the number of Citing Articles of 167 (153 without Self-Citations) and an H-index of 8. He has a h-index of 6 in Scopus and 10 in Google Scholar. Vasile Dinu is President of the Consumer Protection Association "UniversCons" and a member of European Association for Research on Services (RESER) and of Internationale Gesellschaft für Warenwissenschaften und Technologie (IGWT).



**Gheorghe Săvoiu, PhD**, is Professor habil. in the Department of Finance, Accountancy and Economics at the Faculty of Economics and Law, the University of Pitești. He is vice-president of the Romanian Statistical Association, a PhD. supervisor in the field of Economic Statistics and Cybernetics at the Doctoral School of the University of Craiova, associate researcher at INCE "Costin C. Kirițescu" of the Romanian Academy, part of the new Centre of Mountain Economics CE-MONT, and also fellow researcher of the Romanian Committee for History and Philosophy of Science and Technology (CRIFST) belonging to the Romanian Academy. Gheorghe Săvoiu is editor and peer reviewer for various scientific journals indexed by Thomson Reuters Web of Science (*Amfiteatru Economic*, *Current Science*, *International Review of Economics and Finance*).

He authored over 30 books and courses and over 250 articles. In July 2016 he had a h-index of 4 in Thomson Reuters Web of Science and a h-index of 5 in Scopus. In 2012, as editor and co-author, Gheorghe Săvoiu published *Econophysics: Background and Applications in Economics, Finance, and Sociophysics*, London: Elsevier Academic Press (AP), a book that won the AFER (Association of Romanian Faculties of Economics) award, in the 2013 annual competition.



**Dan-Cristian Dabija**, PhD, is Associate Professor in the Department of Marketing at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Babeş-Bolyai University, Romania. His teaching and research fields are retailing, international marketing, Romanian consumer behaviour, sustainable development in retailing and tourism marketing. Dr Dabija has completed his PhD studies at the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, Romania, and won several doctoral and postdoctoral research scholarships at Romanian and German universities. As of December 2015, he has been a PhD supervisor in Marketing. Dr Dabija currently leads a research project financed by the Romanian Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research Development and Innovation Funding – UEFISCDI (Competition: Young Research Teams 2014). In July 2016, Dan-Cristian Dabija had a h-index of 4 in Web of Science and Scopus and a h-index of 9 in Google Scholar. Throughout his career he has published over 120 papers in prestigious journals from Europe and North America and in some collective volumes published under the aegis of many international conferences (EMAC, World Marketing Congress, Annual MBAA International Conference, Annual North American ACR Conference, RESER, Logistic Network Conference UK). He serves as a reviewer for several scientific journals (*Amfiteatru Economic*, *Romanian Marketing Journal*, *Journal of Global Marketing*, *Marketing Education Review*).