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## Editorial

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### Luigi Aldieri\* and Concetto Paolo Vinci

University of Salerno,  
84084, Italy  
Email: laldieri@unisa.it  
Email: cpvinci@unisa.it  
\*Corresponding author

### Mohsen S. Brahmi

University of Sfax,  
2134, Tunisia  
Email: brahmi.mohsen@gmail.com

**Biographical notes:** Luigi Aldieri is an Associate Professor of Economics at the University of Salerno. He holds a PhD in Sciences Economiques et de gestion at the Solvay Business School of Economics and Management (SBS-EM) of Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB). He obtained his PhD in Economics at the University of Naples Federico II. His research interests embrace applied econometrics, the measurement of knowledge, geographic spillovers and economic performance of large international firms. He has several publications as research articles and is a member in the editorial board of reputed journals.

Concetto Paolo Vinci is a Full Professor of Economics at the University of Salerno. He is member of Association for Comparative Economic Studies (ACES), [www.aceecon.org](http://www.aceecon.org). He earned his First degree from the University of Naples Federico II. He obtained his PhD in Development Economics, University of Naples Federico II. He carried out a period of research at the Department d'économie Appliquée – Economie du Travail et de l'Emploi (DULBEA-ETE), Université Libre de Bruxelles (Bruxelles, BE, 19/09/1999–30/06/2000). His main research interests are efficiency wages and dual economics, economics of migration, working hours and capital operating time.

Mohsen S. Brahmi is affiliated with the University of Sfax. He is teaching master levels and licenses in business economics fields. His research interest includes technological innovations, industrial sector performance, firm governance, analytics solutions for various mining industries and quantitative corporate finance. He has published books in firm technologies ICT adoption and finance economics, research articles in ranked journals, and also member in the editorial board of reputed journals.

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The search for efficiency represents one of the most effective means for achieving several goals, such as increasing economic sustainability, fostering international cost competitiveness and reducing polluting emissions (Costantini et al., 2018). In particular, obtaining a more sustainable and affordable system is recognised as an important challenge for future world development.

The literature concerning growth theory (Romer, 1994; Krugman, 1991) and innovation systems (Lundvall, 1992) outlines the importance of knowledge diffusion process for firms' productivity and economic growth. In particular, firms try to innovate by generating the technological knowledge necessary for developing new products and production processes or improving those already in existence. Firms' innovative capability depends on their ability to combine existing knowledge flowing from other firms to create new knowledge (Nieto and Quevedo, 2005), the so-called 'knowledge spillovers' (Griliches, 1979).

The objective of this special issue is to consider studies relative to the public policies favouring the research and development (R&D) expenditures or patent data in different industries (Mohsen, 2013) and countries (Aldieri and Vinci, 2016, 2018).

This special issue is a result of the collaboration between University of Sfax and University of Salerno. Following a rigorous double peer-reviewed process of the journal, and after the selection of the papers submitted, only 15 articles are accepted after revision for publication in this special issue.

The first article, entitled 'Work sharing as a metric and productivity indicator for administrative workflows', by Charles Roberto Telles, developed an indicator of the productivity of administrative complex workflows. The indicator can roughly and steadily reveal the definition of productivity as a state of endo-sectorial (among internal sector agents) and exo-sectorial (among external sector agents) work sharing. The indicator can be used by public and private managers to measure human resource efficiency in proportion to work requests/inputs of all administrative works occurring in a given workflow.

The second article, entitled 'A comparative analysis of technical efficiency, technological change and total factor productivity in selected ASEAN+3 countries', by Noorazeela Zainol Abidin, Ishak Yussof, Zulkefly Abdul Karim and Mohd Shahidan Shaari, analyses the trends in technical efficiency (TEC), technological change (TC) and TFP growth using the Malmquist productivity index method. The analysis is based on data ranging from 1981 to 2014 in selected ASEAN+3 countries. The results show that during the periods 1981–1985, 1986–1990, 1991–1995, 1996–2000 and 2001–2005, the contribution of TEC to TFP growth was higher than that of TC.

The third article, entitled 'Blockchain for customer transparency in e-commerce – a survival of fittest not fastest', by Nishant Kumar, Geetika Jain and Archana Shrivastawa, emphasises the prospective use of blockchain technology in ecommerce industry which has been coupled with the vagueness of these issues. Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT) has been used as the base model to understand the consumer behaviour towards using blockchain technology as a new platform with special reference to fashion apparel sector. Providing traceability of product with an objective of consumer transparency in this mould will change the way of doing online shopping and have more onus on retailers.

The fourth article, entitled 'Economic impacts assessment of saline agriculture on marginal lands in Egypt: case study', by Sherine Mansour, Mohsen Brahmi and Dakheel Abdall, aims to measure how to improve the livelihood of small farmers in the New Valley through the levels of dissemination and application of models for cultivation new introduced crops tolerant to salinity, at El-Kharga area, New Valley Governorate. This was done through economic evaluation, identify the level of farmers performance of the rural productive practices at the New Valley in the fields of agro-economic, social and environmental activities in the area, design different scenarios to determine the

impact of the women's role on the added value of plant production, taken into consideration an economic assessment of some small scale industrial-agricultural projects.

The fifth article, entitled 'A study to identify the factors influencing learning orientation on service innovation framework of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation', by Yogendra Pal Bharadwaj and Mukesh Singh, intends to identify the factors influencing learning orientation (shared vision, intra-organisational knowledge sharing, open-mindedness, and commitment to learning) on the service innovation performance of employees' working in Delhi Metro Rail Corporation. Based on a self-adapted questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale, it used multiple regression analysis with a sample of 650 employees of DMRC through the proposition of a conceptual model and the hypotheses were tested accordingly.

The sixth article, entitled 'From TQM to perceived value: an industrial outlook case study', by Esther Bassil Sleilati, aims to detect the impact of TQM on customer perceived value in the Lebanese packaging industry. The methodology used is the qualitative multiple case study technique through in-depth interviews of marketing and quality managers of certified suppliers and purchasing managers of their customers. The findings show that certified suppliers and customers corroborate that quality certifications enhance customer perceived value by improving customer trust, expectations, perceived service quality, and customer perceived value.

The seventh article, entitled 'Customer satisfaction and customer loyalty: an empirical case study on the impact of benefits generated through smartphone applications', by Erum Shaikh, Waqas Ahmed Watto, Mohsen Brahmi, Muhammad Nawaz Tunio and Sheeraz Niaz Lighari, explores what factors are responsible for the increase or decrease in the customer loyalty and customer satisfaction while using Pakistani branded Smartphone applications. The methodology used in this study is quantitative, in this regard, the data was collected from 323 respondents on a structured questionnaire using a judgmental sampling technique in a minimal interference setting.

The eighth article, entitled: 'Nascent entrepreneurs and challenges in the digital market in developing countries', by Muhammad Nawaz Tunio, Erum Shaikh, Naveeda K. Katper and Mohsen Brahmi, analyses the challenges experienced by the nascent entrepreneurs in the digital market. There is a boom in the digital market in the world where entrepreneurs conduct business and interact with the diverse buyers for shopping and transactions. The methodology adopted is a qualitative approach in which semi-structured interviews are conducted with entrepreneurs. The findings of the study indicate that the dark side of the digital market in the form of challenges like frauds, mistrust, as well as several cybercrimes.

The ninth article, entitled 'Factors affecting students' continued usage intention for e-learning in higher education in Jordan: extending UTAUT with COVID-19 perceived risk', by Ali Aljaafreh, aims at identifying the factors affecting students' continued usage intention for e-learning including COVID-19 perceived risk, performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating condition. The data was collected using an online survey from 441 respondents, however; 376 responses were valid for the statistical analysis.

The major contribution of this study is investigating the effect of COVID-19 perceived risk and confirming its positive relationship with continued usage intention.

The tenth article, entitled ‘Human capital and the performance of Iranian digital startups: the moderating role of knowledge sharing behaviour’, by Aidin Salamzadeh, Mehdi Tajpour, Elahe Hosseini and Mohsen Salem Brahmi, focused on how human capital could affect the performance of selected Iranian digital start-ups, considering the moderating role of knowledge sharing behaviour. To do so, 160 digital start-ups – which were registered in the science part of the University of Tehran, were studied as the research population. Based on Morgan’s table, 113 start-ups were selected using a random sampling technique. Smart pls3 was used to analyse the research hypotheses.

The 11th article, entitled ‘Qualitative research in social sciences: data collection, data analysis and report writing’, by Bui Thanh Khoa, Bui Phu Hung and Mohsen Hejsalem-Brahmi, aims to present the definition, characteristics, and philosophical assumptions of qualitative research and critically to discuss major contemporary concerns in qualitative data collection. The main methods to collect data, alongside their strengths and weaknesses, are presented to help researchers use them properly. The authors also sketch different approaches to qualitative data analysis and measures of research reliability and validity.

The 12th article, entitled ‘Impact of the health crisis COVID-19 on finance market and economic sectors: case of Italian Government measures’, by Nadia Mansour, Salha Ben Salem and Mohsen S. Brahmi, discusses the enormous economic and financial impact of the corona virus, particularly in Italy, and how the government has responded to this crisis. The methodology used is syntheses’ descriptive analyses of the impact of the health crisis in the Italian economy by statistical graphics.

The 13th article, entitled ‘A mediation-based analysis of emotional intelligence effect on cognition and consumer decision-making’, by Mihir Joshi and Mohsen Salem Brahmi, aims to advance the current emotional intelligence and cognition research. It establishes the interrelations emotional intelligence ability model and cognition with consumer decision making in context to online shopping in India. Consumer research has been largely fixated on reasoning ability since cognitive assessment of consumers is based on the information collected through previous experiences while the affective states consisting of emotional responses and moods have been prioritised less.

The 14th article, entitled ‘Increasing online business productivity through customer electronic loyalty: the role of online trust and hedonic value’, by Bui Thanh Khoa, aimed to understand the relationship between online trust, hedonic value, and the dimensions demonstrated the customer’s electronic loyalty as they shop from electronic commerce websites. The mixed-method was used to archive the research objectives. The qualitative research was done through narrative research, and phenomenological research; concurrently, the quantitative method adopted by survey with 917 respondents.

The 15th article, entitled ‘Governance of abundant natural resources, mining and energy, and their economic impacts on developing countries: theoretical controversies’, by Mohsen S. Brahmi and Luigi Aldieri, presents the main works of the economists on the regime of governance of the mining and energy natural resources and their economic impacts to the rich nations, in these resources. Firstly, we approach the doctrine of the pension and the debates of the economists in this economic notion. This leads us, secondly, to handle the diverse surrounding areas of the curse of natural resources and its consequences on the growth for the developing countries DCs.

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We wish you an excellent reading!

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