Talent Goes Social: Online Corporate Networking and Business Performance

Submitted to Sustainability

REF: sustainability-951697

Response to <u>Referee #1</u>

We hope that this report finds you well and healthy. We appreciate your time and wish all the best during this pandemic.

Let us thank you for your comments and suggestions. In light of your comments we have made several changes, which in our opinion have contributed to improve the manuscript.

Below we provide our specific replies to your comments (the referee's comments are boxed in *italics*).

"thank you for the opportunity to read and review your manuscript. It is very interesting and inspiring research, and definitely worth study. Unfortunately, I found some missings, which in my opinion are major disadvantages."

We want to start by thankin you for your time evaluating our manuscript and for your general appreciation of our work. In what follows, we describe the actions taken to address the shortcomings you helped to identify.

COMMENTS

1. Did you take as an indicator the number of employees with Linkedin account or share of LinkedIn-connected employees in all number of employees in the company? I understand, that the first option is right, then, the findings didn't take into account the size of the company, as a possible independent variable. From this perspective, the hypotheses, in my opinion, aren't confirmed (or the research is not correctly designed). I don't know, how big is the standard deviation of the number of employees in the selected companies. Maybe it varies significantly and varies the outcomes (bigger company = > highest number of employees => higher revenue)..

Thanks for raising this issue. Without the appropriate research design, you are entirely right that using the number of employees with Linkedin account without any other control would bias our results. It is plausible without the appropriate controls, as you correctly mention, that endogeneity related to omitted variable bias is running our results. One possibility would be to use the share, as you mention. However, this option by itself could also be biased due to omitted variables.

In the revised version of the manuscript on page 6, we have addressed this issue:

Convenient research design can hedge most limitations related to cross-sectional data [61]. The log-linearization of the variables and the clustering robust standard errors at the firm level helps increase our inferences' validity. A potential concern is associated with the firm size. McCann and Barlow [62] show that social media adoption by Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) is distinct from large corporations. Additionally, the influence of social media on firm performance has particular traits in SMEs [63]. It is, therefore, relevant to control for firm size to avoid omitted variable bias. The first step in this direction is the use of sector fixed effects. Ideally, we would include firmfixed effects to control all constant firm characteristics, including firm size. Unfortunately, this is not possible in our cross-sectional data because the firm-fixed effects would absorb all the firm-level variation.

Specifically by underlying the relevance firstly of the fixed effects:

We take two actions to control omitted variable bias and increase the confidence in our inferences. Firstly, we introduce sector fixed-effects (λ_s) . The fixed effects control for the heterogeneity of firms across sectors. The sectorial dummies also capture any omitted variable that affects companies within the same industry. Therefore, under the plausible assumption that firms are similar within each sector, these fixed-effect absorb the firm heterogeneity in terms of firm size and reduce the omitted variable bias.

And the quantile regression:

Secondly, we adopt a second measure that several scholars used to combat this bias: quantile regressions [64-66]. This type of regression performs conditional regressions for each quantile of the dependant variable. Quantile regression has the benefit of correcting a potential estimation bias derives from several companies' weight in the sample. Standard regression techniques assume symmetric distributions, and if the data are skewed, the mean estimates of the coefficients are potentially biased.

In sum, the combination of a structural estimation along with quantile regression limits the potential harm of omitted variable bias.

Please note that following the suggestion of R2, we have eliminated hypothesis H2b. We use, however, the quantile regression analysis as an additional measure to combat this bias.

Additionally, for the sake of clarity, we now only report results with fixed effects. However, we do mention in the text on page 7, line 292 that we performed additional tests without these fixed effects to evaluate the magnitude of omitted variable bias.

For your reference regarding the variability in our sample's firm size, we attach the list of companies. These are all major S&P companies, which are relatively similar within each sector.

2. 241: the research seems to be out to date (2013)? What is the reason for this?x)

Thanks for pointing this issue. The cross-section nature of our study is a limitation, which we have explicitly mentioned in our discussion. Following your comment, we now also add that the age of the data could also be a further limitation, line 375:

A third limitation is that new dynamics might alter the mechanisms unveiled by our data snapshot, limiting to a single year.

We also express our encouragement for new research that overcomes these limitations in lines 278-282.

3. 242 and the tables: why you use two different names for your indicator (revenue in text and turnover in tables)? It's confusing.

Many thanks for spotting this erratum. This was an honest mistake, corrected in this new version.

4. I'm not sure, the revenue is the best indicator. It could overestimate the capital-intensive branches (e.g. mining, automotive). It could also be the proposal (intuitional) of explanation of your remark in the lines 303-306..

Thanks for pointing this out. Similar studies in this area used operating revenue (turnover) as a dependant variable (Paniagua, Sapena & Rivelles, 2020). WE mendtioned this in the text in page

We interpret our use of revenue as a potential limitation in the robustness analysis in line with several authors advocating to use different performance indicators for robustness checks like in Paniagua, Sapena & Rivelles (2018).

However, we do not believe that revenue per se is severely overestimated the effect of capital-intensive firms due to our research design. The beauty behind the fixed effects approach and quantile regression is that this effect is being already captured along with other firm characteristics that are constant at the sector and revenue levels. Nonetheless, we have added a fourth limitation regarding this point.

Please note that we have also proof-read the text, improving the English style.

Again, we thank you indeed for your time and efforts. We hope to have addressed all your concerns and believe that we have a much better manuscript after your review.

References

- Paniagua, J., Rivelles, R., & Sapena, J. (2019). Social Determinants of Success: Social Media, Corporate Governance and Revenue. *Sustainability*, *11*(19), 5164.
- Paniagua, J., Rivelles, R., & Sapena, J. (2018). Corporate governance and financial performance: The role of ownership and board structure. *Journal of Business Research*, *89*, 229-234.

Appendix List of companies

21st Century Fox, 3M Company, ACS, AMEC, ARM Holdings, AXA, Abengoa, Aberdeen Asset Management, Abertis, Acciona, Acerinox, Activision Blizzard, Admiral Group, Adobe Systems Incorporated, Aegon, Aggreko, Akamai Technologies, Inc, Alcatel-Lucent, Alexion Pharmaceuticals, Allianz AG, Altera Corporation, Amadeus IT Holding, Amazon.com, Inc., Amgen Inc., Analog Devices, Anglo American, Antofagasta, Apple Inc., Applied Materials, Inc., ArcelorMittal, Associated British Foods, AstraZeneca, Autodesk, Inc., Automatic Data Processing, Inc., Avago Technologies, Inc., Aviva, BAE Systems, BASF AG, BG Group, BHP Billiton, BMC Software, Inc., BME, BNP Paribas SA, BP, BT Group, Babcock International, Baidu.com, Inc., Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria, S.A., Banco Popular, Banco Sabadell, Banco Santander, S.A., Bankinter, Barclays, Bayer AG, Bed Bath & Beyond Inc., Biogen Idec, Inc, Bridgestone Corp., Bristol-Myers Squibb, British American Tobacco, British Land Company, British Sky Broadcasting Group, Broadcom Corporation, Bunzl, Burberry Group, C. H. Robinson Worldwide, Inc., CA, Inc., CRH, Caixabank, Canon Inc., Capita Group, Carnival, Carrefour SA, Catamaran Corporation, Caterpillar Inc., Celgene Corporation, Centrica, Cerner Corporation, Check Point Software Technologies Ltd., Chevron Corp., Cisco Systems, Inc., Citigroup Inc., Citrix Systems, Inc., Coca-Cola Co., Cognizant Technology Solutions Corporation, Colgate-Palmolive, Comcast Corporation, Compagnie de Saint-Gobain, Compass Group, Costco Wholesale Corporation, Covidien, Credit Suisse Group, Croda International, DENTSPLY International Inc., Daimler AG, Dell Inc., Deutsche Bank AG, Deutsche Telekom AG, Dia, Diageo, DirecTV, Discovery Communications, Dollar Tree, Inc., Dow Chemical, DuPont (E.I.), E.ON AG, EMC Corporation, Enagás, Endesa, Equinix, Ericsson, Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation, Expedia, Inc., Expeditors International of Washington, Inc., Experian, Express Scripts, Inc., Exxon Mobil Corp., F5 Networks, Inc., FCC, Facebook, Inc., Fastenal Company, Ferrovial, Fiserv, Inc., Ford Motor Company, Fossil, Inc., Fuji Photo Film Co., G4S, GDF Suez, GKN, Gamesa, Garmin Ltd., Gas Natural, General Electric, General Motors, Gilead Sciences, Inc., GlaxoSmithKline, Glencore Xstrata, Google Inc., Grifols, HSBC, HSBC Holdings plc, Hammerson, Hargreaves Lansdown, Henry Schein, Inc., Hewlett-Packard, Honda Motor Corp., IBM, IMI, ING Groep NV, ITV, Iberdrola, Imperial Tobacco, Inditex, Indra, Intel Corporation, InterContinental Hotels Group, International Airlines Group, International Business Machines, International Consolidated Airlines Group, Intertek Group, Intuit, Inc., Intuitive Surgical Inc., J Sainsbury, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Jazztel, Johnson & Johnson, Johnson Matthey, KLA Tencor Corporation, Kimberly-Clark Corp., Kingfisher, Koninklijke Philips Electronics NV, Kraft Foods, L'Oréal SA, LVMH Moet Hennessy Louis Vuitton, Land Securities Group, Legal & General, Liberty Global, Liberty Media, Life Technologies Corporation, Linear Technology Corporation, Lloyds Banking Group, London Stock Exchange Group, Mapfre, Marks & Spencer, Mattel, Inc., Maxim Integrated Products, McDonald's Corp., Mediaset Espana Comunicación, Meggitt, Melrose, Merck & Co., Microchip Technology Incorporated, Micron Technology, Inc., Microsoft Corporation, Mondelez International, Monster Beverage, Morgan Stanley, Mylan, Inc., NVIDIA Corporation, National Grid, Nestlé SA, NetApp, Inc., Netflix, Next, Nike, Inc. - class B, Nissan Motor Co., Nokia Oyj, Nortel Networks Corp., Novartis AG, Nuance Communications, Inc., O'Reilly Automotive, Inc., Obrascón Huarte Lain, Old Mutual, Orange S.A., PACCAR Inc., Panasonic, Paychex, Inc., Pearson, PepsiCo Inc., Persimmon, Petrofac, Pfizer, Inc., Philip Morris, Priceline.com, Incorporated, Procter & Gamble, Prudential, QUALCOMM Incorporated, RSA Insurance Group, RWE AG, Randgold Resources, Reckitt Benckiser, Red Eléctrica, Reed Elsevier, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Repsol YPF, S.A., Rexam, Rio Tinto Group, Rolls-Royce Group, Ross Stores Inc., Royal Bank of Scotland Group, Royal Dutch Shell, SABMiller, SBA Communications, Sacyr Vallehermoso, Sage Group, Samsung Electronics Company Limited, SanDisk Corporation, Sanofi-Aventis, Schneider Electric, Schroders, Scottish and Southern Energy, Seagate Technology Holdings, Sears Holdings Corporation, Serco Group, Severn Trent, Shire, Siemens AG, Sigma-Aldrich Corporation, Sirius XM Radio, Inc., Smith & Nephew, Smiths Group, Société Générale, Sony Corp., Standard Chartered Bank, Standard Life, Staples Inc., Starbucks Corporation, Stericycle, Inc, Swiss Re, Symantec Corporation, TUI Travel, Tate & Lyle, Telefónica, Tesco, Tesla Motors, Inc., Texas Instruments, Inc., Toshiba Corp., Total S.A., Toyota Motor Corporation, Travis Perkins, Tullow Oil, Twenty-First Century Fox, Inc., Tyco Electronics, Técnicas Reunidas, UBS AG, Unilever, United Technologies Corporation, United Utilities, Vedanta Resources, Verisk Analytics, Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Viacom Inc., Vivendi Universal SA, Vodafone, Volkswagen AG, WPP Group, Wal-Mart Stores, Weir Group, Western Digital, Whitbread, Whole Foods Market, Inc., William Hill, Wm Morrison Supermarkets, Wolseley, Wood Group, Wynn Resorts Ltd., Xilinx, Inc., Xstrata PLC, Yahoo! Inc., eBay Inc., EasyJet

Response to <u>Referee #2</u>

We hope that you are well and healthy. We appreciate your time and wish all the best during this pandemic.

Below we provide our specific replies to your comments (the referee's comments are boxed in *italics*)

1. The introduction is well-written, however, you could state our contributions clearer, also highlighting practical implications of your study. As you describe in the abstract: "The findings show that internal online social talent measured by the online profiles of employees and their skills are positively associated with companies' financial performance." Here, in the introduction you could build upon that and maybe elaborate more on that.

Thank you for your general positive comment on our work. Following your suggestion, we have significantly clearly stated the main contribution in the introduction, line 62:

In sum, the paper's main contribution is to continue piling up evidence on social media's role in business by showing that internal online social talent is positively associated with companies' financial performance.

2. Hypotheses: Please rethink how hypotheses 2 a and b are formulated: what U-shaped effect do you expect, i.e. what increases/decreases what? What is a "varying association" in 2b? you should be clearer in here for what you test for.

We are grateful for your comment. To clarify and overcome some of the issues raised by R1, we have eliminated that hypothesis. The tests related to that hypothesis are used as a further analysis to confirm H1 and H2. The discussion elaborated in the empirical section regarding potential biases explores this point further and also the response to R1.

3. Empirical method: why is the chosen method suitable to test your hypotheses? How is your sample distributed?

Thanks for raising these issues. In the revised version of the manuscript in page 6, we have addressed this issue specifically by underlying the relevance firstly of the fixed effects.

Convenient research design can hedge most limitations related to cross-sectional data [61]. The log-linearization of the variables and the clustering robust standard errors at the firm level helps increase our inferences' validity. A potential concern is associated with the firm size. McCann and Barlow [62] show that social media adoption by Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) is distinct from large corporations. Additionally, the influence of social media on firm performance has particular traits in SMEs [63]. It is, therefore, relevant to control for firm size to avoid omitted variable bias. The first step in this direction is the use of sector fixed effects. Ideally, we would include firmfixed effects to control all constant firm characteristics, including firm size. Unfortunately, this is not possible in our cross-sectional data because the firm-fixed effects would absorb all the firm-level variation.

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And the quantile regression:

Secondly, we adopt a second measure that several scholars used to combat this bias: quantile regressions [64-66]. This type of regression performs conditional regressions for each quantile of the dependant variable. Quantile regression has the benefit of correcting a potential estimation bias derives from several companies' weight in the sample. Standard regression techniques assume symmetric distributions, and if the data are skewed, the mean estimates of the coefficients are potentially biased.

In sum, the combination of a structural estimation along with quantile regression limits the potential harm of omitted variable bias.

We attach the sample of firms included in this study.

4. Results: Wouldn't it make sense to also report correlations up front?

Indeed, it makes sense to report the correlation between the data. We have done so in Table 1 of the revised version of the manuscript.

5. I missed it, but why did you include: 'Log employees^2'? What are you testing in here??

Thanks for pointing out this issue; we have better explained the procedure to test H2 and added the empirical equation explicitly, line 267:

The test hypothesis 2, related to the non-linearity of the variables of interest, is performed including the quadratic form of the variables of interest in our regression equation. Particularly:

$$\ln R_{is} = \beta_1 \ln employee_i + \beta_2 \ln employee_i^2 + \beta_3 \ln skills_i + \beta_4 \ln skills_{si}^2 + \lambda_s + e_{is}$$

The interpretation of the β coefficients in equation (2) is different from the marginal effects in equation (1). Focusing on employees, β_1 is the slope of the non-linear regression line at the origin and β_2 is a measure of the curvature of this relationship. With the first-order conditions of (2), i.e., the derivative of revenue, we obtain the critical mass of employees upon which the sign of the effect changes.

Additionally, for the sake of clarity, we now only report results with fixed effects. However, we do mention in the text in page 7 that we performed additional tests without these fixed effects to evaluate the magnitude of omitted variable bias.

6. Did you check for multicollinarity? All sectors seem to be significant – so what? You even do not mention, nor dig into that within your discussion.

The sector fixed effects are dummy variables per sector, and by definition, they cannot be collinear among them. We are sorry that this was not clear in the text; we clarified this in page 6.

7. Discussion: your discussion seems very short to me. Also, what I'm missing is a real argument of your findings in the light of prior research. Your contributions to theory and practice might also be expanded.

Thanks for pointing this out. We tried to follow the journal's guiedlines, which suggested a concise conclusion. We have nonetheless added a paragraph following your suggestions on our arguments in light of previous researchine 352:

Our results build upon the literature initiated by Paniagua and Sapena [21], who were among the first to conceptualize the mechanisms that underlie in our findings. They showed how social media has a non-linear relationship with financial performance. They also suggested that corporate networking was an important channel for this relationship. Other previous studies picked up the gauntlet before studying OCSN in engineers [23] and board members [24]. We advance the knowledge frontier by examining the role of an employee's professional activity and skills on business performance.

And our contribution to theory and practice:

The study advances the conceptualization of social media's role in business by interviewing them with talent management. Until now, these bodies of literature were relatively isolated from one another. The paper pushed forward in ways to understand how they interrelate. The paper introduces internal and external social talent and associates them with how individuals interact in OCSN. Our findings have significant implications for organizations and their talent management activities. First, organizations may influence the number of followers by outsourcing business tasks to virtual crowds and facilitating customer and candidates' revealed preferences. Second, they can affect employees' corporate skill sets on an OCSN platform by supporting and encouraging their employees to sign-in on the platform and use online networking tools to interact with other individuals. Third, organizations may provide their employees' visibility and skills.

Please note that we also expanded our limitations and avenues of future research in light of the suggestions of R1.

8. Again, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to review your paper -I hope that you find my comments helpful in further improving your paper..

Please note that we have also proof-read the text, improving the English style.

Again, we thank you truly for your time and efforts. We hope to have addressed all your concerns and believe that we have a much better manuscript after your review.

Appendix

List of companies

21st Century Fox, 3M Company, ACS, AMEC, ARM Holdings, AXA, Abengoa, Aberdeen Asset Management, Abertis, Acciona, Acerinox, Activision Blizzard, Admiral Group, Adobe Systems Incorporated, Aegon, Aggreko, Akamai Technologies, Inc, Alcatel-Lucent, Alexion Pharmaceuticals, Allianz AG, Altera Corporation, Amadeus IT Holding, Amazon.com, Inc., Amgen Inc., Analog Devices, Anglo American, Antofagasta, Apple Inc., Applied Materials, Inc., ArcelorMittal, Associated British Foods, AstraZeneca, Autodesk, Inc., Automatic Data Processing, Inc., Avago Technologies, Inc., Aviva, BAE Systems, BASF AG, BG Group, BHP Billiton, BMC Software, Inc., BME, BNP Paribas SA, BP, BT Group, Babcock International, Baidu.com, Inc., Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria, S.A., Banco Popular, Banco Sabadell, Banco Santander, S.A., Bankinter, Barclays, Bayer AG, Bed Bath & Beyond Inc., Biogen Idec, Inc, Bridgestone Corp., Bristol-Myers Squibb, British American Tobacco, British Land Company, British Sky Broadcasting Group, Broadcom Corporation, Bunzl, Burberry Group, C. H. Robinson Worldwide, Inc., CA, Inc., CRH, Caixabank, Canon Inc., Capita Group, Carnival, Carrefour SA, Catamaran Corporation, Caterpillar Inc., Celgene Corporation, Centrica, Cerner Corporation, Check Point Software Technologies Ltd., Chevron Corp., Cisco Systems, Inc., Citigroup Inc., Citrix Systems, Inc., Coca-Cola Co., Cognizant Technology Solutions Corporation, Colgate-Palmolive, Comcast Corporation, Compagnie de Saint-Gobain, Compass Group, Costco Wholesale Corporation, Covidien, Credit Suisse Group, Croda International, DENTSPLY International Inc., Daimler AG, Dell Inc., Deutsche Bank AG, Deutsche Telekom AG, Dia, Diageo, DirecTV, Discovery Communications, Dollar Tree, Inc., Dow Chemical, DuPont (E.I.), E.ON AG, EMC Corporation, Enagás, Endesa, Equinix, Ericsson, Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation, Expedia, Inc., Expeditors International of Washington, Inc., Experian, Express Scripts, Inc., Exxon Mobil Corp., F5 Networks, Inc., FCC, Facebook, Inc., Fastenal Company, Ferrovial, Fiserv, Inc., Ford Motor Company, Fossil, Inc., Fuji Photo Film Co., G4S, GDF Suez, GKN, Gamesa, Garmin Ltd., Gas Natural, General Electric, General Motors, Gilead Sciences, Inc., GlaxoSmithKline, Glencore Xstrata, Google Inc., Grifols, HSBC, HSBC Holdings plc, Hammerson, Hargreaves Lansdown, Henry Schein, Inc., Hewlett-Packard, Honda Motor Corp., IBM, IMI, ING Groep NV, ITV, Iberdrola, Imperial Tobacco, Inditex, Indra, Intel Corporation, InterContinental Hotels Group, International Airlines Group, International Business Machines, International Consolidated Airlines Group, Intertek Group, Intuit, Inc., Intuitive Surgical Inc., J Sainsbury, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Jazztel, Johnson & Johnson, Johnson Matthey, KLA Tencor Corporation, Kimberly-Clark Corp., Kingfisher, Koninklijke Philips Electronics NV, Kraft Foods, L'Oréal SA, LVMH Moet Hennessy Louis Vuitton, Land Securities Group, Legal & General, Liberty Global, Liberty Media, Life Technologies Corporation, Linear Technology Corporation, Lloyds Banking Group, London Stock Exchange Group, Mapfre, Marks & Spencer, Mattel, Inc., Maxim Integrated Products, McDonald's Corp., Mediaset Espana Comunicación, Meggitt, Melrose, Merck & Co., Microchip Technology Incorporated, Micron Technology, Inc., Microsoft Corporation, Mondelez International, Monster Beverage, Morgan Stanley, Mylan, Inc., NVIDIA Corporation, National Grid, Nestlé SA, NetApp, Inc., Netflix, Next, Nike, Inc. - class B, Nissan Motor Co., Nokia Oyj, Nortel Networks Corp., Novartis AG, Nuance Communications, Inc., O'Reilly Automotive, Inc., Obrascón Huarte Lain, Old Mutual, Orange S.A., PACCAR Inc., Panasonic, Paychex, Inc., Pearson, PepsiCo Inc., Persimmon, Petrofac, Pfizer, Inc., Philip Morris, Priceline.com, Incorporated, Procter & Gamble, Prudential, QUALCOMM Incorporated, RSA Insurance Group, RWE AG, Randgold Resources, Reckitt Benckiser, Red Eléctrica, Reed Elsevier, Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Repsol YPF, S.A., Rexam, Rio Tinto Group, Rolls-Royce Group, Ross Stores Inc., Royal Bank of Scotland Group, Royal Dutch Shell, SABMiller, SBA Communications, Sacyr Vallehermoso, Sage Group, Samsung Electronics Company Limited, SanDisk Corporation, Sanofi-Aventis, Schneider Electric, Schroders, Scottish and Southern Energy, Seagate Technology Holdings, Sears Holdings Corporation, Serco Group, Severn Trent, Shire, Siemens AG, Sigma-Aldrich Corporation, Sirius XM Radio, Inc., Smith & Nephew, Smiths Group, Société Générale, Sony Corp., Standard Chartered Bank, Standard Life, Staples Inc., Starbucks Corporation, Stericycle, Inc, Swiss Re, Symantec Corporation, TUI Travel, Tate & Lyle, Telefónica, Tesco, Tesla Motors, Inc., Texas Instruments, Inc., Toshiba Corp., Total S.A., Toyota Motor Corporation, Travis Perkins, Tullow Oil, Twenty-First Century Fox, Inc., Tyco Electronics, Técnicas Reunidas, UBS AG, Unilever, United Technologies Corporation, United Utilities, Vedanta Resources, Verisk Analytics, Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Viacom Inc., Vivendi Universal SA, Vodafone, Volkswagen AG, WPP Group, Wal-Mart Stores, Weir Group, Western Digital, Whitbread, Whole Foods Market, Inc., William Hill, Wm Morrison Supermarkets, Wolseley, Wood Group, Wynn Resorts Ltd., Xilinx, Inc., Xstrata PLC, Yahoo! Inc., eBay Inc., EasyJet