

monitoring of corporate managements depends on a company's degree of organizational complexity and potential for agency conflicts. These characteristics, which are more common among diversified companies, could lead to large forecast errors coupled with unusually high levels of consensus in analyst forecasts. This phenomenon is referred to as "herding." Because such behavior is synonymous with ineffective analyst coverage, herding could account for differences in valuations in a cross-section of companies with different degrees of diversification.

We used security analysts' summary earnings forecast data for a large panel of companies in the 1980–98 period to detect whether security analysts' herding behavior is related to characteristics of the companies they follow. We operationalized herding among analysts as cases of clustering of analyst earnings forecasts coupled with large forecast errors. We maintain that, given the different nature of diversified and nondiversified companies, the extent and quality of analyst coverage of domestic companies that are industrially focused is different from the extent and quality of analyst coverage of diversified companies. Consequently, we expected analysts' propensity toward herding to be different when they were covering domestic/industrially focused companies from when they were covering geographically and/or industrially diversified companies.

Diversification should exacerbate analysts' tendency toward herding because it increases the complexity of the companies they follow. Companies are generally less transparent about their operations and financials, leading to more conflicts and problems in monitoring. This is especially true for companies that are diversified, either geographically or both. If analysts are less able to monitor these companies, they are more likely to herd. We used security analysts' summary earnings forecast data for a large panel of companies in the 1980–98 period to detect whether security analysts' herding behavior is related to characteristics of the companies they follow. We operationalized herding among analysts as cases of clustering of analyst earnings forecasts coupled with large forecast errors. We maintain that, given the different nature of diversified and nondiversified companies, the extent and quality of analyst coverage of domestic companies that are industrially focused is different from the extent and quality of analyst coverage of diversified companies. Consequently, we expected analysts' propensity toward herding to be different when they were covering domestic/industrially focused companies from when they were covering geographically and/or industrially diversified companies.



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- (H1) Herding behavior is more pronounced among analysts following diversified companies than among those following domestic, industrially focused companies.
- (H2) Herding increases with the degree of both geographical and industrial diversification.
- (H3) Market value declines with analyst propensity toward herding.
- (H4) The impact of herding on market value is stronger for diversified companies.

Our empirical results support all four hypotheses. Our findings indicate that analyst forecasts for geographically or industrially diversified companies display more herding, on average, than forecasts for domestic/focused companies. The results also provide strong support for the notion that herding increases with the degree of both industrial and geographical diversification. In addition, when we estimated two-stage least-squares regressions, we found that herding results in lower market valuations, which implies that the market penalizes security analysts' propensity toward herding. We found this effect to be stronger in the case of diversified companies.

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