

FOREWORD

Even though intangible values have continuously become significant value drivers of companies in today's economy, financial accounting and reporting still lacks to properly incorporate and to report such values. Despite the ongoing debate throughout the past decades, a universal solution inside or outside of the traditional information means has not yet been developed. As a consequence, financial accounting and reporting still provides an incomplete picture of an entity's true resources and claims.

While it is necessary to acknowledge that financial accounting and reporting has inherent limitations and is not supposed to present absolute data, further analysis is required to better understand and to potentially close the information gap. In this thesis, Stephan Grüber focuses on the information use of financial analysts, one of the primary users of IFRSs. He investigates how financial analysts utilize and incorporate information on intangible values in their decision-making processes and whether such information influences decisions. In addition, the study examines the preferences of financial analysts in regard to accounting for and reporting intangibles in the future.

Upon outlining the fundamentals of financial accounting and reporting, Stephan examines the foundations and challenges of intangible values and provides an overview of concepts introduced to improve the accounting and reporting of intangibles. As a next step, he distinguishes various groups of financial analysts and their decision-making objectives, such as buy- and sell-side analysts and equity and fixed income analysts. Chapter 5 represents the main body of this thesis, presenting and discussing two empirical studies. The first part describes the results of a content analysis of sell-side research reports, offering insights into the information use of sell-side analysts. The second part analyzes the results of a web-based experimental survey with over 1,100 financial analysts, focusing on the importance of information of intangibles for their decision-making.

The present analysis offers detailed and comprehensive evidence on the actual information use and preferences of financial analysts, contributing to an improved understanding of the user perspective in financial accounting and reporting, i.e. what users effectively require with respect to information on intangible values. Hence, this thesis may not only be valuable to individuals in academia, but is also useful for

practitioners and executives focusing on corporate communication. In addition, the results may further provide financial analysts with stimulating self-insight regarding their decision-making. I therefore wish this thesis to be widely read and accepted by a broad audience.

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