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Editorial Words

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the 27th volume, first issue of the ASEJ Scientific Journal of Bielsko-Biala School of Finance and Law. In this number, editorial board present a diverse range of articles that delve into pressing topics within the realms of economics, finance, law, and security. These articles shed light on various aspects of contemporary society and offer valuable insights into the challenges we face today. The first article by Medani P. Bhandari, titled "The Corruption: A Chronic Disease of Humanity: Causes, Effects, and Consequences," examines the pervasive issue of corruption and its profound impact on societies worldwide. Following that, Stanisław Ciupka explores the "Ethical Dilemmas of Contemporary Business," addressing the complex moral challenges faced by companies in the modern business landscape. Michał Comporek's article, "Levels of Reported Financial Result and the Scope of Accrual-Based Earnings Management," focuses on the practices of earnings management within public companies in the clothing industry, providing exemplification studies to illustrate the phenomena. Justyna Fibinger-Jasińska's contribution, "Judicial Review of Illegal Clauses in Consumer Loan Agreements," delves into the legal aspects of consumer protection and the role of the judiciary in scrutinizing loan agreements for potential unfair clauses. Wojciech Jakubiec examines the intricacies of money laundering and its selected security issues in "The Essence of Money Laundering – Selected Security Issues," shedding light on the challenges faced in combating this criminal activity. Radosław Koper explores the exclusion of freedom of expression during interrogations and the irregularly obtained evidence, focusing on Article 168a CCP, in "Irregularly Obtained Evidence (Article 168a CCP) in the Aspect of Exclusion of Freedom of Expression of Interrogated Individuals." "The Emotional Surge Impact on the Formation of a Personal Brand as an SMM Product" by Kateryna Kalynets, Yevhen Krykavskyy, Petecki Ignacy, Sylwia Nycz-Wojtan examines the influence of emotional surges on the formation of personal brands, specifically within the realm of social media marketing (SMM). Aleksander Sapiński's article, "The Importance and Challenges of Information Security in the Digital Age: Analysis of the Current Situation and Prospects for Development," analyzes the current state of information security in the digital age, highlighting its significance and outlining the challenges that lie ahead. Lastly, article by Mariola Adamiec-Witek, which sheds new light on the issue of the conduct of proceedings before common courts with the participation of jurors.

I hope that this issue of the ASEJ Scientific Journal of Bielsko-Biala School of Finance and Law provides valuable insights and stimulates further research in the fields of economics, finance, and law. I extend my gratitude to the authors for their contributions and commend the rigorous academic scholarship demonstrated in their work.

prof. dr Ihor Halystia
Editor of the ASEJ, Issue 1, Volume 27, 2032.

Levels of reported financial result and the scope of accrual-based earnings management. An exemplification studies on the example of public companies of the clothing industry

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Abstract— The reported values of the financial result at various levels of the company's operations are an important source of information for various stakeholder groups of textile companies. However, due to its accrual character, financial result is a category highly susceptible to intentional increasing (lowering), in line with the diversified premises of the management staff. The objective of the paper is to investigate the relationship between the profitability of textile companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange and the directions and scale of accounting-type earnings management. The obtained results of empirical research indicate that in the sample data of hand, there are statistically significant relationships between discretionary accruals and gross margin and return of assets coefficients. This remark may be important, among others, for stock exchange investors who have been attracting the attention of the WSE-clothes sector index for years due to the above-average rate of return.

Keywords— textile industry, earnings quality, earnings management, discretionary accruals, profitability

I. INTRODUCTION

From the investors' perspective, the stock market offers the possibility of quickly multiplying cash by implementing investments with above-average rates of return. As the basic principle of making financial decisions by people who place capital on the stock exchange is to maximize the value of the total income from the funds invested in the issuer's shares, the WSE-clothes sector index is characterized by unflagging popularity among investors. It is enough to emphasize that over the last three turbulent years, the rate of return on shares of textile companies was positive (it amounted to 2.03%), while the same ratio for the entire Warsaw Stock Exchange was highly negative, at the level of - 9.89%.

For the vast majority of investors, crucial information on the

monitoring and classification of financial assets in terms of their investment quality, an estimated risk assessment and the expected rate of return is provided by the fundamental analysis (Ritchie 1995). It considers several economic measures, among which, in the eyes of investors, particular attention is paid to the company's profitability ratios. The financial result provides multifaceted economic information that can be used in planning and controlling activities, assessing resource efficiency and making rational economic decisions (Nowak 2013). However, as economic practice shows, the reported values of profit (loss) will not always reflect the actual financial standing of the enterprise. Due to its accrual character, this measure is a category highly susceptible to intentional shaping. The scale and direction of managerial impact on the financial result may depend on many reasons, often strictly opportunistic (Raoli 2013; Jiraporn et al. 2008).

Accounting interference in the company's financial result, carried out in correspondence with the adopted accounting policy of the enterprise, is referred to in the literature as the phenomenon of accrual-based earnings management. As Trotman pointed out, earnings management is a communication technique considering ameliorating of the information provided to the investors. Thus, the economic entity is presenting to the real or prospective investors financial statements passed through the filter of some techniques capable of generating a more favoured image on the market and the illusion of more attractive results (Trotman 1993). Healy and Wahlen (1999) additionally noted that these activities occur when managers use judgment in financial reporting and in structuring transactions to alter financial reports to either mislead some stakeholders about the underlying economic performance of the enterprise or to influence contractual outcomes that depend on accounting practices. In most cases, the implementation of



earnings management negatively affects the quality of reporting data (Dechow, Ge; Schrand 2010).

The main objective of the paper is to examine the relationship between accrual-based earnings management and the profitability of public textile companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. The set research objective was operationalized by hypothesis, claiming that: in the tested research sample, discretionary accruals (being the main indicator of the level of earnings management practices) have a significant relationship with EBITDA margin, gross margin and ROA coefficient. The analysis of mentioned relationships will answer whether the profitability ratios at three various levels of the company's operations largely depend on the discretion in financial reporting. In this way, the objectivity of the presented financial results will be examined, as well as the potential directions of its changes. On the other hand, the conducted research will allow to answer at which levels of the reported financial result potential accrual-based earnings management practices focus their attention in the first place.

Empirical research was conducted among all public clothing companies from the WSE Main Market and the NewConnect market, which shares have been listed on the stock exchange for at least ten consecutive years, in the considered period 2006-to 2020. Additionally, sample selection was based on the criteria as follows: the firm's fiscal year should end on 31 December, and all of the required financial data must be available. The necessary data were obtained from Notoria Service SA.

II. METHODS OF THE INVESTIGATION

To implement the set research objective of the paper, the original version of the Jones model (1991) was used to assess the degree and direction of accrual-based earnings management in textile companies. It should be emphasized that the Jones model was not created for specific enterprises but for a group of economic entities (cross-sectional analysis), consistent with the adopted research methodology (Piosik 2013). Di Narzo, Freo and Mattei (2018) noted that the Jones model and its modified version (Dechow, Sloan, Sweeney 1995) are highly powerful in detecting the earnings management phenomenon. However, the choice of the first of the mentioned research tools was motivated by the fact that the Dechow et al. model is debatable because not all increases in receivables (as the authors claimed) should be considered discretionary.

The Jones model assumes that two variables determine the value of operational (which depend on the nature of pre-economic operations) accruals: change in sales revenues (ΔREV) and an average value of property, plant and equipment (PPE). At the same time, the value of discretionary accruals is based on the difference between the empirical and theoretical value of total accruals (TACC) as the explained variable. In line with accounting rules consistent with the IAS/IFRS, the total accruals TACC is the difference between the net income in a given year computed using an accrual-based accounting system and the surplus in cash from operating activities (Comporek 2021). For the sake of comparability of data, the Jones model should be standardized using the value of lagged total assets.

Consequently, the formula of the Jones Model takes the final form as below:

$$\frac{TACC_{i,t}}{TA_{i,t-1}} = \alpha_1 \left(\frac{1}{TA_{i,t-1}} \right) + \alpha_2 \left(\frac{\Delta REV_{i,t}}{TA_{i,t-1}} \right) + \alpha_3 \left(\frac{PPE_{i,t}}{TA_{i,t-1}} \right) + \varepsilon_{i,t} \quad (1)$$

where:

- TACC_{i,t} - total accruals of the company i in year t;
- TA_{i,t} - total assets of the company i at the end of year t;
- $\Delta REV_{i,t}$ - a change in sales revenues of the company i in year t;
- PPE_{i,t} - gross property, plant and equipment of company i at the end of year t;
- $\alpha_{i=0,1,\dots,k}$ are specific regression parameters;
- $\varepsilon_{i,t}$ denotes the error term in the regression model and, on the other hand, indicates the range of accrual-based earnings management practices ($\varepsilon_{i,t} = DACCT$).

The next step in the empirical analysis was an attempt to determine which factors had a statistically significant impact on the value of the reported profitability ratios of textile companies. For this purpose, a regression model was developed describing the formation of the endogenous variable PROF concerning such exogenous variables as enterprise size, sales growth, interest and non-debt tax shield, financial leverage ratio, working capital ratio, total assets utilization ratio and the discretionary accruals. The indicated variables are considered important factors in the formation of financial strategies of enterprises, primarily in such analytical areas as strategies for obtaining financing sources and shaping the capital structure as well as strategies for investing in the assets of an economic entity (Serrasqueiro, Caetano 2015). The described model adopted the following analytical formula:

$$PROF_t = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 DACCT_t + \alpha_2 SG_t + \alpha_3 WC_t + \alpha_4 LEV_t + \alpha_5 SIZE_t + \alpha_6 ETR_t + \alpha_7 NDTSt + \alpha_8 AU + \varepsilon_t \quad (2)$$

where:

- PROF_t – selected profitability ratio of the company i in year t.
- DACCT – discretionary accruals separated by the Jones model in year t.
- SG_t – sales growth the company i in year t.
- WC_t – working capital ratio of the company i in year t.
- LEV_t – financial leverage ratio of the company i at the end of year t;
- SIZE_t – company's size ratio in year t (calculated as the logarithm of the sales revenues achieved in a given accounting year).
- ETR_t – effective tax rate of the company i in year t (calculated as the ratio of the income tax paid to the gross result of the enterprise in a given accounting period).

- NDTSt – non-debt tax shield of the company *i* in year *t* (calculated as the ratio of the depreciation to the total assets at the end of the accounting year).
- AU_{*t*} – assets utilization ratio of the company *i* in year *t*.
- other markings - as above.

The above econometric model will explain the variability of the three dependent variables illustrating the enterprise's profitability at the EBITDA, gross, and net profitability levels. Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization (EBITDA) reflects the ability to generate cash from operating activities. The operating profitability index (EBIDTA_M) built on its basis, relating EBITDA to revenues from operating activities, is particularly useful in enterprises incurring a loss on core activities (Skoczylas 2016). This indicator takes the following formula:

$$EBIDTA_M_t = \frac{EBITDA_t}{REV_t} \quad (3)$$

where:

- EBITDA_M_{*t*} – EBITDA margin of the company *i* in year *t*.
- other markings - as above.

The second of the measures used to illustrate the effectiveness of the company's operation on the capital market takes the form of the gross margin index. This measure shows how many per cent of the company's revenues remain after deducting all incurred costs (excluding taxes) and is calculated according to the formula:

$$GM_t = \frac{GP_t}{REV_t} \quad (3)$$

where:

- GM_{*t*} – gross margin of the company *i* in year *t*.
- GP_{*t*} – gross profit of the company *i* in year *t*.
- other markings - as above.

Finally, the return on assets (ROA) ratio was included as the third in the study. The net profit value included in its analytical formula informs about the profitability of the total economic activity but also about potential benefits for owners due to dividend payments or share price increases in the case of listed companies. ROA reflects the profitability of the company's total assets at the end of the period, being a synthetic performance indicator used in fundamental analysis. This measure is calculated as follows:

$$ROA_t = \frac{NI_t}{TA_t} \quad (4)$$

where:

- NI_{*t*} – net income of the company *i* at the end of year *t*;
- other markings - as above.

It should also be emphasized that although the main

empirical studies were based on linear regression, the analyses also used such research methods as variable distribution statistics, statistical significance tests, collinearity tests, random component autocorrelation tests, etc.

III. RESULTS OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

The first step of empirical research was to assess the scale and directions of earnings management in public textile enterprises. Table 1 shows descriptive statistics of discretionary accruals coefficients separated by the Jones model. The obtained data show that the strategies of intentionally lowering the financial result prevailed in textile companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange. Relatively high standard deviation values indicate a significant dispersion of the value of the DACC variable around the mean. A proof of this observation is also the minimum and maximum values of the discretionary accruals extracted by the Jones model shown in Table 1. It is also noticeable that the mean values of discretionary accruals were lower than the median values, which indicates a left-asymmetric distribution of a tested variable (Krzanowski 2000).

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF DISCRETIONARY ACCRUALS IN TESTED SAMPLE.

Statistical measure	Mean	Median	Max	Min	Standard deviation	Coefficient of variance
The value of DACC	-0,023	-0,019	0,839	-1,398	0,218	0,048

Source: own calculations.

Table 2 present the results of the regression (Anova test, as well as the model summary), which tested shaping the current value of *EBIDTA_M* as a dependent variable. The first finding worth commenting on is the goodness-of-fit of the tested model to empirical data. In the case of the dependent variable *EBIDTA_M*, the results indicate that the tested model is of little use. This observation is evidenced by the low values of the R-square and the adjusted R-square coefficients, amounting to 0.044 and 0.007, respectively. Moreover, the p-value for the Anova test of 0.313 points out that there is no reason to reject the null hypothesis of no difference between the population means. Hence, further attention has been focused on the model explaining the value of gross profit in textil companies.

Considering the research results presented in Table 3, it can be stated that, with the obtained F-statistic and its p-value, the regression model explaining the shaping of the gross margin *GM* (as a dependent variable) is characterized by a high significance level. The results point out that a 73.6% variation of the dependent variable (*GSP*) can be explained by the independent variables contained in the tested model. Taking the value of the Durbin-Watson test into account (2.12), it can be noticed that there is no first-order autocorrelation among residuals within models. What is more, based on the value of variance inflation factors (VIF) for individual exogenous variables (shaping at a level close to 1), it can be emphasized that no predictor is correlated with other regressors in the model (Longnecker, Ott 2004).

TABLE 2. THE RESULTS OF ANOVA TEST AND REGRESSION ANALYSIS (DEPENDENT VARIABLE – EBITDA MARGIN, EBITDA_M).

Model Summary							
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson	N		
0.210	0.044	0.007	1.79677	2.050	214		
ANOVA							
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.		
Regression	30.479	8	3.810	1.180	0.313		
Residual	661.822	205	3.228				
Total	692.301	213					
Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-2.777	1.266	-	-2.194	0.029	-	-
DACC	0.665	0.704	0.070	0.944	0.346	0.851	1.175
SG	0.080	0.098	0.057	0.813	0.417	0.935	1.069
WC	0.239	0.321	0.057	0.743	0.458	0.789	1.268
LEV	0.744	0.617	0.103	1.207	0.229	0.646	1.549
SIZE	0.160	0.099	0.113	1.606	0.110	0.940	1.064
ETR	0.009	0.058	0.011	0.163	0.871	0.987	1.013
NDTS	3.517	4.425	0.066	0.795	0.428	0.686	1.457
AU	0.220	0.136	0.130	1.620	0.107	0.726	1.378

Source: own calculations.

The highest degree of relations between the dependent variable and the predictors used in the research concerned the relation of the gross margin coefficient with the discretionary accruals extracted by the Jones model coefficient, sales growth ratio (SG) and indicators illustrating the strategies of assets management in an economic entities (WC and AU variables).

On the other hand, the conducted research did not show statistical relationships between gross profitability and such variables as capital structure (LEV), company size (SIZE) or effective tax rate (ETR) and non-debt tax shield (NDTS - assuming the substitutability NDTS with ETR).

TABLE 3. THE RESULTS OF ANOVA TEST AND REGRESSION ANALYSIS (DEPENDENT VARIABLE – GROSS MARGIN, GM).

Model Summary							
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson	N		
0.864	0.746	0.736	0.88536	2.121	214		
ANOVA							
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.		
Regression	471.790	8	58.974	75.235	0.000		
Residual	160.692	205	0.784				
Total	632.483	213					
Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-0.394	0.625	-	-0.630	0.529	-	-
DACC	1.146	0.348	0.126	3.297	0.001	0.851	1.175
SG	-1.127	0.048	-0.846	-23.280	0.000	0.935	1.069
WC	-0.319	0.159	-0.080	-2.013	0.045	0.789	1.268
LEV	-0.205	0.304	-0.029	-0.673	0.502	0.646	1.549
SIZE	0.035	0.049	0.026	0.718	0.474	0.940	1.064
ETR	-0.003	0.029	-0.003	-0.091	0.927	0.987	1.013
NDTS	0.368	2.184	0.007	0.169	0.866	0.686	1.457
AU	0.151	0.067	0.093	2.258	0.025	0.726	1.378

Source: own calculations.

The next stage of the research examines the goodness-of-fit of the regression models useful for determining the values of *ROA* coefficient. Summary statistics for the regression analysis included in Table 4 show that the degree of matching tested models to the empirical data was average. The results point out that 42.9% (adjusted R-square) variation of the dependent variable can be explained by the independent

variables, such as discretionary accruals (*DACC*), sales growth (*SG*), financial leverage (*LEV*), non-debt tax shields (*NDTS*) or assets utilization (*AU*). In general, the statistical usefulness of the examined model in explaining profitability seems to be congruent for textile companies listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange.

TABLE 4. THE RESULTS OF ANOVA TEST AND REGRESSION ANALYSIS (DEPENDENT VARIABLE – RETURN ON ASSETS RATIO, ROA).

Model Summary							
R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson	N		
0.671	0.450	0.429	0.15609	1.801	214		
ANOVA							
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.		
Regression	4.094	8	0.512	21.004	0.000		
Residual	4.995	205	0.024				
Total	9.089	213					
Coefficients							
Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-0.094	0.110	-	-0.857	0.392	-	-
DACC	0.614	0.061	0.563	10.040	0.000	0.851	1.175
SG	-0.017	0.009	-0.107	-1.993	0.048	0.935	1.069
WC	0.025	0.028	0.052	0.899	0.370	0.789	1.268
LEV	-0.237	0.054	-0.286	-4.433	0.000	0.646	1.549
SIZE	0.013	0.009	0.082	1.527	0.128	0.940	1.064
ETR	-0.004	0.005	-0.036	-0.694	0.489	0.987	1.013
NDTS	0.849	0.384	0.138	2.209	0.028	0.686	1.457
AU	0.037	0.012	0.193	3.173	0.002	0.726	1.378

Source: own calculations.

The presented results of empirical research indicate that the management of textile enterprises can intentionally shape the reported gross and net profitability ratios through accrual-based earnings management practices. In both cases, positive values of beta coefficients indicate the existence of positive relationships between the values of GM and ROA coefficients and discretionary accruals separated by the Jones model. Of course, the analyzes performed do not indicate the motives and techniques for implementing such activities. It is important to be aware that the managerial staff may be interested in artificially increasing the financial result, income smoothing or increasing the net loss just recorded (Strakova 2021; Toumeh, Yahya 2019).

In turn, the econometric model tested in empirical research has not turned out to be an adequate tool to unambiguously confirm that operating profit (EBITDA) can be artificially shaped through accrual-based earnings management. Therefore, this issue opens up further potential research directions on the factors determining the quality of reporting data in companies in the clothing industry. Following the literature on the subject, one can risk a statement that the profit (loss) in the area of their core operations depends to a greater extent on the practices of real earnings management than accrual-based earnings management (Ferreira, Otley 2009; Osma, Gomez-Conde, Lopez-Valeiraz 2022).

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Due to the importance of information included in the financial statements, this document must properly reflect the property and financial situation of the enterprise. Therefore, each company that is obliged to audit the financial statements annually should prepare them to follow the principle of the true and fair view. In the context of the financial result, which is the most synthetic reflection of the company's performance, the following aspects can be a sign of high quality: clear indication

of ongoing costs and/or revenues, linking accrual incomes (losses) with cash flows, as well as the clear designation of performance of the company's core business.

The empirical research carried out among public textile joint-stock companies emphasized that the quality of the reported financial result may be distorted by implementing accrual-based earnings management practices. This remark applies primarily to gross and net financial results, which may be artificially increased (lowered) to adapt the income statement to the needs of a particular group of stakeholders. The estimated regression model proved that the shaping of gross profit margin and return of assets is statistically related to the values of discretionary accruals extracted by the Jones model. This insight is particularly interesting because, in the course of empirical analyses, no evidence was found to link textile companies' profitability with seemingly important variables such as company size or effective tax rate. In turn, the tested econometric model did not confirm the relationship between accrual-based earnings management and EBIDTA margin. For this reason, the general hypothesis, claiming that in the research sample, discretionary accruals have a significant relationship with EBITDA margin, gross margin and ROA coefficient, had to be rejected. As indicated earlier, this hypothesis was only partially confirmed.

Due to the limited research sample, the empirical research should not be generalized to all textile enterprises. It seems, however, that the analyses highlight the need to continue research on the quality and reliability of data disclosed in the financial statements of companies operating in the capital market.

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