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Relation between the Characteristics of the Company, the Audit Committee and the Independent Auditor and the Publication Deadline of the Financial Statements

Abstract

The objective in the study was to verify the relation between the characteristics of the company, the audit committee and the independent auditor and the publication deadline of the financial statements of companies listed on BM&FBOVESPA. The research objective was descriptive, the procedures were documentary and the approach was quantitative. A sample of 64 companies was used for each year analyzed, which comprised the period from 2010 till 2012. To analyze the data, multiple linear regression was used, through the software SPSS®. The results demonstrate that a significant relation exists between the publication deadline of the financial statements and the indebtedness, the corporate sector, the non-audit fees and whether the company is audited by the Big Four. Companies that are indebted or pay high non-audit fees tend to disclose their information late. If audited by the Big Four or belonging to the industrial goods, information technology, construction and transportation sectors, they tend to disclose their financial statements earlier.

Key words: Audit Committee, Publication Deadline, Financial Statements.

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1. Introduction

The financial statements are elaborated and disclosed to provide economic-financial information that is useful to different users for the purpose of decision making. For the information to be useful, the CPC 00 (Technical Pronouncement CPC 00, 2011) mentions that this information needs to be relevant, reliable represented, comparable, verifiable, understandable and timely.

Providing information that helps the users to make decisions is the main objective of the financial statements and, therefore, this information needs to be disseminated timely. If not, it loses its value, as outdated information does not contribute to decision making (Al-Ajmi, 2008).

Soltani (2002) highlights that the timeliness of the financial statements is a qualitative characteristic and relevant to assess the utility of the financial information. The professionals acknowledge the timeliness of the financial statements as an important characteristic of the information (Al-Ajmi, 2008) and for the proper functioning of a capital market (Afify, 2009).

Considering the publication date of the financial statements, studies appoint that companies tend to disclose the positive information faster than the negative information (Cullinan, Wang, Yang & Zhang, 2012). Begley and Fischer (1998) add that, in case of negative information, the company can fear a drop in the stock price, deriving from immediate disclosure. This factor can make the company postpone the disclosure of its financial statements.

According to Afify (2009) and Abidin and Ahmad-Zaluki (2012), one of the factors that influence the disclosure deadline of the financial statements is the independent audit. The audit work determines the deadline for disclosure of the financial statements.

Another aspect that can influence the publication deadline of the financial statements is the existence of an audit committee. It has been observed that audit committee characteristics, such as the number of members, the number of independent members with expertise in accounting and finance, can influence the publication deadline of the financial statements. The more effective the audit committee is, depending on its characteristics, the shorter the publication deadline of the financial statements will be (Ika & Ghazali, 2012; Song & Windram, 2004; Pucheta-Martínez & Fuentes, 2007).

Company characteristics, such as economic-financial indicators (Ika & Ghazali, 2012); company size (Al-Ajmi, 2008; Alkhatib & Marji, 2012), activity sector (Ika & Ghazali, 2012); and the corporate governance level (Kirch, Lima & Terra, 2012) also affect the publication deadline of the financial statements.

The publication deadline of the financial statements can also be influenced by independent audit characteristics, such as the size of the audit firm (Afify, 2009; Ahmed, 2003) and the non-audit fees (Mironiuc, Chersan & Robu, 2013; Ahadiat, 2011). Large audit committees, having greater incentives to conclude the audit work, contribute to shorter financial statement publication deadlines (Afify, 2009). As regards non-audit work, when these are high amounts, they can reduce the audit independence, as well as present a low level of financial information transparency, interfering in the publication deadline of the financial statements (Ahadiat, 2011; Mironiuc *et al.*, 2013).

In view of the context, the following research question emerges: **What is the relation between the characteristics of the company, the audit committee and the independent auditor and the publication deadline of the financial statements of the companies listed on BM&FBOVESPA?** To answer that question, the study objective is to verify the relation between the characteristics of the company, the audit committee and the independent auditor and the publication deadline of the financial statements of the companies listed on BM&FBOVESPA.

Through the research, it was verified that international studies analyzed the relation between the audit and the punctuality of the financial statements, such as Healy and Palepu (2001), Ahmed (2003), Al-Ajmi (2008), Afify (2009), Abidin and Ahmad-Zaluki (2012), Alkhatib and Marji (2012). Other studies verified the reflection of the audit committee on the quality of the financial statements (Pucheta-Martinez & Fuentes, 2007) and the relation between the efficacy of the audit committee and the timeliness of the financial statements (Ika & Ghazali, 2012). In Brazil, no studies were found that verified the relation between the independent audit and the publication date of the financial statements. In addition, these studies contribute to identify the factors affecting the publication deadline of the financial statements, helping the companies to manage that deadline, in the attempt to improve them, due to their importance for the decision makers and the stock market.

2. Deadline for Financial Statement Disclosure

The companies disclose their information through financial statements, notes to the financial statements, opinions, among others (Healy & Palepu, 2001). The disclosure of financial information demonstrates the company's operational performance, supporting the different stakeholders' analysis and decision making (Falcão, 1995).

The disclosure deadline of the financial statements is considered an important qualitative characteristic. The information is considered an important qualitative characteristic. The information needs to be disclosed to the users as quickly as possible for them to use it for decision making (Ahmed, 2003).

Sengupta (2004) highlights that the best disclosure strategy is determined by its costs and benefits. It is through the assessment of these costs and benefits that the company managers decide on the nature, information content, disclosure date, disclosure medium, place, among others. According to CPC 00 (Technical Pronouncement CPC 00, 2011), the elaboration and disclosure process of the accounting information involves costs, and it is important for these costs to be justified by the benefits of the information disclosure.

Managers need to set the disclosure date of the financial statements prepared, observing whether the benefits of more rapid dissemination outweigh the costs incurred in this action (Sengupta, 2004; Kirch, Lima & Land, 2012). Kirch et al. (2012) add that the costs and benefits to be analyzed are related to the company's characteristics, the competitive environment and the content of the financial statements. Among the characteristics, features of the complexity of the operations or accounting stand out, as well as process costs, cost of ownership and corporate governance, which can influence the disclosure date of the financial statements.

Kirsch et al. (2012) assume that companies with the best corporate governance practices, which are part of the special listing segments, such as Level 1, Level 2 and the Brazilian Securities, Commodities and Futures Exchange (BM & FBOVESPA), as well as the segments most traded in the stock market, tend to disclose their financial statements more quickly.

As one of the objectives of financial statements is to provide information to users, to assist them in decision making, it needs to be made available in a short period of time after the end of the year, to avoid losing its value. It is in this sense that accounting professionals, users, regulators, among others, acknowledge the deadline for the disclosure of financial statements as a key feature for accounting (Al-Ajmi, 2008).

Al-Ajmi (2008) also highlights that large companies, because they have resources and suffer political pressure from stakeholders, tend to disclose their financial statements in a shorter time. In addition, both good and bad news are factors that may also affect the deadline for information disclosure, it being understood that early disclosures indicate positive news on business performance, and negative when the disclosures in the financial statements are postponed. For this same purpose, Iyoha (2012) describes that the search to disclose financial statements in a timely manner results from the growing need for information from stakeholders. In this context, disclosing good news sooner is more natural than showing bad news, which can cause effects on the stock price and other company indicators (Iyoha, 2012).

Afify (2009) also points out that the deadline for disclosure of financial statements reflects the independent audit work, because such statements are disclosed after the completion of the auditor's review. Iyoha (2012) states that, when an auditor perceives error, probable court cases, financial fraud, he will develop the work with much more care and caution, causing a delay in the disclosure of financial statements.

3. Construction of Hypotheses

The hypotheses related to the disclosure deadline of the financial statements were constructed in view of variables grouped in three dimensions: company, audit committee and independent audit.

3.1 Company characteristics

To make up the company characteristics, financial and economic indicators were used (indebtedness, current liquidity and return on assets), size, activity sector and corporate governance level of the companies, with a view to verifying whether these influence the publication deadline of the financial statements.

The profitability indicator is used to evaluate the profit generated by the company (Alkhatib & Marji, 2012). Companies tend to disclose their financial statements in advance when there is good news (profit) and tend to delay the disclosure when there is bad news (losses) (Iyoha, 2012). In the study by Ika and Ghazali (2012), the indicators "debt", "current liquidity" and "return on assets" influenced the timeliness of reports, extending the publication deadline of the financial statements.

With regard to company size, it is assumed that, the larger the company, the greater the demand for a high quality audit. In this case, the large audit firms are considered, in view of the set of features they join to get the job done. Large companies, because they have resources and suffer political pressure from stakeholders, tend to disclose their information in advance (Al-Ajmi, 2008). Alkhatib and Marji (2012) emphasize that the size of the company is one of the most used variables to determine the impact on the timeliness of financial statements. In the study by Ika and Ghazali (2012), however, firm size had no significant relationship to influence the timeliness of reporting.

As for the corporate business sector, the context of each sector can influence the publication deadline of financial statements. In the study by Ika and Ghazali (2012), the industry influences the publication deadline of the financial statements in an analysis of industries and service providers. The authors conclude that industries are more likely to release the financial statements later, while the service providers, for not having inventory stock, may disclose their information in less time compared to industries.

In Brazil, companies listed on BM & FBOVESPA that are part of corporate governance levels aim to meet a set of rules with regard to investors and the timely disclosure of financial statements. Companies that make up corporate governance levels tend to disclose their information in less time (Kirch et al., 2012).

Organizationally complex enterprises, represented by the number of subsidiaries the company bas, face difficulty monitoring the management, requiring extensive audit work (Bushman, Chen, Engel & Smith, 2004), which in turn may increase the publication deadline of financial statements.

In view of the variables used in the study, the first research hypothesis is:

H1: *There is a significant relationship between economic and financial indicators, size, activity sector, corporate governance and the amount of subsidiaries of companies with the publication deadline of financial statements.*

3.2 Audit Committee Characteristics

The audit committee is responsible for supervising the internal processes and for guaranteeing their integrity and effectiveness to produce the financial statements, and thus guarantee their quality, with a view to protecting the stockholders and other stakeholders (IBGC, 2009).

In the study by Ika and Ghazali (2012), the efficacy of the audit committee is an important factor that influences the timely disclosure of the financial statements. To measure the efficacy, the independence of the committee members and their background in accounting, auditing or finance, as well as the size of the audit committee, were analyzed on the whole. In addition, it was analyzed whether information disclosure was voluntary and whether meetings were held at least four times per year. For the sake of this study, due to the availability of the information, the variables independence, size and expertise of the audit committee members were used.

As for the independence, it is considered that the audit committee will be more independent and will work more effectively if most of its members are independent external counselors (Pucheta-Martinez & Fuentes, 2007). Song and Windram (2004) highlight that there is evidence in favor of the assertion that a larger number of independent counselors increases the efficacy of the audit committee. Vlaminck and Sarens (2012) developed a study in Belgium about the relation between the characteristics of the audit committee and the quality of the financial statements. The authors found a positive relation between the independence of the audit committee and the quality of the financial statements.

As regards the background in accounting, auditing and finance, in the study by Ika and Ghazali (2012), having at least one committee member with a background and experience in accounting or finance was established as the criterion to calculate the efficiency of the audit committee. Dezoort, Hermanson and Houston (2003) highlight that the fundamental role of the audit committee is to supervise the processes to guarantee the integrity of the financial statements for the stakeholders and that more experienced members offer more support to the auditor, thus revealing how important it is for the committee members to have financial experience.

Defond, Hann and Hu (2005) verified the market's reaction when new audit committee members are nominated and found that the market only reacts positively when the members are knowledgeable in auditing with expertise in accounting. Abernathy, Herrmann, Kang and Krishnan (2013) mention that, as the audit committee members' financial experience increases, a higher quality is expected in the financial reports.

What the size of the audit committee is concerned, the larger the committee, the lesser the pressure the company management will exert on the audit committee concerning the resistance to the adjustments the independent audit proposes. In that sense, the number of audit committee members can influence the acceptance or rejection of adjustments the auditor proposes (Pucheta-Martinez & Fuentes, 2007), which can thus affect the disclosure deadline of the financial statements.

Krishnan (2005) studied the association between the quality of the audit committee and the companies' internal control. The quality of the audit committee is measured in three dimensions: its size, its independence and the members' expertise. The internal control problems were observed in two aspects, reportable conditions and material weaknesses. The sample consisted of 128 companies, between 1994 and 2000, whose change of auditors, as observed in the Form 8-K, was available at the SEC. In these reports, the internal control problems were observed. The results appoint that it is significantly less probable for independent audit committees with financial expertise to be associated with internal control problems, verified for both internal control problem levels.

Based on the study by Krishnan (2005), the characteristics of the audit committee mentioned affect the quality of the internal control which, of a higher quality, can influence the duration of the auditor's work. Less time spent on audit activities, as a result of good internal controls, can affect the disclosure deadline of the financial statements.

In view of the presentation on the characteristics independence, expertise and size of the audit committee, the second research hypothesis is:

H2: *A significant relation exists between the characteristics of the audit committee, such as independence, expertise and size, and the publication deadline of the financial statements.*

3.3 Characteristics related to Independent Audit

Studies evidence that the large audit firms offer higher quality services (Al-Ajmi, 2008). Afify (2009) adds that the largest audit companies are more encouraged to conclude the audit work faster in order to keep up their reputation. If not, they man not be reinstated as the company's auditor next year. In the study by Ahmed (2003), the type of auditor reduces the length of disclosure of the financial statements.

Another variable relates to non-audit services. In the study by Mironiuc and Robu (2012), companies that pay high amounts for non-audit services have a low level of financial information transparency (Mironiuc, Chersan & Robu, 2013). Ahadiat (2011) found that the independence of the audit may decrease when high values of non-audit services are paid. The group of companies with unqualified opinions paid higher average non-audit fees than companies with caveat in their opinions.

According to Solomon, Reckers and Lowe (2005), investors have more confidence in the financial statements audited by firms that provide few non-audit services, as this affects the auditor's independence and the quality of financial statements.

In view of the above, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H3: *There is a significant relationship between the companies audited by Big Four and the deadline for publication of the financial statements.*

H4: There is a significant relationship between the non-audit fees and the publication deadline of the financial statements.

4. Methodological Procedures

The study is classified as descriptive and documentar with a quantitative approach. The population included the companies listed on BM & FBOVESPA. To define the sample, initially, the companies were selected that had audit committee in the years 2010, 2011 and 2012. Then, it was checked if every company had the necessary information on the variables used in the study. Thus, out of 92 pre-selected companies, after excluding those without the necessary information, the final sample was composed of 64 companies for each year of analysis.

To demonstrate the variables and the way they were operated, we elaborated a construct. Martins and Theóphilo (2007, p.35) describe that "to empirically explore a theoretical concept, the researcher needs to translate the generic assertion of the concept into a relationship with the real world, based on observable and measurable variables and phenomena, that is, prepare (build) a construct and operate it. " The construct of this research is presented in Table 1.

Dimension	Variable	Description	Collection	Authors
		Dependent variable		
Publication deadline of financial statements	Publication deadline of financial statements (PRZ)	Number of days between last day of financial year and publication date of financial statements.	BM&FBOVESPA website	Ahmed (2003), Pucheta-Martinez and Fuentes (2007), Afify (2009), Ika and Ghazali (2012).
		Independent variables		
Audited company	Indebtedness (END)	Relation between total liabilities and total assets.	Economática®	Alkhatib and Marji (2012), Iyoha (2012), Ika and Ghazali (2012).
	Return on assets (ROA)	Net income on total assets.	Economática®	Alkhatib and Marji (2012), Iyoha (2012), Ika and Ghazali (2012).
	Current liquidity of the company (LIQ)	Relation between current assets and current liabilities.	Economática®	Alkhatib and Marji (2012), Iyoha (2012), Ika and Ghazali (2012).
	Company size (TAM)	Natural logarithm of companies' total assets.	Economática®	Al-Ajmi, (2008), Alkhatib and Marji (2012), Ika and Ghazali (2012).
	Activity sector (SET)	Company's activity sector. Dummy variables for each sector.	BM&FBOVESPA website	Ika and Ghazali (2012).
	Corporate Governance (GC)	Dummy variable: 1 if part of the corporate governance level and 0 if not.	BM&FBOVESPA website	Kirch et al. (2012).
	Subsidiaries (Subs)	Number of subsidiaries of the company.	Reference Form – Item 8.1	Bushman et al. (2004).
Audit committee	Independence (IND)	Relation between number of independent members and total number of members of audit committee.	Reference Form – Item 12.7	Song and Windram (2004), Pucheta-Martinez and Fuentes (2007), Ika and Ghazali (2012).
	Size (TCA)	Number of members on audit committee.	Reference Form – Item 12.7	Pucheta-Martinez and Fuentes (2007), Ika and Ghazali (2012).
	Expertise (EXP)	Relation between number of members on audit committee with background in accounting, auditing and finance and total number of audit committee members.	Reference Form – Item 12.7	Ika and Ghazali (2012).
Independent audit	Big_Four (BIG)	Dummy variable equal to 1 if Big Four, if not 0.	Reference Form – Item 2.1	Ahmed (2003), Afify (2009), Ika and Ghazali (2012).
	Non-audit fees (HNA)	Natural logarithm of fees paid for non-audit services.	Reference Form – Item 2.1	Mironiuc et al. (2013), Mironiuc and Robu (2012), Ahadiat (2011).

Figure 1. Study variables

Source: elaborated by the authors.

To collect the data, a secondary search was undertaken in the database Economática®, the Reference Form and the BM&FBOVESPA website.

First, in Economática®, the variables related to the companies' economic-financial indicators and size were sought. The data from the Reference Form and the BM&FBOVESPA website were used to explore the other variables, such as activity sector; corporate governance; number of subsidiaries, publication date of financial statements; type of audit; non-audit fees and characteristics of audit committee.

The analysis period included the years from 2010 till 2012 and the data were collected in December 2013. The collected data were inserted and compiled in an electronic worksheet and then calculated using the software SPSS® version 20.0. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis were used.

5. Description and Analysis of Results

In this section, the description and analysis of the main study results are presented, concerning the relation between the characteristics of the company, the audit committee and the independent auditor and the publication deadline of the financial statements of the companies listed on BM&FBOVESPA.

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistical analysis of the variables used in the study.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics of variables used in the study

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Median	Standard Deviation
Publication deadline of financial statements	28.0	675.0	95.328	83.000	74.9394
Indebtedness (END)	0.000	64.705	23.36307	25.78862	19.022590
Return on assets (ROA)	0.001	1.993	0.06794	0.03557	0.164842
Current liquidity (LIQ)	0.000	6.338	1.44020	1.37841	1.064448
Company size (TAM)	11.153	20.679	16.10522	16.08428	1.565925
Independence (IND)	0.0	3.0	0.026	0.000	0.2270
Committee size (TCA)	1.0	9.0	3.557	3.000	1.2478
Expertise (EXP)	0.000	1.000	0.19940	0.00000	0.244641
Non-audit fees (HNA)	0.000	15.222	3.02605	0.00000	5.241899
Subsidiaries (Subs)	0.000	147	12.22	6	19.918

Source: research data.

Initially, a descriptive analysis is presented of the dependent variable, which is the publication deadline of the financial statements. In Table 1, it is verified that the median of the selected sample is 83 days. This indicates that, in the selected sample, 50% of the companies take up to 83 days to publish their statements, with a minimum of 28 days. On the other hand, the other 50% of the companies take 83 days or more to publish the statements, with a maximum of 675 days. Considering that it is established in Art. 132 of Law No. 6.404 (1976) that the financial statements should be available to the stockholders 30 days before the Annual General Shareholder Meeting, with April 30th of the subsequent year as the deadline to hold that meeting, March 31st of the subsequent year is the deadline to close the financial statements (Conselho Federal de Contabilidade, 2015). In view of the results, 50% of the companies close their financial statements within the established deadline.

As for the debt of the companies studied, it is clear that there is at least one company in the three years whose debt is nil. The return on assets is an important indicator that permits checking the extent to which the company's investments and applications (assets) generate profitability (profit). Table 1 indicates that the lowest profitability is 0.001 and the maximum 1.993, in which, for every R$ 1.00 of company assets, there is an income of R$ 1.993 for its investors. On the other hand, it is clear that, on average, companies have profitability of 0.067, with a standard deviation of 0.164. Thus, the companies' average profitability ranges between R$ -0.097 and R$ 0.231. According to Alkhatib and Marji (2012), companies tend to publish their financial statements faster when they present positive results and take longer to post them if the result is negative (Iyoha, 2012).

To analyze the relation between companies' current assets and liabilities, the indicator current liquidity is used. In the three years analyzed, the maximum current liquidity ratio is R$ 6.338. In addition, the companies' average ratio is approximately R$ 1.44, which shows that there is capital available to settle short-term obligations.

The analysis of the company size shows that the minimum asset value of the companies studied is 11.15 and the maximum amount is equivalent to 20.67, in which these amounts correspond to the natural logarithm of the total company assets. The average in the companies analyzed in this work is 16.10, with a standard deviation of 1.56. According to Al-Ajmi (2008), the company's size influences the agility to publish the financial statements so that, the larger the company, the shorter the deadline to publish their statements.

The audit committee is a body delegated by the company's Board of Directors to assist the company in corporate governance and, consequently, the quality of accounting information presented (IBGC, 2009). Among the characteristics of the audit committee, the independence, size and expertise of the members stand out.

As verified in Table 1, in the three years evaluated, there is at least one company that has no independent members and, on the other hand, there is at least one company whose members are all independent, with 0.02 as the average number of independent members in the committees analyzed. This fact is repeated for the characteristic expertise of the committee members, when it comes to minimum and maximum values, but the average number of members with expertise is 0.19.

The size of the audit committee is also considered an important feature, in which companies should provide for committees with the number of members (size) according to their need. In Table 1, it is identified that the sample companies have audit committees with a minimum size of one member and maximum of nine members, with 50% of the sample having committees with one to three members and 50% three to nine members.

As for the audit firm, Mironiuc et al. (2013) mention that non-audit fees affect the quality of the financial statements, compromising their transparency and reliability. Ahadiat (2011) found in his research that groups of companies with unqualified opinions had higher average non-audit fees in relation to the group of companies showing opinions with qualifications. In Table 1, it is clear that at least 50% of the companies did not hire non-audit services - this value is perceived in the median corresponding to R$ 0.00. In addition, as regards the number of subsidiary companies, which represents the organizational complexity, the sample companies have no more than 147 subsidiaries and some have none.

After a descriptive analysis of the variables used, next, the data distribution tests are presented, which are important for the use of the multiple regression technique. In Table 2, the result of the randomness, normality, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity tests are displayed, through the application of the *Durbin-Watson*, *Shapiro-Wilk* and *Levene* tests.

Table 2
Analysis of multiple linear regression premises

Premises	Tests	Hypothesis
Randomness	Durbin-Watson: DW statistics = 2.0651 P-value = 1.0000 Autocorrelation of residues = -0.0326	No first-rank autocorrelation between the residues.
Normality	*Shapiro-Wilk:* *SW statistics = 0.7407* *P-value = 0.0000*	Normal distribution of the residues.
Homoscedasticity	*Levene:* *F statistics = 4.4752* *P-value = 0.0357*	Uniform variance of errors.

Source: research data.

The Durbin-Watson test was applied to comply with the premise of randomness. According to Marôco (2011), the test result should be close to 2 to demonstrate that no autocorrelation exists between the residues. In Table 2, the compliance with this premise is observed, as the result equals 2.0651.

The data normality was tested through the Shapiro-Wilk (SW) test. The test compares the "accumulated frequency distribution of a set of values observed in the sample with an expected or theoretical distribution" (Fávero, Belfiore, Silva & Chan, 2009, p. 112). In this study, the SW test was significant at 1%, showing that the distribution of the residues is normal.

To analyze the homoscedasticity, the Levene test was used. According to Marôco (2011), Levene is one of the most used tests to check whether the variances in a population are homogeneous, i.e. the same. The Levene test was not significant, which means that the error variance is uniform. After complying with the data distribution premises, Table 3 demonstrates the summary of the multiple linear regression model.

Table 3
Summary of multiple linear regression model

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R2	Standard estimation error	Durbin-Watson
1	0.429	0.184	0.082	71.974	2.065

Source: research data.

Table 3 shows that the model used effectively predicted the influence of the variables on the publication deadline of the financial statements. The Correlation Coefficient (R), according to Corrar, Paulo and Dias Filho (2009), indicates the level of association between the variables. In that sense, the coefficient 0.429 represents an association of 42.9% between the variables used in this study.

The Determination Coefficient (R^2) showed an explanatory power of 18.40% over the independent variables. The Durbin-Watson test, however, did not demonstrate an autocorrelation problem of the residues. According to Marôco (2011), the result of the DW should border on 2 and not be inferior to 1.70 or superior to 2.2. Hence, it was verified that the model had not autocorrelation problems of the residues, as the result corresponded to 2.065.

Next, Table 4 demonstrates the variance analysis.

Table 4
Variance analysis of the data

	Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	197002.651	21	9381.079	1.811	0.021
	Residues	875459.108	169	5180.231		
	Total	1072461.759	190			

Source: research date

As observed in Table 4, the results of the variance analysis of the data, through the F test, demonstrate that the independent variables used in the model are significant at 5%. Next, it is identified which of these variables influence the publication deadline of the financial statements, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Analysis of the variables used in the study

Model	Non-standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Standard Model	Beta		
Publication deadline of financial statements (Constant)	110.770	89.261		1.241	0.216
Company characteristics					
Indebtedness (END)	1.143	0.497	0.290	2.302	0.023*
Return on assets (ROA)	56.205	38.100	0.124	1.475	0.142
Current liquidity (LIQ)	-3.587	6.255	-0.051	-0.573	0.567
Company size (TAM)	1.966	5.457	0.041	0.360	0.719
Corporate Governance (GC)	5.179	17.248	0.025	0.300	0.764
Subsidiaries (Subs)	0.218	0.312	0.058	0.700	0.485
Cyclical consumption (ConsuCic)	-12.074	24.311	-0.047	-0.497	0.620
Financial and others (Finan)	-4.711	23.334	-0.029	-0.212	0.840
Non-cyclical consumption (ConNCic)	3.976	23.121	0.016	0.172	0.864
Construction and transportation (ConsTrans)	-55.613	24.883	-0.232	-2.235	0.027*
Public utility (UtilPubl)	-38.170	36.111	-0.089	-1.057	0.292
Basic materials (MatBas)	-34.244	21.308	-0.151	-1.607	0.110
Telecommunication (Telec)	-38.501	42.386	-0.082	-0.908	0.365
Industrial goods (BensIndus)	-77.441	45.925	-0.128	-1.686	0.094**
Oil, gas and biofuels (Petrol)	-61.734	52.015	-0.102	-1.187	0.237
Information technology (TecInform)	-63.289	36.727	-0.147	-1.723	0.087**
Audit committee characteristics					
Independence (IND)	1.325	23.474	0.004	0.056	0.955
Committee size (TCA)	-2.009	5.936	-0.033	-0.338	0.735
Expertise (EXP)	19.785	24.842	0.064	0.796	0.427
Independent audit characteristics					
Big Four (BIG)	-68.498	27.160	-0.183	-2.522	0.013*
Non-audit fees (HNA)	2.826	1.080	0.195	2.618	0.010*

Source: research data.

The analysis of significance was observed at 5% (p-value <0.05) and 10% (p-value <0:10). According to the results shown in Table 5, the company's characteristics were statistically significant. The Indebtedness (END) and the business sector Construction and Transportation (ConsTrans) were statistically significant at 5% and the business sector Industrial Goods (BensIndus) and Information Technology (TecInform) at 10 %.

The Indebtedness (END), with a β equal to 1.143, has a positive and significant influence on the publication deadline of the financial statements. Thus, the higher the debt, the longer the deadline to publish the financial statements should be. Conversely, the activity sectors Construction and Transportation (ConsTrans), Industrial Goods (BensIndus) and Information Technology (TecInform), with β equal to -55.613, -77.441 and -63.289, respectively, exert negative and significant influence on the deadline for the publication of the financial statements. This result demonstrates that the companies in these sectors tend to publish their financial statements faster.

These results converge with the studies by Iyoha (2012) and Ika and Ghazali (2012), regarding the significance between the company's debt and the publication deadline, noting that more indebted companies may postpone the publication date of their financial statements to delay possible effects of disclosing the company's debt. With regard to the activity sectors, the results are aligned with the findings of Ika and Ghazali (2012), with regard to service providers (information technology), since these tend to disclose information faster as they have no inventories. On the other hand, it differs in the category of companies with industrial concentration (industrial goods, construction and transport), since these had no impact on the extension of the publication deadline of the financial statements.

In view of the findings, hypothesis 1 about a significant relationship between financial indicators, size, sector of activity, corporate governance and the amount of subsidiaries of companies with the publication deadline of financial statements can be partially accepted, specifically regarding the debt and the activity sector.

The audit committee characteristics independence, size and expertise were not significant to explain the disclosure deadline of the financial statements. This finding rejects hypothesis 2 that there is a significant relationship between the features of the audit committee and the publication deadline of the financial statements. This result differs from the findings of Ika and Ghazali (2012), who found a significant relationship between audit committee characteristics and publication deadline of financial statements in Indonesia.

Finally, the characteristics related to the independent auditor showed a significant relationship with the deadline for the disclosure of financial statements. The Big Four audit firms showed a negative relationship with the deadline for disclosure of financial statements, with a β of -68.498 and significant at 5% (p-value <0.05). Thus, it is clear that the shortest disclosure deadline occurs with companies audited by the Big Four.

Conversely, non-audit fees have a positive relationship, with β corresponding to 2.826, and significant at 5% (p-value <0.05), i.e. the more you use non-audit services, the longer the disclosure period. This can be explained by the fact that companies that pay high values for non-audit services have a low level of financial information transparency (Mironiuc; Chersan & Robu, 2013).

These results accept hypothesis 3 that there is a significant relationship between the companies audited by the Big Four and the deadline for publication of the financial statements. This finding converges with Ahmed (2003), Al-Ajmi (2008), Afify (2009) and Ika and Ghazali (2012), demonstrating that companies audited by the Big Four disclose their financial statements faster than those not audited by the Big Four. This stems from the fact that large audit firms provide higher quality services (Al-Ajmi, 2008), and that the largest audit firms have a greater incentive to finish the audit work as quickly as possible in order to maintain their reputation (Afify, 2009)

The results also confirm hypothesis 4 that there is a significant relationship between the non-audit fees and the deadline to publish the financial statements.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between the characteristics of the company, the audit committee and the auditor with the deadline to publish financial statements of companies listed on BM & FBOVESPA. Therefore, we used a descriptive, documentary and quantitative analysis. The sample consisted of 64 companies, for each year of analysis, which had an audit committee in the period from 2010 till 2012. For the data analysis, we used descriptive statistics and multiple linear regression analysis, using the software SPSS.

The results showed that the variables Debt (END), Business Sector (SET), companies audited by the Big Four (BIG) and Non-Audit Fees (HNA) were significant, influencing the disclosure deadline of financial statements.

Among the variables related to the company's characteristics, the Indebtedness (END) exerts positive and significant influence on the publication deadline of the financial statements, i.e. indebted companies tend to disclose their information belatedly. The activity sectors (industrial goods, information technology, construction and transport) exert negative and significant influence on the publication deadline of the financial statements, the results converge with studies by Iyoha (2012) and Ika and Ghazali (2012).

As for the variables of the independent audit, it was concluded that audit firms Big Four showed a negative and significant relationship with the deadline for disclosure of financial statements, which indicates that the lowest disclosure deadline occurs with companies audited by the Big Four. Regarding the non-audit fees, contacted was a positive and significant relationship, influencing a period of greater disclosure of financial statements. These findings converge with studies of Ahmed (2003), Al-Ajmi (2008), Afify (2009) and Ika and Ghazali (2012).

The result obtained stands out with the variables related to the audit committee of the characteristics in which it found that the size of the audit committee, the independence and expertise of the members did not have significant influence with the deadline for publication of financial statements. This result refutes the understanding that this committee, for having excel function for good internal controls and monitor the preparation of the financial statements linked to the characteristics that the literature has suggested as effective elements of this body, influence within the financial statements.

For the sake of future research, qualitative studies are suggested, through interviews with the people in charge of the controllership in the companies with the shortest and the longest publication deadline of the financial statements, in order to identify factors that can influence the publication deadline. These findings may also be confronted with expert opinions and capital market professionals, in another study.

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