

# Report on Bachelor / Master Thesis

Institute of Economic Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University in Prague

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| <b>Student:</b>             | Kseniya Bortnikova                       |
| <b>Advisor:</b>             | Doc. Tomas Havranek , Ph.D .             |
| <b>Title of the thesis:</b> | Beauty and Productivity: A Meta-Analysis |

## **OVERALL ASSESSMENT** (provided in English, Czech, or Slovak):

*Please provide your assessment of each of the following four categories, summary and suggested questions for the discussion. The minimum length of the report is 300 words.*

### **Contribution**

The master thesis by Kseniya Bortnikova presents a meta-analysis of the relationship between worker beauty and his/her productivity. This is the first meta-analytical study of this effect and it points towards significant publication bias in the relevant literature. The general conclusion of the thesis is that the beauty effect is much smaller than usually presented in the literature.

### **Methods**

Meta-analysis is a correct method to approach the research question posted by the student. It seems that the meta-analytic approach is correctly applied and that the results are correctly interpreted. However, the thesis does not explain the methodology well – neither the idea of the meta-analysis itself nor specific approaches taken to mitigate different problematic issues. We can read about the stages of meta-analysis, but the thesis does not explain why these stages are needed. It looks more like a cookbook. I would expect more discussion of the publication process and how it might affect the published results and thus the average result found in the literature and how, (intuitively and under what assumptions/in which cases) a meta-analysis can reveal the true effect.

The use of Partial Correlation Coefficient is not well explained. How does it solve the problem of noncomparable measurement units? How can one interpret the coefficient? Why values of PCC between 0.07 and 0.17 are considered as small?

Another example is missing explanation of why  $\beta_1$  in equation 4.1 is interpreted as the publication bias. What is the rationale behind this equation?

When it comes to the results presented in Table 4.1, the author should write why the study-specific fixed effects are used or why the inverse number of results reported in a study is used as an IV for the standard error of obtained estimate. How these approaches tackle potential problems? Is there any evidence that they actually do so? In Table 4.1 both the FE and RE estimates are reported and they show completely different results. What does it suggest? The author should comment on this and explain which of the models reported in Table 4.1 is the preferred one and why.

The methods used to test for publication bias are also not well described either.

And a minor comment: number of citations is suggested as one of the characteristics that should be included in the heterogeneity analysis. But the number of citations depends not only on the quality of work, but also on the years of publishing, as the most recent papers did not have a chance to collect many citations yet. How does the author deal with this problem?

### **Literature**

The literature review presented in this thesis is comprehensive, but could be presented better. For example there are some issues stressed in the literature review that are not analyzed further, and there are some issues touched in the analysis that are not stressed in the literature review. What I like in the literature review is that the author summarizes papers using different measures of beauty and different measures of productivity.

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## Manuscript form

The manuscript is well structured, but it would strongly benefit from English proofreading. There are numerous typos and grammatical mistakes all over the thesis.

There are some unfinished sections (eg. on page 4) and some sections are difficult to read (eg. the section discussing productivity measures).

Some references to equations, figures or tables are wrong (probably a typo).

The results reported in Table 4.1. are not well described. Only in the note to the table one learns what are the fixed effects about, there is no explanation in the text about why are they used or what is the unit for which fixed effects are added.

Finally, I would suggest that tables be presented next to the text describing them, not two pages further.

## Summary and suggested questions for the discussion during the defense

All in all I would say that the analysis presented in the thesis is well performed but not well presented. The author has conducted an interesting research and the conclusions she presents are important for the literature. Given the manuscript form I suggest to grade the thesis with B.

Suggested question:

Explain the rationale between each model reported in Table 4.1 and argue which of these models is the preferred one.

## **SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED** (for details, see below):

| CATEGORY                                | POINTS     |
|---|------------|
| <i>Contribution</i> (max. 30 points)    | 28         |
| <i>Methods</i> (max. 30 points)         | 28         |
| <i>Literature</i> (max. 20 points)      | 12         |
| <i>Manuscript Form</i> (max. 20 points) | 12         |
| <b>TOTAL POINTS</b> (max. 100 points)   | <b>80</b>  |
| <b>GRADE</b> (A – B – C – D – E – F)    | <b>B/C</b> |

**NAME OF THE REFEREE:** *Barbara Pertold-Gebicka*

**DATE OF EVALUATION:** 11.6.2019

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**Referee Signature**

**EXPLANATION OF CATEGORIES AND SCALE:**

**CONTRIBUTION:** *The author presents original ideas on the topic demonstrating critical thinking and ability to draw conclusions based on the knowledge of relevant theory and empirics. There is a distinct value added of the thesis.*

|               |                |             |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| <i>Strong</i> | <i>Average</i> | <i>Weak</i> |
| 30            | 15             | 0           |

**METHODS:** *The tools used are relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the author's level of studies. The thesis topic is comprehensively analyzed.*

|               |                |             |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| <i>Strong</i> | <i>Average</i> | <i>Weak</i> |
| 30            | 15             | 0           |

**LITERATURE REVIEW:** *The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and command of recent literature. The author quotes relevant literature in a proper way.*

|               |                |             |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| <i>Strong</i> | <i>Average</i> | <i>Weak</i> |
| 20            | 10             | 0           |

**MANUSCRIPT FORM:** *The thesis is well structured. The student uses appropriate language and style, including academic format for graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables and disposes with a complete bibliography.*

|               |                |             |
|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| <i>Strong</i> | <i>Average</i> | <i>Weak</i> |
| 20            | 10             | 0           |

**Overall grading:**

| TOTAL    | GRADE |
|----------|-------|
| 91 – 100 | A     |
| 81 - 90  | B     |
| 71 - 80  | C     |
| 61 – 70  | D     |
| 51 – 60  | E     |
| 0 – 50   | F     |