

Revisiting the Cross-Section of Expected Stock Returns: Evidence from a Textual Analysis of Buy Recommendations

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I. Research Question

- Many competing theories explaining investor behavior / behavior of markets
- Often overlap in their predictions

 \rightarrow Difficult to disentangle with observational data

- \rightarrow Increasing interest in investor surveys
- Surveys are great, but





Our research question

Investors frequently express their beliefs in writing



Cheap and scalable alternative to capture investors' beliefs and rationales?

II. Illustration of How Our Method May Be Applied

Consider stocks that typically earn low returns

- Chen and Zimmerman (2021) survey prior literature and find that 202 firm characteristics strongly predict <u>raw stock returns</u> in the cross-section
 - E.g., high asset growth \rightarrow low average returns
 - Could be perceived safety?
 - Could be perceived supremacy / extrapolation?
 - Could be perceived lottery-like feature / upside potential?

Cooper, Gulen, and Schill (2008)



Cooper, Gulen, and Schill (2008)



"Defensive, protection, stable..."





Cooper, Gulen, and Schill (2008)



"Expanding, leader, outperformer..."

III. Results



vieles über die Schrift ablesen in der er ge-sotz Dies ist ein Blindtext. An ihm lässt sich Grai setz ist. Auf den ersten Blick wird der





Cooper, Gulen, and Schill (2008)



"Gamble, speculative, volatile..."





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1. Source stock-opinion articles

1,171,130 Single-Ticker sell-side analyst reports from 2006 to 2021

Evercore ISI

Technology | Software

SERVICENOW, INC.

NOW | \$158.00

OUTPERFORM | TARGET PRICE: \$190.00

Company Update

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April 25, 2018

Company Statistics

EPS

Market Capitalizat	ion (M):			29,366
Shares Outstandir	ng (M):			186
Float (M):				172
Average 10-Day V	olume (00	00s):		1,824
Enterprise Value (M):			\$28,117
52-Week Range:			\$88.3	5 - \$176.56
Fiscal Year End				Dec
Earnings Sum	mary			
		2016A	2017A	2018E
Revenue (M)	1Q	\$305.9	\$428.8	\$589.2A

\$448.3

\$492.4

\$549.1

\$0.31

\$0.22

\$0.38

\$1,918.5

\$615.7

\$650.2

\$731.5

\$2,586.7

\$0.56A

\$0.42

\$0.62

2Q \$341.3

3Q \$357.7

4Q \$385.7

1Q \$0.09

20 \$0.15

3Q \$0.23

FY \$1,390.5

Steady 1Q Results: Focus Shifts To A-Day & L/T Growth Opportunity

Strong subscription revenue growth and op. margins set the stage for another solid fiscal year; ACV growth in newer products (30% of total vs. 19% in 1Q17) provides further comfort around the broader platform opportunity

Bottom line: ServiceNow delivered steady F1Q results with revenue and op. margins outperforming expectations. While adjusted billings growth (and 2Q guidance) in the high 20% range may dampen some of the enthusiasm around the quarter, FY18 guidance implies billings acceleration in 2H and we believe that the growth in newer products such as CSM and HR Onboarding help support the long-term growth opportunity. Further, as the focus shifts to the May 7 analyst day, we believe NOW is well-positioned to outline a much bigger revenue opportunity beyond its current guidance (i.e. \$4bn in 2020) and this outlook should help fuel the next leg up in the stock when looking out over the next 6-12 months. Bottom line: NOW got off to a solid start to FY18, we believe the outlook looks conservative, billings growth is poised to accelerate in 2H and we expect the analyst day will help reiterate the long-term opportunity in front of the company. Reiterate Outperform and \$190 PT.

1. Source stock-opinion articles

140,412 Single-Ticker SA articles from 2006 to 2021

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2. Create wordlists

We ask 100 US institutional investors

"For each of the next three questions, please list up to *five nouns, verbs, or adjectives* (*NOT specific tickers, company names, industries, or product names/brands*) that you would use to:

- Q1. describe a stock that, to you, is a "safe-haven asset:" a stock that does relatively well when times are bad. If you would never invest in such a stock, please leave everything blank and simply move on to the next question.
- Q2. describe a stock that has been doing well and that you expect will continue to do very well or, in general, a stock that you are very confident will earn abovenormal returns. If you would never invest in such a stock, please leave everything blank and simply move on to the next question.
- **Q3**. describe a stock that offers somewhat of a gamble: the stock will most likely not produce above-normal returns, but if it does, the payoff will be enormous. If you would never invest in such a stock, please leave everything blank and simply move on to the next question."

2. Create wordlists

We ask 100 US institutional investors

Institutional Investors:

Five most frequent answers to Q1:

"conservative, defensive, protection, reliable, stable."

Five most frequent answers to Q2:

"competitive, expanding, leader, outperformer, strong."

Five most frequent answers to Q3:

"gamble, potential, speculative, upside, volatile."

2. Create wordlists

We ask 100 US institutional investors

Institutional Investors:

Five most frequent answers to Q1:

"conservative, defensive, protection, reliable, stable." **"Safety Words"**

Five most frequent answers to Q2:

"competitive, expanding, leader, outperformer, strong." "Supremacy Words"

Five most frequent answers to Q3:

"gamble, potential, speculative, upside, volatile." "Lottery Words"

We consider all possible word forms tied to the business realm. We account for simple negation.

II. Methodology

III. Results

Novy-Marx (2010)



Novy-Marx (2010)



Novy-Marx (2010)





Novy-Marx (2010)



27% more safety words here

... compared with here (t-stat = 5.90)

No reliable differences in supremacy and lottery words!

Idiosyncratic risk

Ang, Hodrick, Xing, Zhang (2006)



28% more lottery words here

... compared with here (t-stat = 17.42)

No reliable differences in safety and supremacy words!

Idiosyncratic risk



Ang, Hodrick, Xing, Zhang (2006)



20% more **lottery words** here 28% more **lottery words** here

... compared with here (t-stat = 36.98)

... compared with here (t-stat = 17.42)

No reliable differences in safety and supremacy words!



Table 2 – Analyst Reports





Table 2 – Analyst Reports







Table 2 – Analyst Reports





Table 2 – SA Articles



Results fairly robust

Table 4

We arrive at the same conclusion when

- only considering "most important anomalies"
- only considering reports/articles since anomaly has been published
- only considering "older anomalies"

Validating text-based inferences with survey responses



Nanyang Business School











