Money Market Fund Reform and Voluntary Disclosure

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Abstract: This study examines how the 2010 Money Market Fund Reform influences voluntary disclosure practices through the reputation risk channel. Following the 2008 financial crisis, this reform introduced enhanced liquidity requirements and disclosure obligations, fundamentally altering risk management and stakeholder communication in money market funds. Using a comprehensive empirical analysis, we investigate whether these regulatory changes affect firms' voluntary disclosure decisions as they manage reputation risk. Our analysis reveals a significant positive relationship between the Reform and voluntary disclosure levels, with the full specification showing a treatment effect of 0.0459 (t=3.50, p<0.001). The results demonstrate that firms respond to enhanced regulatory scrutiny by increasing voluntary disclosures, particularly those with higher institutional ownership and larger size. Conversely, firms with poorer performance or higher risk exposure provide less voluntary disclosure, consistent with reputation management incentives. This study contributes to the literature by identifying reputation risk as a crucial channel through which regulatory changes influence disclosure decisions and extends our understanding of how regulatory interventions affect corporate disclosure practices through reputation-based mechanisms. These findings provide valuable insights for regulators and policymakers considering future reforms in financial markets.

INTRODUCTION

The 2010 Money Market Fund Reform represents a significant regulatory intervention aimed at enhancing the stability and resilience of money market funds following the 2008 financial crisis. This reform introduced enhanced liquidity requirements and disclosure obligations, fundamentally altering how money market funds manage risk and communicate with stakeholders (Diamond and Dybvig, 2000; Gorton and Pennacchi, 1990). The reform's emphasis on transparency and risk management has important implications for firms' reputation risk management strategies and their voluntary disclosure practices, particularly given the interconnected nature of financial markets and information flows (Bushman and Smith, 2003).

We examine how the Money Market Fund Reform affects voluntary disclosure through the reputation risk channel, addressing a crucial gap in our understanding of how regulatory changes influence firms' disclosure decisions. Specifically, we investigate whether enhanced liquidity requirements lead to changes in voluntary disclosure practices as firms attempt to manage reputation risk. This research question is particularly relevant given the growing importance of reputation management in financial markets and the limited evidence on how regulatory reforms influence disclosure through reputation-based mechanisms (Graham et al., 2005; Beyer et al., 2010).

The theoretical link between Money Market Fund Reform and voluntary disclosure operates through the reputation risk channel in several ways. First, enhanced liquidity requirements increase the visibility of fund management practices, potentially exposing firms to greater reputation risk from stakeholder scrutiny (Diamond, 1991). Second, the reform's emphasis on transparency creates incentives for firms to proactively manage their reputation through voluntary disclosures (Verrecchia, 2001). This mechanism is consistent with theories

of reputation formation and maintenance in financial markets (Kreps and Wilson, 1982).

The reputation risk channel suggests that firms subject to enhanced regulatory scrutiny will increase voluntary disclosure to maintain stakeholder confidence and minimize reputation damage. This prediction builds on established theoretical frameworks regarding the role of disclosure in reducing information asymmetry and managing stakeholder perceptions (Leuz and Verrecchia, 2000). Furthermore, the reputation risk channel implies that firms with greater exposure to reputation concerns will exhibit stronger disclosure responses to the regulatory change (Skinner, 1994).

Prior literature demonstrates that reputation concerns significantly influence corporate disclosure decisions, particularly during periods of regulatory change or market uncertainty (Graham et al., 2005). We extend this literature by examining how specific regulatory requirements affect the relationship between reputation risk and voluntary disclosure choices.

Our empirical analysis reveals a significant positive relationship between the Money Market Fund Reform and voluntary disclosure levels. The baseline specification without controls showed a treatment effect of 0.0146 (t=1.03), while the full specification with controls yielded a stronger effect of 0.0459 (t=3.50, p<0.001). The significant increase in R-squared from 0.0001 to 0.2439 demonstrates the importance of controlling for firm characteristics in isolating the reputation risk channel.

The results are economically significant, with institutional ownership (coef=0.6361, t=24.82) and firm size (coef=0.1113, t=23.29) emerging as important determinants of disclosure behavior. The negative coefficients on loss indicators (coef=-0.1779, t=-11.82) and calendar risk (coef=-0.1792, t=-8.27) suggest that firms with poorer performance or higher risk exposure provide less voluntary disclosure, consistent with reputation management incentives.

These findings provide strong evidence that the Money Market Fund Reform influenced voluntary disclosure through the reputation risk channel, with firms responding to enhanced regulatory scrutiny by increasing their voluntary disclosures. The results remain robust after controlling for various firm characteristics and market conditions.

This study contributes to the literature on regulatory effects and corporate disclosure by identifying reputation risk as a crucial channel through which regulatory changes influence disclosure decisions. While prior research has examined the direct effects of disclosure regulation (Leuz and Wysocki, 2016), our study is the first to isolate the reputation risk channel in the context of Money Market Fund Reform. Additionally, we extend the literature on reputation management (Cao et al., 2018) by demonstrating how regulatory changes affect firms' reputation-driven disclosure strategies.

Our findings have important implications for understanding how regulatory interventions affect corporate disclosure practices through reputation-based mechanisms. The results suggest that enhanced regulatory scrutiny leads to increased voluntary disclosure as firms attempt to manage reputation risk, providing valuable insights for regulators and policymakers considering future reforms in financial markets.

BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Background

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) enacted significant Money Market Fund Reform in 2014, representing one of the most substantial regulatory changes in the money market fund industry since its inception (SEC, 2014). This reform primarily required institutional prime money market funds to adopt a floating net asset value (NAV) structure, departing from the traditional stable \$1.00 NAV model (Kacperczyk and Schnabl, 2013;

Strahan and Tanyeri, 2015). The SEC implemented these changes in response to the 2008 financial crisis, during which the Reserve Primary Fund "broke the buck," triggering widespread concern about money market fund stability and potential systemic risks to the financial system (Chernenko and Sunderam, 2014).

The reform became effective in October 2014, with a two-year implementation period allowing funds to adjust their operations and disclosure practices. The new requirements specifically targeted institutional prime money market funds, which invest in corporate debt securities, while government money market funds remained exempt from the floating NAV requirement (Hanson et al., 2015). The regulation also introduced mandatory stress testing, enhanced disclosure requirements, and new liquidity management tools, including liquidity fees and redemption gates (McCabe et al., 2013).

During this period, the SEC also adopted other significant regulatory changes, including amendments to Regulation Systems Compliance and Integrity (Regulation SCI) and updates to disclosure requirements for asset-backed securities. However, the Money Market Fund Reform stood out as the most comprehensive overhaul of money market fund regulation since Rule 2a-7 was initially adopted (Duygan-Bump et al., 2013; Cipriani et al., 2014).

Theoretical Framework

The Money Market Fund Reform's impact on voluntary disclosure decisions can be examined through the lens of reputation risk theory. Reputation risk, defined as the potential loss of intangible capital stemming from stakeholder disapproval of an organization's actions or policies, plays a crucial role in shaping firms' disclosure strategies (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Diamond, 1989). In the context of financial institutions, reputation serves as an implicit contract with stakeholders, where maintaining trust is paramount for continued operations and growth.

The theoretical underpinnings of reputation risk suggest that firms make voluntary disclosure decisions based on their assessment of potential reputation costs and benefits. Prior literature establishes that enhanced disclosure can serve as a mechanism for building and maintaining reputation capital, particularly during periods of regulatory change or market uncertainty (Beyer et al., 2010; Graham et al., 2005).

Hypothesis Development

The Money Market Fund Reform's requirement for floating NAV creates a unique setting to examine how regulatory changes influence voluntary disclosure through the reputation risk channel. When institutional prime money market funds transition from stable to floating NAV, they face increased scrutiny from investors and other stakeholders regarding their risk management practices and portfolio composition. This heightened attention likely increases the potential reputation costs of adverse events or poor performance (Gorton and Pennacchi, 1990; Diamond and Dybvig, 1983).

The reputation risk framework suggests that firms subject to increased regulatory oversight often respond by enhancing voluntary disclosure to maintain stakeholder confidence and mitigate potential reputation damage. Prior research demonstrates that financial institutions increase voluntary disclosure during periods of regulatory change to signal their commitment to transparency and risk management (Leuz and Verrecchia, 2000). In the context of money market funds, enhanced voluntary disclosure can serve as a mechanism to differentiate high-quality funds from their peers and maintain investor confidence during the transition to floating NAV.

Building on these theoretical arguments and empirical evidence, we expect that institutional prime money market funds will increase their voluntary disclosure following the implementation of the Money Market Fund Reform. This prediction is strengthened by the

observation that reputation costs are particularly salient for financial institutions managing other people's money, where trust and stability are essential for maintaining assets under management (Kim and Verrecchia, 1994; Boot et al., 1993).

H1: Institutional prime money market funds increase their voluntary disclosure following the implementation of the Money Market Fund Reform, compared to unaffected money market funds.

MODEL SPECIFICATION

Research Design

We identify firms affected by the 2010 Money Market Fund Reform using data from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) Form N-MFP filings. The SEC implemented this reform to enhance liquidity requirements and strengthen the stability of money market funds. Following Goldstein et al. (2017), we classify firms as treated if they have outstanding commercial paper or other short-term debt instruments held by money market funds in the year prior to the reform implementation.

Our primary empirical specification examines the relationship between Money Market Fund Reform and voluntary disclosure through the reputation risk channel:

FreqMF =
$$\beta_0 + \beta_1$$
Treatment Effect + γ Controls + ϵ

where FreqMF represents the frequency of management forecasts, measured as the natural logarithm of one plus the number of management forecasts issued during the fiscal year (Rogers and Van Buskirk, 2013). Treatment Effect is an indicator variable equal to one for firm-years after the implementation of the Money Market Fund Reform for treated firms, and

zero otherwise.

We include a comprehensive set of control variables known to influence voluntary disclosure decisions. Institutional Ownership captures monitoring intensity (Ajinkya et al., 2005). Firm Size, measured as the natural logarithm of total assets, controls for disclosure infrastructure and visibility (Lang and Lundholm, 1996). Book-to-Market ratio accounts for growth opportunities and information asymmetry. ROA and Stock Return control for firm performance (Miller, 2002). Earnings Volatility captures underlying business uncertainty, while Loss indicates financial distress. We also control for Class Action Litigation Risk following Kim and Skinner (2012).

Our sample covers fiscal years 2008-2012, centered on the 2010 reform implementation. We obtain financial data from Compustat, stock return data from CRSP, institutional ownership data from Thomson Reuters, and management forecast data from I/B/E/S. We require firms to have necessary data available for our primary variables and control variables. To address potential endogeneity concerns, we employ a difference-in-differences research design, comparing changes in disclosure behavior between treated and control firms around the reform implementation. This approach helps isolate the effect of the regulation from other concurrent changes in the economic environment.

The reputation risk channel suggests that enhanced liquidity requirements may influence firms' disclosure decisions through their concern for maintaining reputation in the money market. Following Acharya and Lambrecht (2015), we expect treated firms to increase voluntary disclosure to maintain investor confidence and ensure continued access to money market funding. The control variables account for alternative channels through which firm characteristics might affect disclosure decisions, allowing us to better isolate the reputation risk mechanism.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Sample Description and Descriptive Statistics

Our sample comprises 16,271 firm-quarter observations representing 4,177 unique firms across 254 industries from 2008 to 2012. The sample provides broad cross-sectional coverage of the U.S. equity market during a period of significant regulatory change in money market fund operations.

We find that institutional ownership (linstown) averages 56.8% with a median of 62.5%, indicating substantial institutional presence in our sample firms. The distribution is slightly left-skewed, with the interquartile range spanning from 27.9% to 84.7%. These ownership levels are comparable to those reported in prior studies examining institutional ownership patterns (e.g., Bushee, 1998).

Firm size (lsize), measured as the natural logarithm of market capitalization, shows considerable variation with a mean of 5.979 and standard deviation of 2.086. The book-to-market ratio (lbtm) exhibits a mean of 0.720 and median of 0.572, suggesting our sample firms are moderately growth-oriented. Return on assets (lroa) displays notable dispersion with a mean of -4.2% and median of 2.1%, reflecting the inclusion of both profitable and loss-making firms during our sample period.

Stock return volatility (levol) shows substantial right-skew with a mean of 14.2% but a median of only 5.7%, indicating the presence of some highly volatile firms in our sample. The loss indicator variable (lloss) reveals that approximately one-third of our observations (33.5%) represent firm-quarters reporting losses, consistent with the challenging economic conditions during our sample period.

The money market fund frequency measure (freqMF) exhibits a mean of 0.593 with substantial variation (standard deviation = 0.892), suggesting heterogeneous exposure to money market fund holdings across our sample firms. The post-law indicator shows that 57.5% of our observations fall in the post-reform period.

Notably, our calculated risk measure (lcalrisk) has a mean of 0.336 and median of 0.232, with the distribution showing right-skew (75th percentile = 0.510). This pattern suggests that while most firms maintain moderate risk levels, there exists a subset of firms with substantially higher risk profiles.

The sample appears well-distributed across industry classifications, with SIC codes ranging from 100 to 9997, though we observe some clustering in certain industries as indicated by the interquartile range of 3350 to 6035. Overall, our sample characteristics are broadly consistent with those reported in recent studies examining regulatory effects on corporate behavior in U.S. markets.

RESULTS

Regression Analysis

We find evidence that the Money Market Fund Reform is associated with increased voluntary disclosure among institutional prime money market funds. The treatment effect in our fully specified model (Specification 2) shows a positive coefficient of 0.0459, suggesting that affected funds increase their voluntary disclosure by approximately 4.59 percentage points following the reform implementation, compared to unaffected funds.

The treatment effect is both statistically and economically significant in Specification 2, with a t-statistic of 3.50 (p < 0.001). The economic magnitude is meaningful, representing an increase of about 4.59% in voluntary disclosure, which is substantial given the baseline levels of disclosure in the money market fund industry. The model's explanatory power is reasonable, with an R-squared of 0.2439, indicating that our specified variables explain approximately 24.39% of the variation in voluntary disclosure.

The inclusion of control variables substantially improves our model specification, as evidenced by the increase in R-squared from 0.0001 in Specification 1 to 0.2439 in Specification 2. The control variables exhibit relationships consistent with prior literature. Institutional ownership (linstown) and firm size (lsize) show strong positive associations with voluntary disclosure (coefficients of 0.6361 and 0.1113, respectively; both p < 0.001), aligning with previous findings that larger firms and those with greater institutional ownership tend to provide more voluntary disclosure. Book-to-market ratio (lbtm), stock returns (lsaret12), loss indicators (lloss), and calculated risk measures (lcalrisk) all show negative associations with voluntary disclosure, consistent with prior research suggesting that firms with poorer performance or higher risk tend to disclose less voluntarily. These results strongly support our hypothesis (H1) that institutional prime money market funds increase their voluntary disclosure following the implementation of the Money Market Fund Reform. The findings are consistent with our theoretical framework suggesting that increased regulatory scrutiny leads to enhanced voluntary disclosure through the reputation risk channel.

Note: While our results demonstrate a strong association between the reform and increased voluntary disclosure, we acknowledge that our research design cannot fully establish causality, as there may be other concurrent factors influencing disclosure decisions during this period.

CONCLUSION

This study examines how the 2010 Money Market Fund Reform influenced voluntary disclosure practices through the reputation risk channel. Our investigation centers on understanding how enhanced liquidity requirements affected fund managers' disclosure decisions when faced with reputation concerns. While prior literature has extensively documented the direct effects of regulatory changes on financial institutions' behavior, we provide novel evidence on the indirect effects through reputation management.

Our analysis suggests that the reform's enhanced liquidity requirements created a new dimension of reputation risk for money market funds. Fund managers, concerned about maintaining their reputation for safety and stability, appeared to adjust their voluntary disclosure practices in response to the regulatory changes. This finding extends the literature on the relationship between regulation and voluntary disclosure (e.g., Leuz and Verrecchia, 2000) by highlighting the mediating role of reputation risk. The reform's emphasis on liquidity management appears to have heightened managers' awareness of reputation costs associated with potential non-compliance or perceived instability.

The relationship between regulatory requirements and voluntary disclosure through the reputation channel appears to be particularly pronounced for funds with greater institutional ownership and those operating in more competitive markets. This finding aligns with theoretical predictions from the reputation literature in accounting (e.g., Beyer et al., 2010) and suggests that market structure and investor sophistication influence how managers respond to reputation risks created by regulatory changes.

Our findings have important implications for regulators and policymakers. The evidence suggests that regulatory reforms can influence disclosure practices not only through direct compliance requirements but also through indirect reputation channels. This insight is

particularly relevant for future policy design, as regulators should consider how new requirements might affect institutions' reputation management strategies. The results also suggest that reputation risk can serve as an important enforcement mechanism, complementing traditional regulatory oversight.

For fund managers and investors, our findings highlight the growing importance of reputation management in the context of evolving regulatory requirements. Managers need to carefully consider how their disclosure choices affect their reputation capital, particularly in periods of regulatory change. Investors can benefit from understanding how regulatory reforms might influence funds' disclosure practices through reputation concerns, potentially improving their ability to evaluate fund quality and stability.

Several limitations of our study warrant mention and suggest directions for future research. First, our analysis focuses on a single regulatory reform, potentially limiting the generalizability of our findings. Future research could examine how reputation risk influences disclosure choices across different regulatory changes and institutional contexts. Second, measuring reputation risk remains challenging, and developing more refined measures could enhance our understanding of its role in disclosure decisions. Finally, future studies could explore the interaction between reputation risk and other channels through which regulation affects disclosure, such as proprietary costs or litigation risk.

The dynamic relationship between regulation, reputation risk, and voluntary disclosure remains a fertile area for future research. Promising avenues include examining how technological changes affect reputation risk management, investigating the role of social media in amplifying reputation concerns, and studying how different types of regulatory requirements influence reputation-driven disclosure decisions. Such research would further our understanding of how financial institutions navigate the complex interplay between regulatory compliance and reputation management in their disclosure choices.

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Table 1Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	P25	Median	P75
FreqMF	16,271	0.5926	0.8919	0.0000	0.0000	1.6094
Treatment Effect	16,271	0.5747	0.4944	0.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Institutional ownership	16,271	0.5684	0.3241	0.2795	0.6249	0.8469
Firm size	16,271	5.9789	2.0861	4.4348	5.9438	7.4120
Book-to-market	16,271	0.7200	0.6945	0.3136	0.5721	0.9405
ROA	16,271	-0.0416	0.2520	-0.0322	0.0213	0.0667
Stock return	16,271	-0.0142	0.4964	-0.3131	-0.0925	0.1658
Earnings volatility	16,271	0.1418	0.2747	0.0236	0.0568	0.1445
Loss	16,271	0.3349	0.4720	0.0000	0.0000	1.0000
Class action litigation risk	16,271	0.3360	0.2918	0.1005	0.2322	0.5104

This table shows the descriptive statistics. All continuous variables are winsorized at the 1st and 99th percentiles.

Table 2
Pearson Correlations
MoneyMarketFundReform Reputation Risk

	Treatment Effect	FreqMF	Institutional ownership	Firm size	Book-to-market	ROA	Stock return	Earnings volatility	Loss	Class action litigation risk
Treatment Effect	1.00	0.01	-0.07	0.06	-0.04	0.06	0.02	-0.04	-0.03	0.35
FreqMF	0.01	1.00	0.42	0.45	-0.17	0.22	-0.01	-0.15	-0.27	-0.01
Institutional ownership	-0.07	0.42	1.00	0.62	-0.19	0.28	-0.08	-0.21	-0.24	0.05
Firm size	0.06	0.45	0.62	1.00	-0.37	0.36	0.04	-0.25	-0.41	0.14
Book-to-market	-0.04	-0.17	-0.19	-0.37	1.00	0.04	-0.22	-0.12	0.14	-0.09
ROA	0.06	0.22	0.28	0.36	0.04	1.00	0.13	-0.52	-0.59	-0.08
Stock return	0.02	-0.01	-0.08	0.04	-0.22	0.13	1.00	0.01	-0.15	0.02
Earnings volatility	-0.04	-0.15	-0.21	-0.25	-0.12	-0.52	0.01	1.00	0.32	0.12
Loss	-0.03	-0.27	-0.24	-0.41	0.14	-0.59	-0.15	0.32	1.00	0.13
Class action litigation risk	0.35	-0.01	0.05	0.14	-0.09	-0.08	0.02	0.12	0.13	1.00

This table shows the Pearson correlations for the sample. Correlations that are significant at the 0.05 level or better are highlighted in bold.

Table 3

The Impact of Money Market Fund Reform on Management Forecast Frequency

	(1)	(2)
Treatment Effect	0.0146 (1.03)	0.0459*** (3.50)
Institutional ownership		0.6361*** (24.82)
Firm size		0.1113*** (23.29)
Book-to-market		-0.0282*** (3.78)
ROA		0.0138 (0.61)
Stock return		-0.0281** (2.46)
Earnings volatility		-0.0081 (0.41)
Loss		-0.1779*** (11.82)
Class action litigation risk		-0.1792*** (8.27)
N	16,271	16,271
R ²	0.0001	0.2439

Notes: t-statistics in parentheses. *, **, and *** represent significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% level, respectively.