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Leibniz-Institut für Wissensmedien

Informational Benefits From Professional Social Media Use: Results From a Longitudinal Study

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ReDefTie

Redefining tie strength:
How social media (can) help us to get non-redundant information and emotional support

FUNDED BY

LINKEDIN

About Us

Welcome to LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network with 300 million members in over 200 countries and territories around the globe.

Mission

Our mission is simple: connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful. When you join LinkedIn, you get access to people, jobs, news, updates, and insights that help you be great at what you do.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Social capital:

- “the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its **source** lies in the **structure** and **content** of the actor's **social relations**. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor.” (Adler & Kwon, 2002, p. 23)

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Informational benefits

- … occur in three forms: **access**, **timing**, and **referrals** (Burt, 1992, p. 13)

Social capital on social media:

- mainly studied on Facebook
- conceptual work on Enterprise Social Media

RESULTS FROM LAST ICA

Is LinkedIn making you more successful? The informational benefits derived from public social media

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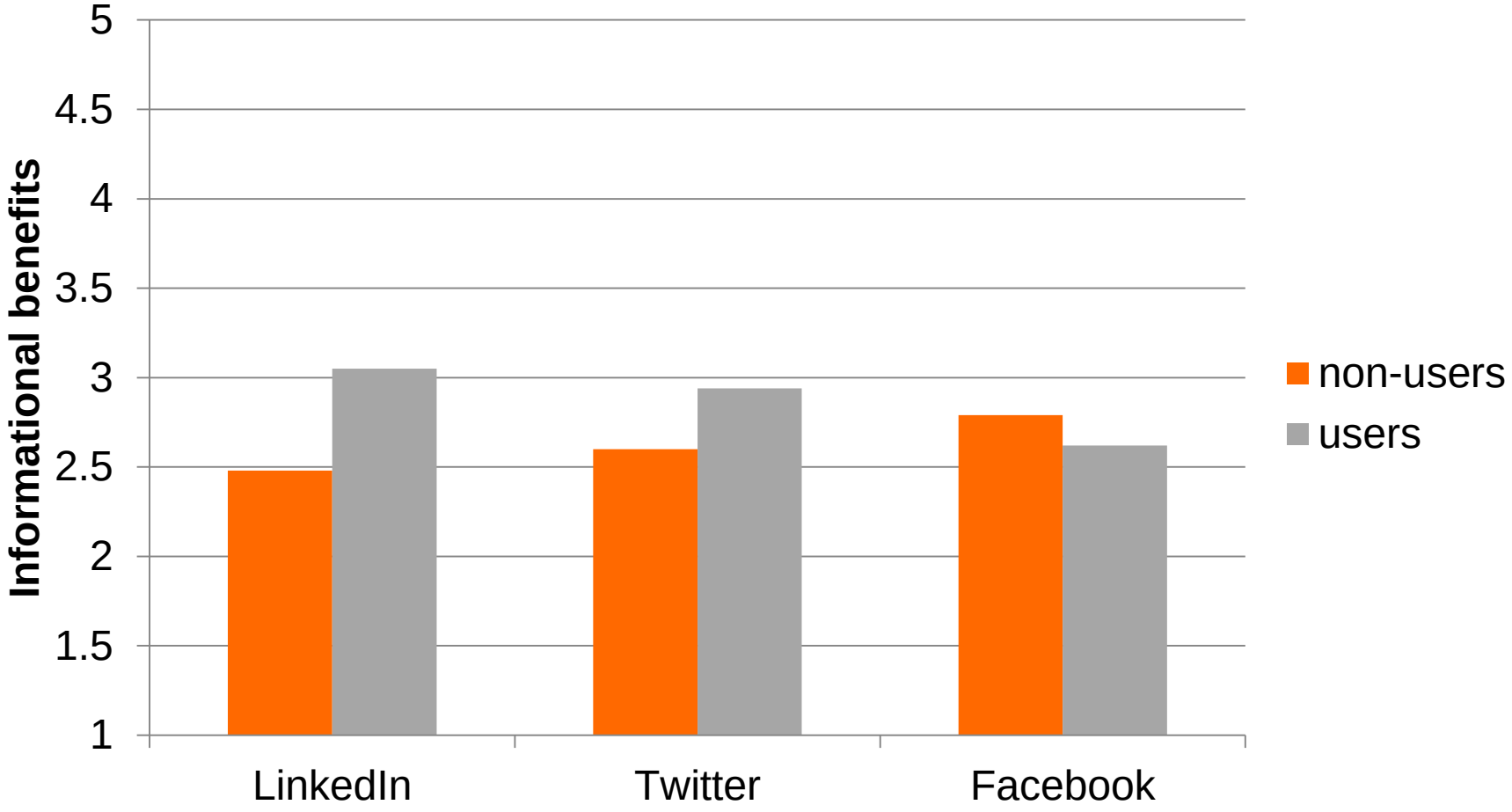


SURVEY

- social media use: frequency reading, posting, groups
- professional content: posting about professional successes, general information about work, asking for advice on work
- network composition: strong, weak, latent ties
- strategic networking (e.g., „I accept invitations from important people”)
- informational benefits (5 items, e.g., “I can get access to knowledge that is helpful in mastering job tasks from my network members” or “I receive information about job opportunities from my network members”; α = .90; Wickramasinghe & Weliwitigoda, 2011)

DISCUSSION

- Use of professional networks, but also Twitter, pays off
- but: only wave 1, cross-sectional analysis
- Could be a selection effect!
  - ➢ More successful people are more likely to use professional networks
- => longitudinal data!

SAMPLE

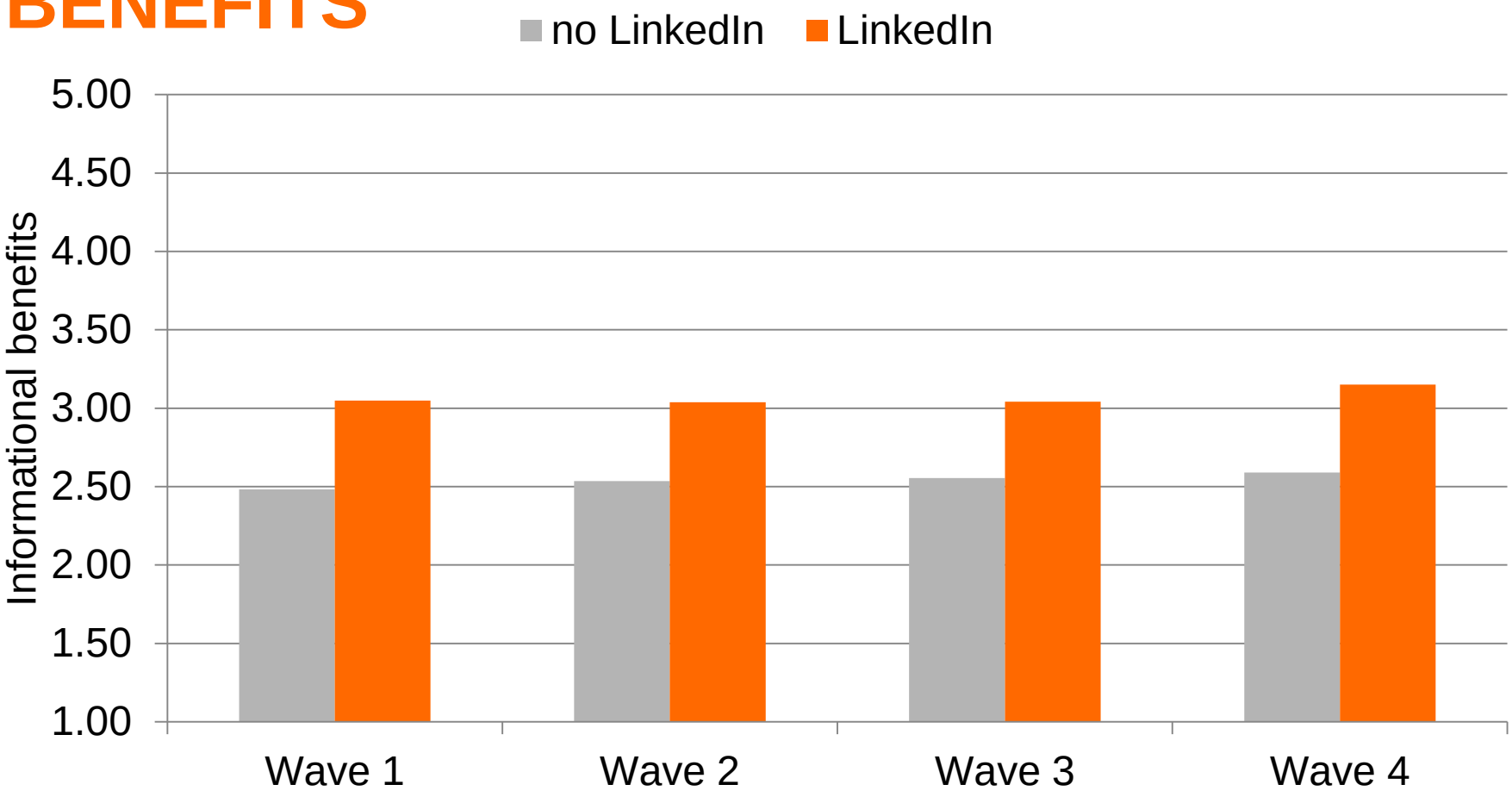
Waves 1-4, longitudinal study ERC project

Original sample: N = 3367 in Wave 1, N = 1953 in Wave 4

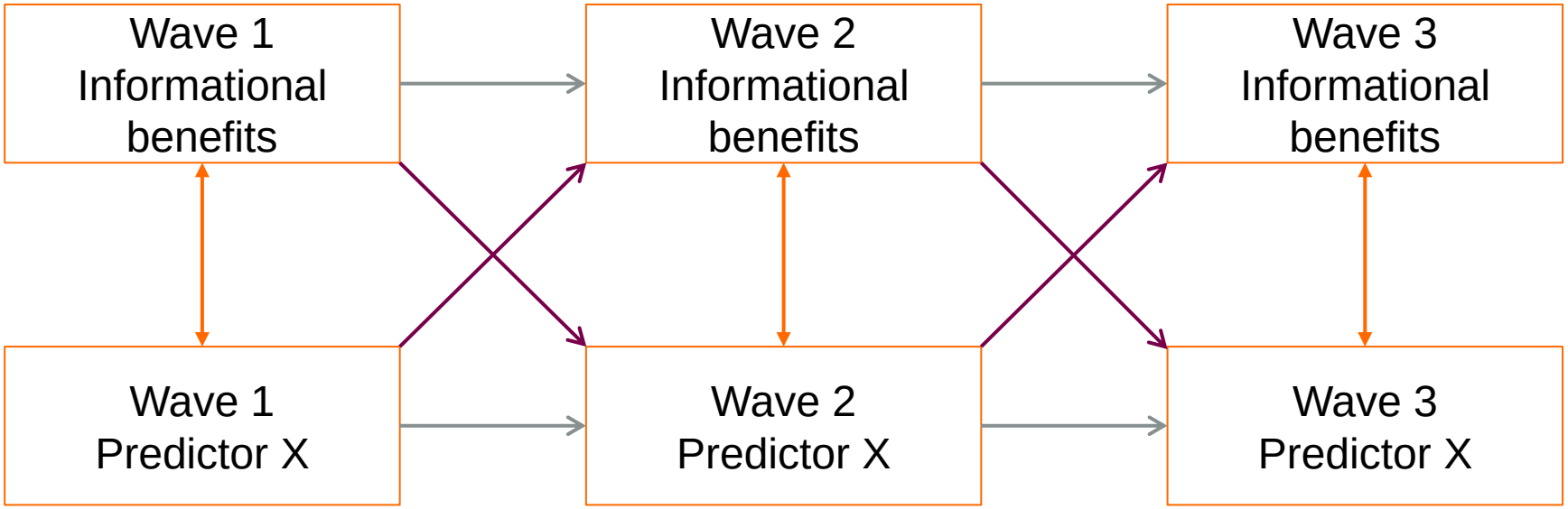
- subsample of working people (+/- 60%)

- For LinkedIn effects: only LinkedIn users (+/- 23%)
  - Wave 1: 643
  - Wave 4: 386

CROSS-SECTIONAL: LINKEDIN-USERS REPORT HIGHER INFORMATIONAL BENEFITS



METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: CROSS-LAGGED PANEL- ANALYSIS



Control for stability across time
Effects within a wave
Effects across time

LONGITUDINAL MODELS

- Passive use: login, reading => ambient awareness?
- Active use: posting, activity in groups
- Network composition: # of strong and weak ties (structure of the network)
- Strategic networking: selection of important people (content of the network)

RESULTS

- Strong selection effect: People with higher informational benefits are more likely to use professional networks such as LinkedIn
- Additional media effects:
  - within a wave:
    - Passive use: frequency of login + reading
    - Active use: Activity in groups + professional content
  - over time:
    - Number of ties predicts informational benefits half a year later
    - Shift: *strong ties* gain in importance, weak ties become less important
  - Spiral: strategic networking wave 1 => informational benefits wave 2 => strategic networking wave 3 => informational benefits wave 4

DISCUSSION

- Strength: longitudinal design, representative sample

- Use of professional networks can lead to informational benefits
- Selection effect, but additional media effects

- Use only concurrent effects => due to design; most recent posts on top
- Work-related posts important!

- Networking needs time => longitudinal effects
- Shift from weak to strong ties => ambient intimacy/relationship building?

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Questions?

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Project website: www.redeftie.eu

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THE PASSIVE USE MODEL

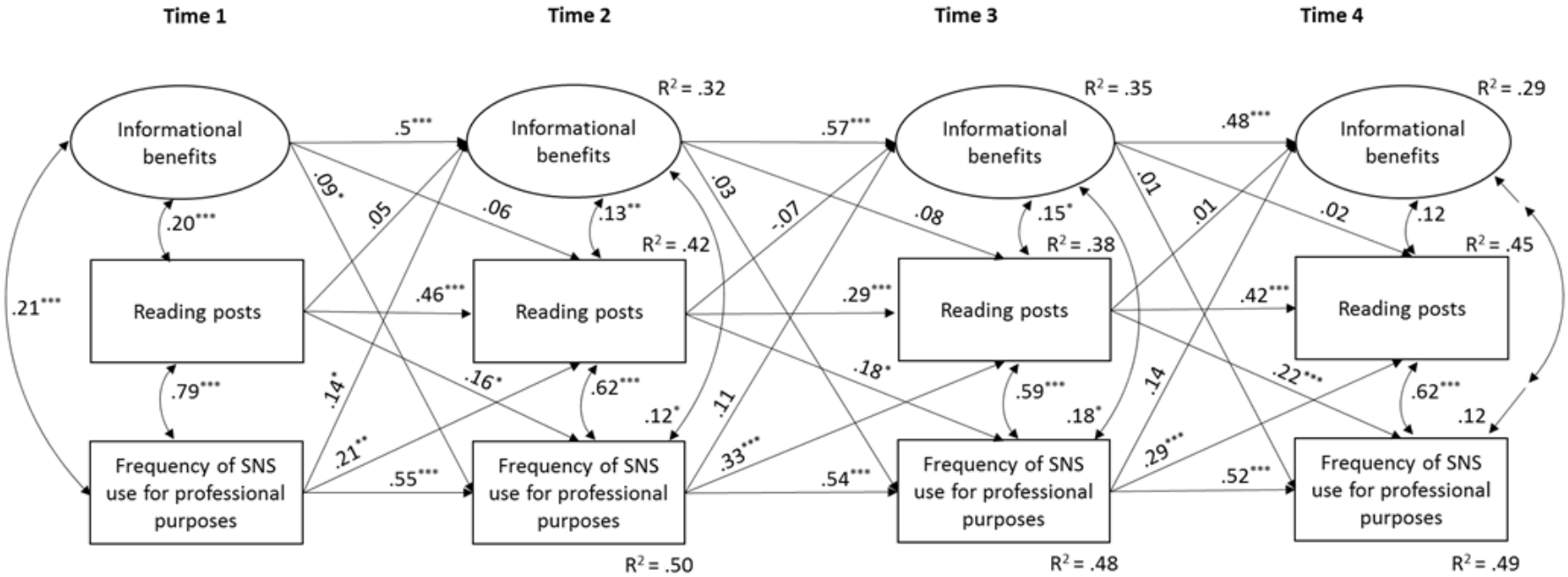

Figure 1. Longitudinal relationship between frequency of reading posts, frequency of SNS use for professional purposes, and informational benefits. Standardized coefficients, $^{*}p \leq .05$, $^{**}p \leq .01$, $^{***}p \leq .001$, MLR estimation, χ^2(Yuan-Bentler scale correction, d.f. = 301, N = 872) = 670.78, $p <$ .001, *CFI* = .96, *TLI* = .95, *RMSEA* = .04.

THE ACTIVE USE MODEL

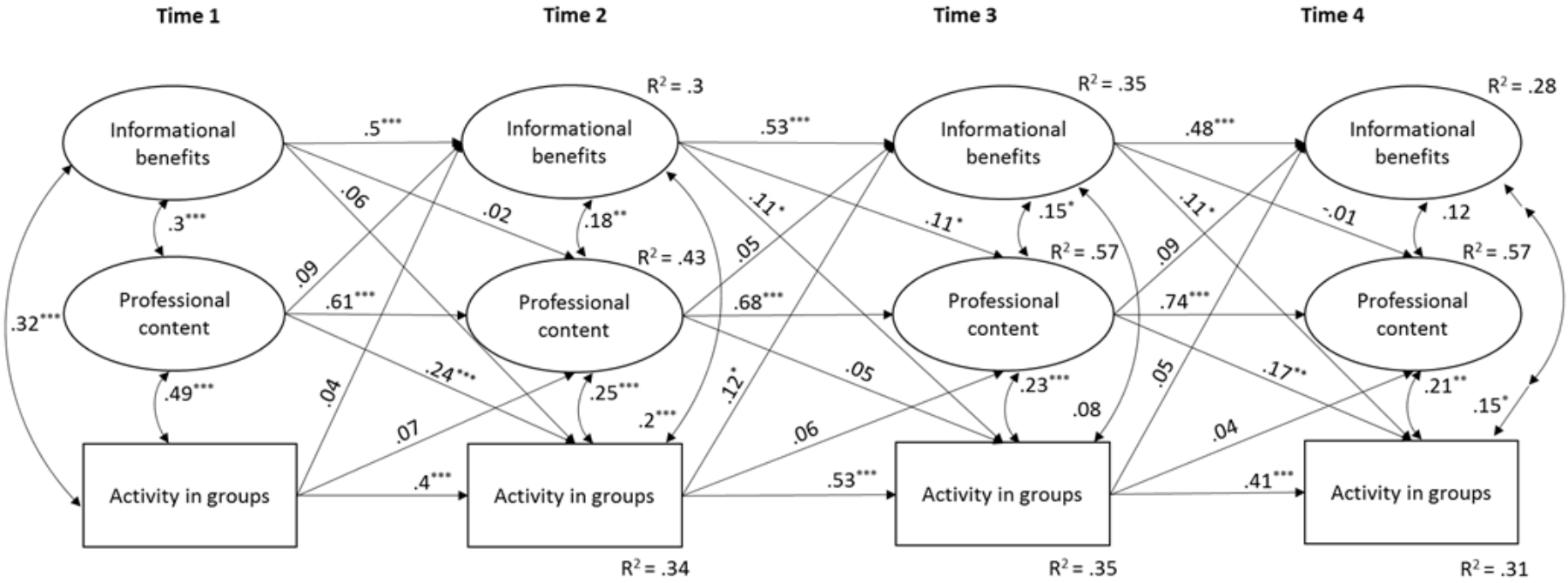

Figure 2. Longitudinal relationship between posting professional content, activity in groups, and informational benefits. Standardized coefficients, $^{*}p \leq .05$, $^{**}p \leq .01$, $^{***}p \leq .001$, MLR estimation, χ^2(Yuan-Bentler scale correction, d.f. = 529, N = 872) = 927.58, $p < .001$, *CFI* = .96, *TLI* = .95, *RMSEA* = .03.

THE NETWORK COMPOSITION MODEL

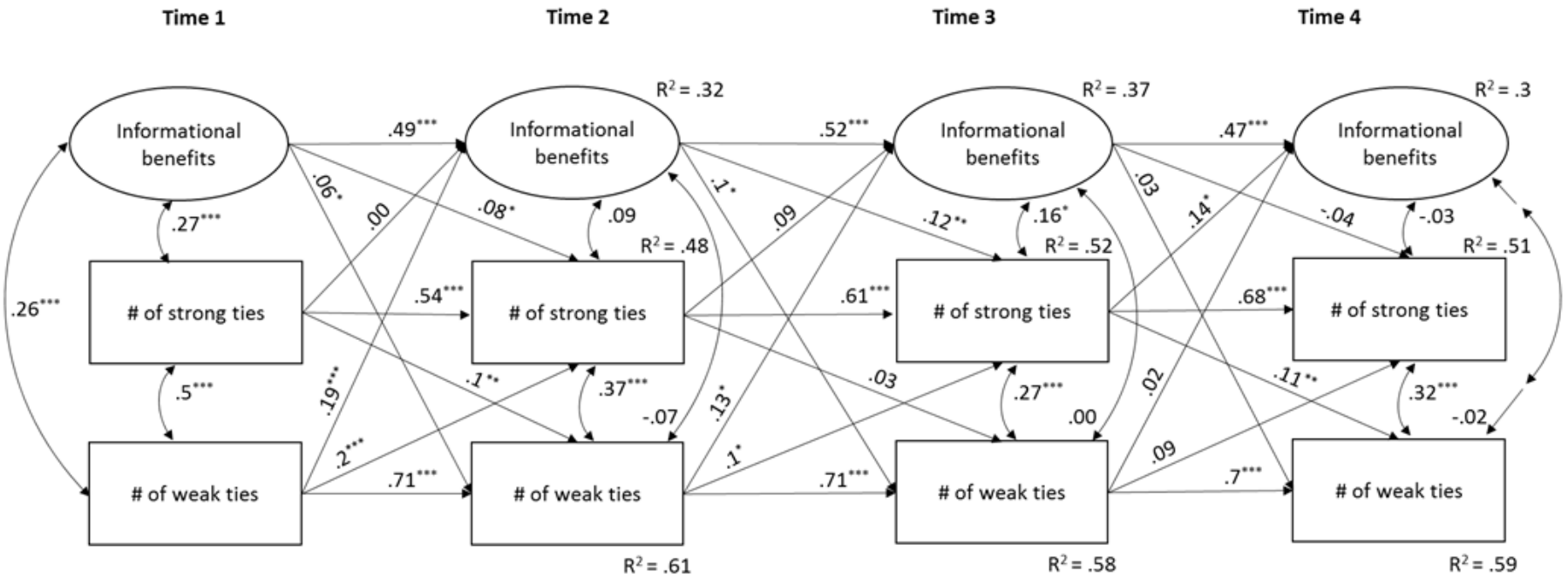

Figure 3. Longitudinal relationship between number of strong ties, number of weak ties, and informational benefits. Standardized coefficients, $^{*}p \leq .05$, $^{**}p \leq .01$, $^{***}p \leq .001$, MLR estimation, χ^2(Yuan-Bentler scale correction, d.f. = 301, N = 872) = 761.31, $p < .001$, *CFI* = .94, *TLI* = .93, *RMSEA* = .04.

THE STRATEGIC NETWORKING MODEL

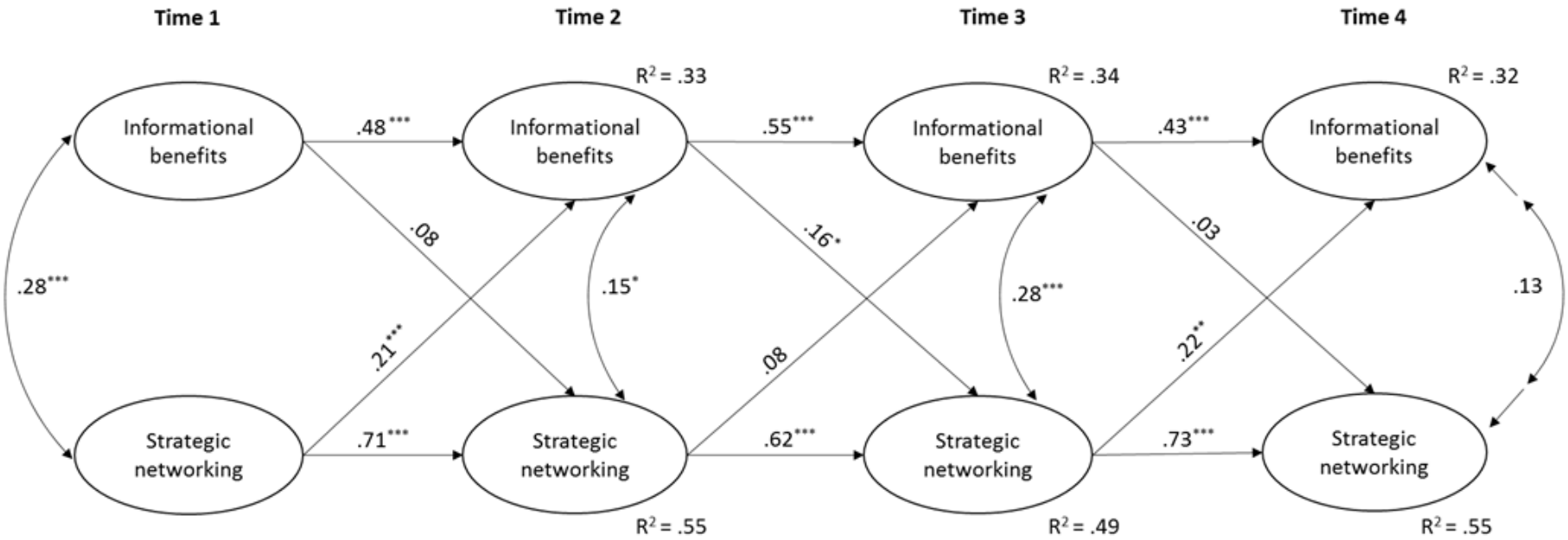

Figure 4. Longitudinal relationship between strategic networking and informational benefits. Standardized coefficients, $^{*}p \leq .05$, $^{**}p \leq .01$, $^{***}p \leq .001$, MLR estimation, χ^2(Yuan-Bentler scale correction, d.f. = 545, N = 972) = 1014.6, $p < .001$, *CFI* = .95, *TLI* = .94, *RMSEA* = .03.