Application to Economics of Digitization Tutorial

Dear all,

after having attended a few NBER PhD Workshops in the past which always left me inspired and truly connected to others from the research field, I hereby would like to apply for the one happening in March next year. I am sure it is not only another opportunity to listen to outstanding researchers, and learn a lot about ongoing research in the area of the Economics of Digitization, but also to get to know other young researchers in a non-virtual setting. Therefore, I would like to provide you with some information about my background and research projects in the following. I would more than appreciate to be invited to this workshop.

I am looking forward to hearing from you.

Best,
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Course work and institutions

Currently I work as a doctoral researcher at the Digital Economy department at ZEW — Leibniz Centre for European Economic Research in Mannheim, Germany. I started in this position under the direction of Irene Bertschek in October 2018. Furthermore, I am officially enrolled as a PhD student at the University of Zurich, Switzerland, since February 2020; my PhD supervisor is Ulrich Kaiser. I was delighted to be a visiting student researcher at the Stanford Economics Department invited by Liran Einav earlier this year; additionally, I will go back there for another research stay at the Digital Economy Lab led by Erik Brynjolfsson early next year.

Before joining ZEW and continuing my graduate study with a PhD program I completed my undergraduate studies in Business Administration and Economics at the Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany, in 2016 as well as a two-year master program in Economics at the University of Münster in 2018. During the latter I focused on Microeconomics classes on master and PhD level as well as Public Economics. During that time my interest for the Economics of Digitization rose due to study courses as well as internships at a German ministry.

Our structural doctoral program at ZEW and the PhD studies at the University Zurich offer me different opportunities to further elaborate my Economics knowledge. Therefore, I attended several courses such as Advanced Microeconomics, Microeconometrics, Machine Learning, Text Analysis, Webscraping, Applied Theory for Empiricists, Health Economics as well as Theory Contribution in Management Research. These courses and their lecturers teached me further aspects I like to apply to the context of digitization.

Research interests and projects

Due to our department's focus on Digital Economy actually all my work is somehow related to the Economics of Digitization. Therefore, I am interested in the fundamentals, consequences, and challenges of digitization and associated technologies. My research so far mainly focuses on digital platforms and digital health.

My first project, and chapter of my dissertation, is about "GDPR and the Lost Generation of Innovative Apps" on the market for mobile applications. In our paper we ask about consequences on exit, entry, privacy intrusiveness as well as overall welfare effects of the GDPR which came into effect in May 2018 in order to protect user privacy within the European Union. Our main results are a massive exit of apps around the enactment, a sharp slowdown in the number of new entrants post GDPR, and slighty reduced privacy intrusiveness of apps. GDPR somehow serves as the reverse of digitization when increasing entry barriers. Especially the lower number of apps – and lost generation of innovative apps – is consequential for welfare. This project is joint work with Reinhold Kesler (University of Zurich, and ZEW Mannheim), Michael Kummer (University of East Anglia, Georgia Institute of Technology, and ZEW Mannheim), and Joel Waldfogel (University of Minnesota, NBER, and ZEW Mannheim); we are currently re-working the paper and trying to add additional data for helpful insights.

A second project is on "Reputation Inflation and Experts' Additional Value: Evidence from Vivino". Therein, we try to understand to what extent increasing online ratings are justified by better quality or rather a self-reinforcing process without a qualitative basis. Additionally, we investigate differences in experts' and non-experts' consistency in reviewing and heterogeneous effects between these groups in general. For our analyses we use information on several million web-scraped reviews from an online wine platform. This project is joint work with Matthew Ribar (Stanford University).

Thirdly, I am working on a project investigating the effects of the introduction of a new reimbursement pathway for digital health applications in Germany. Using long-run panel datasets for the Google Play Store as well as the Apple App Store we are able to analyze effects on market entry, app characteristics, and competition aspects in the newly established market. Furthermore, I can benefit from my previous work with app data and even enhance this with additional data from the Apple App Store. The project is joint work with Simon Reif and Sabrina Schubert from our Health Economics group at ZEW.

Besides my main research, the focus on digitization is also valid for policy consulting work for the German government where I support our head of department in a commission of experts and we regularly face topics like digital platforms, cybersecurity, digital health or markets for technologies. Furthermore, I have been involved in policy advice on the status quo of digitization in Baden-Wurttemberg as well as personalized and dynamic pricing in online markets for German ministries.

I would highly appreciate to take part in the Doctoral Tutorial and get to know other PhD students and researchers in the US next to my research stays.