Application for Attending the Digitization Tutorial Meeting in March 2023

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Yifei Wu, a third-year PhD student in Business Administration (Strategy) at Harvard Business School. I joined the program in 2020 and completed two years of coursework. In June 2022, I passed the field exam required by my field, in which I majored in Strategy and minored in innovation and entrepreneurship.

I am hoping to attend the Digitization Tutorial in San Francisco in March 2023, as I believe I could learn tremendously from this meeting. My main research interest is digitization in emerging markets. I study digital transformation in both startup and traditional firm settings. On the startup side, I study how technology startups and digital platforms create social and business value in Global South countries. Together with my colleagues at the Tech4All lab, we collaborate with FinTech, HealthTech and AgriTech companies to understand factors that facilitate or impede these companies from scaling in emerging markets. I also study factors that shape the level of trust on digital platforms. On the traditional firm side, I study the impact of digital transformation on workers and task structure in traditional firms, as well as the effectiveness of various reskilling strategies adopted by the firm. This relates to a core topic of the Digitization tutorial this year – the labor consequence of digitization. In the Appendix below, I included short descriptions of my working projects.

I am in the process of drafting a short dissertation proposal. The topics will center around digitization in emerging markets. My intended dissertation committee members include Tarun Khanna, Rem Koning and Hong Luo/Shane Greenstein.

I am happy to provide further materials if necessary. It would be wonderful if I could be given the opportunity to attend this tutorial and communicate with other researchers. I look forward to hearing from you!

Best regards,

Yifei Wu

Appendix: Current working projects

1. My first working project studies the labor and task impact of digital transformation implemented in a traditional industry (banking) in Colombia. Using observational data, we compare the inside tasks at the bank before and after digital transformation and assess the impact of skill training on agent productivity.

2. My second working project seeks to understand entrepreneurs' ability to interpret data and information. We collaborate with a payment provider/FinTech platform in Africa, which has hourly-level transaction data of over 200,000 small businesses. We show historical performance data to small businesses and randomly select a group of business owners to interpret their patterns of underperformance. We then evaluate performance changes following the treatment in order to assess whether there is an effect from being able to think causally and interpret information.

3. My third working project studies how technology and data create value for startup in emerging markets by partnering with a Agri-tech firm which uses artificial intelligence in their business. We study the following questions: How can the company use data and AI to improve smallholder farmers' productivity and revenue? Is the effect more pronounced for certain farmers or regions over others? How can the company use technology to optimize logistics and reduce its own operational costs? Can the company delegate more decision-making to the farmers by leveraging technology and data?

4. My fourth working project studies factors impacting consumer trust in digital platforms. In particular, we study whether filtering out low-quality content from a platform affects consumer trust in that platform. To explore, we show MTurk participant restaurant reviews from Yelp – either from the filtered reviews (i.e. the ones that Yelp determines as "not recommended") or the unfiltered reviews, without telling participants which set the reviews were drawn from or the name of the platform. We then elicit participants' levels of trust in the platform. Our hypothesis is that participants will trust the platform less if they are shown the filtered reviews (which are more likely to be spammy).