



18 November 2016

Dear Committee of NBER Economics of Digitization,

My name is Guillermo Uriz-Uharte and I am a first year PhD student in Economics at University College of London (UCL). Prior to UCL, during my Master's dissertation at CEMFI (Madrid), I started to work in the field of Innovation, Digitization and Organizational Economics. The more I read about it the more I grew convinced that the digital technologies revolution is reshaping our world and shaking the foundations of many well-known facts in the Economic literature. As a result, I am enthusiastic about working within these fields during my PhD in order to be a first-hand witness of how this exciting literature develops and, hopefully, make my contribution to it.

In the rest of this application letter I will try to convey a bit of my background, research interests and projects and how I consider attending this Economics of Digitization meeting can contribute to them.

BACKGROUND

I am currently in my first year of PhD working under the supervision of Professor Imran Rasul. In addition, I am also involved with Professors Ricard Gil (John Hopkins Carey Business School) and Jose Enrique Galdon-Sanchez (Public University of Navarra) in a research project funded by BBVA in which we intend to study the relation between management and ICT adoption.

During my two years at CEMFI and the MRes year at UCL, I have successfully completed numerous PhD courses. In addition to the series of core courses I have taken courses on Industrial Organization, Labor Economics, Advanced Microeconometrics, Structural Econometrics, Banking, Development, Quantitative Macroeconomics, etc. Furthermore, I intend to take a course on Empirical IO at LSE during the next months. I believe that this rigorous curriculum has prepared me effectively to undertake my research work. Furthermore, having studied a Double Degree in Business and Law has enabled me to have a wide perspective when tackling problems.

RESEARCH WORK & INTERESTS

I am interested in both Applied Theory and Empirical Economics specifically with a focus on the fields of Digitization, Innovation and Management. Technology adoption is changing the nature of the relations within and between firms: mechanization of tasks, more dynamic firm structures, easier externalization of

tasks, more accurate information on markets and competitors through big data, etc; and I would like tackle some of these issues in my work. More specifically, in my first project I am focusing on the effect of ICT adoption at the firm site level on innovation decisions and outcomes. Traditionally, small firms have been considered to have an advantage in radical innovation. Quoting Holmstrom (1989): “Stylized facts seem to indicate that small firms have been responsible for a disproportionate share of significant innovations ... the casual evidence suggests the hypothesis that large firms are at a comparative disadvantage in managing truly innovative research”. However, there is reason to think that this dynamics may have been affected or even inverted with the digitization wave.

In the joint project with Ricard Gil and Jose Enrique we want to analyse the effect of big data adoption in firm and market performance. In order to do so we are planning to use results on the introduction of a big data information service provided by a Spanish bank to customer retail firms. Using data from credit card transactions in the whole country, this bank sends (for free) a monthly report to retail firms that are costumers of the bank about their performance and the performance of their competitors. This constitutes a great “natural experiment” in which to measure the effects of the arrival of big data.

So far, these are the two main projects I am working on. I am aware my interest will develop in the future, but I am enthusiastic about this new field, the very interesting questions that have not even been tackled yet and the prospects of my current projects.

INTEREST IN THE COURSE

Given my research interests I think this graduate course on Digitization and the NBER winter meeting are the perfect opportunity for me. Being at an early stage of my PhD it will allow me to discover existent literature, available resources and meet other people working on the field. Given that the existing work in this literature is a bit disperse, attending this meeting will be most useful. Furthermore, it will be most profitable to talk about my research projects with more experienced students and Professors on the field. All in all, I believe it would be an honour to have the chance to attend such a prestigious event. I thank you in advance for considering my application.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Yours sincerely

UCL Department of Economics
University College London
Drayton House
30 Gordon Street
London WC1E 6BT
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)7542 216948
Email: guillermo.uriz-uharte.15@ucl.ac.uk