

# 1. The Role of New Technologies and Digital Platforms in Targeting and Engaging with Low-Income Segments: Best Practices from China

## Topic Description and Main Steps

This thesis aims to explore the meaning of digitalization for targeting low-income market segments in China and ultimately for poverty alleviation. One such example is the Taobao Villages phenomena, which were developed as a model for harnessing the digital platform to promote economic growth and expand employment by developing e-commerce in rural areas.

Firstly, the student is to explore the size and characteristics of the Chinese low-income segments, by combining a secondary data analysis (for example from the National Bureau of Statistics of China) and review of existing literature. Secondly, the student is to conduct multiple case-studies of Chinese firms or initiatives that include a technology or digital platform as a core component, and target or engage with the low-income market segments. Cases should be built based on existing academic literature, grey literature (ex. company websites and social media accounts, consulting papers or reputable new sources) but should also include primary data (ex. via interviews or questionnaire).

## Student's Skill-Set

- Highly motivated, driven and curious
- Interest in exploring the role of firms in sustainable development
- Good English skills, Fluent Mandarin is an advantage

## Contact Details

Start date is as early as possible. If you are interested in this thesis topic, you should make yourself familiar with the basic concepts mentioned. Please prepare a 2-page proposal in which you state why you think this topic is of practical relevance, why you think that you are the right person to work on this thesis project and your planned schedule. More details can be found in the following website: <https://www.scm.rwth-aachen.de/education/how-to-write-a-thesis-with-us/>

Please submit your proposal to:

Stephanie Knizkov, Msc. (knizkov@scm.rwth-aachen.de)

[www.scm.rwth-aachen.de](http://www.scm.rwth-aachen.de)

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## 2. The Role of New Technologies and Digital Platforms in Bottom of the Pyramid Markets: A Systematic Literature Review

### Topic Description and Main Steps

This thesis aims to explore the meaning of digitalization for targeting the low-income market segments in the developing world, also known as Base of the Pyramid (BOP) Markets. For example, it is well known that mobile technology has created an entire wave of changes in Africa with banking and financial services being offered via mobile phones (see M-Pesa in Kenya). However, in addition to providing new services, technologies such as mobile are also revolutionizing business models of existing products. For example, mobile technology has enabled unique new models such as pay-as-you-go in the off-grid energy industry, across sub-Saharan Africa and India. Despite their prevalence in practice, digitalization and its unique effects in BOP markets is rarely addressed in academic literature. As of yet, there is no systematic analysis of application (fields), of potentials and challenges available.

The student will conduct a profound and systematic literature review on on the prevalence of digitalization and new technologies in academic literature on BOP markets. This means, he or she will systematically analyze a set of research articles in a selection of research journals using a pre-defined set of search terms to derive an overview of the status digitalization in BOP markets. Before, the student needs to familiarize him- or herself with the concepts of BOP markets and digitalization, as well as with the research method “systematic literature review”. In particular, in the phase of selecting, journals, articles and search terms, the student will be closely supervised and supported.

### Student's Skill-Set

- Highly motivated, driven and curious
- Interest in exploring the role of firms in sustainable development
- Good English skills

### Contact Details

Start date is as early as possible. If you are interested in this thesis topic, you should make yourself familiar with the basic concepts mentioned. Please prepare a 2-page proposal in which you state why you think this topic is of practical relevance, why you think that you are the right person to work on this thesis project and your planned schedule. More details can be found in the following website: <https://www.scm.rwth-aachen.de/education/how-to-write-a-thesis-with-us/>

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### 3. The Bottom of the Economic Pyramid in Developed Countries: Potential for Reverse Innovations from the Global South

#### Topic Description and Main Steps

This thesis aims to explore the unique challenges and characteristics of low-income market segments in Europe and compare them with those of Base of the Pyramid (BOP) markets in developing countries. For example, these can be connected to challenges of individuals in such markets (income level, income volatility, access to formal institutions and services, social exclusion etc.) or of the environment itself (urban vs. rural, poor infrastructure, lack of reach of formal regulatory bodies, etc.). How are BOP markets in Europe and in the developing world similar? How are they different?

Firstly, the student is to explore the size and characteristics of the European BOP segments, by combining a profound secondary data analysis (for example from EUROSTAT or OECD data). Additionally, the student will complement this by conducting expert interviews with relevant stakeholders in Europe (examples can include NGOs, Start-ups and EU institutions targeting poverty or associated challenges, etc.).

#### Student's Skill-Set

- Highly motivated, driven and curious
- Enjoys the independence of exploring new ideas and directions
- Good English skills

#### Contact Details

Start date is as early as possible. If you are interested in this thesis topic, you should make yourself familiar with the basic concepts mentioned. Please prepare a 2-page proposal in which you state why you think this topic is of practical relevance, why you think that you are the right person to work on this thesis project and your planned schedule. More details can be found in the following website: <https://www.scm.rwth-aachen.de/education/how-to-write-a-thesis-with-us/>

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