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Jasmin Gider – Simon N. M. Schmickler – Christian Westheide

High-Frequency Trading and Price Informativeness

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Jasmin Gider[†] j.gider@uvt.nl

Simon N. M. Schmickler[‡] snms@princeton.edu

Christian Westheide[§] christian.westheide@univie.ac.at

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Abstract

We study how the informativeness of stock prices changes with the presence of high-frequency trading (HFT). Our estimate is based on the staggered start of HFT participation in a panel of international exchanges. With HFT presence, market prices are a less reliable predictor of future cash flows and investment, even more so for longer horizons. Further, firm-level idiosyncratic volatility decreases, and the holdings and trades by institutional investors deviate less from the market-capitalization weighted portfolio as a benchmark. Our results document that the informativeness of prices decreases subsequent to the start of HFT. These findings are consistent with theoretical models of HFTs' ability to anticipate informed order flow, resulting in decreased incentives to acquire fundamental information.

JEL classification: G10, G14

Keywords: High-Frequency Trading, Price Efficiency, Information Acquisition, Information Production

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[†]Department of Finance, Tilburg University, PO Box 90163, 5000 LE Tilburg, The Netherlands, +31 13 466 3238.

[‡]Princeton University, Department of Economics.

[§]University of Vienna, Oskar-Morgenstern-Platz 1, 1090 Vienna, Austria, +43 1 4277 37505.

1 Introduction

High-frequency traders (HFTs) have emerged as a new major type of participant in financial markets over the last two decades. On modern equity exchanges, HFTs nowadays account for the majority of order messages and a significant share of trading volume. In the U.S., high-frequency trading (HFT) constitutes approximately half of trading volume, in Europe about one third.[1] HFTs are characterized by short holding periods and a high degree of technological sophistication enabling rapid communication with the exchange server, thus allowing the submission of order messages with low latency.[2]

We investigate how stock price informativeness about fundamentals changes with the beginning of HFT. To that end, we estimate a generalized difference-in-differences model, using an international panel of 18 stock markets and HFT start dates that are based on pronounced increases in order-cancellation ratios and decreases in average trade sizes (see Aitken et al. (2015)). We measure price informativeness using the welfare-based measure suggested by Bai et al. (2016), which captures the variation in future cash flows and investment in the next one to five years that is predicted by current market prices. The staggered introduction across different markets reduces the likelihood that a simultaneous unrelated event drives the results. Price informativeness about future cash flows and investment, and idiosyncratic volatility decrease with the start of HFT, and institutional investors deviate less from the market portfolio. These findings suggest that information acquisition deteriorates with the start of HFT.

[1]See Deutsche Bank Research citing estimates from TABB Group for 2014.

[2]HFT is a subset of algorithmic trading. Algorithmic trading refers to the general class of trading strategies which determine order submissions and cancellations in an automated fashion based on a set of input variables stemming from market data. See Menkveld (2016) for a recent survey of the literature on HFT.

Fundamentally informative prices matter from a social welfare perspective because they lead to an efficient allocation of real resources. Prices that reveal the attractiveness of future investment opportunities enable funds to flow accordingly. Information acquisition also matters for social welfare if the information that market participants acquire feeds into real decision making, e.g., through learning or incentive channels. If market participants acquire information that is not known to decision makers at the firm, then the revelation of this information leads to more efficient investment decisions as conjectured by Hirshleifer (1971), or more recently, the market feedback loop literature (e.g., Dow et al. (2017), or Edmans et al. (2015)).

Informative prices require two conditions: first, existing information needs to be impounded into prices through the trading process. Second, new information has to be acquired by investors to begin with. Most empirical studies on HFT focus on short-horizon efficiency, the former channel, and document a positive effect. These studies examine outcomes such as how closely prices resemble a random walk, or whether HFT trade against transitory pricing errors. Several theoretical models yield predictions on information acquisition, the latter channel. Short-run efficiency might improve, while information acquisition actually deteriorates. Empirically testing this channel is difficult, because information acquisition cannot be directly observed from the researcher's perspective. Our paper contributes by studying price informativeness and thereby providing indirect evidence on information acquisition. Depending on the impact of HFT on information acquisition, the net effect of HFT on price informativeness can be either positive or negative.

Our analysis shows that the start of HFT is associated with a substantial reduction in the informativeness of prices about future cash flows, amounting to at least 48% of one standard deviation for horizons greater than or equal to two years. The economic magnitude of this decline increases further for longer horizons, reaching approximately 88% of one standard deviation for a five year horizon. The forecasting power of prices with respect to investment also decreases by at least one third of a standard deviation, and becomes more pronounced for longer horizons.

Examining the timing of changes in price informativeness around the start of HFT, we find that the wedge between markets that have and that have not (yet) adopted HFT coincides with the estimated start dates. The findings cannot be explained by differential exposures to the growing importance of exchange-traded funds (ETFs). Further, the findings cannot be explained by changes in the composition of markets, which might directly affect price informativeness. Moreover, we obtain comparable estimates when we account for potential differences in the precision with which the price informativeness measures are estimated at the exchange-year level. Cross-sectional tests reveal that the effect is more pronounced for firms in which HFT are known to be more active (large firms), and for firms that are more difficult to value (young and high growth firms).

Idiosyncratic volatility, the variation in stock returns that cannot be explained by asset pricing factors, measures the incorporation of firm-specific information into prices. We document that idiosyncratic volatility decreases by 15% of one standard deviation subsequent to the start of HFT, thus providing empirical support for the detrimental effect of HFT on information acquisition based on firm-level observations.

Further, we study the investment decisions taken by institutional investors in these markets. If institutional investors acquire and process less firm-specific information, we expect this to be reflected in their investment decisions. For each market, we compute the deviation of portfolio holdings of mutual funds from a market capitalization-weighted portfolio (Active weight) and trades leading to changes in their active positions (Active trade). We find that both measures decrease with the start of HFT, by approximately 40% and 63% of one standard deviation, respectively.

Taken together, these findings lend support to the hypothesis that HFT is detrimental to information acquisition activities. Hence, we provide empirical support for the existence of a tension between the incorporation of existing information in prices[3] and incentives to acquire new information that appears to be aggravated by HFT. Our results help reconcile the opposing views of most of the existing academic literature on HFT and the opinions expressed by some institutional investors who base their investment decisions on fundamental information, and who indeed appear to be the group of market participants who are negatively affected by HFT.

In addition to the above mentioned literature on the real effects of financial markets,[4] this study complements the various strands of the literature on HFT. Our study tests predictions made in a number of recent theoretical studies investigating the effect of HFT on information acquisition by other market participants. Stiglitz (2014) voices the concern that HFTs anticipate informed order flow and appropriate the information rents that would have otherwise accrued to the investors that incurred information acquisition costs. As the rents from investing in fundamental information acquisition decrease, information production by investors decreases accordingly. As a result, less fundamental information is impounded into prices and resource allocation deteriorates, because it is based on less informative market prices. Yang and Zhu (2018) analyze

[3]See, e.g., Foucault et al., 2016, Brogaard et al., 2015, Chakrabarty et al., 2018, Brogaard et al., 2014, Carrion, 2013, Riordan and Storkenmaier, 2012, Conrad et al., 2015, Boehmer et al., 2015, Zhang, 2017, as examples for literature studying this process in relation to HFT.

[4]See Bond et al. (2012) for a comprehensive survey.

this mechanism formally, by building on a two-period Kyle (1985) model, to which they add a so-called "back-runner". Their model analyzes the strategic interaction between two types of informed traders: a trader that is fundamentally informed, and the back-runner that infers this fundamental information from observing past order flow. If this order flow signal is sufficiently accurate, the fundamentally informed trader adds noise to his trading strategies in an attempt to conceal his private information. As a result, less fundamental information is revealed in equilibrium. An extension of the model with endogeneous information acquisition shows that the fundamental trader acquires less information to begin with in the presence of a back-runner. Draus (2018), in a three-period Kyle model, considers an HFT that is either able to learn from fundamental-based order flow or to obtain a noisy signal about the fundamental investor's information irrespective of the order flow. In both cases, the fundamental investor acquires less information than in the absence of the HFT and long-term price informativeness is lower. Baldauf and Mollner (2018) model order anticipation in a fragmented market where HFTs can act both as liquidity demanders and suppliers. They find that if HFTs become faster, both information acquisition and the bid-ask spread decrease. Dugast and Foucault (2018) show that price informativeness can decline if readily available, raw, but imprecise information becomes sufficiently inexpensive such that market participants reduce their demand for more accurate, processed information.

Our analysis is also related to studies on transaction costs of institutional investors. Tong (2015) finds that HFT activities increase transaction costs in the U.S., whereas Brogaard et al. (2014), in a study of the U.K. equity market, do not find any significant effects. Van Kervel and Menkveld (2018) and Korajczyk and Murphy (2019), for the Swedish and Canadian markets, respectively, find that HFTs can apparently identify large institutional orders and adjust their behavior in a way that increases institutional transaction costs, though they do not examine whether the presence of HFT as such has an effect on institutions' average transaction cost.

In a contemporaneous paper that, to our knowledge, is the only empirical study investigating the implications of automated trading on information acquisition, Weller (2018) documents that algorithmic trading decreases the amount of information that is impounded into prices in the period prior to quarterly earnings announcements. His evidence supports the existence of a trade-off between the incorporation of existing and new information in prices. Our approach is complementary to that of Weller (2018) because, applying a different methodology, we study a longer-term measure of fundamental price informativeness. Our results suggest that the information that is impounded into prices with a delay far exceeds the content of a quarterly earnings announcement. Based on the reasoning by Hirshleifer (1971), longer-term information is more relevant for allocative efficiency as compared to information which is latent but will be revealed with certainty in the short-run.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 describes the empirical strategy, the main measures and the data. Section 3 presents the results on the informativeness of prices about cash flows and investment. Section 4 examines more direct measures of information acquisition, and Section 5 concludes.

2 Empirical Strategy and Data

2.1 Empirical Strategy

The main idea behind our empirical strategy is to use the staggered start of HFT presence in international markets to study the effect of HFT on price informativeness. We use the estimated HFT start dates by Aitken et al. (2015) who follow two approaches. HFT is generally considered to be associated with a large amount of order cancellations relative to trading volume and small trade sizes. Thus, using order book and trade data from Thomson Reuters Tick History (TRTH), Aitken et al. (2015) identify times with a pronounced and persistent increase in order cancellation-to-trade ratios, or a decrease in trade sizes, respectively.[5] Start dates based on order cancellation rates are not available for five markets with HFT. We use a combination of both approaches. We use the earlier of the two start dates, in case they are both available for the given market, and the trade size-based start dates for the markets without information on order cancellation ratios. Table 1 shows the HFT start dates for twelve international exchanges. The start dates based on trade size range from the early adopters (United States, Germany) in the beginning of 2003 to the late adopters in 2009 (Indian stock exchanges). The start dates based on order cancellation are broadly comparable, but occur 16 months earlier for Toronto and 24 months earlier for London.

Five exchanges (Seoul, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Singapore and Hong Kong) serve as counterfactuals in our analyses, because these markets were not exposed to HFT over our sample period. On the mainland Chinese exchanges in Shenzhen and Shanghai, it is prohibited to open and close a position in a security on the same trading day

[5]For the precise definition of the dates, see the appendix of Aitken et al. (2015). TRTH is a database developed by SIRCA, founded by Professor Michael Aitken.

(Bian et al., 2017).[6] HFT in the Hong Kong and Korean equity markets is nearly impossible because of a financial transaction tax that is payable on each transaction even for positions that are closed by the end of the trading day without exemptions. High exchange trading fees have made HFT uneconomical in Singapore.[7]

The use of colocation, i.e., the housing of trading firms' computer servers within an exchange's data center, is closely related to HFT activity. While colocation today is used also by other major market participants, HFTs have originally been the primary clientele of exchanges' colocation offerings. It is important to note, however, that colocation is not a necessary condition because HFTs may house their servers in close geographic proximity to exchanges without the latter offering colocation services. In fact, it is likely that exchanges begin to offer colocation as an endogenous response to the demand by HFTs. Colocation does facilitate HFT and likely results in a larger amount of HFT, even though the first HFTs might have traded on an exchange before the initiation of colocation offerings. Aitken et al. (2015) identify the dates when exchanges offered colocation for the first time and show that the start of HFT based on trade size has preceded the offering of colocation services. We use these dates as a third alternative definition for HFT "start" dates.

We recognize that these approaches to estimate the start of HFT in certain markets are noisy. In the Appendix in Tables A4, A5, and A6 we investigate the sensitivity of the results to the choice of the start date.

Based on the HFT start dates, we run a difference-in-differences analysis with mul-

[6] As is the case for exchanges in other countries, rules are different for derivatives markets.

[7] See Meyer and Guernsey (2017), https://www.hkex.com.hk/Services/Rules-and-Forms-and-Fees/Fees/Securities-(Hong-Kong)/Trading/Transaction?sc_lang=en, and http://www.nts.go.kr/eng/data/KOREANTAXATION2012.pdf.

tiple events using a panel of exchange-year observations and estimate

$$\mathrm{Y}_{k,m,t} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \mathrm{HFT}_{m,t} + \delta X_{m,t} + \eta_t + \mu_m + \varepsilon_{m,t}, \tag{1}$$

where m indicates the stock exchange and t the year, Y_k represents price informativeness about future cash flows or investment for the time horizons $k = 1, ..., 5$. HFT is zero prior to the HFT start date and one for all following years. X is a vector of control variables that consists of the natural logarithm of total market size and Electronic, a dummy variable capturing the effect of the transition from floor to electronic trading based on Gorham and Singh (2009). η_t are year fixed effects, μ_m stock exchange fixed effects, and $\varepsilon_{m,t}$ is the error term. Following the same approach, we also analyze changes in idiosyncratic volatility using a panel of firm-year observations.

As indicated above, the models in both the exchange-level and the firm-level analysis include year and exchange or firm fixed effects, respectively. The former flexibly eliminates common trends. The latter eliminates the impact of time-invariant unobservable firm or stock exchange-specific characteristics. Our estimates of the coefficient of HFT are thus driven by variation within markets and within firms.

We argue that HFT adoption has likely been brought about by the presence of sophisticated investors in combination with the automation of trading platforms. Because the former likely start out trading in their home markets, differences between the populations of investors in different countries matter. The latter has been adopted on different exchanges at different points in time. The start of HFT requires certain technical and institutional preconditions: the market has to offer direct market access, or exchange membership to HFTs, and HFT has to be legal.

The key to our identification strategy is the staggered chronology of the start of HFT across international markets. Given that the start of HFT is not randomly allocated across markets, potential concerns about reverse causality or an omitted factor driving the HFT start dates need to be addressed. Hence, we discuss subsequently why those concerns do not appear to be plausible explanations for our results.

Reverse causality could threaten a causal interpretation of our results. Whether this concern is plausible depends on whether HFTs can directly benefit from a decline in the fundamental informativeness of prices, i.e., from an increasing distance between prices and their fundamental values. One could argue that some of their strategies involve arbitrage between securities or markets, and this is why they might profit from inefficient prices. However, HFTs predominantly hold securities for short horizons, mostly intradaily with little overnight exposure. As a consequence, HFTs are unlikely to have sufficient patience to wait until prices converge to their fundamental values. Hence, it is unlikely that HFT profits are directly determined by the informativeness of prices.

The observed chronological order in this paper is inconsistent with the notion that HFTs enter informationally inefficient markets first. If anything, the markets in the U.S. and Germany, in which we observe the first start of HFT, rather rank among the more efficient markets. Also in the cross-section of stocks, the existing evidence is inconsistent with a preference for trading inefficient stocks: Brogaard et al. (2014) show that HFTs are more active in large than in small cap stocks, which suggests that they do not prefer to trade in less efficient markets, even if the potential profit, as a fraction of their trading volume, may be higher in such an environment.

A causal interpretation of the estimates in our study hinges upon the assumption that there is no unobservable confounding factor that drives both HFT and price informativeness. The staggered nature of events and the use of exchange fixed effects mitigate the concern that this assumption is violated, as any such confounding factor would have to be correlated with the chronological order of the start of HFT. Further, we analyze pre-trends and directly address potential confounders that might bias our results, by considering the impact of ETF growth, financial crisis, changes in market compositions, and the chronological order of the introduction of electronic trading platforms further below.

2.2 Measuring the Informativeness of Prices and Information Acquisition

2.2.1 Informativeness about Future Cash Flows and Investment

We measure the informativeness of prices following the approach suggested by Bai et al. (2016) and used in Kacperczyk et al. (2018). This measure captures how well the cross-section of firms' market prices in a given market at a given point in time predict the cross-section of their future cash flows or the cross-section of future investment, respectively.

Building on standard Q theory, Bai et al. (2016) consider firms that choose capital adjustments given a productivity shock and capital adjustment costs. Managers and outside investors receive a signal about the productivity shock. Since their signals include information that is outside of the manager's information set, managers take into account market prices when making investment decisions. As a result, the efficiency of firms' investment decisions, and thus welfare, increases with the informativeness of market prices about the productivity shock.

To calculate this measure, the authors regress cash flows in the future one to five years on current market values, controlling for current cash flows and industry membership and scaling all variables by firms' total assets. Market values are measured at the end of March following the end of the firm's fiscal year. Following Bai et al. (2016), we estimate

$$\frac{E_{i,t+k}}{A_{i,t}} = a_{m,t,k} + b_{m,t,k}\log\left(\frac{M_{i,t}}{A_{i,t}}\right) + c_{m,t,k}\left(\frac{E_{i,t}}{A_{i,t}}\right) + d^{s}_{m,t,k}1^{s}_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t,k} \tag{2}$$

for each market and each year, where i identifies each firm, m identifies the market, t the year, E is EBITDA, A is total assets, M is the market value of equity, 1^s indicates the firm's first digit of the SIC code and $k = 1, ..., 5$. The informativeness of prices about cash flows (Priceinfo^{CF}) in horizon k in year t and in market m is given by the square root of the predicted variance of future cash flows using current market prices, which is the coefficient $b_{m,t,k}$ above multiplied by the standard deviation of $\log\frac{M_{i,t}}{A_{i,t}}$.

We construct the informativeness of prices about investment similarly. Capital expenditures one to five years ahead are regressed on current market values, controlling for current investment, current EBITDA and industry dummies. We estimate

$$\frac{I_{i,t+k}}{A_{i,t}} = a_{m,t,k} + b_{m,t,k}\log\left(\frac{M_{i,t}}{A_{i,t}}\right) + c_{m,t,k}\left(\frac{E_{i,t}}{A_{i,t}}\right) + d_{m,t,k}\left(\frac{I_{i,t}}{A_{i,t}}\right) + e^{s}_{m,t,k}1^{s}_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t,k}, \tag{3}$$

where I denotes capital expenditure and the other variables are as defined above. Informativeness about investment (Priceinfo^{I}) with respect to horizon k in year t and in market m is given by the predicted variance of future investment based on market prices, which is the coefficient $b_{m,t,k}$ above multiplied by $log\frac{M_{i,t}}{A_{i,t}}$.

2.2.2 Idiosyncratic Volatility

Idiosyncratic, or firm-specific volatility denotes the portion of variation in stock returns that is not explained by asset pricing factors. French and Roll (1986) argue that this portion of variation captures the rate of the incorporation of private information into prices via trading. It has been used and supported as a measure of the incorporation of firm-specific information into prices by a number of articles, including Durnev et al. (2003), Durnev et al. (2004), Chen et al. (2007), or Fernandes and Ferreira (2009).

Idiosyncratic volatility is computed as the standard deviation of the residuals obtained from a Fama-French three factor model estimated using daily returns over the last 12 months (Fama and French (1993)).[8]

2.2.3 Mutual Fund Holdings and Trades

Since investors acquire information to use it when constructing their portfolios seeking superior returns, any change in the extent of information acquisition should be reflected in their portfolio choices. In particular, if investors acquire less information their portfolio weights should be closer to that of a passive benchmark. We use mutual fund holdings data from the Thomson Reuters Global Ownership database to measure fund managers' active decisions as proxies for their information acquisition. We cannot observe the stated benchmark of all funds at all times, nor the constituents and their weighting of all indices, and it is also not clear that the official benchmark is the one actually used by the fund manager as a baseline portfolio. We therefore follow Doshi

[8] We thank Heiko Jacobs for providing the data used in Jacobs (2016).

et al. (2015) who define Active weight as the deviation from the value-weighted portfolio, and show that their measure positively predicts fund performance. Active weight for fund i at time t is defined as

$$\text{Active weight}_{it} = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{j} |w_{it}^{j} - w_{it}^{jm}|, \tag{4}$$

with w being portfolio weights, j indicating stocks contained in the portfolio, and jm referring to the market capitalization-based weight of the stock in the portfolio under consideration.

A lower amount of active positions taken by investors should also correlate with a reduced portfolio turnover as investors have less reason to adjust their portfolios. This should obviously hold true if the activeness of portfolio holdings decreases. To the extent that investors try not to reduce the amount of active positions in their portfolio, e.g., because their investors may have a preference for more active portfolios as opposed to closet indexing, they may do so by acquiring information about only a subset of stocks at a time, and consequently by replacing active positions less frequently. We therefore define an additional measure that we term Active trade, which refers to the active change in portfolio weights from one year to the next. Active trade for portfolio i at time t is defined as

$$\text{Active trade}_{it} = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{j} (w_{it}^{j} - w_{it}^{jm}) - (w_{it-1}^{j} - w_{it-1}^{jm}), \tag{5}$$

where we sum only over those stocks contained in the portfolio in both years.

The measures as defined above are defined on a fund-level. However, for our purposes, we need to obtain exchange-level rather than fund-level observations. This requires two additional steps: First, within each fund, we compute Active weight and Active trade separately for stocks listed on each exchange. Second, we aggregate the measure on an exchange-level by value-weighting the individual funds' exchange portfolios' active weights.

2.3 Sample and Summary Statistics

The empirical analysis is based on annual data of an international panel of listed firms spanning the period from 1993 to 2012. We use accounting data from Compustat North America and Compustat Global and price and volume data from CRSP and Compustat Global for the U.S. and international exchanges, respectively. In cases of stock prices being available for the same firm and different exchange codes, we choose the exchange with the largest number of shares traded as the relevant one for the given firm and the given year.

Macroeconomic variables such as information on gross domestic product or trade are from the World Bank. We convert all values denominated in non-U.S. currency to U.S. dollars using exchange rates from the Federal Reserve System. We use the U.S. GDP deflator indexed to 2009 from the Federal Reserve Economic Data to turn nominal into real values.

We exclude firms with negative values of book equity and require that the current book value of total assets, current earnings, and future earnings are available.[9] For each market-year, we require at least 50 firm observations for the estimation of our

[9] For robustness, we exclude financial firms, i.e., firms with a Standard Industry Classification code starting with 6, from our sample. When we omit financial firms, the results remain similar in terms of statistical significance and economic magnitude.

informativeness measures. We select firms from 18 different stock markets. Figure 1 shows how the composition of our sample, which consists of 13 markets that exhibit the start of HFT during our sample periods and 5 counterfactual markets. The figure also shows the staggered start of HFT across these 18 markets and 20 years. The final sample consists of 330 rather than 360. This is because of missing financial statement and price data for these markets in the Compustat database, or because some firms get delisted, thus reducing the number of available data points to below 50. Further, we lose some market-year observations for longer horizons because information on some firms is not available for these longer horizons. Table A2 in the Appendix shows the number of firm observations for each market and each year for which market values, earnings, earnings in each of the next five years, total assets and industry membership are available in Compustat.

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of our sample. The upper part displays statistics of our main measures of informativeness, whereas the bottom part shows other firm characteristics. Since our dataset comprises all stocks available in the major databases, the size of sample firms spans a wide range from a few million dollars to the largest global firms. The average firm is traded on an exchange where price informativeness is positive, even though there is a wide dispersion in the price informativeness. The bottom 5th percentiles of the measures are negative for all five horizons. This suggests that for some markets at certain points in time, the valuation of firms is negatively associated with future cash flows. The informativeness measures increase for longer horizons.

3 Price Informativness about Cash Flows and Investment

In this section, we analyze how the informativeness of prices changes with the start of HFT. After presenting the baseline results, we investigate pre-trends, address potentially confounding factors, and test cross-sectional implications.

3.1 Empirical Results

Panel A of Table 3 shows the results of a regression of Priceinfo^{CF} with respect to the next one to five years on the dummy variable HFT, control variables and exchange and time fixed effects. Standard errors are clustered at the year level.[10] The coefficient of HFT is negative for all five horizons, consistent with the notion that HFT decreases price informativeness. The coefficient in column 1 is negative, but with -0.35 rather small in terms of economic magnitude and fails to be statistically significant at conventional levels. The coefficients of HFT for horizons 2 to 5 increases substantially to a value from -1.03 to -2.2 and are statistically significant at least at the 5% level. Economically, the decrease amounts to approximately 48% of one standard deviation in column 2, or 88% relative to the mean value. The magnitude of this negative coefficient increases further for longer horizons, suggesting that the negative association between HFT and Priceinfo^{CF} becomes more pronounced for longer prediction horizons. For horizons 3, 4 and 5, the decrease even amounts to approximately 56%, 76% and 82%, respectively, of one standard deviation of the outcome variable.

[10]The results are qualitatively very similar when using two-dimensional clustering in both the year and exchange dimension, or when we use the bootrapping approach by Cameron et al. (2011) to adjust for a low number of clusters in the year and exchange dimension, respectively.

Next, we analyze price informativeness about investment as an outcome variable. Panel B of Table 3 shows the regression results. Using Priceinfo^I as an outcome variable, the coefficient estimate of the dummy variable HFT is negative for all horizons and statistically significant at the 5% level for horizon 1 and at the 1% level for horizons 2 to 5. The magnitude of the negative coefficient of the HFT dummy increases with the time horizon, from -0.28 for horizon 1 to -1.48 for horizon 5. Economically, the effect of HFT is sizeable. The effect ranges from 27% (horizon 1) to 61% of one standard deviation in horizon 5. In sum, Priceinfo^I appears to deteriorate with the start of HFT, especially for longer horizons.

In order to illustrate the timing of the effect relative to the start of HFT, we estimate a modified version of Equation 1 in which we replace the HFT dummy variable with its interactions with event time dummies around the HFT start dates. Figures 2 and 3 plot the coefficients of the interaction terms for all five horizons. Adopting exchanges and non-adopting or later-adopting exchanges appear to evolve on similar paths in the periods prior to the start of HFT. These graphs show that the decrease in Priceinfo^{CF} and Priceinfo^I coincides with the estimated start of HFT. The decrease still persists several years after the start of HFT, suggesting a rather permanent change. We note that the confidence intervals widen substantially for later periods.

In Appendix Table A3, we investigate to which extent differences in the precision of the informativeness measure may confound our estimate. Differences in the precision can be caused by the the fact that the number of firm observations for each market year varies substantially, from 51 firm observations to 2,844 firm observations. Our results are comparable when we estimate weighted regressions where we use the number of observations used to compute the price informativeness measure in a given market-year as a weight. The coefficients remain very similar - in some cases they decrease very slightly - while the standard errors decrease for all 5 horizons.

We analyze the sensitivity of our results with respect to alternative HFT start dates based on trade size decreases, order-cancellation ratios and colocation offerings in Tables A4, A5 and A6 in the Appendix. The results are comparable, though order-cancellation based start dates seem to be associated with the most pronounced decrease in Priceinfo^{CF}.

3.2 Potentially Confounding Factors

Next, we directly investigate potentially confounding factors that might bias our estimates. More specifically, we consider the market-specific growth in exchange traded funds and potential changes in the composition of markets.

As ETFs and HFTs both grew substantially over the past decades, the correlation between ETF trading and HFT presence is positive. However, the direction of causality is not obvious. On the one hand, HFTs benefit from ETF trading by arbitraging between ETFs and their constituent securities. On the other hand, their activities enable a liquid ETF market. A plausible concern is that the growth in ETF trading might directly affect the informativeness of prices and that the results reported so far are confounded by this effect. There is evidence in the literature both for higher and for lower price informativeness resulting from ETFs (Israeli et al., 2017, or Glosten et al., 2017). ETF growth has been most pronounced in the U.S. If the decline in price informativeness can be explained by ETF growth, we expect weaker results when we exclude U.S. markets. The estimates in Panel A of Table 4 show that when excluding the U.S. the decline in forecasting power of prices for cash flows becomes even more pronounced for longer horizons. Panel B shows that the statistical and economic significance excluding U.S. markets is only slightly reduced compared to our baseline estimates for using price informativeness about investment as an outcome variable.

Further, to investigate whether ETF growth can explain our results, we include the natural logarithm of trading volume of the respective largest ETF replicating the performance of the exchanges' main indices as a further explanatory variable. Table 5 shows that, while the coefficients on ETF trading are negative and the size of the HFT coefficient decreases slightly, the economic and statistical magnitude of the coefficient estimate remain sizeable.

Price informativeness is also determined by the types of firms that the given market is composed of. The fundamental characteristics of firms traded on the exchanges can vary, or there can be entries or exits of firms that lead to changes in market compositions. Firms can become easier or harder to evaluate. For instance, Farboodi et al. (2018) argue that informativeness increases with firm age and firm size. Such changes in market composition may correlate with our HFT start dates and, consequently, bias our estimates. If firms became younger and smaller with the start of HFT, we would overestimate the drop in informativeness associated with HFT. Similarly, if firms became older and larger, the effect of HFT on informativeness would be underestimated. Further, the variability of cash flows or investment can change such that price informativeness decreases without changes in information acquisition. To account for these alternative explanations, we construct measures of average firm size, firm age and the standard deviation of earnings for each market and year. In Panel A of Table 6, we use these measures as outcome variables in a regression on HFT, control variables, and market and year fixed effects. The composition of markets with respect to firm size, firm age, or the variability of earnings is unchanged with the start of HFT, as suggested by the small and statistically insignificant coefficients in columns 1, 2, and 3.

In Panels B and C of Table 6 we include these characteristics as additional control variables to analyze to what extent changes in market composition affect our informativeness measures. Even if there are no overall changes in a certain direction, it could still be the case that if these characteristics change in a few markets, they are affecting our estimate. The coefficient of HFT decreases only slightly when regressing Priceinfo^{CF}, but still remains economically and statistically significant. For Priceinfo^{I} as an outcome variable, the coefficients increase slightly in magnitude. Collectively, these results reject the notion that the observed decrease in informativeness after the start of HFT can be explained by changes in the composition of firms.[11]

In the Appendix, we analyze further potentially confounding factors. The results of Tables A7 and A8 show that differential exposure to crisis, or the correlation of HFT starts with the switch to electronic trading is unlikely to confound our estimates.

3.3 Cross-Sectional Tests

Next, we calculate the informativeness of stock prices for portfolios within markets. The goal of this exercise is, first, to test whether the effects are larger for firms that have greater exposure to HFT, and, second, to test whether the effects are larger for firms that are more difficult to value. To that end we form portfolios by splitting observations in each market and year at the median value of market capitalization, firm age, and Tobin's Q. We construct the price informativeness measures for each of these portfolios.

[11] The results are very similar when we use the linear or log-linear functional terms of these variables, or when we include the (log) mean firm size, mean firm age and the standard deviation of earnings as control variables in one single regression.

The market capitalization split is motivated by the notion that HFTs are more active in stocks with large market capitalization, as supported by the findings in Brogaard et al. (2014). Information asymmetries are high in young and growth firms, as they tend to have short histories of revenues and profits, and the bulk of their value consists of future investment opportunities. As a consequence, these firms are harder to value.

Table 7 shows the estimated coefficient of the HFT dummy variable for these portfolios. Panel A shows that the decrease in informativeness is more pronounced for large firms than for small firms. The difference of the coefficients for large and small firms is negative for all horizons, but is statistically weak and only significant at the 10% level for horizon 3. This result thus weakly supports the notion that stocks with a higher share of HFT activity experience larger decreases in price informativeness. Panel B shows that the decrease in Priceinfo^{CF} is greater for younger than for older firms. The difference is positive for all five horizons and statistically significant at the 1% level for horizon 4 and at the 5% level for horizon 5. This finding supports the hypothesis that young firms are more difficult to value and, hence, more likely to suffer from decreased information acquisition. In Panel C, we compare the effect between firms with high and low Tobin's Q. The difference is negative in all five cases, though the difference is statistically significant only at the 10% level for horizon 3. Taken together, the decrease in Priceinfo^{CF} appears to be more pronounced for firms with high Tobin's Q, lending support to the notion that firms that are more difficult to value are more exposed to the effects of HFT.

4 Information Acquisition Activities

The previous analyses investigate the informativeness of prices. In this section, we turn to measures of information acquisition activities. Specifically, we study idiosyncratic return volatility as a measure of the incorporation of information into prices, and the activeness of mutual fund portfolios as a measure of the use of information acquired by investors.

4.1 Idiosyncratic Volatility

Table 8 shows the result of a regression of idiosyncratic volatility on the dummy variable HFT when controlling for different sets of variables such as firm characteristics, macroeconomic variables, and firm fixed and time fixed effects. According to the results in column 3, idiosyncratic volatility decreases by 0.222 percentage points per day after the start of HFT. This coefficient is statistically significant at the 1% level and also economically sizeable, as it corresponds to approximately 15% of one standard deviation and 8% of its mean value. This finding suggests that information-based trading decreases with the start of HFT.

In addition to the analysis of idiosyncratic volatility, we include a similar panel analysis using the bid-ask spread as an outcome variable in column 4 of Table 8. We find that the spread significantly decreases by approximately 10% of one standard deviation or 11% relative to its mean value after the start of HFT. This suggests that stock liquidity for trades that are sufficiently small so as to require only one execution at the best price has improved. This result is consistent with existing studies such as Boehmer et al. (2015). Since the adverse selection component forms an important part of the bid-ask spread, this result is consistent with a less informed order flow. This finding supports the notion that HFTs' ability to identify informed trading activity in the order flow enables trading by small uninformed traders at a low cost whereas large investors, who need to split their orders into small parts, face higher costs, which we cannot measure directly.

4.2 Holdings and Trades by Funds

Next we test whether a decrease in price informativeness is also reflected in holdings and trades of institutional investors. Table 9 shows that exchange-level active holdings by mutual funds decrease after the start of HFT. The coefficient is statistically significant at the 10% level only, but economically significant as it represents nearly 40% of one standard deviation. The decrease in active trade is substantial, as suggested by the results in column 4. The coefficient is statistically significant at the 1% level and accounts for 63% of one standard deviation. Figure 4 plots the coefficient for individual years around this effect. For *Active weight* as an outcome variable, the coefficient of the HFT dummy turns negative after the start of HFT and reverts back to zero for later periods. The coefficients for the individual post periods fail to be statistically significant, which is not surprising, given that the coefficient for all post-HFT start periods is only statistically significant at the 10% level. When studying active trade as an outcome, the drop after the start of HFT appears to be slightly more persistent. These results indicate that the decrease in active holdings and active trades by institutional investors coincides with the staggered start of HFT across these markets. Institutional investors deviate less from the market portfolio in their holdings and trades, which is consistent with the notion that they acquire and process less information about individual securities. The reversal in *Active weight* some time after the start of HFT suggests that investors adjust their behavior by taking longer term active positions, consistent with the argument made earlier that a reduction in information acquisition can be associated with a lower portfolio turnover even if the activeness of the portfolio holdings is not reduced.

5 Conclusion

The two principal functions of financial markets are risk-sharing and efficient resource allocation. Accordingly, market quality is generally defined as consisting of two dimensions: liquidity and price discovery. While these two dimensions are naturally interlinked, this paper addresses the latter. As pointed out by Hirshleifer (1971), the efficiency of prices depends on two different types of activities, the incorporation of existing information into prices and the acquisition of new information.

The previous literature on high-frequency trading primarily studies the former. This paper examines the influence of HFT on stock price informativeness, related to cash flows and investment realized years into the future, and thus speaks to the latter.

The empirical evidence in this paper suggests that the informativeness of prices declines with the presence of HFT. With HFT, market valuations predict future cash flows and investment less precisely. This decrease becomes even more pronounced for longer prediction horizons. At the firm level, bid-ask spreads decrease, and idiosyncratic volatility, which captures the process of impounding firm-specific information into prices, also decreases. Institutional investors appear to take less active investment decisions after the start of HFT. In sum, our results provide empirical support for the the arguments of Stiglitz (2014), modeled theoretically by, e.g., Yang and Zhu (2018). The findings are consistent with the hypothesis that HFT reduces the gains from information for institutional investors through order anticipation, i.e., the ability to use past order flow to predict future order flow by institutional investors in the same direction, making the execution of large informed trades more expensive. Hence, institutional investors acquire less information and, as a consequence, market prices reflect less fundamental information. Thus, HFT distorts the basis for resource allocation. This result of HFT unambiguously decreases total welfare, while the aggregate effect of HFT on welfare would have to consider the trade-off with effects on risk-sharing, which is facilitated by higher liquidity for small trades, as have been reported in the existing literature. Since different trading strategies are involved in beneficial liquidity provision and aggressive exploitation of order anticipation, market operators or regulators may reasonably consider potential mechanisms to rein in aggressive HFT.

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Figure 1: Staggered start of HFT across markets

This graph shows the HFT start dates across the markets in our sample.

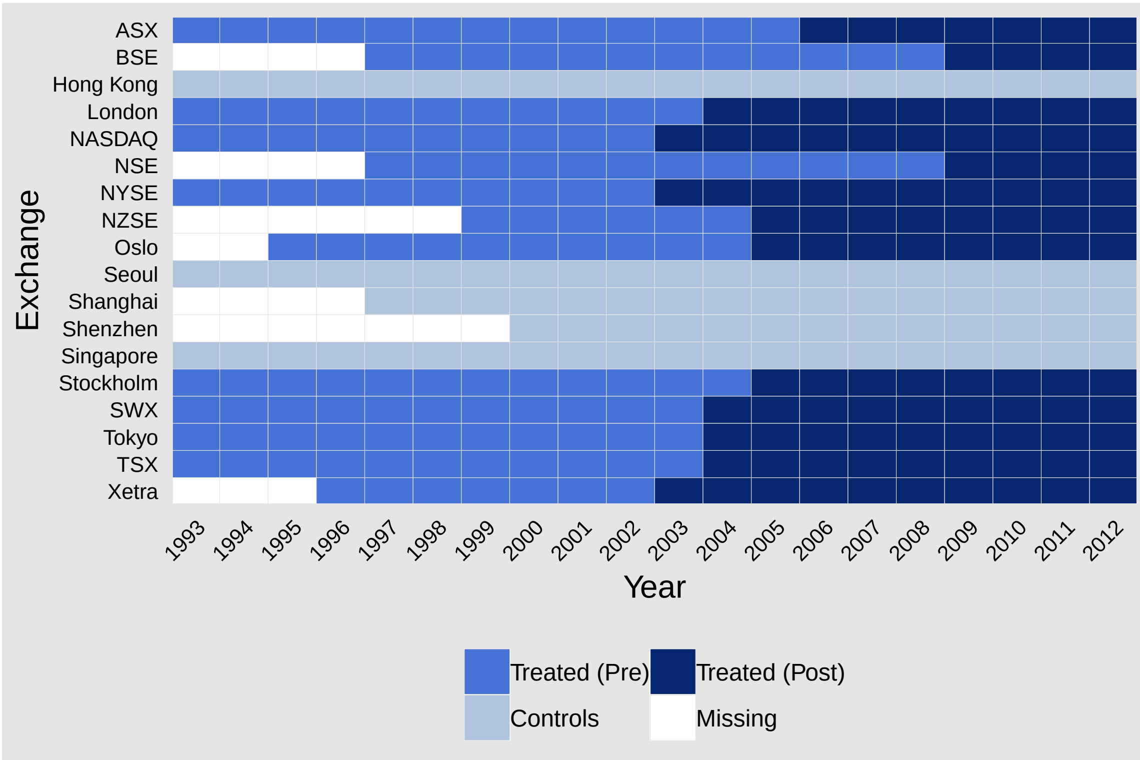

Figure 2: Informativeness about cash flows in event time

This graph shows the coefficient estimates and 90% confidence intervals of the HFT dummy interacted with event time dummy variables around the HFT start from a regression of Priceinfo^{CF} from horizon 1 to horizon 5 on exchange controls, time fixed effects and exchange fixed effects. The event time dummy variable indicates the number of years before or respectively after the start of HFT for the respective exchange.

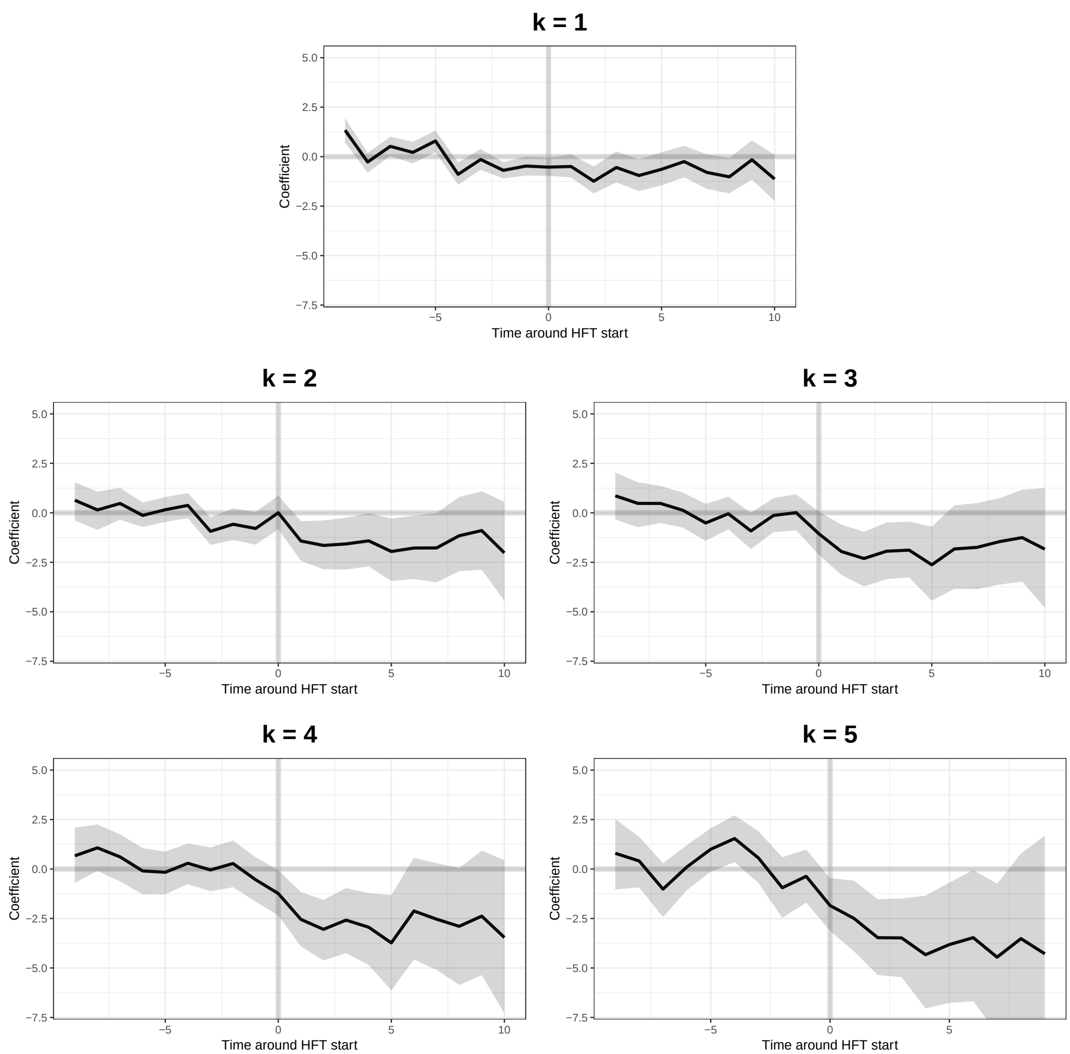

Figure 3: Informativeness about investment in event time

This graph shows the coefficient estimates and 90% confidence intervals of the HFT dummy interacted with event time dummy variables around the HFT start from a regression of Priceinfo^I over horizon 1 to horizon 5 on exchange controls, time fixed effects and exchange fixed effects. The event time dummy variable indicates the number of years before or respectively after the start of HFT for the respective exchange.

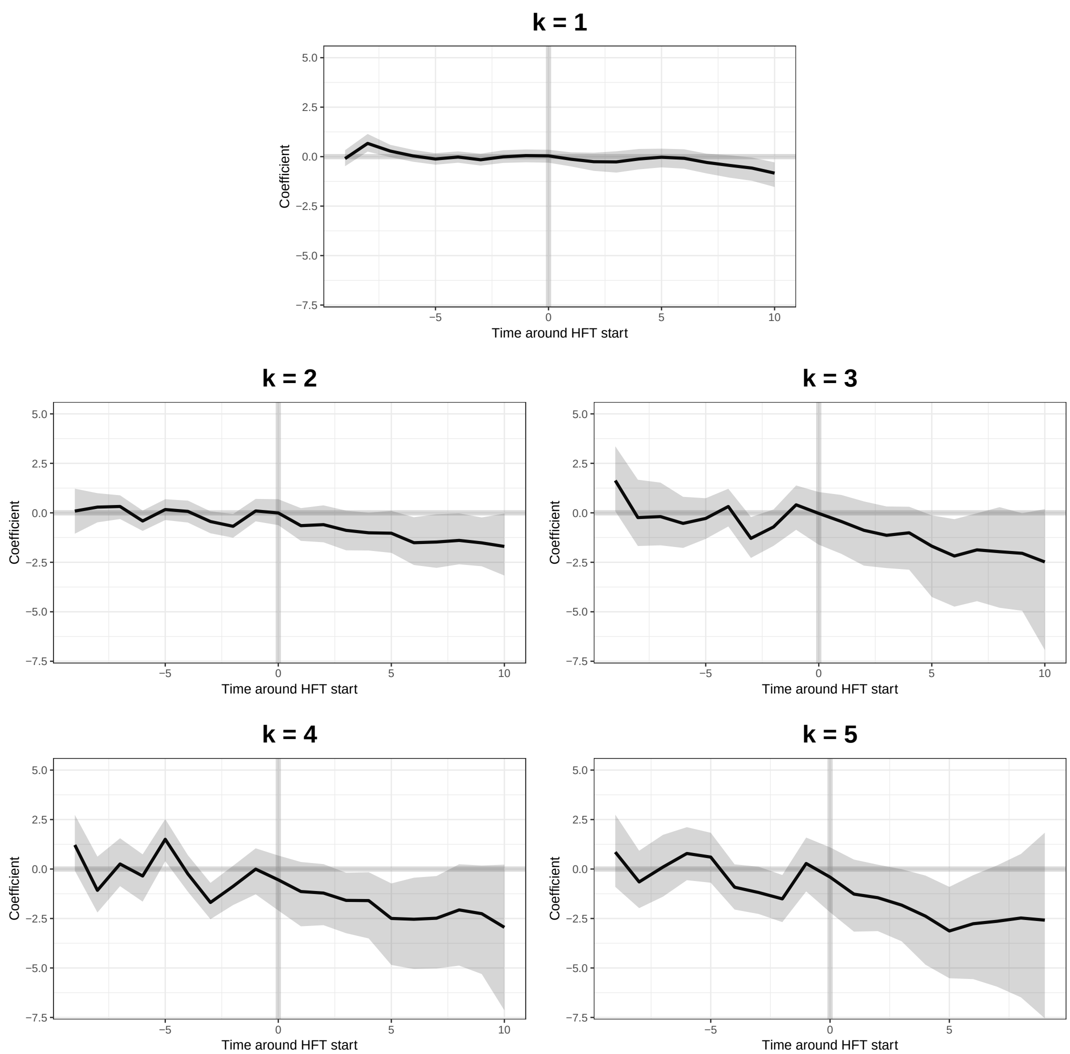

Figure 4: Holdings and trades by institutional investors

This graph shows the coefficient estimates and 90% confidence intervals of the HFT dummy interacted with event time dummy variables around the HFT start from a regression of Active weight and Active trade over horizon 1 to horizon 5 on exchange controls, time fixed effects and exchange fixed effects. The event time dummy variable indicates the number of years before or respectively after the start of HFT for the respective exchange.

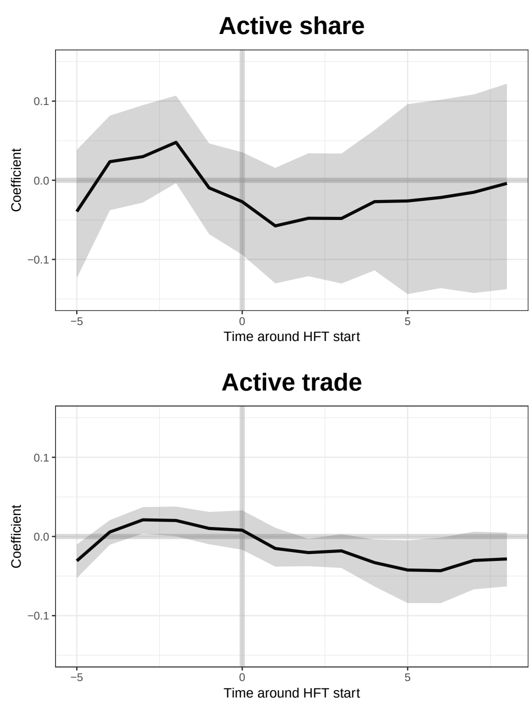

Table 1: Estimated HFT start dates across markets

This table shows HFT start dates based on trade size, order cancellation rates and colocation offerings (see Aitken et al. (2015)). We combine the stocks listed on the two Indian exchange, the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE) and the National Stock Exchange (NSE), because NSE is the larger market in terms of trading volume for large firms that generally trade on both exchanges, many other stocks trade only on BSE.

Market	Country	HFT start date		
		trade size	order cancel	colocation
Nasdaq Stock Market	United States	Jan-03		Mar-07
Xetra	Germany	Jan-03		Aug-06
New York Stock Exchange	United States	May-03	Jul-03	Aug-08
SIX Swiss Exchange	Switzerland	Jan-04		Apr-12
New Zealand Stock Exchange	New Zealand	Nov-04		
Oslo Stock Exchange	Norway	Apr-05	Feb-05	Apr-10
Stockholm Stock Exchange	Sweden	Apr-05		Mar-11
Tokyo Stock Exchange	Japan	May-05	Apr-04	Jan-10
Toronto Stock Exchange	Canada	May-05	Jan-04	Apr-08
Australian Stock Exchange	Australia	Apr-06	Jun-06	Oct-08
London Stock Exchange	United Kingdom	Feb-06	Feb-04	Sep-09
National Stock Exchange	India	May-09	May-09	Jan-10
Bombay Stock Exchange	India	May-09	May-09	Jan-10
Counterfactuals				
Korea Exchange	South Korea			
Shanghai Stock Exchange	China			
Shenzhen Stock Exchange	China			
Singapore Exchange	Singapore			Jul-11
Stock Exchange of Hong Kong	Hong Kong			Oct-12

Table 2: Descriptive statistics

This table shows summary statistics for our sample spanning annual data from 1993 to 2012. Variable definitions are provided in Table A1.

Variable	Lower 5%	Median	Mean	Upper 5%	S.D.
Informativeness measures					
Priceinfo^{CF} (k=1)	-1.84	0.93	0.91	3.24	1.49
Priceinfo^{CF} (k=2)	-2.71	1.21	1.17	4.62	2.08
Priceinfo^{CF} (k=3)	-2.95	1.64	1.64	5.93	2.51
Priceinfo^{CF} (k=4)	-2.29	2.07	2.20	6.63	2.77
Priceinfo^{CF} (k=5)	-1.75	2.62	2.98	8.16	3.12
Priceinfo^{I} (k=1)	-0.12	0.83	0.99	3.05	1.01
Priceinfo^{I} (k=2)	-0.27	1.14	1.57	4.85	1.77
Priceinfo^{I} (k=3)	-0.67	1.41	1.71	5.45	1.90
Priceinfo^{I} (k=4)	-0.83	1.45	1.89	6.17	2.24
Priceinfo^{I} (k=5)	-0.70	1.77	2.12	6.84	2.40
Idiosyncratic volatility	1.08	2.39	2.81	6.05	1.60
Active weight	0.11	0.30	0.30	0.45	0.10
Active trade	0.04	0.12	0.12	0.18	0.04
Firm controls					
Market capitalization (USD million)	7	192	2116	7487	11458
Book value of total assets (USD million)	9	287	5887	14317	48786
Tobin's Q	0.63	1.20	1.75	4.69	1.66
Log(marketcap/assets)	-2.33	-0.35	-0.39	1.45	1.15
Cash/assets	0.01	0.11	0.18	0.63	0.20
Long-term debt/assets	0.00	0.06	0.12	0.44	0.15
EBITDA/assets	-0.23	0.08	0.06	0.25	0.17
Capex/assets	0.00	0.04	0.06	0.21	0.07
Firm age	1.00	6.00	7.03	17.00	4.98
Bid-ask spread	0.25	1.03	1.47	4.02	1.64

Table 3: Price informativeness about cash flows and investment

This table shows the results of a regression of price informativeness about cash flows (Panel A) and about investment (Panel B) of horizon k on the dummy variable HFT, a set of control variables and year and stock exchange fixed effects. All values are expressed in real terms and converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the year level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: price informativeness about cash flows

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.348	-1.034***	-1.395**	-1.893***	-2.220***
	(0.306)	(0.341)	(0.543)	(0.425)	(0.595)
Electronic (d)	0.478	1.178***	0.965*	-0.221	-0.058
	(0.309)	(0.383)	(0.532)	(0.516)	(0.729)
Log market size	-0.153	-0.348**	-0.551**	-0.572**	-0.529**
	(0.119)	(0.156)	(0.239)	(0.246)	(0.238)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.273	0.456	0.406	0.411	0.339
Obs	330	325	324	322	304

Panel B: price informativeness about investment

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{I}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.277**	-0.754***	-0.887***	-1.143***	-1.475***
	(0.114)	(0.193)	(0.303)	(0.380)	(0.366)
Electronic (d)	-0.223	0.521	0.227	0.351	0.469
	(0.256)	(0.576)	(0.549)	(0.663)	(0.748)
Log market size	0.222*	0.180	0.212	0.300	0.159
	(0.111)	(0.163)	(0.132)	(0.182)	(0.280)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.492	0.527	0.410	0.337	0.381
Obs	326	321	320	319	301

Table 4: Excluding U.S. markets

This table shows the results of a regression of price informativeness about cash flows and investment of horizon k on the dummy variable HFT, a set of control variables and year and stock exchange fixed effects. Observations from U.S. exchanges are excluded. All values are expressed in real terms and converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the year level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: price informativeness about cash flows

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.283	-0.950**	-1.403**	-2.104***	-2.560***
	(0.362)	(0.406)	(0.635)	(0.488)	(0.609)
Electronic (d)	0.586	1.117*	0.820	-1.190	-1.187
	(0.450)	(0.548)	(0.802)	(0.918)	(1.226)
Log market size	-0.161	-0.342**	-0.550**	-0.508**	-0.505**
	(0.125)	(0.150)	(0.234)	(0.226)	(0.204)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.230	0.386	0.321	0.329	0.233
Obs	290	285	284	282	266

Panel B: price informativeness about investment

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{I}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.168	-0.613***	-0.532**	-0.812**	-1.153***
	(0.109)	(0.179)	(0.198)	(0.367)	(0.347)
Electronic (d)	-0.328	1.045	0.257	0.406	0.617
	(0.430)	(0.940)	(0.943)	(1.076)	(1.033)
Log market size	0.239*	0.111	0.262	0.336*	0.181
	(0.116)	(0.188)	(0.162)	(0.175)	(0.277)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.518	0.552	0.462	0.344	0.382
Obs	286	281	280	279	263

Table 5: Controlling for ETF trading

This table shows the results of a regression of price informativeness about cash flows and investment of horizon k on the dummy variable HFT, the natural logarithm of the average monthly trading volume of the market's main exchange-traded fund, a set of control variables and year and stock exchange fixed effects. All values are expressed in real terms and converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the year level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: price informativeness about cash flows

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.335	-0.948**	-1.280**	-1.674***	-1.796**
	(0.324)	(0.351)	(0.571)	(0.486)	(0.637)
Log ETF volume	-0.007	-0.043	-0.056	-0.106	-0.179*
	(0.031)	(0.030)	(0.045)	(0.071)	(0.100)
Electronic (d)	0.478	1.181***	0.967*	-0.235	-0.062
	(0.310)	(0.382)	(0.531)	(0.505)	(0.745)
Log market size	-0.155	-0.351**	-0.556**	-0.579**	-0.581**
	(0.116)	(0.155)	(0.240)	(0.254)	(0.248)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.271	0.457	0.408	0.419	0.357
Obs	330	325	324	322	304

Panel B: price informativeness about investment

Dep. var.: Inv. predict	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.309**	-0.776***	-0.906**	-1.067**	-1.374***
	(0.123)	(0.210)	(0.322)	(0.410)	(0.401)
Log ETF volume	0.016	0.011	0.009	-0.036	-0.042
	(0.012)	(0.026)	(0.037)	(0.051)	(0.053)
Electronic (d)	-0.221	0.522	0.228	0.342	0.464
	(0.256)	(0.576)	(0.550)	(0.659)	(0.745)
Log market size	0.225*	0.180	0.212	0.302	0.152
	(0.111)	(0.161)	(0.130)	(0.191)	(0.290)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.492	0.525	0.408	0.337	0.380
Obs	326	321	320	319	301

Table 6: Market composition

Panel A of this table shows the results of a regression of the natural logarithm of mean firm size (column 1), mean firm age (column 2) or the standard deviation of earnings (column 3) on the dummy variable HFT, a set of control variables, and year and stock exchange fixed effects. Panel B and C show the results of a regression of price informatinvess about cash flows and about investment as an outcome variable, respectively. All values are expressed in real terms and converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the year level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: Changes in market composition

Dep. var.:	Log size	Age	SD earnings
HFT (d)	-0.233	-0.057	0.005
	(0.136)	(0.054)	(0.006)
Electronic (d)	0.377***	-0.006	-0.025***
	(0.080)	(0.042)	(0.005)
Log market size	0.254***	0.097***	-0.006***
	(0.033)	(0.016)	(0.002)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.925	0.850	0.857
Obs	330	330	330

Panel B: price informativeness about cash flows

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5	(6) k = 1	(7) k= 2	(8) k = 3	(9) k = 4	(10) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.304	-0.953***	-1.337**	-1.858***	-2.094***	-0.324	-1.041***	-1.350**	-1.944***	-2.238***
	(0.301)	(0.323)	(0.545)	(0.413)	(0.570)	(0.313)	(0.342)	(0.547)	(0.427)	(0.590)
Electronic (d)	0.409	1.048**	0.869	-0.273	-0.292	0.481	1.178***	0.970*	-0.245	-0.066
	(0.301)	(0.380)	(0.556)	(0.549)	(0.829)	(0.305)	(0.386)	(0.530)	(0.505)	(0.738)
Log market size	-0.200*	-0.445***	-0.621***	-0.614**	-0.714**	-0.194*	-0.339**	-0.616**	-0.491*	-0.510*
	(0.108)	(0.143)	(0.205)	(0.248)	(0.306)	(0.107)	(0.153)	(0.265)	(0.277)	(0.263)
Log firm size	0.185	0.356*	0.263	0.157	0.692					
	(0.166)	(0.197)	(0.338)	(0.382)	(0.542)					
Firm age						0.421	-0.118	0.762	-0.964	-0.239
						(0.642)	(0.591)	(0.830)	(0.767)	(1.162)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.273	0.458	0.406	0.409	0.343	0.273	0.454	0.407	0.412	0.336
Obs	330	325	324	322	304	330	325	324	322	304

Panel B: price informativeness about cash flows (continued)

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	(11) k = 1	(12) k= 2	(13) k = 3	(14) k = 4	(15) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.312	-0.996***	-1.364**	-1.886***	-2.240***
	(0.286)	(0.320)	(0.539)	(0.437)	(0.632)
Electronic (d)	0.304	0.969**	0.787	-0.261	0.116
	(0.281)	(0.353)	(0.492)	(0.471)	(0.575)
Log market size	-0.196	-0.384**	-0.584**	-0.580**	-0.492**
	(0.114)	(0.158)	(0.236)	(0.234)	(0.222)
SD earnings	-6.991	-7.635*	-6.487	-1.596	7.386
	(4.258)	(4.053)	(5.251)	(5.891)	(11.020)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.285	0.463	0.409	0.409	0.340
Obs	330	325	324	322	304

Panel C: price informativeness about investment

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^I	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5	(6) k = 1	(7) k= 2	(8) k = 3	(9) k = 4	(10) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.348***	-0.769***	-1.078***	-1.256***	-1.603***	-0.295**	-0.756***	-0.914***	-1.166***	-1.516***
	(0.119)	(0.213)	(0.353)	(0.396)	(0.352)	(0.125)	(0.190)	(0.318)	(0.400)	(0.383)
Electronic (d)	-0.109	0.545	0.541	0.521	0.702	-0.246	0.519	0.193	0.312	0.425
	(0.209)	(0.511)	(0.400)	(0.598)	(0.685)	(0.259)	(0.589)	(0.559)	(0.686)	(0.783)
Log market size	0.295**	0.197	0.430**	0.432**	0.336	0.277**	0.185	0.279*	0.365**	0.223
	(0.107)	(0.166)	(0.194)	(0.157)	(0.240)	(0.110)	(0.174)	(0.145)	(0.169)	(0.283)
Log firm size	-0.293	-0.063	-0.830	-0.492	-0.667*					
	(0.181)	(0.282)	(0.533)	(0.397)	(0.339)					
Firm age						-0.563*	-0.061	-0.798	-0.791	-0.797
						(0.324)	(0.605)	(0.508)	(0.904)	(1.075)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.502	0.525	0.433	0.341	0.389	0.498	0.525	0.412	0.338	0.381
Obs	326	321	320	319	301	326	321	320	319	301

Panel C: price informativeness about investment (continued)

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^I	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.231**	-0.711***	-0.811**	-1.077***	-1.397***
	(0.103)	(0.188)	(0.295)	(0.356)	(0.338)
Electronic (d)	-0.008	0.700	0.607	0.707	0.757
	(0.203)	(0.495)	(0.462)	(0.625)	(0.739)
Log market size	0.232**	0.142	0.245*	0.225	0.121
	(0.105)	(0.136)	(0.135)	(0.158)	(0.260)
Log SD earnings	0.873**	0.480	1.484*	1.239**	1.062
	(0.364)	(0.528)	(0.792)	(0.590)	(0.786)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.499	0.530	0.408	0.336	0.383
Obs	345	340	339	338	319

Table 7: Cross-sectional tests

This table shows the results of a regression of price informativeness about cash flows of horizon k on the dummy variable HFT, a set of control variables and year and stock exchange fixed effects for several portfolios. In Panel A, price informativeness is constructed based on all observations which are above or below the median market capitalization for the given market and year. In Panel B, the measure is constructed based on all observations which are above or below the median firm age for the given market and year. In Panel C, the measure is constructed based on all observations which are above or below the median value of Tobin's Q in a given market and year. All values are expressed in real terms and converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the year level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	(11) k = 1	(12) k= 2	(13) k = 3	(14) k = 4	(15) k = 5
Panel A: firm size					
HFT × large	-0.865***	-1.674***	-2.230***	-2.461***	-2.663***
	(0.233)	(0.412)	(0.645)	(0.657)	(0.698)
HFT × small	-0.422	-0.999*	-0.842	-1.790**	-1.974*
	(0.435)	(0.504)	(0.733)	(0.774)	(1.023)
Difference	-0.411	-0.731	-1.321*	-0.872	-0.706
	(0.358)	(0.554)	(0.738)	(1.126)	(0.787)
Panel B: firm age					
HFT × old	-0.510*	-1.309***	-1.383***	-1.216**	-1.311
	(0.251)	(0.373)	(0.471)	(0.542)	(0.899)
HFT × young	-0.518	-1.127**	-1.676**	-2.650***	-2.969***
	(0.405)	(0.403)	(0.587)	(0.467)	(0.755)
Difference	0.063	-0.229	0.420	1.570***	1.915**
	(0.425)	(0.466)	(0.401)	(0.498)	(0.908)
Panel C: Tobin's Q					
HFT × high Q	-0.865***	-1.673***	-2.229***	-2.459***	-2.661***
	(0.233)	(0.412)	(0.645)	(0.658)	(0.698)
HFT × low Q	-0.422	-1.000*	-0.843	-1.792**	-1.976*
	(0.435)	(0.504)	(0.733)	(0.774)	(1.023)
Difference	-0.410	-0.729	-1.318*	-0.868	-0.702
	(0.358)	(0.554)	(0.739)	(1.127)	(0.787)

Table 8: Idiosyncratic volatility

This table shows the results of a regression of idiosyncratic volatility and the bid-ask spread (both multiplied by 100) on the dummy variable HFT, a set of firm and market-varying control variables, year fixed effects and firm fixed effects. All unscaled values are converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the firm level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dep. var.:	Ivol	Ivol	Ivol	Spread
HFT (d)	-0.289***	-0.578***	-0.234***	-0.163***
	(0.013)	(0.017)	(0.018)	(0.026)
Log price		-0.201***	-0.271***	-0.345***
		(0.006)	(0.012)	(0.018)
Log market cap		-0.350***	-0.212***	-0.330***
		(0.005)	(0.012)	(0.017)
Leverage		0.159***	0.175***	0.013
		(0.044)	(0.052)	(0.067)
Tobin's Q		0.295***	0.170***	0.098***
		(0.005)	(0.005)	(0.006)
Log GDP		0.454***	0.189***	-0.227***
		(0.011)	(0.048)	(0.065)
GDP growth		-0.007***	-0.030***	-0.026***
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Inflation		0.144***	-0.026***	-0.008
		(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.005)
Log trade		-0.486***	-0.272***	-0.398***
		(0.014)	(0.065)	(0.093)
Year FE	no	yes	yes	yes
Firm FE	no	no	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.008	0.451	0.739	0.670
Obs	157,469	157,469	157,469	157,469

Table 9: Holdings and trades by institutional investors

This table shows the results of a regression of active weight and active trade on the on the dummy variable HFT, a set of firm and market-varying control variables, year fixed effects and firm fixed effects. All unscaled values are converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the firm level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Dep. var.:	Active weight	Active trade	Active weight	Active trade
HFT (d)	-0.060***	-0.039***	-0.039*	-0.027***
	(0.018)	(0.008)	(0.019)	(0.007)
Electronic (d)			0.047***	0.003
			(0.015)	(0.007)
Log market size			0.031***	0.018***
			(0.008)	(0.004)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.488	0.465	0.526	0.524
Obs	287	269	287	269

Appendix

Table A1: Definition of variables

This table defines the variables used in this paper.

Variable	Definition
Informativeness measures	
Priceinfo^{CF}	The coefficient of the natural logarithm of the market value of equity scaled by the book value of assets when regressing EBITDA in the future one to five years scaled by total assets on contemporaneous EBITDA scaled by assets on the natural logarithm of market value of equity and an industry dummy variable, multiplied by the standard deviation of the natural logarithm of the market value of equity scaled by the book value of total assets.
Priceinfo^{I}	The coefficient of the natural logarithm of the market value of equity scaled by the book value of assets when regressing capital expenditures in the future one to five years scaled by total assets on contemporaneous capital expenditures scaled by total assets, contemporaneous EBITDA scaled by assets on the natural logarithm of market value of equity and an industry dummy variable, multiplied by the standard deviation of the natural logarithm of the market value of equity scaled by the book value of total assets.
Idiosyncratic volatility	The standard deviation of the residual from a regression of daily excess returns on the Fama-French three factor model, based on the daily excess returns of the 12 months in the past fiscal year.
Active weight	Exchange-year specific deviation of actual holdings by mutual funds from those implied by the relative market capitalization of the firms, as specified in Equation 4.
Active trade	Exchange-year specific active changes in positions held by mutual funds, as specified in Equation 5.

Definition of variables (continued)

Variable	Definition
Firm characteristics	
Market capitalization (USD million)	Share price at the end of December of the given fiscal year multiplied by the number of shares outstanding.
Total assets (USD million)	Book value of total assets.
Tobin's Q	The market value of total assets (computed as the market value of equity plus total assets minus the book value of equity) scaled by the book value of total assets.
Cash/assets	Cash and cash equivalents divided by total assets.
Long-term debt/assets	Long-term debt scaled by total assets.
EBITDA/assets	EBITDA scaled by total assets.
Capex/assets	Capital expenditures scaled by total assets.
R&D/assets	Research and development expenditures scaled by total assets.
Firm age	The number of years since the firm has been first covered by Compustat.
Spread	Annual average of the bid-ask spread measured in percent of the stock price.
Exchange-level factors	
Log GDP	The country's gross domestic product from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI).
GDP growth	Annual growth of the country's gross domestic product.
Inflation	CPI inflation from WDI.
Log trade	The natural logarithm of the value of exports plus imports scaled by the gross domestic product from WDI.
ETF volume	Average monthly trading volume of the market's main exchange traded fund based on trading volume given by Datastream.
Crisis (d)	This dummy variable is set to 1 if the annual return over the main stock market index of this market is smaller than minus 5%, and to 0 otherwise.
Electronic (d)	This dummy variable is set 1 if the given market has switched to electronic trading, and to 0 otherwise (see Gorham and Singh (2009)).

Table A2: Details on firm observations for every exchange-year

This table shows the number of firm observations for each exchange-year, for which information on market prices, industry membership, and earnings in the next k period are non-missing.

Panel A: $k = 1$

Exchg	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Sample
TSX	480	575	607	605	582	651	656	642	662	670	687	734	757	836	830	806	775	753	739	740	20
NYSE	1553	1603	1629	1652	1607	1511	1415	1391	1400	1416	1415	1388	1373	1325	1346	1328	1319	1355	1396	1396	20
NASDAQ	1811	1909	2089	2250	2221	2078	2178	2186	2114	2037	1998	1996	1959	1912	1914	1858	1761	1749	1732	1694	20
ASX	146	222	238	278	381	394	399	498	687	934	1028	1168	1256	1340	1457	1515	1532	1545	1561	1513	20
BSE			13	31	51	65	55	60	96	116	162	173	201	215	352	560	711	883	1281	1689	16
SWX	55	58	66	92	109	121	137	172	196	196	194	207	222	230	238	235	228	220	221	218	20
Hong Kong	119	155	177	256	422	433	455	519	569	759	809	843	904	974	1064	1074	1145	1206	1284	1329	20
Xetra	44	46	47	58	67	83	82	109	202	213	215	226	250	297	316	320	316	320	323	315	17
London	750	829	903	1248	1333	1280	1292	1360	1329	1283	1311	1428	1673	1800	1817	1737	1654	1603	1588	1563	20
NSE	2	2	16	22	51	62	60	90	235	302	364	424	540	719	943	1024	1083	1034	1005	995	16
NZSE	8	11	16	21	41	50	52	54	60	61	80	88	98	100	108	103	105	101	105	108	14
Oslo	39	46	51	82	113	96	95	111	130	136	143	152	169	173	180	177	180	186	176	173	18
Seoul	55	65	163	176	189	204	239	259	303	331	344	371	409	426	463	470	482	491	598	584	20
Shanghai				47	59	63	70	461	540	612	684	722	707	752	748	786	816	838	862	896	16
Shenzhen				31	35	39	49	405	413	418	425	444	439	528	634	707	887	1211	1423	1503	13
Singapore	87	127	148	164	230	230	247	289	378	394	443	510	558	609	627	635	655	660	654	649	20
Stockholm	61	66	67	116	165	174	216	242	255	251	253	247	254	303	334	354	360	342	355	368	20
Tokyo	1120	1446	1563	1646	1750	1843	2200	2311	2363	2444	2527	2625	2712	2819	2801	2776	2798	2783	2802	2844	20
Sum																					330

Panel B: $k = 2$

Exchg	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Sample
TSX	436	526	550	526	517	544	567	589	603	601	609	639	655	742	734	725	689	675	665	666	20
NYSE	1486	1533	1510	1510	1429	1373	1317	1349	1367	1357	1326	1309	1275	1253	1308	1278	1270	1310	1328	1341	20
NASDAQ	1653	1744	1868	1971	1926	1861	1956	2035	1973	1887	1855	1823	1769	1771	1803	1719	1650	1634	1620	1601	20
ASX	145	218	228	262	351	359	377	463	651	910	975	1077	1168	1229	1414	1448	1451	1460	1445	1431	20
BSE			13	30	50	49	54	62	97	113	154	174	181	208	344	546	655	846	1233	1609	14
SWX	48	60	67	89	104	125	134	168	189	196	190	203	214	224	228	227	217	216	215	210	19
Hong Kong	112	154	172	250	408	421	444	500	562	723	773	815	885	944	1044	1060	1128	1185	1261	1296	20
Xetra	43	43	48	57	65	57	126	106	194	214	211	225	245	299	315	314	315	315	308	303	17
London	746	803	844	1116	1210	1164	1218	1241	1242	1216	1212	1319	1555	1589	1689	1601	1521	1501	1513	1483	20
NSE	2		14	21	45	51	65	93	230	301	367	426	532	722	944	1028	1024	1008	982	957	15
NZSE	9	10	15	22	38	50	48	52	61	59	77	87	90	93	105	100	100	97	106	100	13
Oslo	40	45	51	78	93	83	85	103	121	134	139	137	156	157	176	170	173	171	167	154	18
Seoul	55	64	153	161	188	194	237	250	297	316	339	363	392	418	430	456	469	476	563	555	20
Shanghai				47	58	62	69	460	536	610	659	714	696	762	739	787	804	835	860	890	16
Shenzhen				30	34	39	45	404	410	415	401	435	425	541	630	704	884	1205	1413	1506	13
Singapore	86	124	148	156	215	217	237	275	374	384	428	497	545	558	628	601	621	630	627	620	20
Stockholm	60	62	62	111	149	151	206	231	246	244	242	229	245	279	325	341	332	324	345	347	20
Tokyo	1116	1426	1570	1625	1727	1815	2145	2253	2326	2410	2484	2561	2655	2713	2739	2712	2738	2739	2767	2812	20
Sum																					325

Panel C: $k = 3$

Exchg	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Sample
TSX	398	484	477	471	438	477	529	536	545	536	531	546	579	657	659	651	621	612	601	613	20
NYSE	1424	1428	1379	1339	1309	1275	1279	1325	1307	1291	1255	1224	1200	1231	1261	1227	1225	1250	1278	1261	20
NASDAQ	1515	1572	1654	1732	1735	1695	1830	1926	1835	1759	1684	1641	1649	1674	1675	1614	1532	1530	1528	1492	20
ASX	145	211	216	251	322	339	349	439	638	876	900	1007	1081	1199	1356	1370	1376	1355	1371	1346	20
BSE			12	27	40	52	55	66	99	112	155	157	182	202	331	491	629	825	1169	1550	15
SWX	49	60	67	85	108	121	130	166	190	192	185	194	209	215	221	216	213	210	208	204	19
Hong Kong	113	149	167	246	399	417	431	498	540	699	749	808	863	923	1030	1061	1108	1162	1234	1241	20
Xetra	41	45	47	55	46	80	129	105	195	213	211	223	245	297	310	313	311	300	295	289	16
London	723	752	768	1002	1095	1089	1122	1161	1180	1125	1119	1241	1378	1476	1566	1481	1428	1432	1445	1378	20
NSE			14	17	40	56	72	92	233	306	373	424	537	720	951	970	996	987	947	924	15
NZSE	8	9	15	18	38	46	47	53	59	55	77	81	84	90	101	95	96	95	99	96	13
Oslo	38	45	50	66	79	72	80	95	119	130	124	129	140	153	169	161	159	162	149	148	17
Seoul	54	65	145	158	180	190	233	251	285	316	332	352	383	393	419	460	456	450	538	542	20
Shanghai				46	57	62	69	458	535	588	648	707	705	752	740	781	801	833	855	619	16
Shenzhen				33	34	36	46	404	405	393	391	423	438	538	629	702	881	1197	1421	1497	13
Singapore	84	123	139	145	205	213	226	269	365	375	416	483	496	563	597	575	593	605	603	589	20
Stockholm	56	57	57	98	127	141	198	221	239	234	224	221	228	272	315	312	314	314	324	333	20
Tokyo	1100	1427	1552	1608	1702	1778	2086	2217	2301	2368	2424	2512	2557	2659	2681	2653	2695	2703	2735	2753	20
Sum																					324

Panel D: $k = 4$

Exchg	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Sample
TSX	369	417	427	398	390	443	480	496	491	473	449	486	522	594	592	582	561	560	555	558	20
NYSE	1324	1309	1234	1225	1220	1243	1250	1271	1248	1216	1171	1141	1185	1185	1221	1190	1169	1199	1206	1190	20
NASDAQ	1369	1398	1463	1584	1601	1599	1742	1797	1710	1594	1535	1514	1565	1571	1587	1493	1450	1456	1431	1377	20
ASX	135	196	203	230	303	312	331	429	622	809	836	941	1052	1149	1294	1301	1283	1291	1291	1281	20
BSE			11	26	38	50	62	66	95	113	141	153	178	188	289	477	605	784	1123	1488	14
SWX	51	61	64	89	106	117	127	165	185	188	177	190	199	208	210	213	208	202	201	197	20
Hong Kong	110	145	164	240	399	406	434	479	522	684	755	788	847	912	1030	1043	1087	1141	1179	1166	20
Xetra	44	44	48	40	64	80	126	106	196	212	209	222	243	293	309	309	296	288	281	286	16
London	680	691	701	909	1019	1004	1044	1098	1094	1052	1062	1119	1281	1373	1447	1396	1363	1370	1346	1286	20
NSE			12	17	44	62	74	92	235	315	369	425	535	728	899	945	977	950	917	901	15
NZSE	7	10	11	19	35	46	47	53	56	56	72	76	80	89	96	90	94	89	92	95	13
Oslo	38	44	43	56	69	68	78	95	115	116	116	118	135	145	161	148	153	145	144	142	17
Seoul	56	64	141	153	182	189	235	240	289	310	326	344	365	382	420	445	432	435	528	525	20
Shanghai				45	57	62	69	457	519	580	642	721	698	751	732	785	802	833	597	585	16
Shenzhen				33	31	36	45	399	384	384	380	434	440	538	628	699	876	1203	1411	1504	13
Singapore	85	115	131	139	200	198	221	266	358	363	404	442	505	533	570	548	573	584	569	552	20
Stockholm	50	54	49	85	119	137	190	215	227	216	216	207	222	263	287	297	304	292	312	326	18
Tokyo	1101	1407	1536	1586	1664	1729	2059	2193	2265	2313	2381	2424	2510	2601	2628	2625	2663	2677	2681	2710	20
Sum																					322

Panel E: $k = 5$

Exchg	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	Sample
TSX	321	380	357	353	365	405	449	455	436	405	401	444	461	528	537	525	511	514	504		19
NYSE	1216	1176	1139	1152	1187	1208	1198	1203	1168	1130	1097	1123	1141	1154	1178	1131	1128	1143	1146		19
NASDAQ	1230	1241	1340	1458	1520	1554	1623	1680	1562	1453	1436	1452	1463	1479	1473	1409	1371	1354	1315		19
ASX	130	184	187	213	281	297	327	414	574	749	781	920	1012	1094	1230	1209	1221	1211	1230		19
BSE			11	26	37	57	61	60	97	105	137	158	168	158	283	462	584	748	1071		14
SWX	52	60	67	89	102	115	125	164	182	180	172	181	193	198	207	207	200	197	193		19
Hong Kong	108	142	163	243	385	408	425	463	514	692	744	783	838	916	1023	1024	1072	1090	1106		19
Xetra	43	45	35	54	64	80	129	107	195	210	208	221	240	293	305	294	284	275	278		16
London	628	628	631	845	945	933	979	1020	1021	1004	977	1055	1197	1275	1361	1330	1305	1281	1256		19
NSE			13	21	48	66	71	93	243	311	373	422	540	683	876	926	940	922	896		14
NZSE	7	6	12	16	34	46	48	51	56	54	67	71	80	85	94	89	88	84	90		12
Oslo	37	39	40	48	66	67	77	91	102	110	106	113	128	139	150	142	136	140	138		15
Seoul	56	66	135	154	179	193	228	242	284	305	317	326	355	392	405	423	420	426	516		19
Shanghai				46	57	62	69	441	509	575	656	710	698	745	737	782	803	588	560		15
Shenzhen				30	31	35	44	378	379	375	390	442	439	538	627	697	879	1195	1418		12
Singapore	79	109	127	135	185	197	217	260	345	357	374	451	479	510	542	532	552	550	533		19
Stockholm	47	46	43	78	114	130	185	205	210	208	201	203	212	244	275	288	284	283	306		16
Tokyo	1085	1398	1511	1552	1622	1704	2037	2160	2215	2275	2294	2391	2460	2552	2599	2595	2637	2624	2640		19
Sum																					304

Robustness

We recognize that there is substantial heterogeneity in the number of firms traded on the different exchanges. This condition might imply different degrees of precision with which we measure price informativeness. We employ weighted regressions, where we use the number of observations used to estimate price informativeness for a given exchange-year as the weight, to potentially improve the precision of our results. The findings in Panels A and B of Table A3 show that the coefficient estimates are quantitatively very close to our baseline regression results in Table 3.

Table A3: Weighted regressions

This table shows the results of a weighted regression of Priceinfo^{CF} (Panel A) and Priceinfo^{I} (Panel B) of horizon k on the dummy variable HFT, a set of control variables and year and stock exchange fixed effects, where the exchange-year observations are weighted according to the number of firm observations in the given exchange-year that are used to estimate the price informativeness measures. All values are expressed in real terms and converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the year level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: price informativeness about cash flows

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.360	-1.027***	-1.384***	-1.841***	-2.173***
	(0.280)	(0.331)	(0.480)	(0.399)	(0.565)
Electronic (d)	0.429	1.105***	0.907*	-0.029	0.267
	(0.264)	(0.345)	(0.441)	(0.442)	(0.599)
Log market size	-0.181	-0.375**	-0.560**	-0.575**	-0.532*
	(0.115)	(0.169)	(0.228)	(0.241)	(0.257)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.322	0.493	0.451	0.443	0.384
Obs	330	325	324	322	304

Panel B: price informativeness about investment

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{I}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.294**	-0.704***	-0.895***	-1.091***	-1.453***
	(0.105)	(0.195)	(0.292)	(0.306)	(0.319)
Electronic (d)	-0.172	0.115	0.295	0.505	0.644
	(0.188)	(0.378)	(0.369)	(0.415)	(0.549)
Log market size	0.201*	0.235	0.236	0.381**	0.255
	(0.103)	(0.150)	(0.137)	(0.162)	(0.262)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.567	0.565	0.476	0.433	0.459
Obs	326	321	320	319	301

Alternative HFT Start Dates

We investigate the sensitivity of the results with respect to alternative approaches to determine the entry of HFT in these markets. Table A4 shows the regression results when our estimated HFT start dates are determined based on trade size. These results are very similar to the main findings shown in Table 3, with the coefficients being slightly smaller for the predictability of cash flows. Next, we use an increase in order cancellation rates as an alternative indicator. Panel A of Table A5 shows that the results are similar under this alternative definition. The number of observations decreases to 241 in column 1, because the order cancellation-based start dates are not available for all 13 markets with HFT participation. For cash flow predictability, the coefficients are greater in terms of economic magnitude for all horizons. The analysis of investment predictability in Panel B shows that the coefficient estimates are smaller in terms of economic and statistical significance. The coefficient estimates are negative for horizons 3, 4 and 5, and statistically significant at the 5% and 1% level in horizons 4 and 5, respectively.

Next, we investigate colocation offerings based on Aitken et al. (2015) as a further alternative. The coefficient of the dummy variable Colocation in the first five columns of Panel A Table A6 is negative for all five horizons. The economic magnitude for horizon 1 (35% of one standard deviation) is larger as compared to the baseline case in Panel A of Table 3 (23% of one standard deviation), but substantially smaller for horizons 2 and 5. When controlling both for the trade size-based HFT start date and colocation, the coefficient of colocation is negative but fails to be statistically significant at conventional levels for all horizons but 1 and 5. The economic significance of the coefficient estimate of HFT in columns 6 to 10 differ only by a few percentage points when compared to the baseline case in Table 3. These findings suggest that there is a small additional detrimental effect on price informativeness after colocation starts.

Using Priceinfo^I as the outcome, the coefficient of Colocation is positive in all horizons but horizon 5. For horizon 1 the coefficient is even statistically significant at the 1% level, suggesting that Priceinfo^I increases with the start of colocation. For horizon 5, the coefficient is negative but statistically indistinguishable from zero. When controlling for both the HFT dummy and the Colocation dummy variable, the coefficient is positive for all horizons but horizon 5. The economic magnitude of the coefficient estimate of HFT is again almost the same as in our baseline case. Taken together, these results suggest that the decline in informativeness coincides with the estimated start dates based on increases in order cancellation and drops in trade size.[12]

[12]We note that the colocation offering dates in Aitken et al. (2015) differ from the ones given in Boehmer et al. (2015). The results in Table A6 are similar when we use the colocation dates indicated in the latter study.

Table A4: Start dates based on trade size

This table shows the results of a regression of price informativeness about cash flows (Panel A) and about investment (Panel B) for horizon k on the dummy variable HFT based on pronounced drops in trade sizes, a set of control variables and year and stock exchange fixed effects. All values are expressed in real terms and converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the year level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: price informativeness about cash flows

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.352	-0.936**	-1.252**	-1.782***	-2.086***
	(0.311)	(0.385)	(0.570)	(0.459)	(0.631)
Electronic (d)	0.475	1.167***	0.950*	-0.239	-0.080
	(0.306)	(0.383)	(0.529)	(0.517)	(0.728)
Log market size	-0.154	-0.336**	-0.533**	-0.559**	-0.510**
	(0.121)	(0.158)	(0.237)	(0.245)	(0.235)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.273	0.453	0.402	0.407	0.334
Obs	330	325	324	322	304

Panel B: price informativeness about investment

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{I}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.332**	-0.816***	-0.948***	-1.181**	-1.545***
	(0.128)	(0.210)	(0.317)	(0.426)	(0.399)
Electronic (d)	-0.221	0.522	0.228	0.353	0.473
	(0.258)	(0.575)	(0.554)	(0.668)	(0.757)
Log market size	0.215*	0.170	0.202	0.293	0.148
	(0.112)	(0.163)	(0.131)	(0.183)	(0.278)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.494	0.528	0.411	0.338	0.382
Obs	326	321	320	319	301

Table A5: Start dates based on order cancellation

This table shows the results of a regression of the predictability of cash flows (Panel A) and of the predictability of investment (Panel B) of horizon k on the dummy variable HFT based on order cancellation rates, a set of control variables and year and stock exchange fixed effects. All values are expressed in real terms and converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the year level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: price informativeness about cash flows

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (order cancellation)	-0.448	-1.055***	-1.409**	-2.275***	-3.080***
	(0.302)	(0.362)	(0.532)	(0.443)	(0.659)
Electronic (d)	0.469	0.894*	0.318	-0.756	-0.270
	(0.303)	(0.461)	(0.654)	(0.660)	(0.938)
Log market size	-0.132	-0.312*	-0.465*	-0.550**	-0.652**
	(0.134)	(0.160)	(0.244)	(0.257)	(0.275)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.397	0.508	0.452	0.470	0.402
Obs	256	253	252	251	238

Panel B: price informativeness about investment

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{I}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (order cancellation)	-0.231	-0.617**	-0.780**	-1.109**	-1.431***
	(0.136)	(0.229)	(0.358)	(0.396)	(0.420)
Electronic (d)	-0.185	0.943	0.386	0.868	0.880
	(0.342)	(0.725)	(0.758)	(0.725)	(0.796)
Log market size	0.201	0.134	0.245	0.412**	0.272
	(0.121)	(0.197)	(0.148)	(0.194)	(0.317)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.503	0.547	0.452	0.429	0.479
Obs	253	250	249	248	235

Table A6: Start dates based on colocation

This table shows the results of a regression of the predictability of cash flows (Panel A) and of the predictability of investment (Panel B) of horizon k on the dummy variable HFT based on colocation offerings, a set of control variables and year and stock exchange fixed effects. All values are expressed in real terms and converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the year level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: price informativeness about cash flows

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	k = 1	k= 2	k = 3	k = 4	k = 5	k = 1	k= 2	k = 3	k = 4	k = 5
Colocation (d)	-0.605**	-0.370	-0.448	-0.479	-1.167**	-0.537*	-0.054	-0.016	0.114	-0.557
	(0.278)	(0.271)	(0.347)	(0.358)	(0.413)	(0.304)	(0.278)	(0.328)	(0.370)	(0.427)
HFT (d)						-0.222	-1.021**	-1.391**	-1.920***	-2.111***
						(0.319)	(0.361)	(0.561)	(0.476)	(0.610)
Electronic (d)	0.552	1.215***	1.003*	-0.213	0.025	0.548*	1.186***	0.967*	-0.236	0.014
	(0.321)	(0.396)	(0.576)	(0.566)	(0.796)	(0.316)	(0.381)	(0.535)	(0.530)	(0.737)
Log market size	-0.143	-0.228	-0.385*	-0.340	-0.273	-0.168	-0.350**	-0.551**	-0.568**	-0.545**
	(0.106)	(0.139)	(0.214)	(0.199)	(0.164)	(0.120)	(0.156)	(0.240)	(0.242)	(0.232)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.278	0.440	0.386	0.378	0.309	0.277	0.454	0.404	0.409	0.338
Obs	330	325	324	322	304	330	325	324.000	322	304

Panel B: price informativeness about investment

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^I	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5	(6) k = 1	(7) k= 2	(8) k = 3	(9) k = 4	(10) k = 5
Colocation (d)	0.275**	0.038	0.084	0.028	-0.727*	0.386***	0.287	0.381	0.402	-0.327
	(0.123)	(0.251)	(0.277)	(0.365)	(0.362)	(0.130)	(0.284)	(0.317)	(0.441)	(0.420)
HFT (d)						-0.366***	-0.820***	-0.975***	-1.235***	-1.412***
						(0.109)	(0.201)	(0.310)	(0.426)	(0.380)
Electronic (d)	-0.272	0.492	0.185	0.299	0.509	-0.275	0.479	0.173	0.295	0.512
	(0.256)	(0.609)	(0.542)	(0.686)	(0.763)	(0.258)	(0.605)	(0.559)	(0.692)	(0.777)
Log market size	0.272**	0.285*	0.339**	0.457***	0.328	0.233**	0.190	0.225	0.315	0.150
	(0.109)	(0.163)	(0.124)	(0.147)	(0.244)	(0.111)	(0.170)	(0.140)	(0.187)	(0.282)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.491	0.514	0.394	0.318	0.358	0.498	0.526	0.410	0.337	0.379
Obs	326	321	320	319	301	326	321	320	319	301

Further Potentially Confounding Factors

In this section, we investigate further potentially confounding factors: differential exposures to crises, and the switch to electronic trading.

If price informativeness decreased in times of market crisis and the latter were correlated with the staggered start of HFT, the observed effect might be falsely attributed to HFT. To address this concern, we calculate yearly market returns based on the main national index of the given market and use those returns to create the dummy variable *crisis* which is set to 1 if the yearly observation is in the bottom quintile in terms of annual market return for the given exchange and the market return is lower than -5%[13]. We find that there is no significant correlation between market returns and the start of HFT. The correlation between HFT and market returns is -0.025; that between the HFT dummy and the crisis dummy is -0.04 and statistically indistinguishable from zero.

We re-run our main analysis where we exclude observations in which the crisis dummy variable is equal to 1 (Table A7, Panel A for cash flow and Panel B for investment predictability) and find similar results.[14] In Panels C and D, we interact the dummy variables *crisis* and *HFT* to investigate how HFT affects price informativeness in crisis versus normal times. The lack of statistical significance of the interaction terms except for the predictability of investment at horizons 3, and, more importantly, the retained significance of the coefficient estimate of the HFT dummy variable, reject the

[13]The results are not sensitive to the selection of this benchmark. We find very similar results when we use a benchmark of -10%, or -15%, or a benchmark of the return being in the bottom quintile for the given exchange, or the overall sample.

[14]We additionally run regressions where we exclude the years immediately before and after a financial crisis. The results show that the coefficient of the HFT dummy variable does not change substantially. If anything, the magnitude of the coefficient increases. The results are also comparable when we exclude observations from the financial crisis period between 2007 and 2009.

concern that our results can be explained by differential exposure to financial crises.

The introduction of electronic trading platforms is an alternative type of staggered event that affects financial markets and may have occurred in a similar sequencing. There is a substantial gap between the transition to electronic markets and the start of HFT. While the former happened mostly during the 1990s, the latter mainly occurred during the last decade. One might be concerned that the dummy variable Electronic explains the drop in the dependent variable, but if the two variables are highly correlated, this effect could be falsely attributed to HFT. The two dummy variables are in fact correlated: The raw correlation between Electronic and HFT is relatively large with a value of 0.38 and statistically significant at the 1% level. We choose to include the dummy Electronic as a control variable in our main analyses to assure that our results for HFT are not driven by Electronic. Here, we directly investigate the effect of Electronic on price informativeness. We exclude observations for which HFT = 1 and begin our sample period in 1990 because the introduction of electronic trading generally occurred several years before the start of HFT participation. Table A8 shows the results. In Panel A, the coefficient is even positive, and statistically significant at the shorter horizons. In Panel B, the coefficient estimate of Electronic is insignificant and its sign varies. Based on these results, we can reject the objection that we misattribute a potential impact of Electronic to the introduction of HFT.

Table A7: Controlling for financial crisis

This table shows the results of the predictability of cash flows and investment of horizon k on the dummy variable HFT, a set of control variables and year and stock exchange fixed effects. Panel A and B exclude all observations, for which the dummy variable crisis is equal to one. Panel C and D include the interaction term between the dummy variable HFT and the crisis indicator. All values are expressed in real terms and converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the year level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: price informativeness about cash flows

Dep. var.: CF predict.	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.312	-1.089**	-1.342**	-1.972***	-2.321***
	(0.363)	(0.404)	(0.626)	(0.475)	(0.769)
Electronic (d)	0.534	1.209***	1.072	-0.165	0.058
	(0.344)	(0.410)	(0.636)	(0.571)	(0.981)
Log market size	-0.122	-0.376	-0.690*	-0.717*	-0.527
	(0.201)	(0.237)	(0.367)	(0.380)	(0.361)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.262	0.437	0.400	0.416	0.321
Obs	275	271	269	268	251

Panel B: price informativeness about investment

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^I	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)	-0.329**	-0.823***	-1.242***	-1.380***	-1.819***
	(0.147)	(0.202)	(0.400)	(0.480)	(0.469)
Electronic (d)	-0.375	0.500	0.209	0.146	0.652
	(0.309)	(0.695)	(0.646)	(0.827)	(0.979)
Log market size	0.332***	0.440**	0.334	0.387	0.077
	(0.099)	(0.158)	(0.246)	(0.303)	(0.344)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.486	0.525	0.426	0.343	0.351
Obs	261	257	255	255	238

Table A7: Controlling for financial crisis (continued)

Panel C: price informativeness about cash flows

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)=1	-0.453	-1.108**	-1.341**	-1.926***	-2.173***
	(0.326)	(0.388)	(0.598)	(0.451)	(0.640)
Crisis (d)	-0.271*	-0.295	-0.075	-0.234	-0.104
	(0.134)	(0.215)	(0.268)	(0.425)	(0.330)
HFT (d) × crisis	0.638	0.400	-0.395	0.137	-0.311
	(0.493)	(0.356)	(0.480)	(0.385)	(0.560)
Electronic (d)	0.482	1.173***	0.949*	-0.232	-0.073
	(0.306)	(0.379)	(0.536)	(0.509)	(0.740)
Log market size	-0.164	-0.368**	-0.563**	-0.590**	-0.546**
	(0.119)	(0.155)	(0.251)	(0.256)	(0.258)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.274	0.454	0.403	0.407	0.334
Obs	330	325	324	322	304

Panel D: price informativeness about investment

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{I}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
HFT (d)=1	-0.264**	-0.777***	-0.920**	-1.136**	-1.519***
	(0.119)	(0.214)	(0.325)	(0.416)	(0.373)
Crisis (d)	-0.078	-0.274	-0.292	-0.340	-0.041
	(0.126)	(0.213)	(0.293)	(0.474)	(0.337)
HFT × crisis	-0.109	0.072	0.131	-0.152	0.265
	(0.141)	(0.142)	(0.328)	(0.667)	(0.546)
Electronic (d)	-0.232	0.505	0.214	0.324	0.474
	(0.257)	(0.586)	(0.548)	(0.666)	(0.757)
Log market size	0.215*	0.156	0.186	0.267	0.159
	(0.117)	(0.182)	(0.146)	(0.216)	(0.303)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.490	0.525	0.408	0.335	0.376
Obs	326	321	320	319	301

Table A8: Price informativeness and electronic trading

This table shows the results of a regression of the predictability of cash flows (Panel A) and of the predictability of investment (Panel B) of horizon k on the dummy variable Electronic, a set of control variables and year and stock exchange fixed effects for the period from 1990 to 2012. Market-year observations, in which the dummy variable HFT is equal to 1, are excluded. All values are expressed in real terms and converted to U.S. dollars. All variables are defined as in Table A1. The table reports point estimates. Standard errors, clustered at the year level, are given in parentheses. *, ** and *** indicate statistical significance at the 10%, 5% and 1% level, respectively.

Panel A: price informativeness about cash flows

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{CF}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
Electronic (d)	0.628**	1.224***	1.048*	0.376	0.193
	(0.287)	(0.393)	(0.593)	(0.449)	(0.822)
Log market size	-0.094	-0.262	-0.627**	-0.531*	-0.598**
	(0.140)	(0.157)	(0.297)	(0.274)	(0.224)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.187	0.333	0.278	0.378	0.319
Obs	255	250	249	246	240

Panel B: price informativeness about investment

Dep. var.: Priceinfo^{I}	(1) k = 1	(2) k= 2	(3) k = 3	(4) k = 4	(5) k = 5
Electronic (d)	-0.241	1.078	0.898	0.912	1.039
	(0.365)	(0.666)	(0.637)	(0.852)	(1.008)
Log market size	0.194	0.019	-0.105	-0.075	-0.234
	(0.144)	(0.211)	(0.181)	(0.218)	(0.284)
Year FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange FE	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Adjusted R2	0.325	0.456	0.381	0.328	0.407
Obs	241	236	234	233	228

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