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Brief bio:

I am currently in my 4th year, doing Quantitative Marketing at Boston University. I am broadly interested in digital marketplaces, and how consumers process different cues while making purchases in that setting. Specifically, I have focused one stream of my research on user-generated content, and the other on non-focal "reference prices" that consumers encounter online. Methodologically, I primarily employ causal inference and quasi-experimental methods. I also use some degree of machine learning to create interesting outcomes that might be relevant to look at. In addition to my regular fellowship and research support, I have also been awarded the Rafik Hariri Fellowship for an additional $7500 of research support at Boston University. The fellowship recognises outstanding PhD students pursuing data-driven research across the school.

Coursework:

In terms of coursework, I have done a sequence of statistics and econometrics that is commonly taken at Econ PhD programs. I have also taken courses on digital economics, marketing analytics and several seminars on marketing management, marketing models and consumer behavior. A complete list is attached below:

PHD COURSEWORK (and university)

Marketing	
Marketing Management and the Customer-Focused Firm I (BU)	Frederic Brunel
Consumer Behavior I & II (BU)	Remi Trudel/Didem Kurt
Marketing Management and the Customer-Focused Firm II (BU)	Shuba Srinivasan
Marketing Models (HBS)	Doug Chung
Marketing Analytics (MIT)	Dean Eckles
Economics and Methods	Ivan Fernandez Val
Advanced Statistics for Economists (BU)	Victor Chernozhukov
Econometrics I (MIT)	Victor Chernozhukov/Joshua Angrist
Advanced Econometrics (MIT)	Shane Greenstein
Empirical Studies of Innovation and Digitization (HBS)	Erik Brynjolfsson/Marshall V.Alstyne
Economics of Digitization/Information Economics (BU/MIT)	Esther Duflo/Sara Ellison
Data Analysis for Social Scientists (MIT)	Carey Morewedge
Experimental Design and Methods (BU)	Tim Simcoe
Causal Inference for Management Research (BU)	
Teaching and Research	Pat Kauffman
Philosophy of Science and Research	Janelle Heineke
Teaching and Dissemination of Knowledge	

Dissertation summary:

The widespread expansion of digital markets in the past decade poses several questions for platforms, firms and customers alike. An important dimension to be explored in this domain is the provision of information on e-commerce platforms - given the increasing ease with which product pages can be customised to include various widgets and a vast variety of content, how do these pieces of information interact? Further, what are the specific channels through which this information eventually influences consumer decision-making?

My dissertation is situated in this space, and aims to look at how consumers respond to various “cues'” that are being introduced by e-commerce platforms which offer products or services that can be purchased online, and how these cues might eventually influence decision-making and by extension, the profitability of the firm.

In my first project (paper currently under review), the cue I focus on is user generated content (UGCs). More specifically, we study how the introduction of the Q&A technology (which enables customers to ask product-specific questions before purchase, and receive answers either from other customers or the platform itself) affects the more widely established reviews and ratings feature on e-commerce platforms. We find that consumers use these two forms of user-generated content to address different sets of concerns - while reviews and ratings can provide relevant information regarding the quality of a product before purchase, Q&As are much more effective at addressing idiosyncratic concerns about product fit that are specific to customers. By alleviating such fit concerns, the addition of Q&As leads to better matches between customers and products, higher customer satisfaction, and resultantly higher ratings. We find that the extent of this influence is moderated by the degree of prior fit uncertainty (operationalised in various ways) that exists for products. Moreover, the share of negative reviews that arise due to fit mismatch issues are reduced following the arrival of Q&A.

My second (more nascent) project examines another cue being widely adopted by e-commerce platforms in recent times, which is the advertised reference price (e.g., the "was-now", or the "starting from" price). An extensive body of literature, both in consumer behavior and economics, has established how consumers might be influenced by various forms of reference prices (internal and external) when making purchase decisions, over and above the focal price they pay. However, most of this work uses lab experiments, or store-level scanner data that construes reference price as a function of prior purchase experience (e.g., past prices paid, past promotions received), and does not directly investigate contemporaneous effects. Digital markets present a unique setting to study reference prices, wherein consumers are exposed directly to possible reference prices even without any prior purchase experience. Our goal in this project is to look at this question from the perspective of online vacation rental markets, and examine how the presence of such “non-focal” prices on the booking page might affect demand. We find observational evidence on Airbnb.com to suggest that consumers anchor on non-focal prices (the “From...” price in this context) as signals of quality, i.e, a higher advertised reference price leads to an increase in purchases. To further establish this relationship causally, we are currently designing a set of experiments to be run on a travel aggregator platform.
Taken together, the two projects will aim to shed light on factors that influence consumer decision-making in an e-commerce setting, and the possible mechanisms underlying this influence.

Committee Members:

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Tentative completion time:

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