Contact Information

Lena Song
New York University
19 West 4th St., 6th Floor, New York, NY 10012-1119
lena.song@nyu.edu
929-499-7198

Course of Study

I am a 5th year economics Ph.D. student at NYU. My research interests include applied microeconomics, behavioral economics and media economics, and I have taken a range of courses in theory and applied micro.

In addition to courses, I am a co-organizer of the Applied Micro Student Lunch and the Applied Micro Reading Group at NYU and actively participate in several other reading groups.

Research

My general research agenda is to study the welfare and distributional impacts of media.

My dissertation, “Discrimination and Media Diversity: Historical Evidence from Radio Stations”, explores the interplay between discrimination and media diversity using data on radio stations from 1946-1965. Radio stations devoting airtime to programs catering towards African American audiences first emerged in 1948. By the late 1950s more than 600 stations across the U.S. aired such programming – just under 20% of all radio stations. I examine how regional variations in discrimination, coupled with differences in competitive intensity and the timing of TV introduction, can explain these emerging differences in media diversity. To determine the size of racial bias in the media, I build on existing frameworks of two-sided markets with entry and product positioning firm decisions. Using this framework, I will estimate the overall welfare implications with the introduction of minority media, to shed light on the necessity of government minority ownership regulations today.

This paper is part of a bigger digitization project in which I collect data on radio market from 1946 to 1965, a period of drastic social change and technological progress, until right after the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. I digitize multiple data sources including industry magazines and government documents to create this comprehensive panel data on radio programming, financial information and technical specifications for all stations around the U.S.

Besides broadcasting, I have studied the effect of media more generally. In one paper, I build a theoretical framework and show that more information through media could lead to a transition in market structure from bargaining to fixed price. The basic intuition is that a more informed population of buyers promotes posted price and discourages sellers from engaging in bargaining. In a related paper joint with Morgan Hardy and Gisella Kagy, we show that this transition to fixed prices could have distributional consequences. In a panel study of garment makers in Ghana, we show that lower income sellers are disadvantaged in bargaining and could benefit from such a transition.

In an ongoing project with Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow, we study the behavioral welfare effects of social media for adolescents and young adults. With infrastructure to collect and analyze the time usage of participants, we study the impact of social media various outcomes including wellbeing, mental health, sleep quality and academic performance, and how this is affected by self-control problems.

My committee members are: Hunt Allcott, Martin Rotemberg, Luis Cabral and Raquel Fernandez.