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 6th 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 was 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

I study media and inequality. My dissertation, “Discrimination and Media Diversity: Historical Evidence from Radio Stations”, explores the interplay between discrimination and media diversity using data on radio stations in the 1950s.

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. Building on the IO literature, I develop a test for firm-owner discrimination in the spirit of Becker’s outcome test. To apply this test, I hand-collect and digitize a novel and comprehensive dataset on all commercial radio stations in the 1950s. With financial information, I show that black-oriented radio stations were significantly more profitable than other stations and provide the first set of evidence of firm owner discrimination in the media market.

This paper is part of a bigger digitization project in which I collect data on radio market from 1946 to 1968, 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 work with Hunt Allcott and Matthew Gentzkow, we study smartphone social media use in a randomized experiment involving about 2000 smartphone users. We lay out a model of digital addiction, estimate its parameters and provide evidence on digital addiction and its effect on time use and consumer surplus.

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