15th NBER Entrepreneurship Research Boot Camp 2022
Application

Applicant:

Shreekanth Mahendiran

PhD Candidate, Department of Strategy, Globalization, and Society

University of Lausanne

Contact Information

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Recommendation Letter Writer:

Annamaria Conti

Associate Professor, Department of Strategy, Globalization, and Society

Quartier UNIL-Chamberonne

Bâtiment Internef, Office: 607

Lausanne, Vaud, 1015

Switzerland

Shreekanth Mahendiran

Department of Strategy, Globalization, and Society

University of Lausanne

Email: shreekanth.mahendiran@unil.ch

Education

2019 – May 2023 (expected graduation)	**PhD, Department of Strategy, Globalization and Society** University of Lausanne, Switzerland
2007 – 2009	**M.Sc. Economics** Madras School of Economics, Anna University, India
2004 – 2007	**B.A. Economics** Loyola College, Madras University, India

Research Assistance

2019 –	**Graduate Research Assistant** Department of Strategy, Globalization and Society University of Lausanne Assignment: Annamaria Conti, Anthony Dukes, Chirantan Chatterjee, Daniel Sokol, Eric Hanushek, Mathew J. Higgins
2019 -	**Teaching Assistant** General Approach to Management, Instructor: Annamaria Conti, Xavier Castaner, Guido Palazzo, and P. Bienz Theories of Organization, Instructor: Christian Zehnder, and Xavier Castaner

PhD Courses

COMPLETED

Philosophy of Science, (Guido Palazzo)

Theories of Organization, (Christian Zehnder and Xavier Castaner)

Econometrics, (Michele Pellizzari)

Causal Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling, (John Antonakis, and Sirio Lonati)

Experimental Methods, (Rustamdjan Hakimov)

Strategy of Innovation, (Annamaria Conti)

Entrepreneurship (independent study with Annamaria Conti)

Competitive Advantage and Strategic Interactions, (Annamaria Conti)

INDEPENDENT TRAINING

Python (Online Courses: Data Camp)

Working Papers

1. Annamaria Conti, & **Shreekanth Mahendiran**, Too Hot to Handle: The Effects of Misconduct on Entrepreneurial Venture Outcomes, *Work-in-progress.*
2. **Shreekanth Mahendiran,** Chirantan Chatterjee, Anthony Dukes, & D. Daniel Sokol, (2021), Fight or Surrender to Counterfeiters: Litigation as a Response to Trademark Infringement, [Reject & Resubmit | In the stage of Resubmission – *Journal of Marketing Research* - Available at - https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3817945]
3. Chirantan Chatterjee, Eric Hanushek, **Shreekanth Mahendiran**, (2021), Can Greater Access to Education Be Inequitable? New Evidence from India's Right to Education Act, [*NBER working paper* – Available at - https://www.nber.org/papers/w27377]

Published Book Chapter

1. Chirantan Chatterjee & **Shreekanth Mahendiran**, (2017), From a Pharmacy to a Laboratory: The Global Biologics Revolution & the Indian Bio-Pharmaceutical Industry. *University of Pennsylvania & Oxford University Press Book*.

Academic Presentation

2021	Research Policy ECR, Marketing Science Conference, Data & Algorithms for ST&I Studies
2020	RISE3 Workshop

Conference Attendance

2021	Research Policy ECR, Marketing Science Conference, Data & Algorithms for ST&I Studies,
2020	RISE3 Workshop, NBER Economics of AI, EGOS – PDW 04.

Academic Community Service

2021	Adhoc Reviewer for Leadership Quarterly, JEMS
2021 -	PhD Representative, Department of Strategy, Globalization, & Society, University of Lausanne.
2020 -	Part of Organizing Committee for IPI PhD Seminar – IPR, Innovation, & Entrepreneurship Virtual Seminar

Professional Experience

2011-2019	Research Advisor, Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore, India
2011-2019	Independent work with Chirantan Chatterjee, Reader in Economics of Innovation, University of Sussex
2010-2011	Research Associate, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore India

Skills

STATA, Python, LaTeX

Status

Residence B Permit – Switzerland, Citizenship – India

Shreekanth Mahendiran

Lausanne, January 18th 2022

I would like to express my strong interest in being considered as a candidate for the 15th NBER Entrepreneurship Research Boot Camp, 2022. In the fall semester of 2019, I joined the PhD programme at the Department of Strategy, Globalization, and Society, University of Lausanne (UNIL *hereon*). Before that, I had worked extensively with Prof. Chirantan Chatterjee providing research assistance for several years. He took me under his wings and educated me on the rigors of research as a whole, and most importantly on how compile and analyse large datasets. Not only that, he has introduced me to the literature on innovation and strategy. Here at UNIL, I am fortunate to have Prof. Annamaria Conti as my co-supervisor with whom I conducted an independent study on entrepreneurship and I started collaborating on a pipeline of research projects.

As mentioned earlier, my extensive collaboration with Prof. Chatterjee exposed me to understand the nuances of large datasets and setting it up for empirical analysis. I do believe that it is one of my strengths to identify interesting research questions and have the ability to visualize and design the empirical setup that allow investigating these research questions. As I detail later, I use these skills in several research projects spanning innovation and entrepreneurship.

I must admit that my foray into entrepreneurship is a more recent endeavour. I have to thank the interactions with Prof. Conti which has inspired me to dwell into the entrepreneurship literature. My interest is piqued by the fact that entrepreneurship constitutes the driving force of economic development as indicated in recent research work by Guzman and Stern (2020). In addition, I moved to Switzerland from Bengaluru, India, which is considered as a startup hub of India. While living there, I was surrounded by friends and colleagues who were either starting up their own ventures or employed in a startup. I was always curious to understand the challenges faced by entrepreneurs in coming up with new business ideas and finding the necessary networks and resources to carry out the ideas successfully.

I just started my third year of the PhD programme after having completed my coursework in the summer of 2021. I aim to develop a research agenda that is at the intersection of innovation and entrepreneurship. For my thesis, my research focuses on the role of firm reputation in innovation and entrepreneurial outcomes.

My most recent project is with Prof. Annamaria Conti. In our working paper, we examine how reputational damage triggered by a startup misconduct affects the entrepreneurial outcomes for similar startups. We define similarity on the basis of either technological field or geographical proximity of startups. Our starting point is that investors operate in an asymmetrical information context where a misconduct in a particular field can trigger a revision in their evaluation of performance outcomes for similarly related startups. For this project, I collected all misconduct cases during the 1998-2020 period in US. I was able to identify 86 misconduct cases in the US which provides Prof. Conti and myself with the opportunity to categorize these cases into technological, harassment, financial, and economic espionage. We make use of a difference-in-differences empirical strategy enriched by adding relevant fixed effects to control for unobserved heterogeneity at the firm and sectoral level. In addition, we also intend to implement a Monte Carlo simulation technique to address any issues with the selection of treatment and control sample to strengthen our causal analysis. The preliminary

results are very encouraging wherein we find that similar startups do experience negative outcomes. To explain, our results indicate that similar startups are less likely to raise new funding rounds after a misconduct becomes public knowledge, relative to startups developing dissimilar technologies. In addition, similar startups raise much lower amounts in all the rounds, an economically significant effect of about 40 percent, subsequent to a news about the misconduct. The negative effect is stronger for technological misconducts, followed by financial and harassment misconducts. Our results further reveal that economic espionage, such as stealing of trade secrets or intellectual property infringements, does not have any effect at all. Most interestingly, the detected negative effects perpetuate for about five years after the misconduct becomes public knowledge. Therefore, similar startups get financially constrained in the long run owing to a misconduct carried out by another startup (*preparato*r hereon), relative to those developing dissimilar technologies. Furthermore, our results indicate that these similar startups experience acquisitions much later than those developing dissimilar technologies. As a follow-up to this paper, Prof. Conti and I have plans to investigate whether these similar startups react by replacing their CEOs thereby attempting to dissociate themselves from these misconducts.

My most advanced project is with Anthony Dukes, Chirantan Chatterjee, and Daniel Sokol. This research explores whether firms developing a reputation as tough litigant acts as a deterrent strategy against counterfeiters in markets where government trademark enforcement is weak. Litigation can convey to potential counterfeiters that a trademark-holding firm would sue upon entry. We explore this idea empirically in the context of pharmaceutical trademarks in India using the framework of a stylized theoretical model. For this project, I developed successfully a novel distance measure for trademark infringement. This measure facilitates in understanding the level and intensity of trademark infringement that a firm faces in the market. We employ a classical panel data regression setup with a battery of fixed effects to control for unobserved heterogeneities at the firm and therapeutic market level. Our findings indicate that litigation reduces subsequent counterfeiting. To explain, firms that develop a reputation as tough litigant trigger competitors to name their trademarks much differently, thereby experiencing much lower intensity of trademark infringement in the market. We are in the process of re-submitting our manuscript to the *Journal of Marketing Research*.

Given my research interests, I believe that an opportunity to attend the NBER Entrepreneurship Bootcamp will be of great value to me as it would ground my focus to the relevant theoretical literature to make progress in my current research. I believe that it provides exposure to different theoretical lenses and methodological tools that can be used to examine relevant research questions in the field of entrepreneurship. Consequently, the bootcamp will will be fundamental for me to understand the boundaries of current research and in generation of new ideas / perspectives, thereby providing direction to my future research pursuits. It will also provide the opportunity to get to know and learn from the thought leaders and other fellow researchers in this field.

I thank you for considering my application and look forward to hearing from you.

UNIL | Université de Lausanne

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January 20, 2022

RE: Letter of Recommendation for Shreekanth Mahendiran

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to encourage you to invite Shreekanth Mahendiran, a third-year PhD student at HEC Lausanne, to this year's Entrepreneurship Boot Camp.

Shreekanth is an extremely talented student. I have known Shreekanth for three years, and I have supervised him for the past six months. Shreekanth approached me a few months ago, proposing me to pursue an exciting research project in the entrepreneurship sphere. The main idea is that misconduct episodes affecting entrepreneurial ventures might produce negative consequences for other ventures that are either technologically close or geographically proximate to the misconduct perpetrators. In fact, investors may infer from this kind of events that an entire technological area or entrepreneurial cluster may be "tainted" and prone to similar offenses. To pursue this project, Shreekanth collected all misconduct cases affecting US startups during 1998-2020. He then categorized them into technological misconduct, financial fraud, sexual harassment, and economic espionage. He successively implemented a machine-learning algorithm to identify startups that develop similar technologies as the misconduct perpetrators. Shreekanth is well-versed in causal identification strategies and, to address obvious endogeneity issues, he proposed to estimate a difference-in-differences model saturated with a host of relevant fixed effects. The preliminary results are quite encouraging. For instance, startups producing similar technologies as the misconduct perpetrators are found to become less likely to obtain financing and to raise smaller amounts after the misconduct event is reported in the news relative to startups developing dissimilar technologies located outside of the perpetrator's state. The strongest adverse effects are associated with technological misconduct, financial fraud, and sexual harassment, while the impact of economic espionage is null. Furthermore, startups related to misconduct perpetrators are no less likely to be acquired than unrelated startups. However, it takes them longer to be acquired. Not only Shreekanth has had a leading role in the data collection and analysis, but he also made a remarkable investment in putting together the bibliography relevant for this project. As such, he has had the opportunity to become acquainted with the entrepreneurial finance literature that has investigated investor strategies, with a specific focus on venture capitalists and information asymmetries.

There are several interesting projects that will ensue from this data collection endeavor. For instance, Shreekanth is exploring the possibility that startups negatively affected by misconduct episodes may react by disproportionally replacing their CEOs to signal their willingness to distance themselves from such episodes. Shreekanth is further digging into the types of investors that may be more or less affected by a given misconduct episode, paying specific attention to the investment specialization of venture capitalists.

While Shreekanth is relatively new to the entrepreneurship field, he has already demonstrated his ability to pursue interesting research with two other projects he started when he was research assistant for Professor Chirantan Chatterjee at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore. The project I am most excited about is the one he has in collaboration with Chirantan Chatterjee, Anthony Dukes, and Daniel Sokol. In this project, Shreekanth and coauthors examine trademark litigation as a deterrent strategy against counterfeiters in markets where government trademark enforcement is weak. They are about to re-submit the revised version to the *Journal of Marketing Research*, an A-level field journal.

I truly believe that Shreekanth has the capacity to become an accomplished entrepreneurship scholar. He has excellent research skills, and, technically, he is very well trained. He additionally has an incredible work ethic. Unfortunately, Shreekanth lacks the network and exposure to entrepreneurship scholars that he could have accessed at a top North American Institution. Therefore, I strongly believe that the marginal benefit Shreekanth could derive by participating in this year's Entrepreneurship Boot Camp is immense.

Kindest Regards,

