AKHIL ILANGO

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Curriculum Vitae

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Graduate Coordinator: Marta Araque marta.araque@upf.edu | (+34) 93 542 2226

Graduate Studies

2019 - present *Ph.D* in Economics, Universitat Pompeu Fabra
Thesis title: "Essays in Industrial Organisation"
Expected completion date: July 2023

References:

Professor Sandro Shelegia (advisor)	Professor Rosa Ferrer (advisor)
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2022 *Visiting Scholar*, German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), Berlin
2019 *Master of Research* in Economics, Universitat Pompeu Fabra
2018 *Master of Science* in Economics, Barcelona School of Economics

Undergraduate Studies

2017 *B.Tech* in Mechanical Engineering, National Institute of Technology - T, India

Teaching and Research Field

Primary field: Industrial Organisation
Secondary fields: Digital Economy, Search & Matching, Market Design, Firm Growth, Text Data

Research Papers

Sponsored Search: Theory and Evidence on How Platforms Exacerbate Product Market Concentration
Job Market Paper
Finalist - Best Paper Award, Delhi School of Economics and The Econometric Society
Finalist - Heinz König Best Paper Award, 20th Conference on the Economics of ICT - Mannheim

How do sponsored advertisements affect product market concentration, through their effects on firms' pricing and consumer behaviour? To analyse this, I develop a theory of digital markets where an intermediary provides a platform for firms to advertise their product and where consumers need to engage in costly search if they want to learn about the product characteristics. First, I show that when prices are observable prior to the costly product inspection, the less prominent (lower in the search order) firm is forced to lower its price in order to attract more visitors, thus putting it at a competitive disadvantage. Second, I augment this model by allowing the intermediary to determine endogenously, through an auction, the order in which products are displayed and the advertising commissions to be paid (per-click). I show that the pass-through from these commissions to product prices is actually higher for the less prominent firm, thus further putting it at a competitive disadvantage. In equilibrium, these asymmetries in consumer price elasticity and commission pass-through lead to lower competition, consumer surplus and total transactions in the product market. Third, I show that the *"pay per-click"* business model is intermediary-optimal while the *pay per-sale* and the *consumer subscription fee* models improve consumer surplus at the expense of the intermediary. Fourth, I provide novel empirical evidence that is consistent with some key predictions of the model. These results contribute to the ongoing policy discussions on the effect of dominant digital platforms on product market concentration.

Sleeping With the Enemy: How Politicians and Interest Groups Adapt their Collaborations in the Face of Reputational Threats
with Miguel Espinosa and Giorgio Zanarone, *Submitted*

How does the reputation of interest groups affect their collaboration with politicians? We address this question using unique data on the public speeches and lobbying contacts of U.S. legislators. We find that when external events tarnish a foreign country's reputation, legislators with prior connections to that country publicly distance themselves from it through their speeches, while meeting more often with its lobbyists. Our results suggest that politicians and interest groups navigate crises by strategically decoupling the public and private dimensions of their collaboration. On the one hand, politicians protect themselves from reputational spillovers through public distancing. On the other hand, interest groups increase the assistance they provide to politicians via lobbying in order to motivate those politicians to continue a private collaboration that is now less appealing to them.

Demand Distortions, Markups and Firm Growth
with Sampreet Goraya

Local demand is an important determinant of firm growth in rural areas. In this project, we document the role of ethnic networks in segmenting the local demand and its implication for local firm growth and aggregate misallocation. We focus our analysis on India, where the caste system plays a significant role on individuals' economic outcomes. First, we show that demand is segmented along caste lines. This, in turn, creates markup and productivity dispersion across firms owned by different castes. To identify this demand segmentation effect, we use exogenous changes in regional rainfall intensity as an instrument for local demand shocks. We find that consumers historically classified as belonging to the Low Caste (LC consumers) experience a positive income shock due to rainfall and that this translates into higher per-capita consumption for them. Further, we show that regional increase in the LC consumers' demand translates into higher output growth and lower markup for the firms owned by members of the same "caste-category", relative to others. Using a quantitative model, we plan to quantify the significance of demand channel in determining firm growth and misallocation.

Book Chapters

Current Challenges in Online Advertising Markets
with Rosa Ferrer and Paul Richter
in *Reforms to foster competition in Spain*, edited by Juanjo Ganuza and Joaquín López Vallés,
published by The Spanish National Markets and Competition Commission (CNMC)

Research In-Progress

Sponsored Search: Structural Evidence from Clickstream Data

The Dynamics of Firm Prominence

Advertisement Auctions: Budget Allocation and Bidding Algorithms with Mingshi Kang

Digital Influencers: A Market for Attention with Weicheng Min

Professional Activities

Presentations
(*scheduled; [†]co-author presentation; [‡]accepted, but unable to attend due to COVID-19 visa restrictions)

2022	11th Workshop on Consumer Search and Switching Costs - NYU Stern School of Business[*], XXXVI JEI - Spanish Economic Association[*], 49th Annual Conference of the EARIE - U Vienna[*], Asian Meeting of The Econometric Society - Tokyo[*], Conference on Mechanism and Institution Design - NU Singapore, Australasian Meeting of The Econometric Society - Brisbane, 20th ZEW Conference on the Economics of ICT - Mannheim, Society for Institutional & Organizational Economics - U Toronto[†], Asian Meeting of The Econometric Society - CUHK, German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) - Berlin, North American Summer Meetings of the Econometric Society - Miami Herbert Business School[‡], INFORMS ISMS Marketing Science - Chicago Booth School of Business, Strategy Science - NYU Stern School of Business[†], Economics PhD Conference - Warwick U, Mediterranean Workshop on Economic Theory - U Porto, Trans-Atlantic Doctoral Conference - London Business School, African Meeting of The Econometric Society - Addis Ababa, Humboldt U, Spring Meeting of Young Economists, Royal Economic Society, MIT Sloan School of Management[†], U Bocconi[†]
2021	The Econometric Society Winter School - Delhi School of Economics, Microeconomics Lunch - U Pompeu Fabra, IO Workshop - Stockholm School of Economics, Jamboree - Barcelona School of Economics
2020	Applied Economics Lunch - U Pompeu Fabra, Jamboree - Barcelona School of Economics

Organisation

2022	Assisted at Centre for Economic Policy Research - IO conference, Berlin
2021	Assisted at Association of Competition Economists conference, Barcelona

Summer Schools

2022	Dynamic Structural Econometrics: Market Design, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Teaching Experience

(Undergraduate - U Pompeu Fabra)

2022	Regulation and Competition Policy
	Microeconomics I
	Business Organisation and Management
2021	Introduction to Game Theory
	Data Analysis
	Business Organisation and Management
2020	Industrial Organisation
	Microeconomics II
	Mathematics for Finance
2019	Industrial Organisation
	Modern Statistical Computing in R

Research Experience

2022	Research Assistant to Professor Tomaso Duso, DIW, Berlin
	Analysed text of the universe of EU Merger case documents, using R
	Prepared and merged above with different data sources, using Stata
	Above data currently used for multiple projects
2020	Research Assistant to Professor Miguel Espinosa, U Bocconi, Milan
	Analysed transcript of the universe of U.S. Congressional Hearings, using Python
	Co-designed diff-in-diff models for baseline and robustness exercises
	Presented at the UPF Internal seminar
2017	Research Assistant to Professor Venkatachalam Lingappan, MIDS, Chennai, India
	Designed and conducted a survey on behavioural norms related to digital transactions

Other Employment

2015	Operations Intern, Daimler India Commercial Vehicles, Chennai, India

Scholarships

2019 - present	Ph.D financial aid, Universitat Pompeu Fabra (GPEFM)
2019	Master of Research tuition fee waiver, Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Languages and Other Skills

Languages	English (fluent), Tamil (native), Telugu (native), Hindi (fluent), Spanish (basic)
Software	STATA, R, Python, MATLAB, LaTeX, C++, Microsoft Office