James Sams

Ph.D. Candidate, Quantitative Marketing
Graduate School of Business, Stanford University

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Education

- **Stanford University Graduate School of Business** — **Stanford, CA**
  Ph.D. Quantitative Marketing — 2014-2019 (expected)
- **University of Chicago** — **Chicago, IL**
  B.A. Economics; Political Science — 2002-2006

Research Interests

- Quantitative Marketing
- Innovation; Product Development and Introduction
- Consumer Learning
- Machine Learning and Econometrics
- Policy and Regulation; Sustainable and Responsible Marketing

Papers

Job Market Paper

- **Learning or Herding? Understanding Social Interactions and the Distribution of Success on a Social Music Sharing Platform** (PDF) 2018

Works in Progress

- **Consumption Experiences and the Production of New Ideas: Evidence from Artists' Behavior on SoundCloud**
  with Harikesh Nair, Navdeep Sahni, and Florian Stahl 2017
- **Does Increased Grocery Access Affect the Nutritional Composition of Grocery Purchases: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects and Food Deserts**

Teaching Experience

- Teaching Assistant for **Marketing 568: Consumer Search and Marketing: Business Models in the Information Economy** taught by *Stephan Seiler*
  Graduate School of Business, Stanford University 2017
- Teaching Assistant for **Data Warehousing** taught by *Svetlozar Nestorov*
  Graduate Program in Computer Science, University of Chicago 2014
- Teaching Assistant for **Introduction to Databases** taught by *Svetlozar Nestorov*
  Graduate Program in Computer Science, University of Chicago 2011-2013

Professional Experience

- **Booth School of Business** **Chicago, IL**
  Research Professional 2010-2014
  - Conducted independent research analysis backed with descriptive statistics, statistical inference and data visualizations in support of professors' research agenda, primarily understanding how consumers changed their spending habits on cheaper products, especially private label goods, in response to the income shock from the Great Recession (*Jean-Pierre Dubé, Günter J. Hitsch, and Peter Rossi*).
  - Created, cleaned, built, and documented Kilts-Nielsen Data Warehouse. This involved merging two previously unmerged datasets of ∼90 billion store location-product-specific sales and price records and ∼2 billion household-specific product purchase and price records in the respective main fact tables, with the goal of having a production-capable, annually update-able data warehouse used by hundreds of academic economists and marketers across America.
- **Software Consultant and Developer** **Chicago, IL**
  Independent 2006-2010
  - Fostered relationships with customers to gain further insight and develop further business opportunities.
  - Developed custom small scale software, typically connecting disparate databases or creating and populating new ones to enable deeper analytics to guide business decisions.
- **Human Rights Program, University of Chicago** **Chicago, IL**
  Research Assistant 2004-2006
- **Botswana Network on Ethics, Law, and HIV/AIDS** **Gaborone, Botswana**
  Intern 2005
- **1st Degree Murder Task Force, Cook County Public Defender** **Chicago, IL**
  Law Clerk 2004
- **Percy, Smith, Foote, and Gadel** **Alexandria, LA**
  Legal Research and Data Coordinator 2002-2005

References

- **Harikesh Nair** (Principal Advisor)
  Professor of Marketing
  Stanford Graduate School of Business
  hnair@stanford.edu
  (650) 736-4256
- **Wes Hartmann** (Co-Advisor)
  Professor of Marketing
  Stanford Graduate School of Business
  wesleyr@stanford.edu
  (650) 725-2311
- **Navdeep Sahni**
  Associate Professor of Marketing
  Stanford Graduate School of Business
  navdeep.sahni@stanford.edu
  (650) 736-2205

Other

Computer Skills: Python, R, Julia, SQL, Linux, C/C++ (basic), JavaScript (basic)

Citizenship: US

Honors and Awards

- **A. Michael Spence Fellowship** 2017
- **Carroll and Emma Roush Scholarship** 2016
- **Reid W. Dennis Fellowship** 2016
- **Stephen Adams Fellowship** 2015
- **Patrick E. Paddon and S. Leslie Jewett Fellowship** 2014
- **Peter F. deVos Fellowship** 2014
- **Jaedicke Family Fellowship** 2014

Paper Abstracts

- **Learning or Herding? Understanding Social Interactions and the Distribution of Success on a Social Music Sharing Platform** (PDF)
  Job Market Paper

  Digital sharing platforms like YouTube and SoundCloud crowdsource the process by which users can discover high quality new products among an increasingly vast flow of new products, acting as ongoing digital test markets. Social features on these platforms can accelerate the discovery process by encouraging sharing of information and facilitating learning, thereby reducing the number of people sampling poor quality products. This may more quickly concentrate platform traffic on higher quality alternatives. Social features may also include a feedback loop if people care about consuming the same products as their peers. Given previous research showing that social feedback loops can distort or even invert the relationship between product quality and product popularity, if such feedback loops exist, the discovery and filtering capabilities of crowdsourcing may be compromised, emphasizing the need to understand the nature of social interactions on such platforms. Utilizing data from SoundCloud, a music sharing and streaming site, I develop an approach to separately identify and measure these two separate endogenous social effects with and without feedback loops. Results suggest that the platform's social features do have informative effects but that the feedback loop plays a dominant role for the most successful songs.

- **Consumption Experiences and the Production of New Ideas: Evidence from Artists' Behavior on SoundCloud**
  Work in Progress. Joint with Harikesh Nair, Navdeep Sahni, and Florian Stahl

  The production of new ideas is a fundamental component of modern society. Economists have recognized that new ideas are a key element of economic growth; businesspeople seek them out for competitive advantages; researchers try to push forward the barrier of knowledge; and artists attempt to develop deeper understandings of the human condition. But where these ideas come from remains a mystery. This paper seeks to understand the influence of artists' consumption experience on their production of new ideas. Using a metric of song similarity learned from revealed preference data, combined with data on artists' consumption and production, we explore whether there is a plausible causal connection between novel consumption experiences and artists' creation of new music.

- **Does Increased Grocery Access Affect the Nutritional Composition of Grocery Purchases: Heterogeneous Treatment Effects and Food Deserts**

Work in Progress.

A substantial literature has posited that one cause of the high rates of obesity among low-income people is the lack of access to reasonably priced nutritional food, with such neighborhoods frequently termed "food deserts". A related but alternative hypothesis is that a high density of readily available junk food through e.g. bodegas and convenience stores, creates exceptionally low barriers to casual, calorie-dense snacking, termed "food swamps". I use an event study framework utilizing the movement of people to new neighborhoods and the opening and closing of grocery stores to identify these effects as a series of small-scale natural experiments. I then utilize recent developments in the measurement of heterogeneous treatment effects to better identify which groups may be most responsive to the treatment.

PhD Coursework

Course Number	Description	Instructor
Econ 202	Core Microeconomics 1	Ilya Segal
Econ 203	Core Microeconomics 2	Fuhito Kojima
Econ 204	Core Microeconomics 3	Matt Jackson
Econ 210	Core Macroeconomics 1	Pablo Kurlat
Econ 247	Labor Economics 2	Nicholas Bloom
Econ 257	Industrial Organization 1	Brad Larsen, Jon Levin
Econ 258	Industrial Organization 2A	Brad Larsen, Matt Gentzkow
Econ 260	Industrial Organization 3	Tim Bresnahan, Liran Einav
Econ 282	Contracts, Information, and Incentives	Ilya Segal
GSBGen 641	Advanced Empirical Methods	Wes Hartmann
GSBGen 646	Behavioral Decision Making	Itamar Simonson
MgtEcon 603	Econometric Methods 1	Guido Imbens
MgtEcon 604	Econometric Methods 2	Ali Yurukoglu
MgtEcon 605	Econometric Methods 3	Peter Reiss
MgtEcon 634	Machine Learning and Causal Inference	Susan Athey
MgtEcon 640	Quantitative Methods for Empirical Research	Guido Imbens
Mktg 644	Quantitative Research in Marketing	Navdeep Sahni
Mktg 645	Empirical Analysis of Dynamic Decision Contexts	Harikesh Nair
Mktg 646	Bayesian Inference: Methods and Applications	Sridar Narayanan
Stats 202	Data Mining and Analysis	Lester Mackey