The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

Department of Information Systems, Business Statistics and Operations Management

Seminar Announcement

On Breaking the Iron Cage of Caste and Family: Arranged Marriages, Platforms, and the Inversion of Status
by
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Date   :   **Monday, 28 August 2023**
Time   :   **11:00 - 12:30 PM**
Venue   :   **4/F meeting room (4047), LSK Business Building**

Abstract: Do the social status markers that structure off-line transactions still matter, or matter in the same way, when markets migrate to on-line digital platforms? Scholars have long established that actors with better social position benefit from greater perceived quality and legitimacy. Platform markets, however, potentially offer more efficient access to information about alternatives, substantial privacy, and the unbundling of search and consumption activities. We study these issues in the context of Indian arranged marriages, a highly institutionalized 'market' in which social norms compel candidates to involve their parents in partner search and conform to caste-based endogamy. We first establish, via an experimental survey, that parental involvement and caste endogamy both increase marriage suitability in off-line scenarios. Next, using profile data gathered from a leading matrimonial matching platform in India, we find that candidate profiles exhibiting parental involvement and caste preference conformity are less likely, compared to twin and near-twin profiles, to receive positive responses from potential alters. We also see that such deviations from status norms are considered more appealing in female profiles. In summary, our work shows that traditional (offline) status indicators convey less value on platforms. We argue that these platform dynamics result from institutional unbundling and privacy.

Bio: Dr. Anandasivam Gopal is the President's Chair of Information Systems and Innovation at Nanyang Business School, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He was previously the Dean's Professor of Information Systems at the Robert H. Smith School of Business, University of Maryland. His research interests are broadly in technology platforms, innovation, mobile platforms and entrepreneurship. He received his PhD from the Tepper School of Business (GSIA), Carnegie Mellon University. He serves as Senior Editor at Information Systems Research.