ECO 426 (Market Design) - Lecture 7

Ettore Damiano

November 16, 2015

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Google AdWords

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- Google advertising revenue: USD 42.5bn in 2012

• Examples of common auctions

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- Auction design: choose the auction format that best achieve the designer's objective

• Key ideas:

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 - Potential buyers know what they would pay but are not telling (private information)
- Auction serves as a "price discovery" mechanism
- Look at different auction formats

• Potential buyers

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• Two bidders, 1 and 2

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- The seller "designs" (i.e. sets the rules) of the auction

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 - Price: the last bidder remaining pays the final auction price

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 - only one bidder remains, price stops and last bidder receives the object after paying 0.6 (revenue to the seller)

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• Before observing his valuation, bidder 1 expected profit is

$$\mathbb{E}\left(\frac{v_1^2}{2}\right) = \frac{1}{6}$$

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- all bids lose, payoff 0

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- second highest bid $b^{(2)} < \underline{b}$
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- $b^{(2)} \in [v_i, \overline{b}]$
- $b^{(2)} > \overline{b}$

- - all bids win, payoff $v_i b^{(2)}$
 - v_i and \overline{b} win, payoff $v_i b^{(2)} > 0$
 - only \overline{b} wins, payoff $v_i b^{(2)} < 0$
 - all bids lose, payoff 0
- Regardless of second highest bid, bidding true valuation always does best

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- Identical to the ascending price auction

First price auction

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- What is best for a bidder depends on what the other bidders are doing

Nash equilibrium

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 - For each possible valuation v_i, bidder i's bid must maximize his "payoff"
 - Each bidder does not know the opponents' values (i.e. incomplete information game)
 - Each bidder's equilibrium strategies maximizes his **expected payoff** given the bidder's belief about the distribution of the opponents' values

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- By bidding b, bidder 1 expected profit is

$$(b/\beta)(v_1-b)$$

• Bidder 1 optimal bidding problem

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$$b_i = \frac{N-1}{N}v_i$$
 for $i = 1, \dots, N$

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First price auction: equilibrium

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 - Example: two bidders with valuations 0.4 and 0.6

Descending price auction

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 - Price: the winner pays the price at which he/she claimed the object

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 - You win if the highest price at which to claim the object is higher than those of your opponents and lose otherwise
 - The winner pays the price at which he claimed the object
- Same equilibrium and same revenue as in a first price auction

• Four auction formats: DP, SP, FP and AP

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 - Same expected profit to the buyers
- Is this a coincidence?