

Effective Adaptive Exploration of Prices and Promotions in Choice-Based Demand Models

Lalit Jain, Zhaoqi Li, Erfan Loghmani, Blake Mason, Hema Yoganarasimhan

FOSTER
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

UNIVERSITY *of* WASHINGTON

Outline





1. Introduction

2. Adaptively Setting Prices and Promotions

3. Incorporating Context

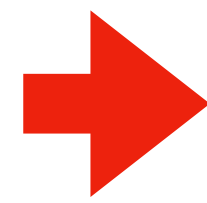
Problem: Setting Prices and Promotion



 <p>AmazonFresh Colombia Ground Coffee, Medium Roast, 32 Ounce</p> <p>Ground 32 Ounce (Pack of 1)</p> <p>★★★★☆ ~ 45,875 13 Highlights</p> <p>\$14⁷⁹ (\$0.46/Ounce)</p> <p>Add to Cart</p>	 <p>Maxwell House Wake Up Roast Medium Roast Ground Coffee (30.65 oz Canister)</p> <p>1.91 Pound (Pack of 1)</p> <p>★★★★☆ ~ 14,039 9 Highlights</p> <p>\$8⁹⁹ (\$0.29/Ounce)</p> <p>Add to Cart</p>	 <p>Maxwell House The Original Roast Medium Roast Ground Coffee (30.6 oz Canister)</p> <p>Ground 1.91 Pound (Pack of 1)</p> <p>★★★★☆ ~ 15,460 7 Highlights</p> <p>\$7⁹⁹ (\$0.26/Ounce) Was: \$8.99</p> <p>Add to Cart</p>	 <p>The Original Donut Shop Regular, Single-Serve Keurig K-Cup Pods, Medium Roast Coffee Pods, 24 Count (Pack of 4)</p> <p>Pod 24 Count (Pack of 4)</p> <p>★★★★☆ ~ 62,220 9 Highlights</p> <p>\$43¹² (\$0.45/Count)</p> <p>Add to Cart</p>
---	---	---	--





Firm needs to

- set prices
- decide what items to promote

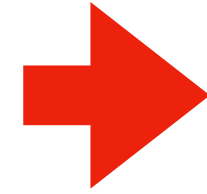


Highly rated

Sponsored | Based on star rating and number of customer ratings

<p>Best Seller</p>  <p>Starbucks K-Cup Coffee Pods—Medium Roast Coffee—Pike Place Roast for Keurig Brewers—100% Arabica—4...</p> <p>Pod 24 Count (Pack of 4)</p> <p>★★★★☆ ~ 100,551</p> <p>\$53³¹ (\$0.56/Count) Was: \$55.97</p>	 <p>San Francisco Bay Ground Coffee - French Roast (28oz Bag), Dark Roast</p> <p>Ground</p> <p>★★★★☆ ~ 3,607</p> <p>\$21⁹⁹ (\$0.79/Ounce) Was: \$24.99</p> <p>prime FREE One-Day</p>	 <p>Starbucks Breakfast Blend Medium Roast Ground Coffee, 18 Ounce (Pack of 1)</p> <p>Ground</p> <p>★★★★☆ ~ 11,275</p> <p>\$11⁹⁹ (\$0.67/Ounce) Was: \$13.47</p> <p>prime FREE One-Day</p>	 <p>Starbucks Ground Coffee—Medium Roast Coffee—Pike Place Roast—100% Arabica—1 bag (28 oz)</p> <p>Ground</p> <p>★★★★☆ ~ 30,100</p> <p>\$18⁴⁹ (\$0.66/Ounce)</p> <p>prime Today 7 AM - 11 AM</p>
---	---	--	--

Problem: Setting Prices and Promotion



Amazon's Choice

AmazonFresh Colombia Ground Coffee, Medium Roast, 32 Ounce
Ground 32 Ounce (Pack of 1)
★★★★☆ ~ 45,875 | 13 Highlights
\$14⁷⁹ (\$0.46/Ounce)
Add to Cart

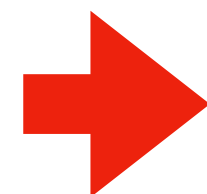
Maxwell House Wake Up Roast Medium Roast Ground Coffee (30.65 oz Canister)
1.91 Pound (Pack of 1)
★★★★☆ ~ 14,039 | 9 Highlights
\$8⁹⁹ (\$0.29/Ounce)
Add to Cart

Maxwell House The Original Roast Medium Roast Ground Coffee (30.6 oz Canister)
Ground 1.91 Pound (Pack of 1)
★★★★☆ ~ 15,460 | 7 Highlights
\$7⁹⁹ (\$0.26/Ounce) Was: \$8.99
Add to Cart

The Original Donut Shop Regular, Single-Serve Keurig K-Cup Pods, Medium Roast Coffee Pods, 24 Count (Pack of 4)
Pod 24 Count (Pack of 4)
★★★★☆ ~ 62,220 | 9 Highlights
\$43¹² (\$0.45/Count)
Add to Cart

Firm needs to

- set prices
- decide what items to promote
- by how much given a budget.



KAUAI COFFEE COMPANY

Kauai Coffee Single-Serve Pods, Garden Isle Medium Roast – 100% Arabica Coffee from Hawaii's...
★★★★☆ ~ 21,044
\$28⁷⁵ (\$0.60/Count)
prime Same-Day
FREE delivery Today 7 AM - 11 AM

Why study this problem?

Amazon changes its prices hourly, and can change a product's price as frequently as once every 10 minutes!

How can an online retailer **jointly** decide how to set prices and promotions in order to maximize profit?

If the demand curve for each consumer/product was known - we could jointly optimize.

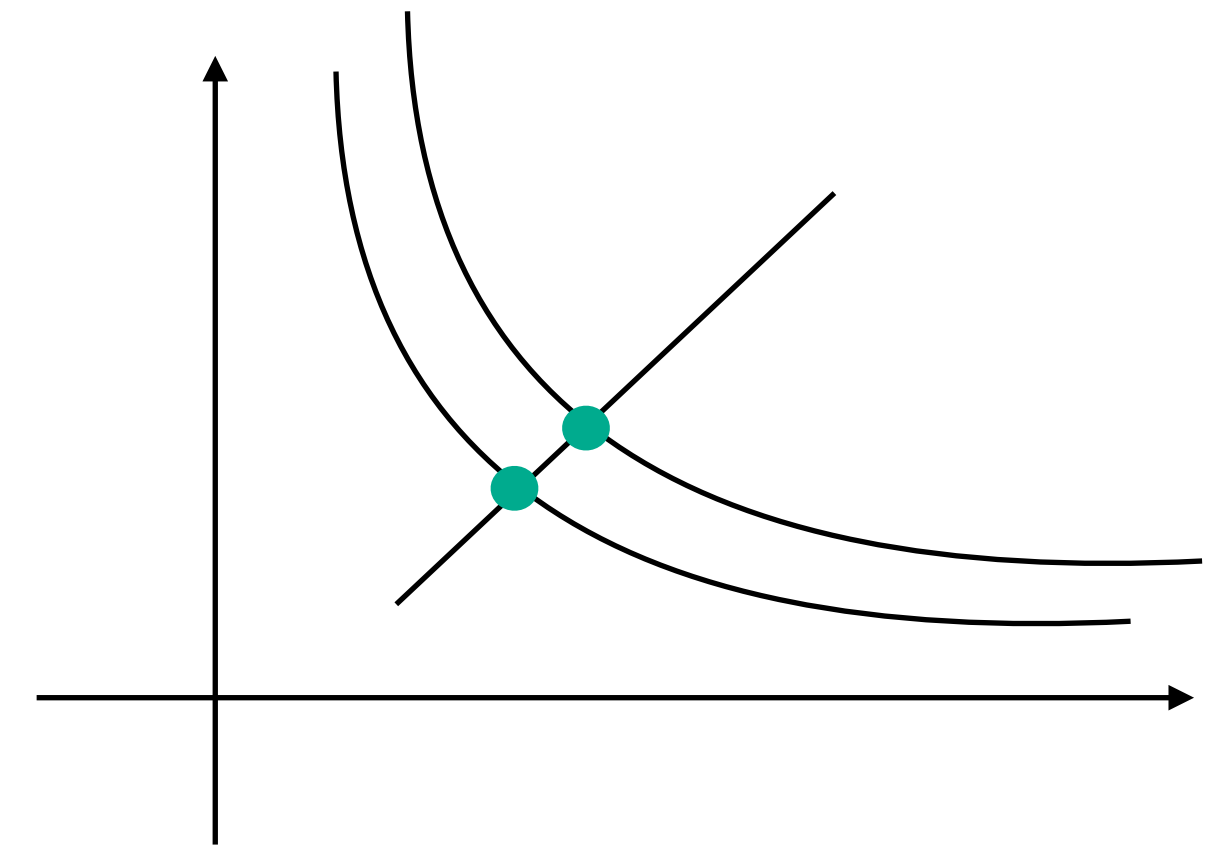
But in practice, the demand is rarely known and can depend on the customer segment.

Traditional Approaches for Pricing

Existing Approaches Suffer from a Lack of Strategic Exploration

Exploiting Historical Data

- Lack of Exogenous Variation
- “Greedy method” - no exploration



Structural Demand Estimation:

Berry+Levinson+Pakes '95, Guadagni+Little '83, Hitsch '06, and more...

Traditional Approaches for Pricing

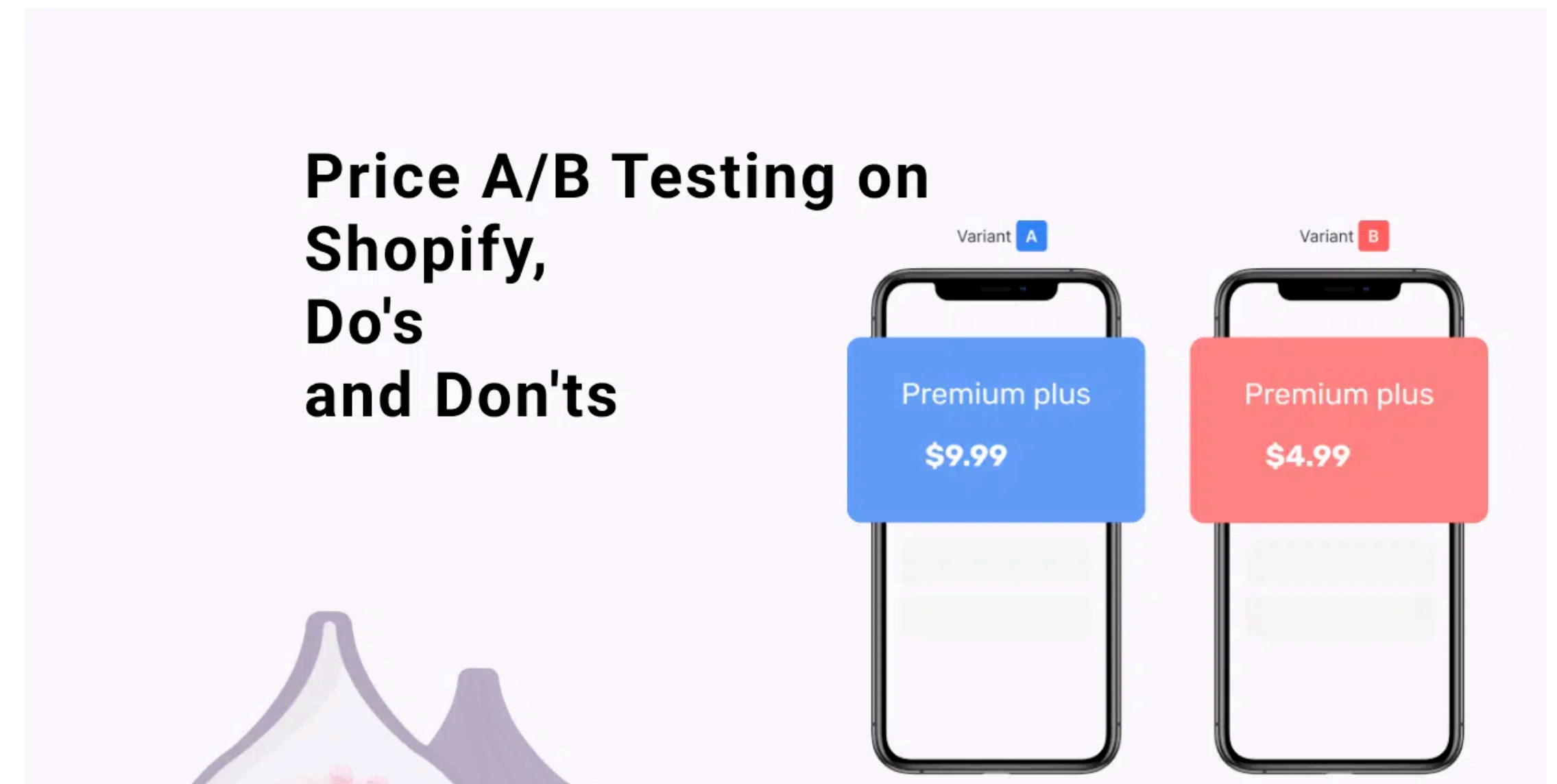
Existing Approaches Suffer from a Lack of Strategic Exploration

Pricing Experiments (A/B tests)

- Potentially High Opportunity cost
- Extremely large action space with many products

Literature:

Aghnion et al '91, Dube and Misra '17, ...



Adaptive Pricing: Protocol

Assume K products and one outside option

For $t = 1, 2, 3, \dots, T$

Customer(s) arrives at platform

Firm chooses price $\mathbf{p}_t = (p_{1t}, \dots, p_{Kt}) \in [\ell, u]^K$

and promotion $\mathbf{x}_t = (x_{1t}, \dots, x_{Kt}) \in X \subset [0, 1]^K$,

Observe purchase decision(s) $I_t \in \{0, 1, \dots, K\}$, and collect revenue p_{I_t}

Adaptive Pricing: Minimize Regret

Expected Profit

$$R(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \sum_{k=1}^K \mathbb{P}(I = k | \mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})(p_k - m_k)$$

Adaptive Pricing: Minimize Regret

Expected Profit

$$R(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \sum_{k=1}^K \mathbb{P}(I = k | \mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})(p_k - m_k)$$

Optimal Price/Promotion

$$\mathbf{p}_\star, \mathbf{x}_\star = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p} \in [\ell, u]^K, \mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{X}} R(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})$$

Adaptive Pricing: Minimize Regret

Expected Profit

$$R(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \sum_{k=1}^K \mathbb{P}(I = k | \mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})(p_k - m_k)$$

Optimal Price/Promotion

$$\mathbf{p}_\star, \mathbf{x}_\star = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p} \in [\ell, u]^K, \mathbf{x} \in X} R(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})$$

Goal: Minimize Regret

$$Reg_T = \sum_{t=1}^T R(\mathbf{p}_\star, \mathbf{x}_\star) - R(\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t)$$

Adaptive Pricing: Minimize Regret

Expected Profit

$$R(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \sum_{k=1}^K \mathbb{P}(I = k | \mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})(p_k - m_k)$$

Optimal Price/Promotion

$$\mathbf{p}_\star, \mathbf{x}_\star = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p} \in [\ell, u]^K, \mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{X}} R(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})$$

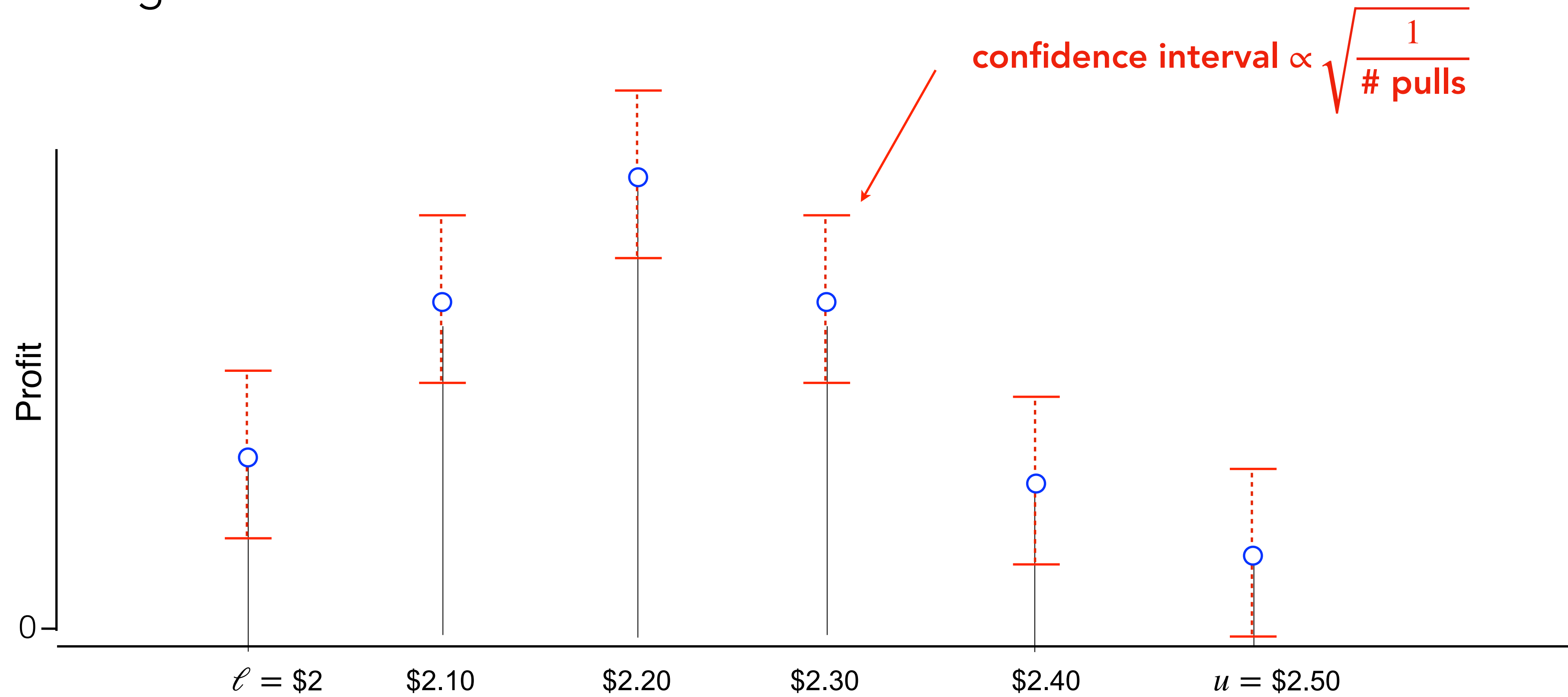
Goal: Minimize Regret

$$Reg_T = \sum_{t=1}^T R(\mathbf{p}_\star, \mathbf{x}_\star) - R(\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t)$$

We want to minimize our opportunity cost of learning the optimal price and promotion. Ideally $Reg_T/T \rightarrow 0$

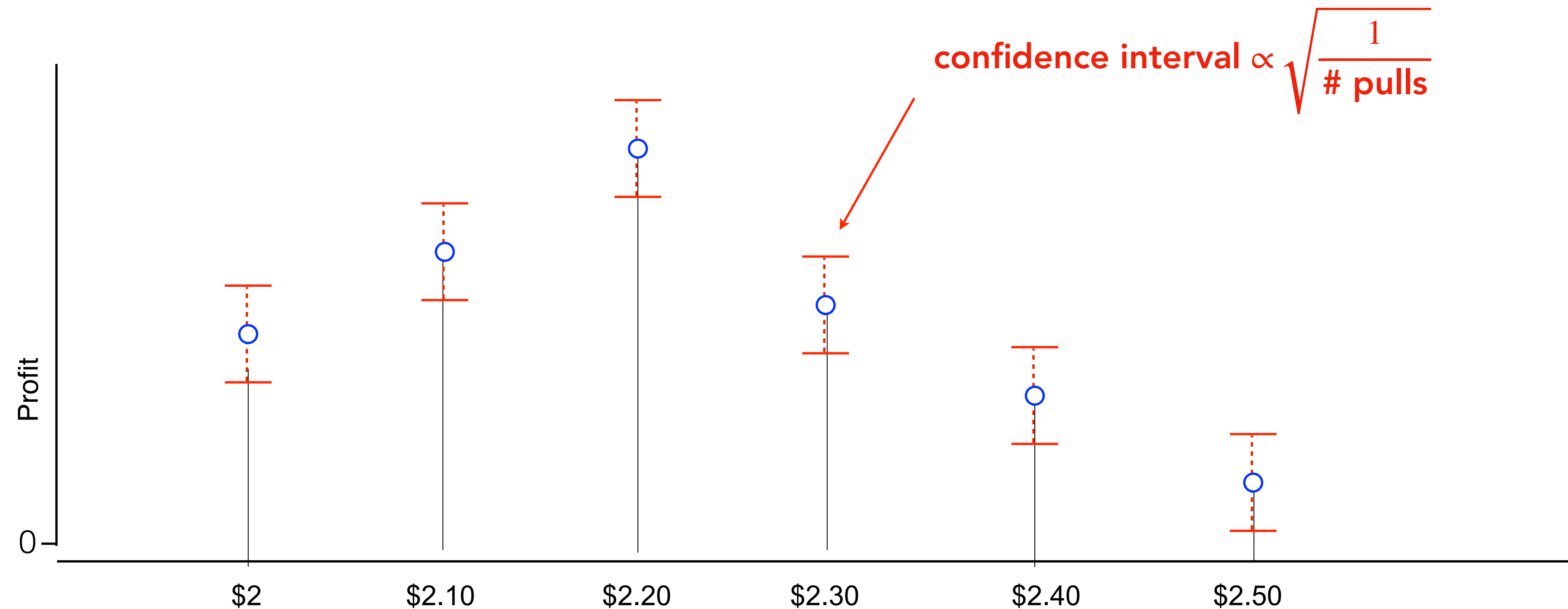
Review of Single Product Pricing: A/B/N testing

- A/B/n Testing:



Review of Single Product Pricing: A/B/N testing

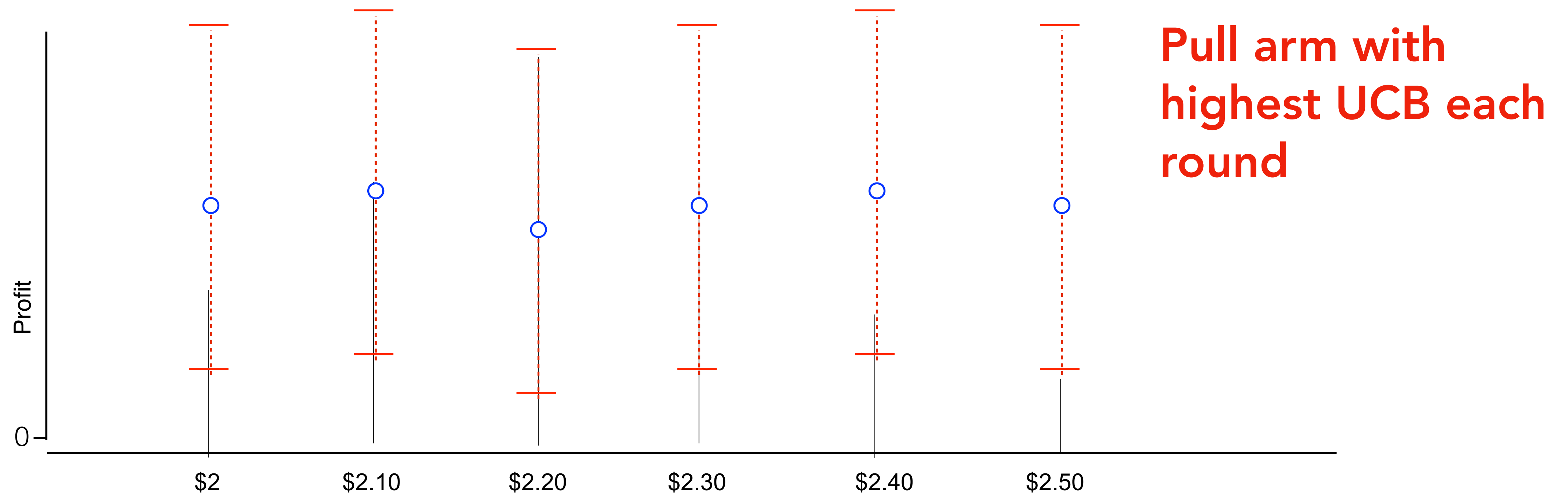
- A/B/n Testing:



- Necessarily $O(T)$ regret!

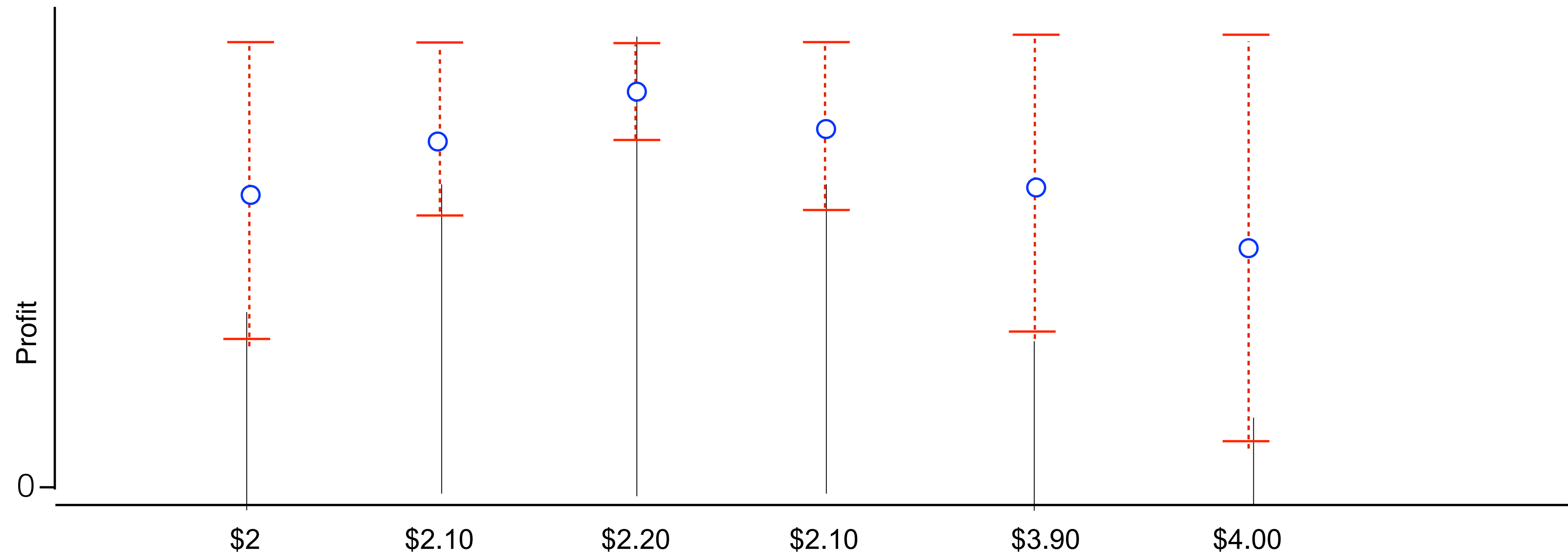
Review of Single Product Pricing: A/B/N testing

- **UCB Approach:** Multi-Armed-Bandits on discrete set of prices
[KleinbergLeighton '03, MisraSchwarzAbernethy'19]



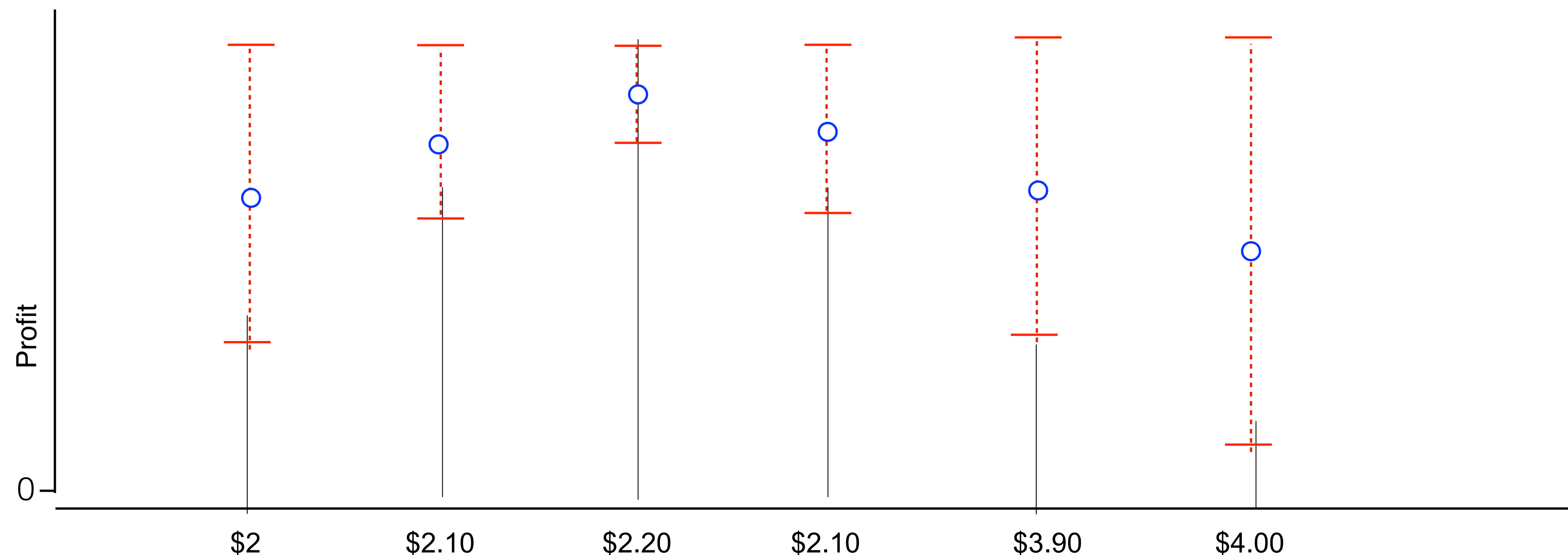
Review of Single Product Pricing: A/B/N testing

- **UCB Approach:** Multi-Armed-Bandits on discrete set of prices
[KleinbergLeighton '03, MisraSchwarzAbernethy'19]



Review of Single Product Pricing: A/B/N testing

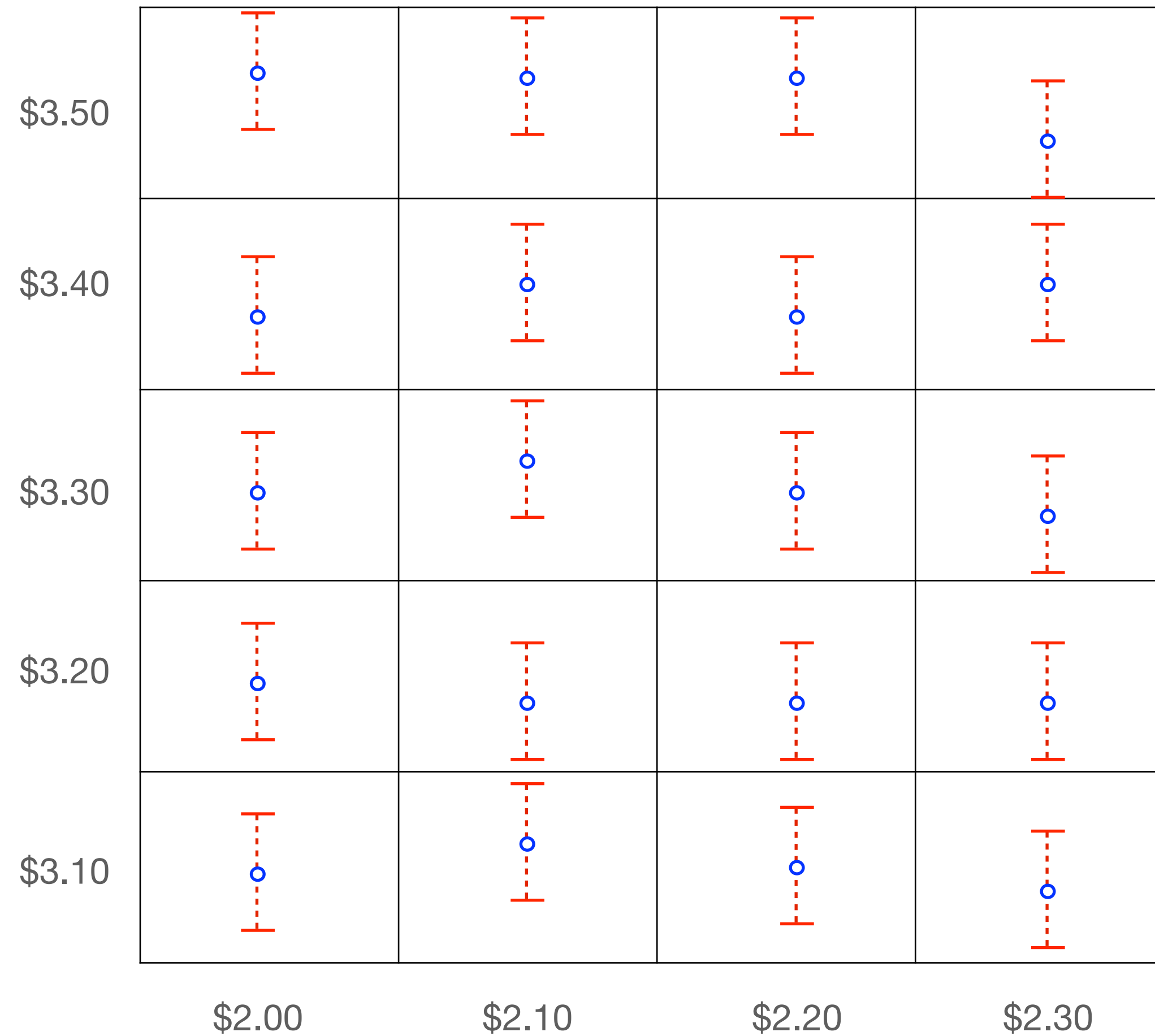
- **UCB Approach:** Multi-Armed-Bandits on discrete set of prices
[KleinbergLeighton '03, MisraSchwarzAbernethy'19]



- Can guarantee $O(\sqrt{DT} + \epsilon T)$ in general
 - If profit function is "strongly concave" can choose D so regret is $O(\sqrt{T})$

Extending to Multiple Products

- Natural Approach: Multi-Armed-Bandits on a discrete set of prices



- Number of price combinations grows exponentially with number of products!

Shortfalls of Discretized Approaches

- Number of price combinations grows exponentially with number of products!
- Difficult to add promotions to the model
- Can't handle customer heterogeneity
- Not exploiting the "smoothness" of the problem

Fundamentally, a totally non-parametric approach is difficult to scale!*

Outline

1. Introduction

2. Adaptively Setting Prices and Promotions

3. Incorporating Context

Adaptive Pricing: Our Approach

Adaptive Pricing: Our Approach

- **Strategic Exploration**
 - **Explore** to learn the demand curve while **Exploiting** current information

Adaptive Pricing: Our Approach

- **Strategic Exploration**
 - **Explore** to learn the demand curve while **Exploiting** current information
- **Exploit demand curve to reduce experimentation cost**
 - Random utility choice model

Adaptive Pricing: Our Approach

- **Strategic Exploration**
 - **Explore** to learn the demand curve while **Exploiting** current information
- **Exploit demand curve to reduce experimentation cost**
 - Random utility choice model
- **Flexible**
 - Can accommodate both prices and promotions
 - Can incorporate customer heterogeneity

Model (McFadden '77)

K products, marginal costs $m \in \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}^K$

$$u_{tk}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \alpha_k - \beta_k p_k + \gamma_k x_k + \epsilon_{tk}$$

Price Variable $\in [\ell, u]$ Promotion Variable $\in [0, 1]$

Product k utility for user t

Model Parameters
 $\theta = [(\alpha_k, \beta_k, \gamma_k)]_{k=1}^K \in \mathbb{R}^{3K}$

Type-1 GEV

Model (McFadden '77)

K products, marginal costs $m \in \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}^K$

Price Variable $\in [\ell, u]$

Promotion Variable $\in [0, 1]$

$$u_{tk}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \alpha_k - \beta_k p_k + \gamma_k x_k + \epsilon_{tk}$$

Type-1 GEV

Product k utility for user t

Model Parameters

$$\theta = [(\alpha_k, \beta_k, \gamma_k)]_{k=1}^K \in \mathbb{R}^{3K}$$

Demand

$$Q_k(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) := \mathbb{P}_\theta(I = k | \mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \frac{e^{u_k(p_k, x_k)}}{1 + \sum_{j=1}^K e^{u_j(p_j, x_j)}}$$

Model (McFadden '77)

K products, marginal costs $m \in \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}^K$

Price Variable $\in [\ell, u]$

Promotion Variable $\in [0, 1]$

$$u_{tk}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \alpha_k - \beta_k p_k + \gamma_k x_k + \epsilon_{tk}$$

Type-1 GEV

Product k utility for user t

Model Parameters

$$\theta = [(\alpha_k, \beta_k, \gamma_k)]_{k=1}^K \in \mathbb{R}^{3K}$$

Demand

$$Q_k(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) := \mathbb{P}_\theta(I = k | \mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \frac{e^{u_k(p_k, x_k)}}{1 + \sum_{j=1}^K e^{u_j(p_j, x_j)}}$$

Expected Profit

$$R_\theta(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \sum_{k=1}^K (p_k - m_k) Q_k(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})$$

Model: Bayesian Approach

$$Q_k(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) := \mathbb{P}_\theta(\text{choose } k \mid \mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \frac{e^{u_k(p_k, x_k)}}{1 + \sum_{j=1}^K e^{u_j(p_j, x_j)}}$$
$$R_\theta(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) := \sum_{k=1}^K (p_k - m_k) Q_k(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})$$

Bayesian Approach

Assume a prior Π_0 , and $\theta \sim \Pi_0$

Objective: Minimize Bayesian Regret

Let $\mathbf{p}_\star, \mathbf{x}_\star$ be the optimal price and promotion.

$$Reg_T = \mathbb{E}_{\theta \sim \Pi_0} \left[\sum_{t=1}^T R_\theta(\mathbf{p}_\star, \mathbf{x}_\star) - R_\theta(\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t) \right]$$

Dynamic Pricing Literature

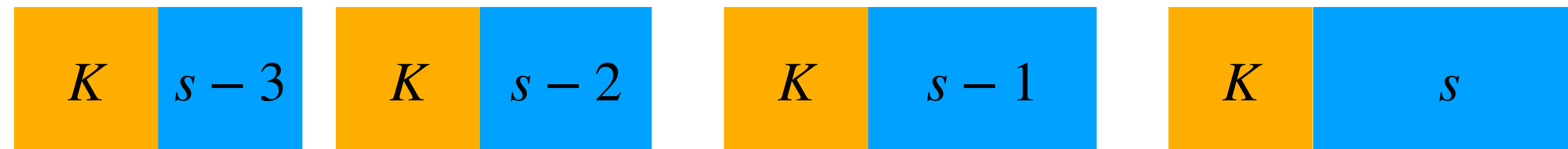
- **Parametric Generalized Linear Settings:** [KeskinZeevi'14],[BoerZwart'14], ...
- **Non-Parametric:** [BesbesZeevi'09],..., [MisraSchwarzAbernethy'19]
- **Choice Models:** [JavanmardNazerzedahShao'19, MiaoChao'21]
- **Assortment Selection:** in retail settings, impossible to know choice set.

Our work is the first to consider:

- a) Choice Models
- b) Promotion variables
- c) Consumer Heterogeneity

Existing Work: Forced Exploration

Epoch: $s = 1, 2, \dots$

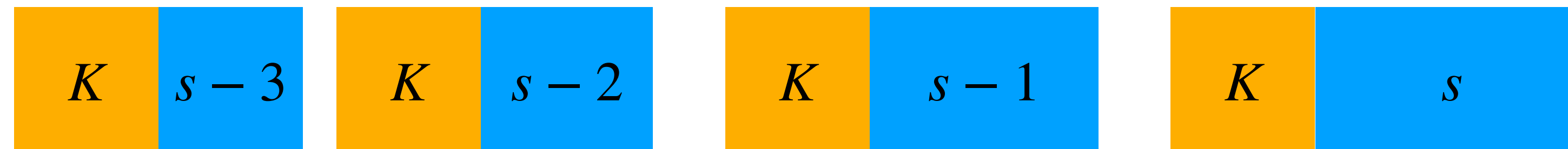


Pure Exploration Phases: Play K random prices, MLE estimate $\hat{\theta}_s$

Pure Exploitation Phases: Play $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_s = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}} R_{\hat{\theta}_s}(\mathbf{p})$

Existing Work: Forced Exploration

Epoch: $s = 1, 2, \dots$



Pure Exploration Phases: Play K random prices, MLE estimate $\hat{\theta}_s$

Pure Exploitation Phases: Play $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_s = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}} R_{\hat{\theta}_s}(\mathbf{p})$

Guarantee*: $Reg_T \leq O(K\sqrt{T})$

[BroderRusmevichientong'12]

[JavanmardNazerzedahShao'20]

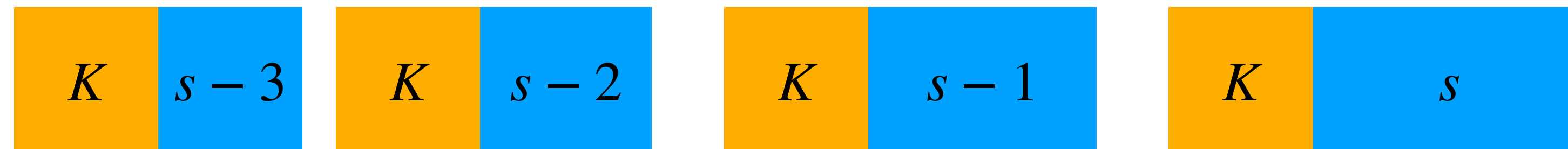
Playing randomized prices is not particularly feasible in practice!

Can't handle promotions easily!

A form of ϵ -Greedy

Existing Work: Forced Exploration

Epoch: $s = 1, 2, \dots$



$$t \approx Ks + s^2$$

K/\sqrt{t} in exploration

Pure Exploration Phases: Play K random prices, MLE estimate $\hat{\theta}_s$

Pure Exploitation Phases: Play $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_s = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}} R_{\hat{\theta}_s}(\mathbf{p})$

Guarantee*: $Reg_T \leq O(K\sqrt{T})$

Playing randomized prices is not particularly feasible in practice!

Can't handle promotions easily!

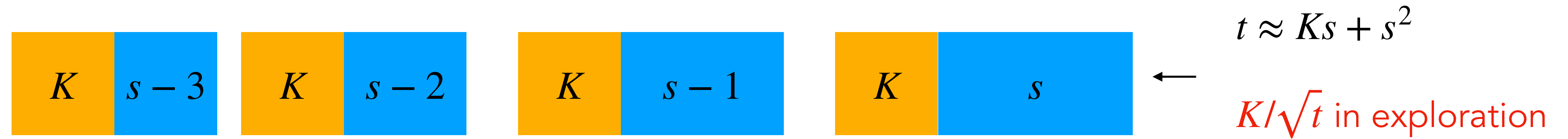
A form of ϵ -Greedy

[BroderRusmevichientong'12]

[JavanmardNazerzedahShao'20]

Existing Work: Forced Exploration

Epoch: $s = 1, 2, \dots$



Pure Exploration Phases: Play K random prices, MLE estimate $\hat{\theta}_s$

Pure Exploitation Phases: Play $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_s = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}} R_{\hat{\theta}_s}(\mathbf{p})$

Guarantee*: $Reg_T \leq O(K\sqrt{T})$

Playing randomized prices is not particularly feasible in practice!

Can't handle promotions easily!

A form of ϵ -Greedy

[BroderRusmevichientong'12]

[JavanmardNazerzedahShao'20]

Our Approach: Thompson/Posterior Sampling

Input: K products, X promotion set

Initialize: Π_0 as some prior distribution over θ

For $t = 1, 2, 3, \dots, T$:

1. **Sample** $\theta_t \sim \Pi_t$

2. **Set** best price/promotion for θ_t :

$$\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}} R_{\theta_t}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})$$

4. **Observe** $I_t \sim Q_t(\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t)$, collect revenue p_{t, I_t}

5. **Update** $\Pi_{t+1} = \text{Posterior}(\Pi_t, \theta_{t+1})$

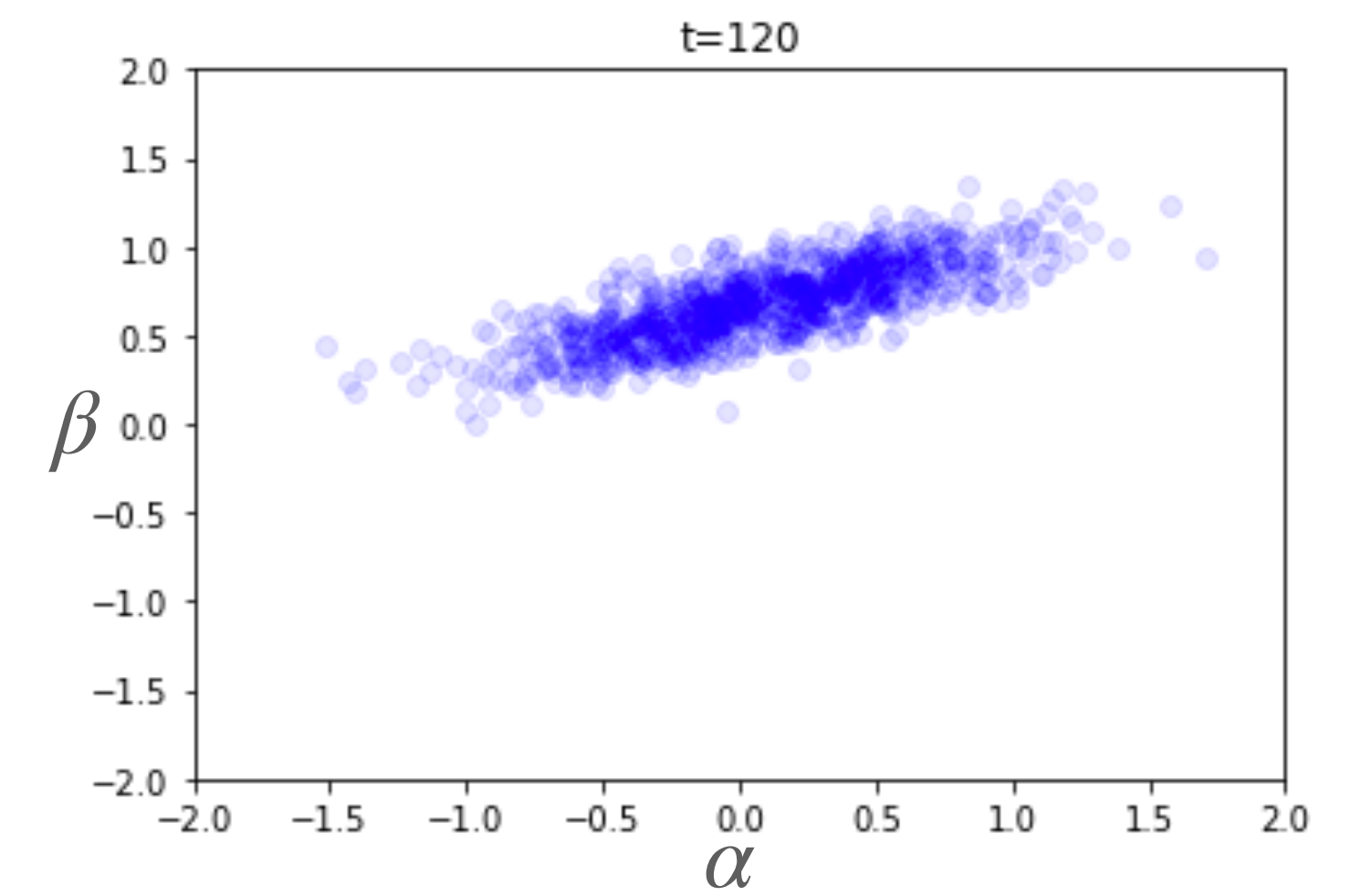
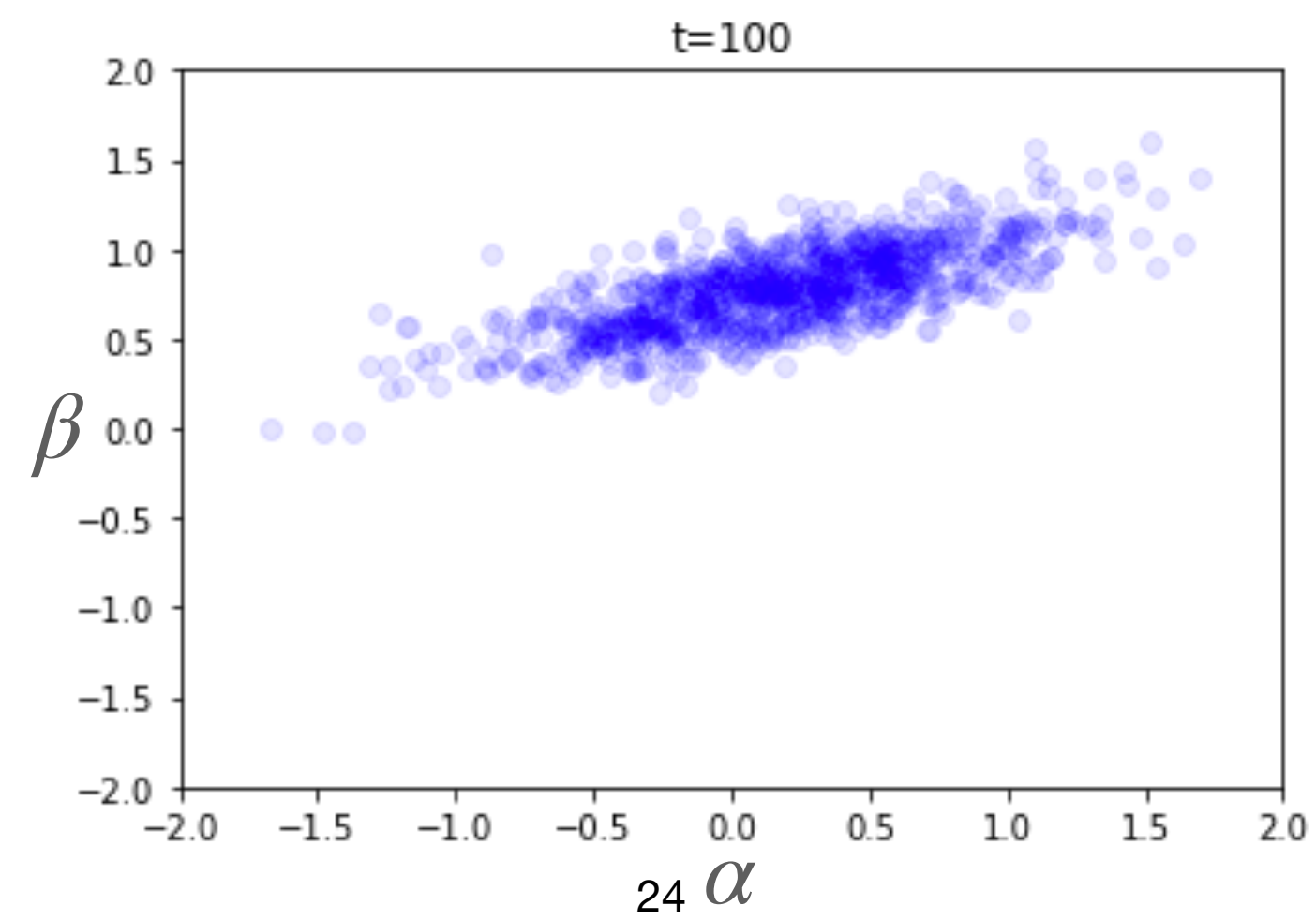
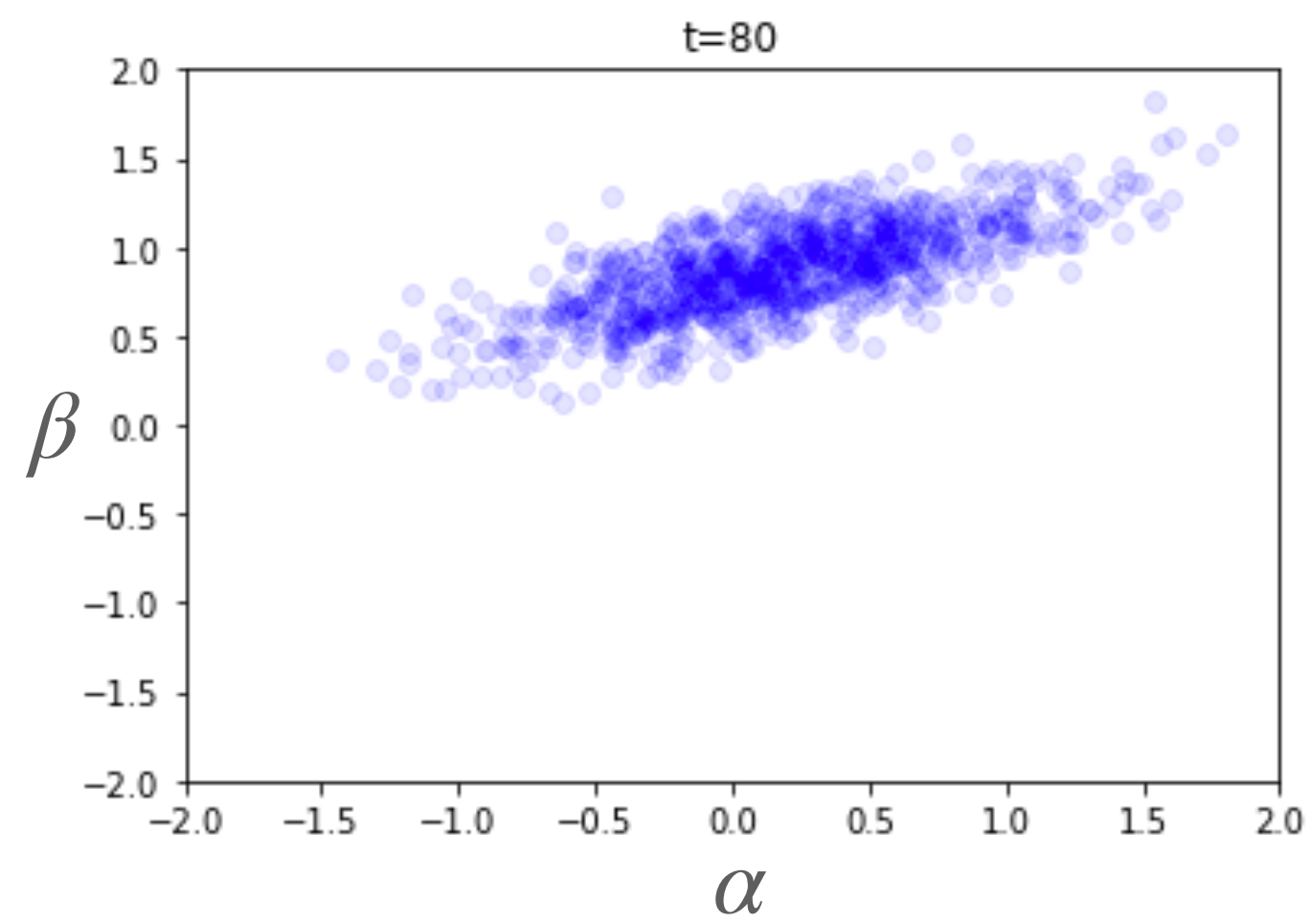
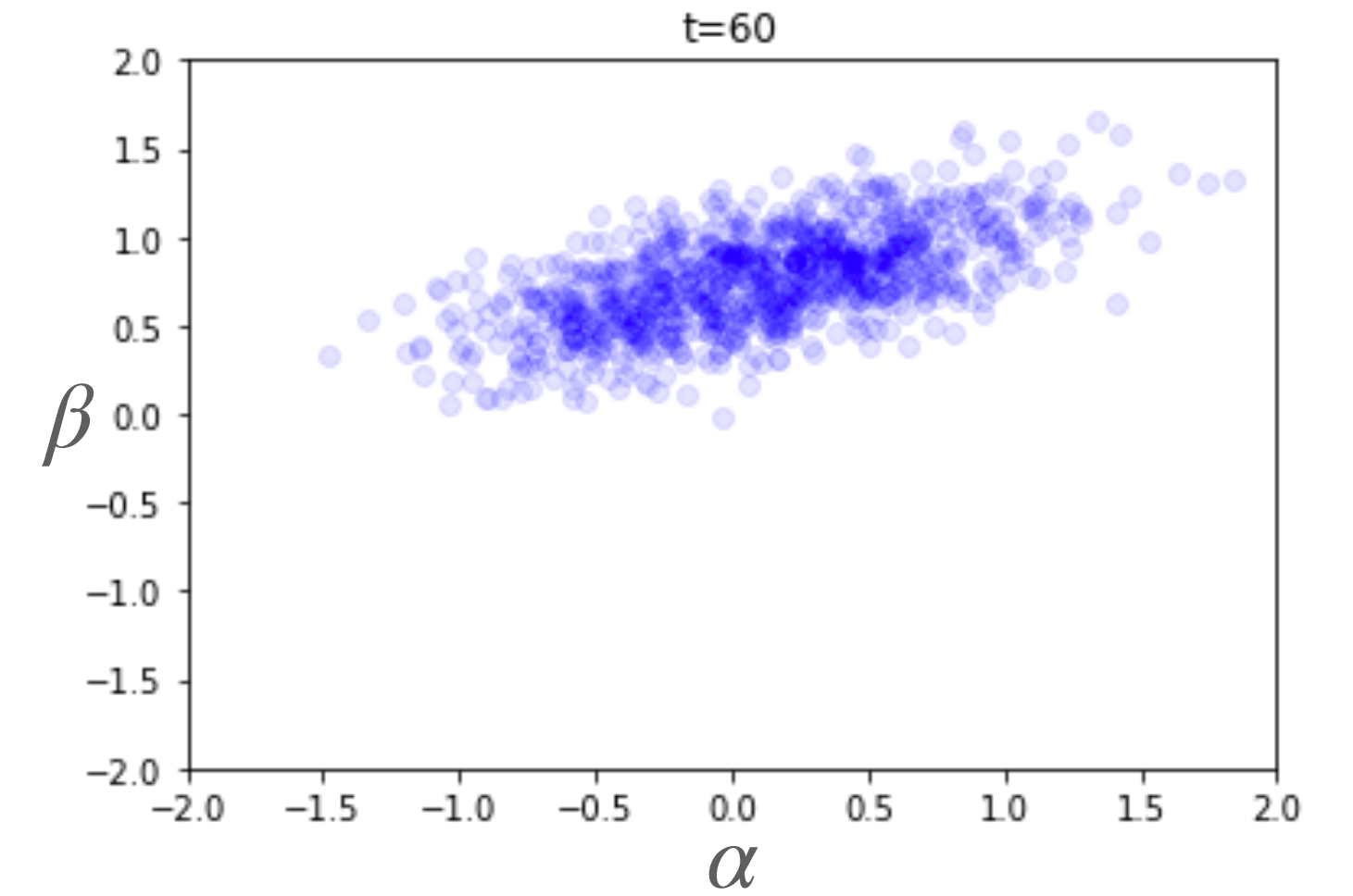
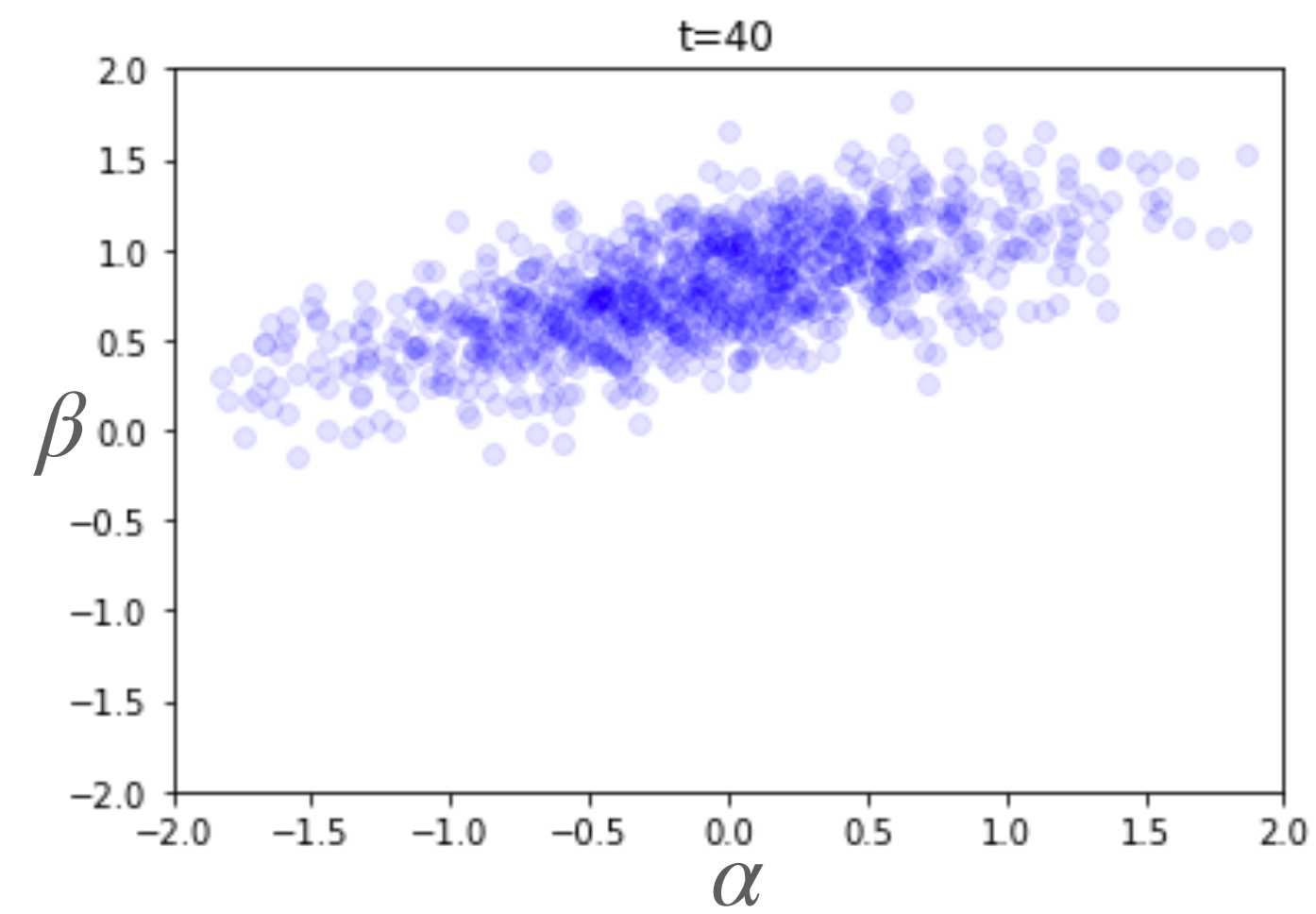
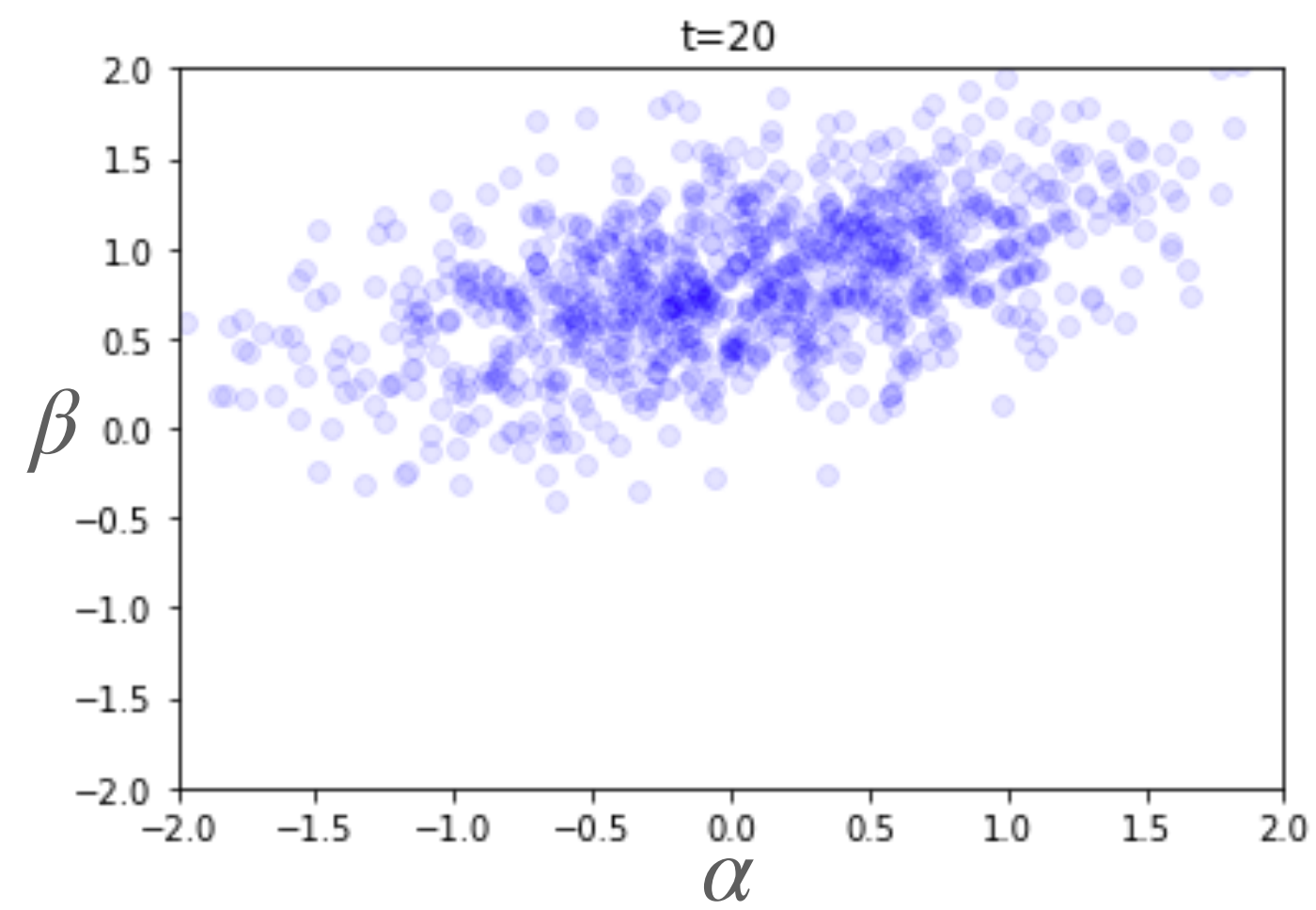
Model Based Exploration ←

Model Based Optimization ←

Our Approach: Thompson Sampling

- **Model Based Exploration and Pricing:** Exploration is driven by the model, not by playing random prices
- **Computational Advantages:** Easily implemented if you can *sample* from the posterior. Maintaining the posterior is impossible in many settings, but sampling is straightforward.
- **Easily Extended:** Can easily incorporate additional features to the model

Thompson Sampling: Intuition



Implementation Challenges

1. Optimizing over p and x at the same time is non-convex and high dimensional

$$\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}} R_{\theta_t}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})$$

2. Posterior Computation Π_t

Optimize Prices with Fixed Promotions

Revenue

$$R_{\theta}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \sum_{k=1}^K (p_k - m_k) \frac{e^{\alpha_k - \beta_k p_k + \gamma_k x_k}}{1 + \sum_{j=1}^K e^{\alpha_j - \beta_j p_j + \gamma_j x_j}}$$

$$\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}} R_{\theta_t}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})$$

Unfortunately non-convex in \mathbf{p}

Lemma (Aydin & Ryan '00) For a fixed value of \mathbf{x} ,

$$\mathbf{p}^*,_i = \frac{1}{\beta_i} + R$$

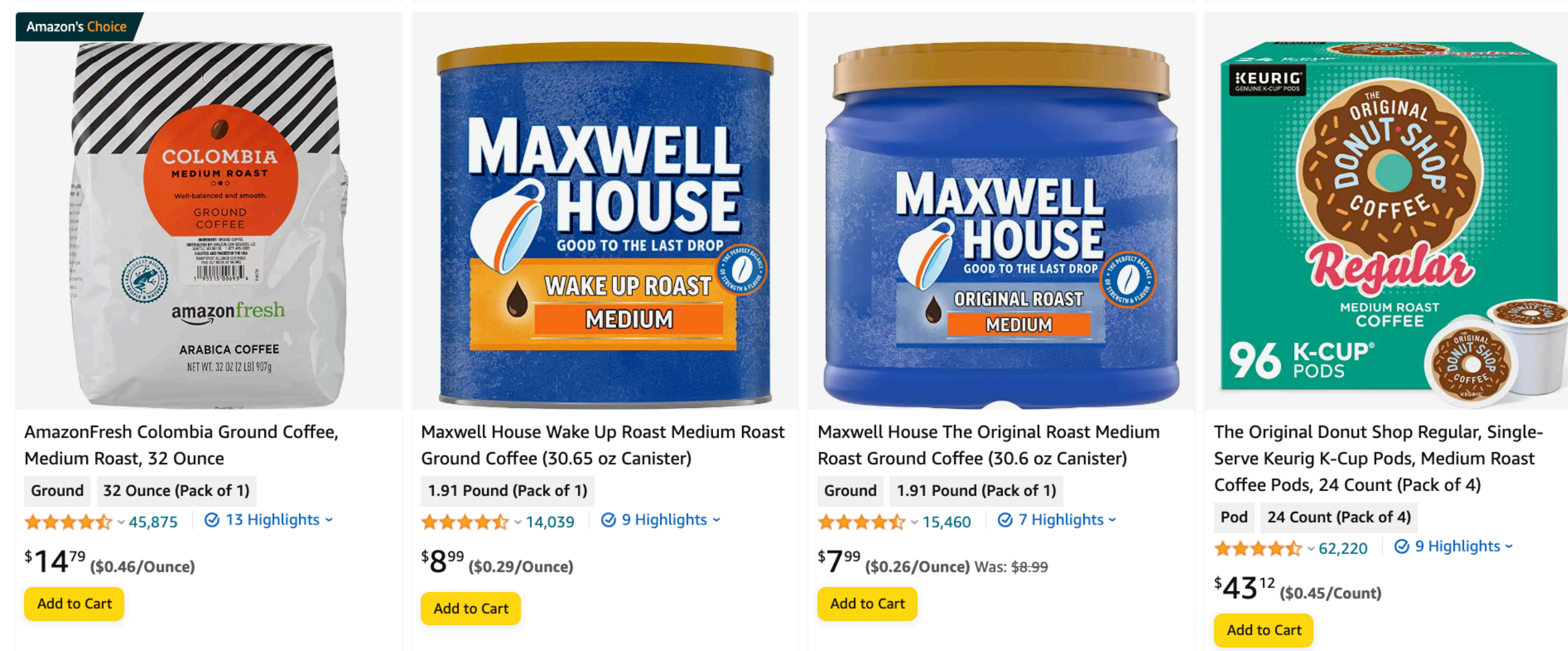
$$R = \sum_{i=1}^K \frac{1}{\beta_i} e^{-(1+\beta_i R)} e^{\alpha_i + \gamma_i x_i}$$

- A fairly fast binary search procedure works well

Optimizing Promotion at a Fixed Price

Easy Setting: X finite and combinatorial

- e.g. $X = \{e_1, \dots, e_K\}$ - we can promote at most one item



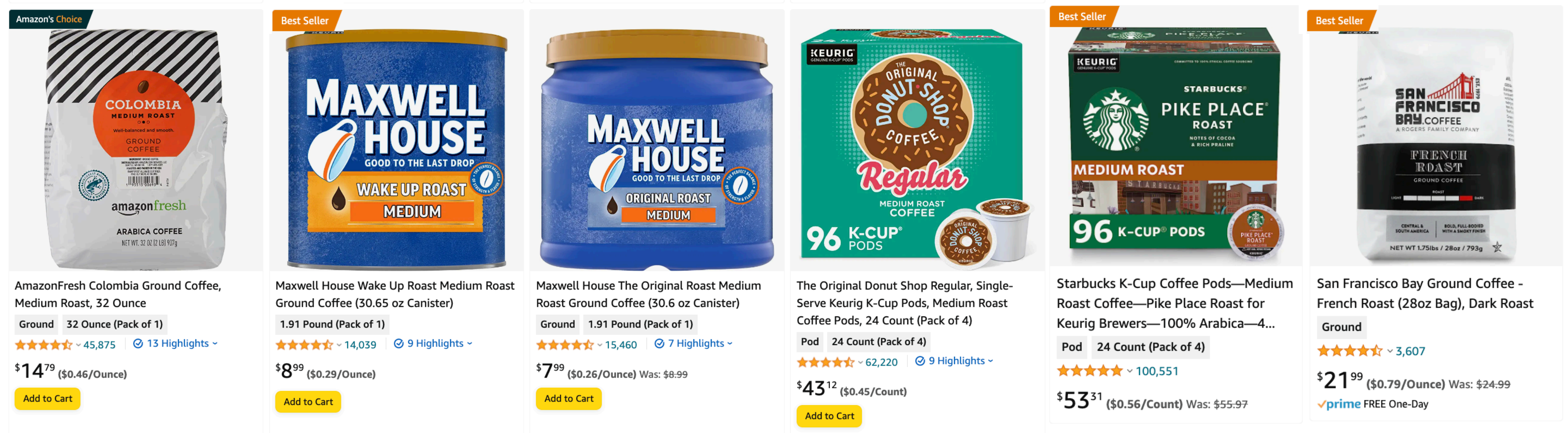
The image shows four Amazon product listings for coffee. Each listing includes a product image, a title, a price, and an 'Add to Cart' button. The products are:

- Amazon's Choice** AmazonFresh Colombia Ground Coffee, Medium Roast, 32 Ounce. Price: \$14.79 (\$0.46/Ounce). 45,875 reviews.
- Maxwell House Wake Up Roast Medium Roast Ground Coffee (30.65 oz Canister). Price: \$8.99 (\$0.29/Ounce). 14,039 reviews.
- Maxwell House The Original Roast Medium Roast Ground Coffee (30.6 oz Canister). Price: \$7.99 (\$0.26/Ounce). Was: \$8.99. 15,460 reviews.
- The Original Donut Shop Regular, Single-Serve Keurig K-Cup Pods, Medium Roast Coffee Pods, 24 Count (Pack of 4). Price: \$43.12 (\$0.45/Count). 62,220 reviews.

Optimizing Promotion at a Fixed Price

Easy Setting: X finite and combinatorial

- e.g. $X = \{e_1, \dots, e_K\}$ - we can promote at most one item
- e.g. $X = \{0,1\}^K$ - we can promote a subset of items



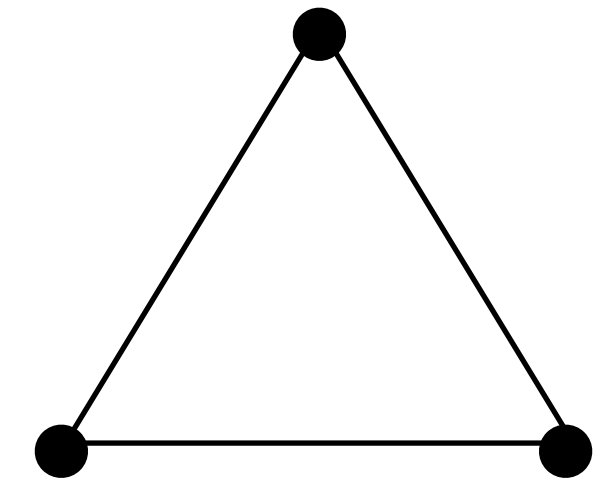
The image shows a horizontal row of six Amazon product listings for coffee. Each listing includes a product image, a title, a price, and an 'Add to Cart' button. The products are:

- Amazon's Choice:** AmazonFresh Colombia Ground Coffee, Medium Roast, 32 Ounce. Price: \$14.79 (\$0.46/Ounce).
- Best Seller:** Maxwell House Wake Up Roast Medium Roast Ground Coffee (30.65 oz Canister). Price: \$8.99 (\$0.29/Ounce).
- Best Seller:** Maxwell House The Original Roast Medium Roast Ground Coffee (30.6 oz Canister). Price: \$7.99 (\$0.26/Ounce).
- Best Seller:** The Original Donut Shop Regular, Single-Serve Keurig K-Cup Pods, Medium Roast Coffee Pods, 24 Count (Pack of 4). Price: \$43.12 (\$0.45/Count).
- Best Seller:** Starbucks K-Cup Coffee Pods—Medium Roast Coffee—Pike Place Roast for Keurig Brewers—100% Arabica—4... Price: \$53.31 (\$0.56/Count).
- Best Seller:** San Francisco Bay Ground Coffee - French Roast (28oz Bag), Dark Roast. Price: \$21.99 (\$0.79/Ounce).

But discrete settings don't capture magnitude of the promotion.



Optimize Promotions Fixing Prices

Simplex Constraint: $X = \Delta^K := \{ \mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}^K : \sum_{i=1}^K x_i = 1 \}$



Choosing amount of budget each item gets:

- e.g. some items get a larger amount of screen space

<p>Amazon's Choice</p>  <p>AmazonFresh Colombia Ground Coffee, Medium Roast, 32 Ounce</p> <p>Ground 32 Ounce (Pack of 1)</p> <p>★★★★☆ ~ 45,875 13 Highlights</p> <p>\$14⁷⁹ (\$0.46/Ounce)</p> <p>Add to Cart</p>	 <p>Maxwell House Wake Up Roast Medium Roast Ground Coffee (30.65 oz Canister)</p> <p>1.91 Pound (Pack of 1)</p> <p>★★★★☆ ~ 14,039 9 Highlights</p> <p>\$8⁹⁹ (\$0.29/Ounce)</p> <p>Add to Cart</p>
--	---



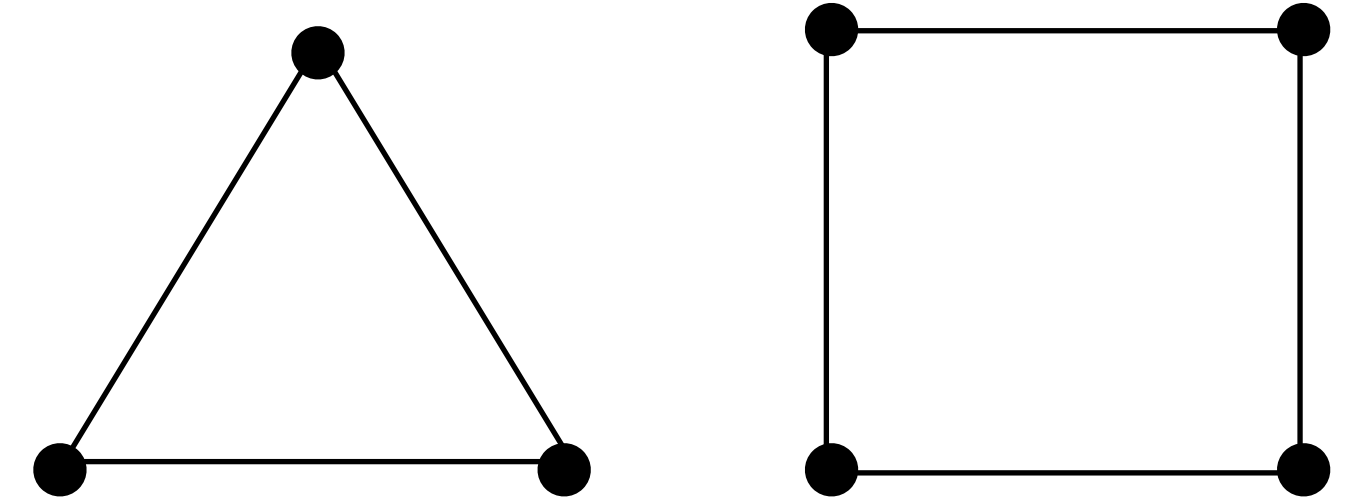
	<p>Sponsored</p> <p>Kauai Coffee Single-Serve Pods, Garden Isle Medium Roast – 100% Arabica Coffee from Hawaii's...</p> <p>★★★★☆ ~ 21,044</p> <p>\$28⁷⁵ (\$0.60/Count)</p> <p>✓prime Same-Day</p> <p>FREE delivery Today 7 AM - 11 AM</p>
---	--

Optimize Promotions Fixing Prices

Optimal Promotion Lemma. The optimal promotion is a vertex of X :

1. $X = \Delta^K$: $\mathbf{x}_\star \in \{e_1, \dots, e_K\}$

2. $X = [0,1]^K$: $\mathbf{x}_\star \in \{0,1\}^K$



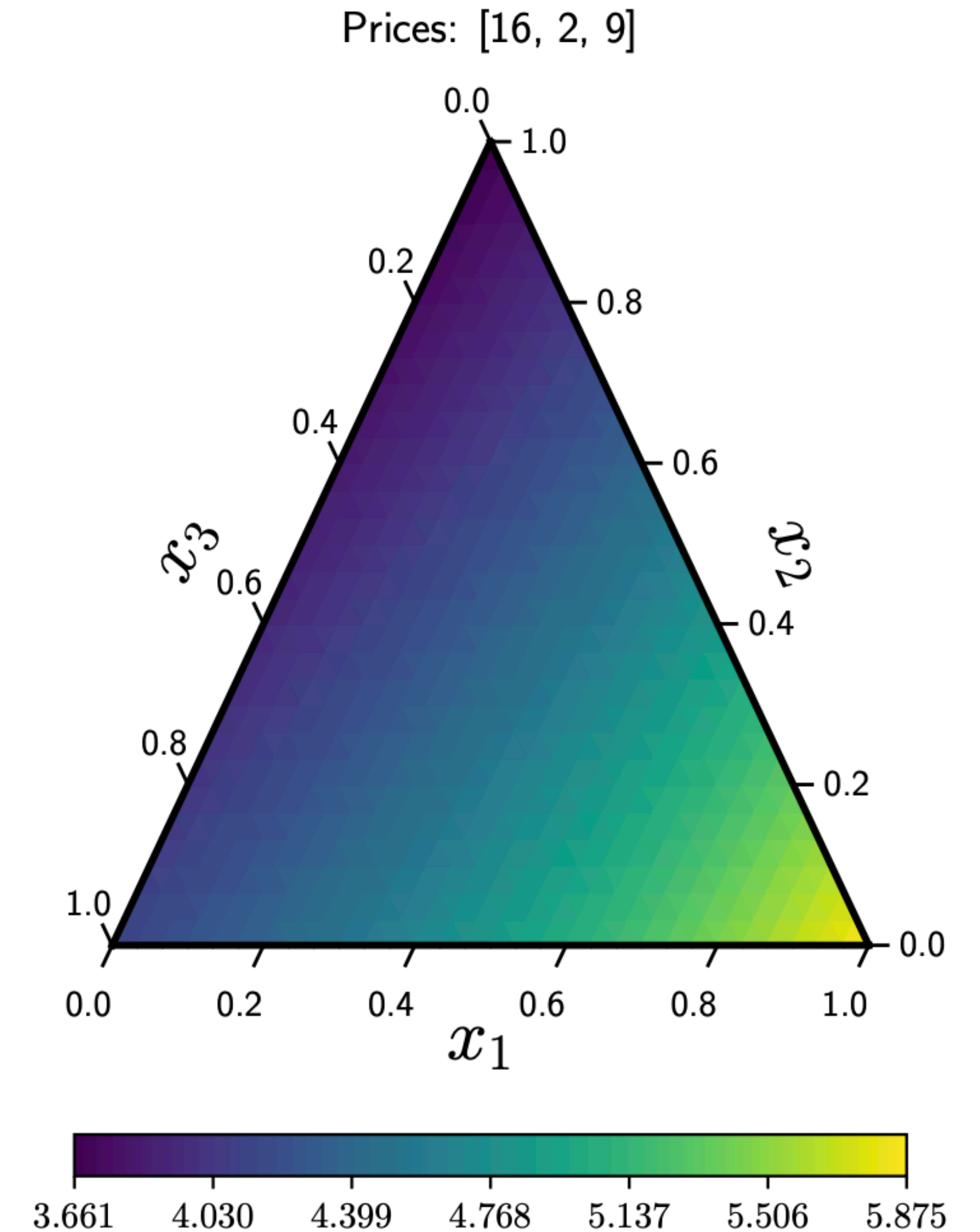
The optimal marketing mix is an all or nothing strategy!

Optimal Promotion: Intuition

$$R_{\theta}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}) = \sum_{k=1}^K (p_k - m_k) \frac{e^{\alpha_k - \beta_k p_k + \gamma_k x_k}}{1 + \sum_{j=1}^K e^{\alpha_j - \beta_j p_j}}$$

However, optimal promotion may not always align with the highest price item!

	Parameters	Product 1	Product 2	Product 3
	α	1	1	1
	β	.1	.2	.3
	γ	.8	.3	.5
Case 1	\mathbf{p}	\$16	\$2	\$9
	\mathbf{x}_*	1	0	0



Challenges

1. Optimizing over p and x at the same time is non-convex and high dimensional

$$\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}} R_{\theta_t}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})$$

Solution: Can assume X is finite, find optimal price for each $x \in X$

2. Posterior Computation Π_t

Posterior Computation

Likelihood Function: $\mathbf{L}(\theta) := \mathbf{L}(\theta | \{(\mathbf{p}_s, \mathbf{x}_s, I_s)\}_{s=1}^t) = \prod_{s=1}^t Q_{I_s}(\mathbf{p}_s, \mathbf{x}_s)$

Posterior Distribution: $p(\theta | \{(\mathbf{p}_s, \mathbf{x}_s, I_s)\}_{s=1}^t) \propto \mathbf{L}(\theta)\Pi_0(\theta)$
 $\propto \exp(\log \mathbf{L}(\theta) + \log \Pi_0(\theta))$

Posterior Computation

Langevin Dynamics:

for $r = 1, 2, \dots, R$

$$\theta_{r+1,t} = \theta_{r,t} + \epsilon_t \nabla_{\theta} [\log \mathbf{L}(\theta_{r,t}) + \log \Pi_0] + \sqrt{2\epsilon_t} \eta_r$$

$$\eta_k \sim N(0, I)$$

Posterior Sampling:

$$\text{Langevin}(\theta_{r,t}) \xrightarrow{R \rightarrow \infty} \exp(\log \mathbf{L}(\theta) + \log \Pi_0(\theta))$$



MCMC method which converges to posterior sampling
[WellingYeh'15]

Generally take $\epsilon_t = O(1/t)$

Posterior Computation

Langevin Dynamics:

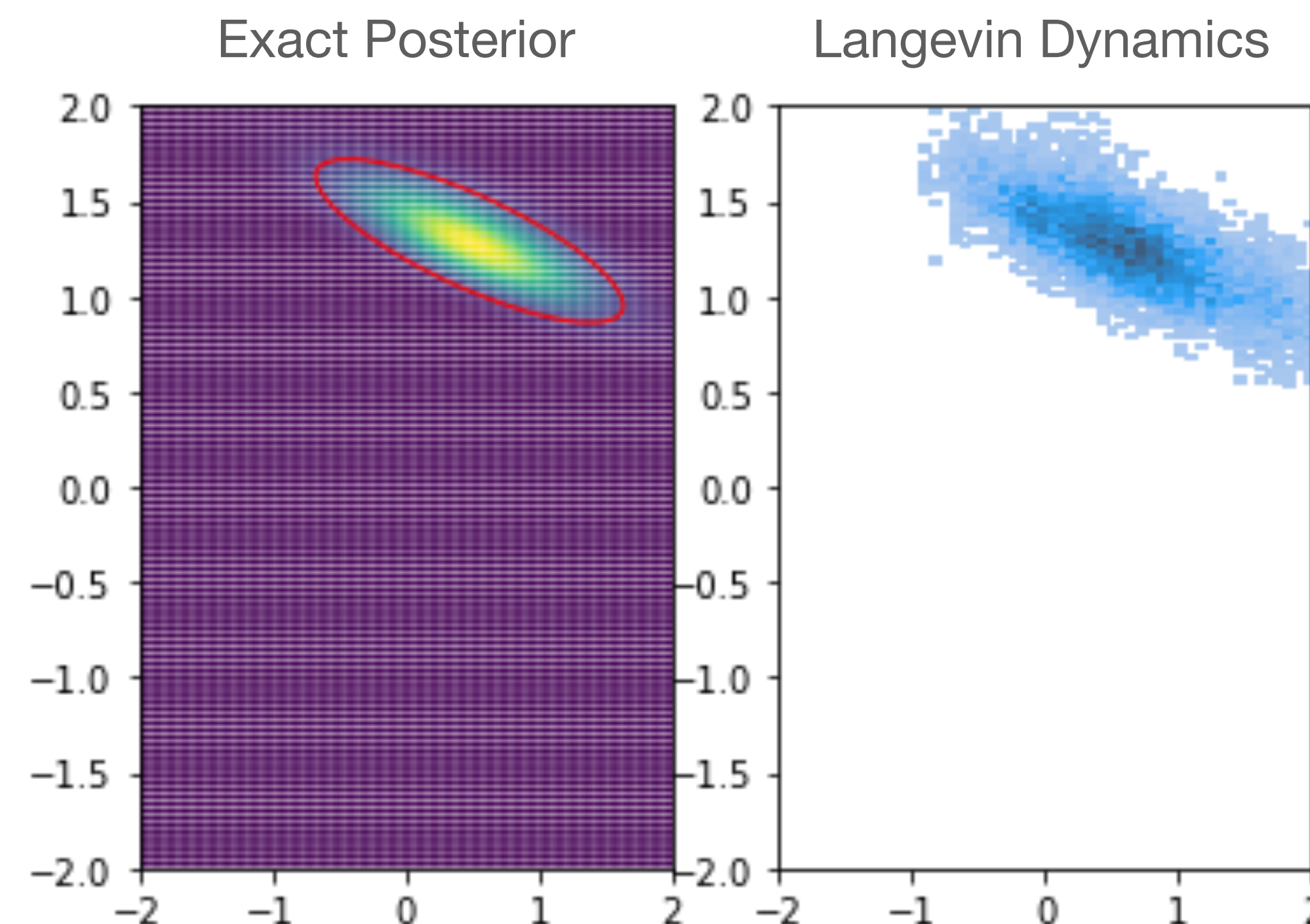
for $r = 1, 2, \dots, R$

$$\theta_{r+1,t} = \theta_{r,t} + \epsilon_t \nabla_{\theta} [\log \mathbf{L}(\theta_{r,t}) + \log \Pi_0] + \sqrt{2\epsilon_t} \eta_r$$

$$\eta_k \sim N(0, I)$$

Example of 1 product, $\alpha_1 = 1, \beta_1 = 1.25$

1. Very fast updates in PyTorch
2. Take $\epsilon_k = O(1/k)$
3. Need a few dozen steps each iteration



Challenges

1. Optimizing over p and x at the same time is non-convex and high dimensional

$$\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}} R_{\theta_t}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})$$

Solution: Can assume X is finite, find optimal price for each $x \in X$

2. Posterior Computation Π_t

Solution: Langevin Dynamics

Our Approach: Thompson Sampling

Input: K products, X promotion set

Initialize: Π_0 as some prior distribution over θ

For $t = 1, 2, 3, \dots, T$:

1. **Sample** $\theta_t \sim \Pi_t$

for $r = 1, 2, \dots, R$

Sample $\eta_r \sim N(0, I)$

$$\theta_{r+1,t} = \theta_{r,t} + \epsilon_t \nabla_{\theta} \log \mathbf{L}(\theta_{r,t}) + \sqrt{2\epsilon_t} \eta_r$$

2. **Set** best price/promotion for θ_t :

for $x \in X$

find $\mathbf{p} = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}} R_{\theta_{t,R}}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})$, take highest

4. **Observe** $I_t \sim Q_t(\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t)$, collect revenue p_{t,I_t}

5. **Update** $\Pi_{t+1} = \text{Posterior}(\Pi_t, \theta_{t+1})$

Regret Guarantees

Theorem: [JLMY] The Bayesian regret of the Thompson Sampling Procedure after a time horizon of T steps is

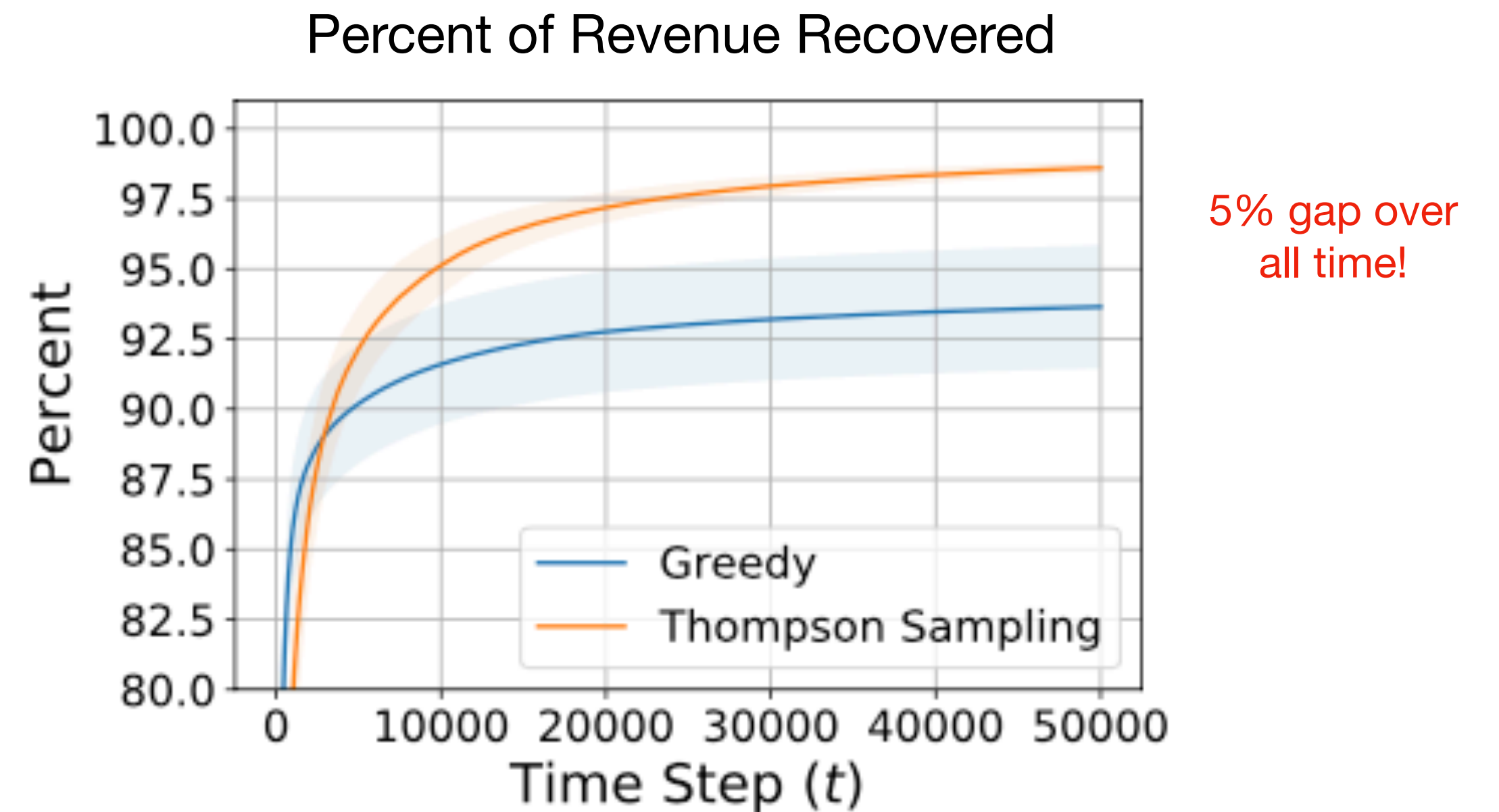
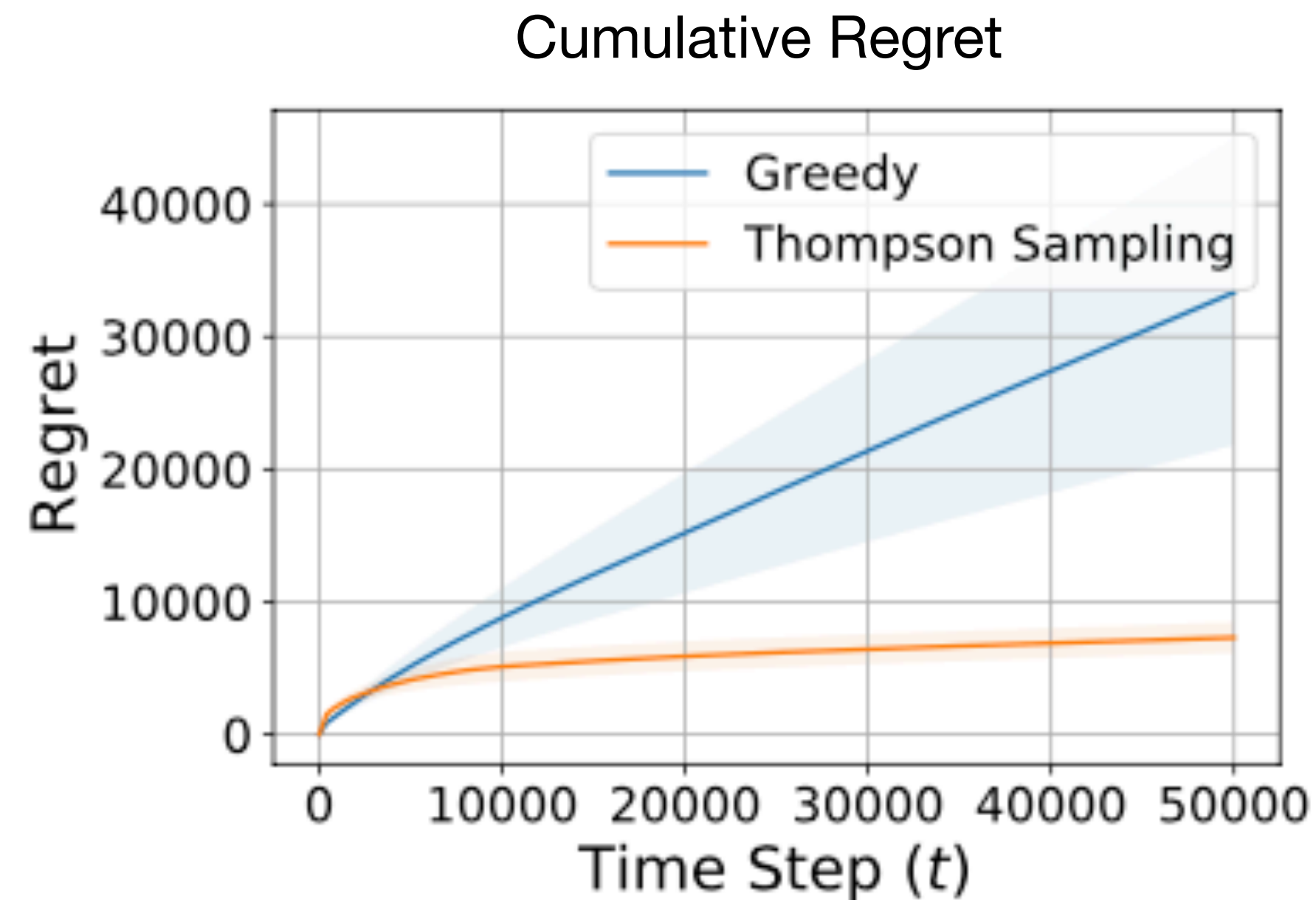
$$\approx K\sqrt{\kappa T}$$

$$\kappa = \frac{1}{\min_{\mathbf{p} \in [\ell, u]^K, \mathbf{x} \in X} \dot{Q}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x})}$$

Empirical Example

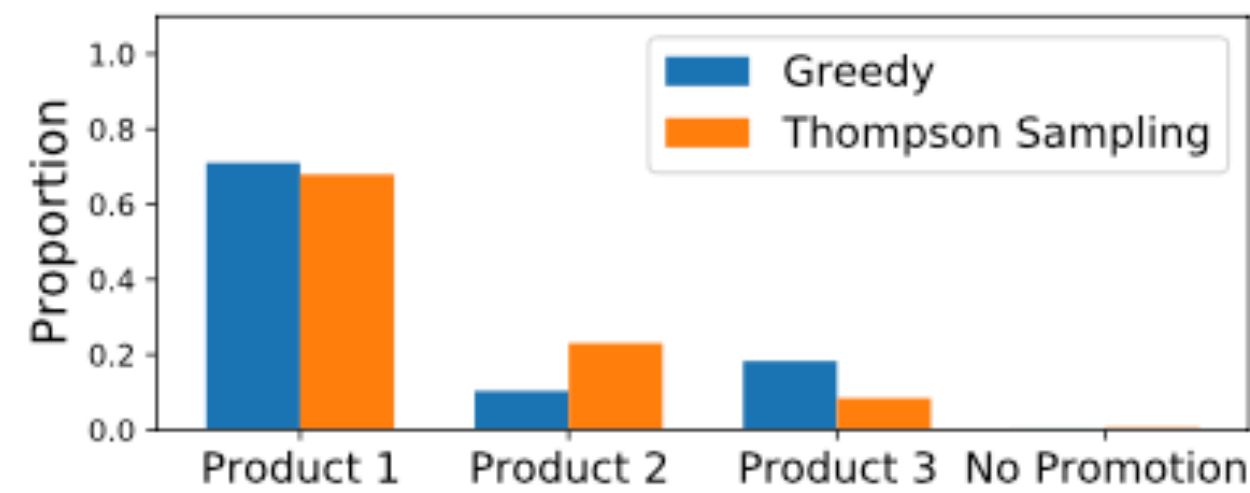
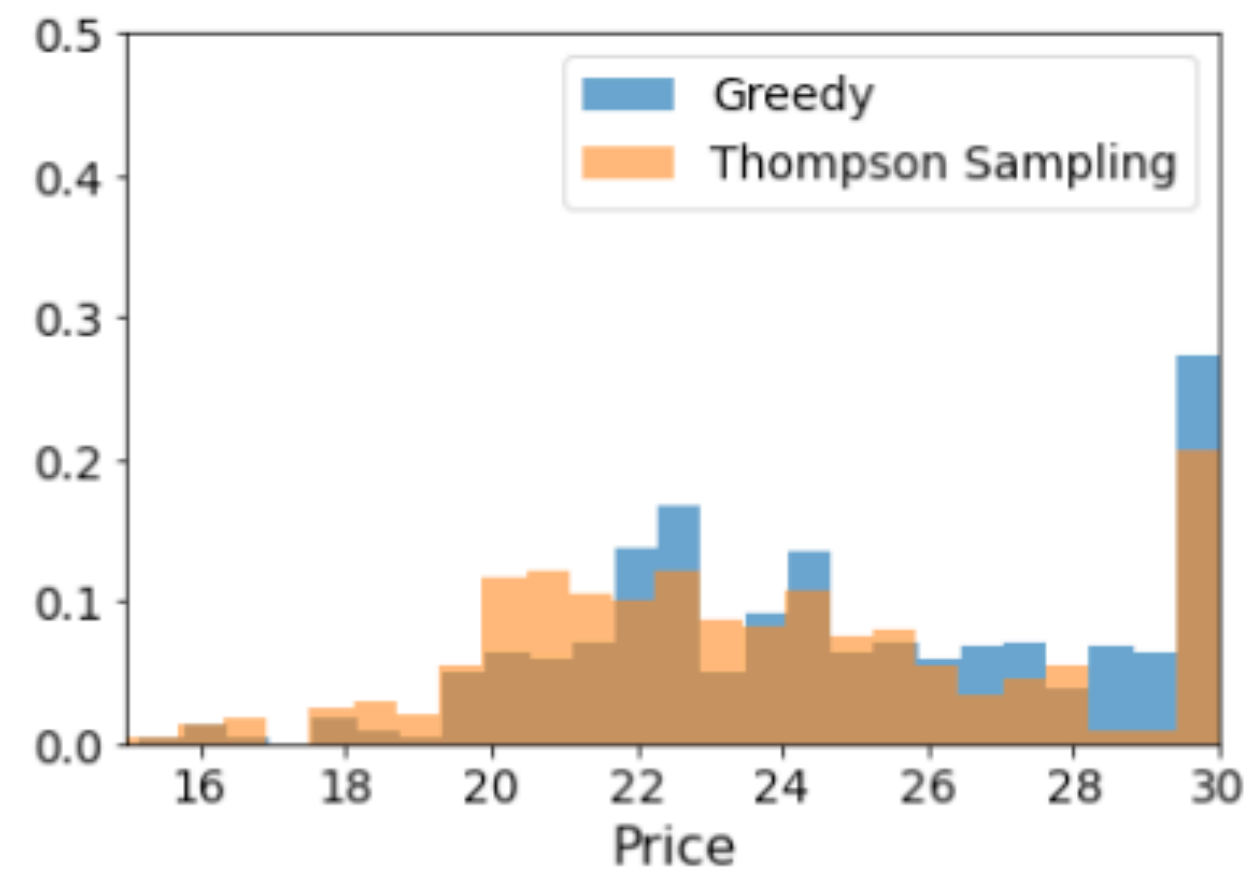
- **Greedy:** Solve the MLE at each time and play the optimal price
- **Thompson Sampling:** Implemented using Langevin Dynamics

Parameters	Product 1	Product 2	Product 3
α	1	1	1
β	.1	.2	.3
γ	.8	.3	.5
\mathbf{p}_*	\$20.50	\$15.50	\$13.83
\mathbf{x}_*	1	0	0

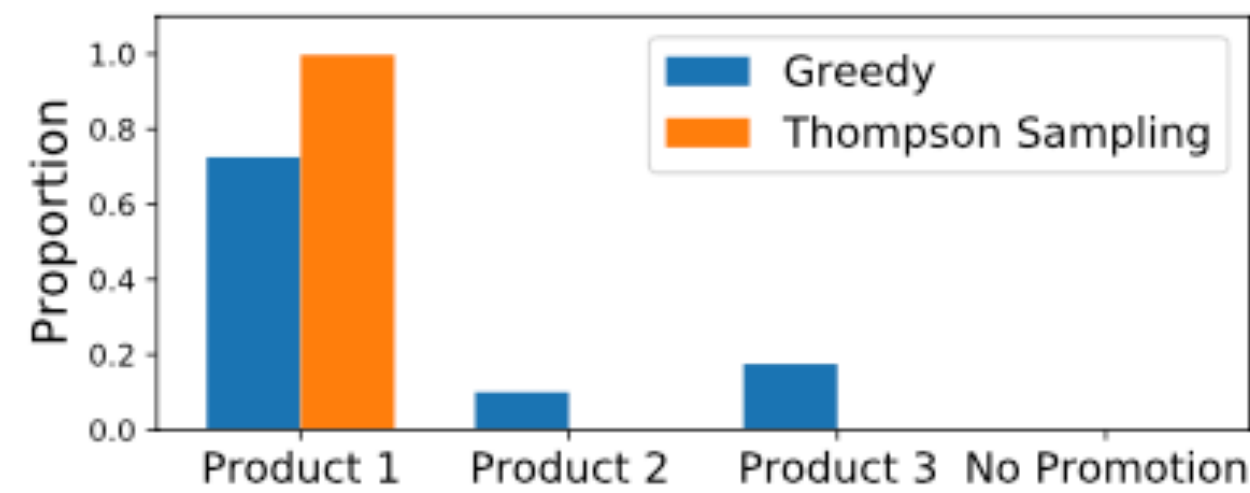
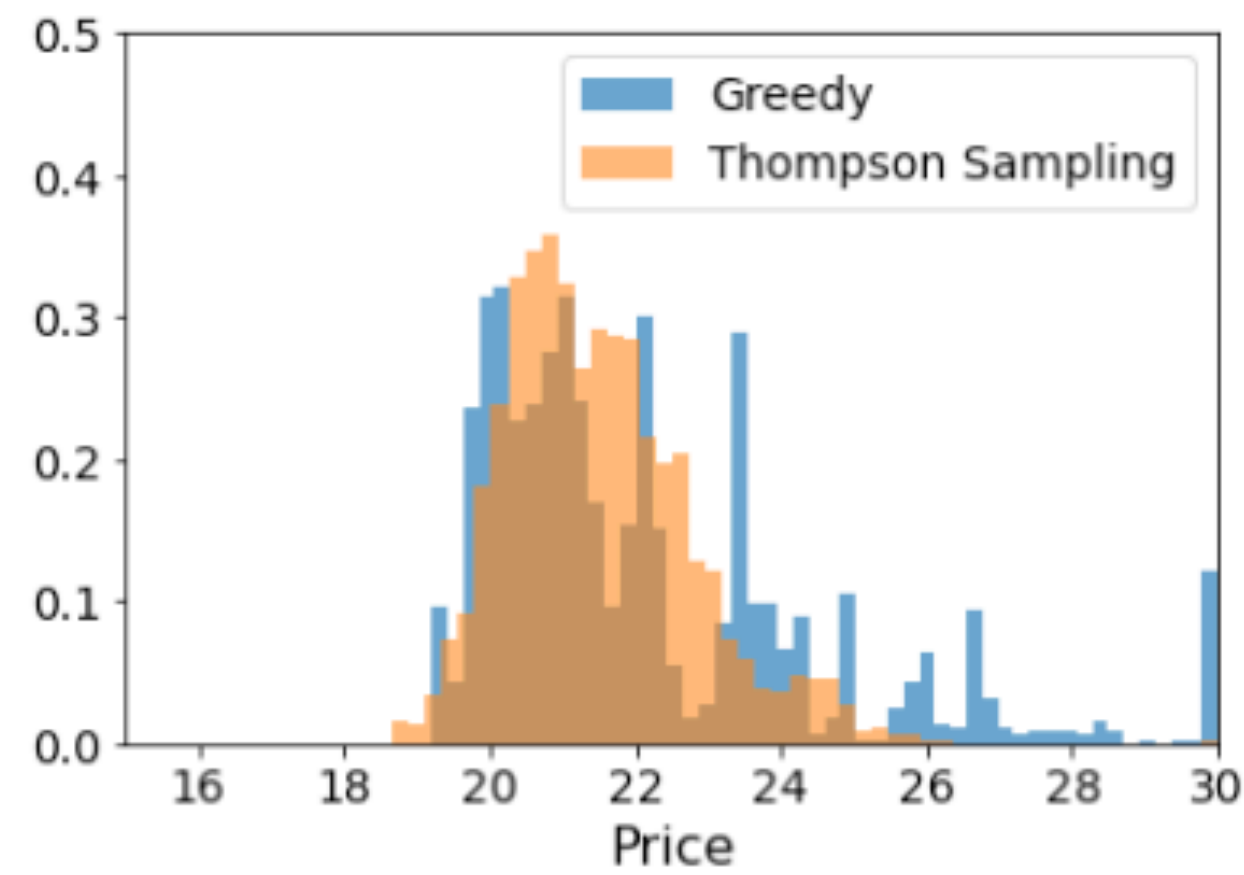


What's going on?

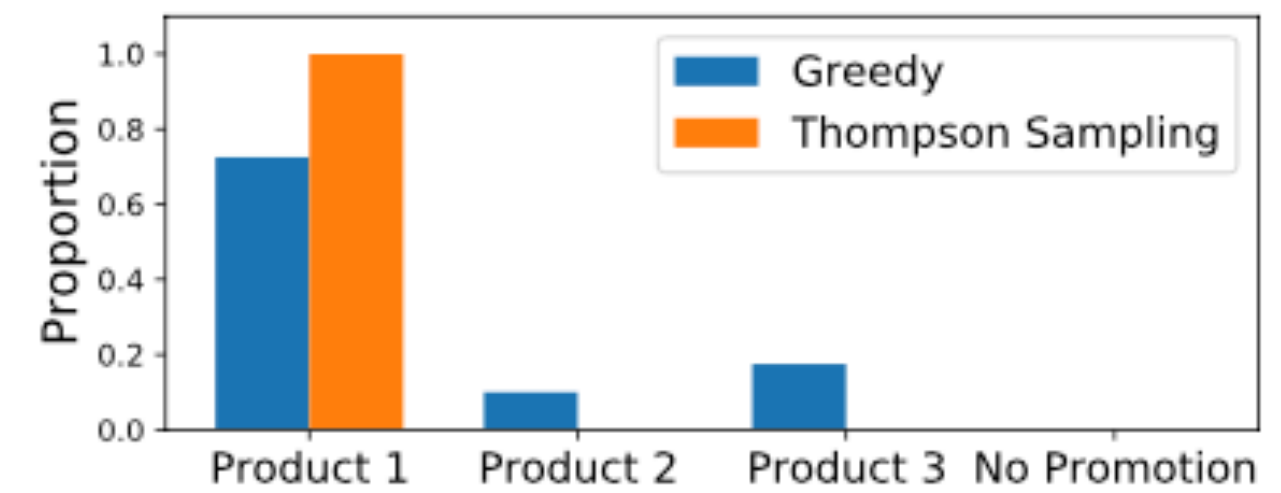
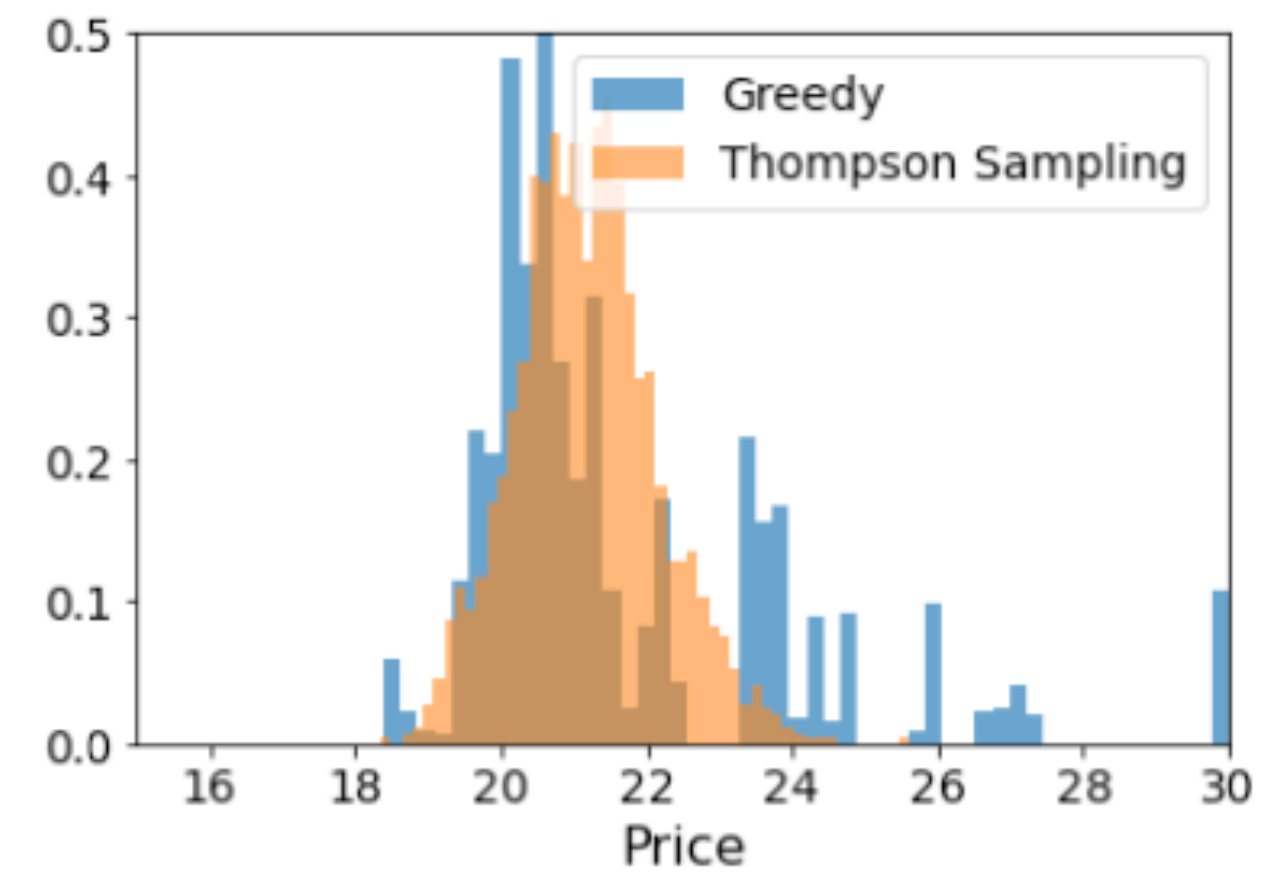
$T \leq 2000$



$10,000 \leq T \leq 20,000$



$40,000 \leq T \leq 50,000$



Outline

1. Introduction

2. Adaptively Setting Prices and Promotions

3. Incorporating Context

Incorporating Heterogeneity

- **Demand may depend on information about customers**
 - Past purchases, location, device, etc.
- **Demand may depend on environmental conditions**
 - Time of year, location
- **Demand may depend on other firms actions**
 - Promotions and Prices of other firms

Adaptive Pricing: Protocol

For $t = 1, 2, 3, \dots, T$

Customer arrives at platform with context $\mathbf{c}_t \in \mathbb{R}^d$

Firm chooses price $\mathbf{p}_t \in [\ell, u]^K$, $\mathbf{x}_t \in X$

Observe purchase decision $I_t \in \{0, 1, \dots, K\}$, and collect revenue p_{I_t}

Incorporating Heterogeneity: Model

- Utility parameters depend on the context

$$u_k(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{c}) = \alpha_k(\mathbf{c}) - \beta_k(\mathbf{c})p_k + \gamma_k(\mathbf{c})x_k$$

$$\alpha_k : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$$

$$\beta_k : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$$

$$\gamma_k : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$$

- Captures user level elasticities in an economically motivated model.
- Easily compute the maximal price and promotion using previous methods.
- Can estimate using MLE

$$R_\theta(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{c}) = \sum_{k=1}^K p_k \frac{e^{\alpha_k(\mathbf{c}) - \beta_k(\mathbf{c})p_k + \gamma_k(\mathbf{c})x_k}}{1 + \sum_{j=1}^K e^{\alpha_j(\mathbf{c}) - \beta_j(\mathbf{c})p_j + \gamma_j(\mathbf{c})x_j}}$$

Incorporating Heterogeneity: Linear Case

$$u_{ik}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{c}) = \alpha_k(\mathbf{c}) - \beta_k(\mathbf{c})p_k + \gamma_k(\mathbf{c})x_k$$

$$\alpha_k(\mathbf{c}) = \langle \alpha_k, \mathbf{c} \rangle$$

$$\beta_k(\mathbf{c}) = \langle \beta_k, \mathbf{c} \rangle$$

$$\gamma_k(\mathbf{c}) = \langle \gamma_k, \mathbf{c} \rangle$$

$$\alpha_k, \beta_k, \gamma_k \in \mathbb{R}^d$$

for all $1 \leq k \leq K$

Incorporating Heterogeneity: Linear Case

$$u_{ik}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{c}) = \alpha_k(\mathbf{c}) - \beta_k(\mathbf{c})p_k + \gamma_k(\mathbf{c})x_k$$

$$\alpha_k(\mathbf{c}) = \langle \alpha_k, \mathbf{c} \rangle$$

$$\beta_k(\mathbf{c}) = \langle \beta_k, \mathbf{c} \rangle$$

$$\gamma_k(\mathbf{c}) = \langle \gamma_k, \mathbf{c} \rangle$$

$$\alpha_k, \beta_k, \gamma_k \in \mathbb{R}^d$$

for all $1 \leq k \leq K$

- Ban+Keskin '21,
Javanmard+Nazerzedah '20,
Javanmard+Nazerzedah+Shao '21,
Qiang+Bayati '16, Dube+Misra '17
- Forced exploration methods tend to consider the linear Gaussian case
- Require the context distribution to be *fixed and stochastic*

Thompson Sampling

Input: K products, X promotion set

Initialize: Π_0 as some prior distribution over θ

For $t = 1, 2, 3, \dots, T$:

1. Receive $\mathbf{c}_t \in \mathbb{R}^d$

2. **Sample** $\theta_t \sim \Pi_t$

for $r = 1, 2, \dots, R$

Sample $\eta_r \sim N(0, I)$

$$\theta_{r+1,t} = \theta_{r,t} + \epsilon_t \nabla_{\theta} \log \mathbf{L}(\theta_{r,t}) + \sqrt{2\epsilon_t} \eta_r$$

3. **Set** best price/promotion for θ_t :

for $x \in X$

find $\mathbf{p} = \arg \max_{\mathbf{p}} R_{\theta_{t,R}}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{c}_t)$, take highest

5. **Observe** $I_t \sim Q_t(\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t, \mathbf{c}_t)$, collect revenue p_{t,I_t}

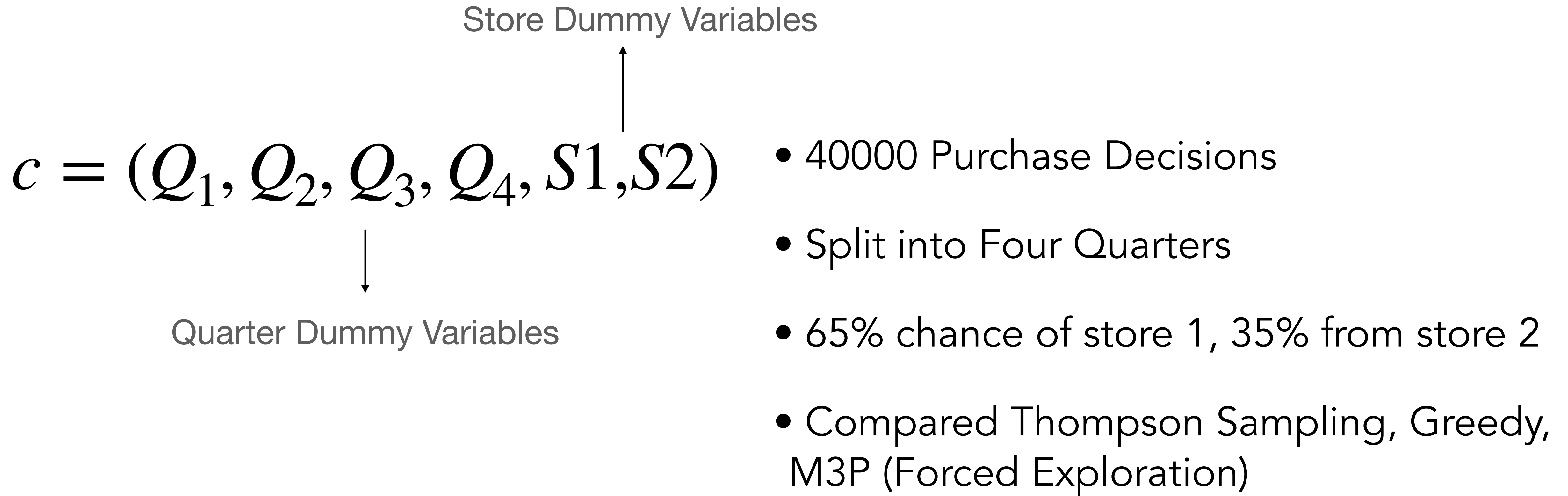
6. **Update** $\Pi_{t+1} = \text{Posterior}(\Pi_t, \theta_{t+1})$

Experiment: Real Life Setting

Considered two large supermarket on the category of ground coffee

- Have access to price/oz of 9 different brands
- Considered a year of data with market share aggregated weekly
- Have price and promotion variables for each brand at a weekly level
- **Fit** a choice model using Berry Inversion
- **Simulated** using this data

Experiment: Simulation



Experiments: Estimation

Utility Equation

$$u_i(\mathbf{p}_t, \mathbf{x}_t, \mathbf{c}_t) = \alpha_i(c_t) - \beta_i(c_t) + \gamma_i(c_t)x_{it}$$

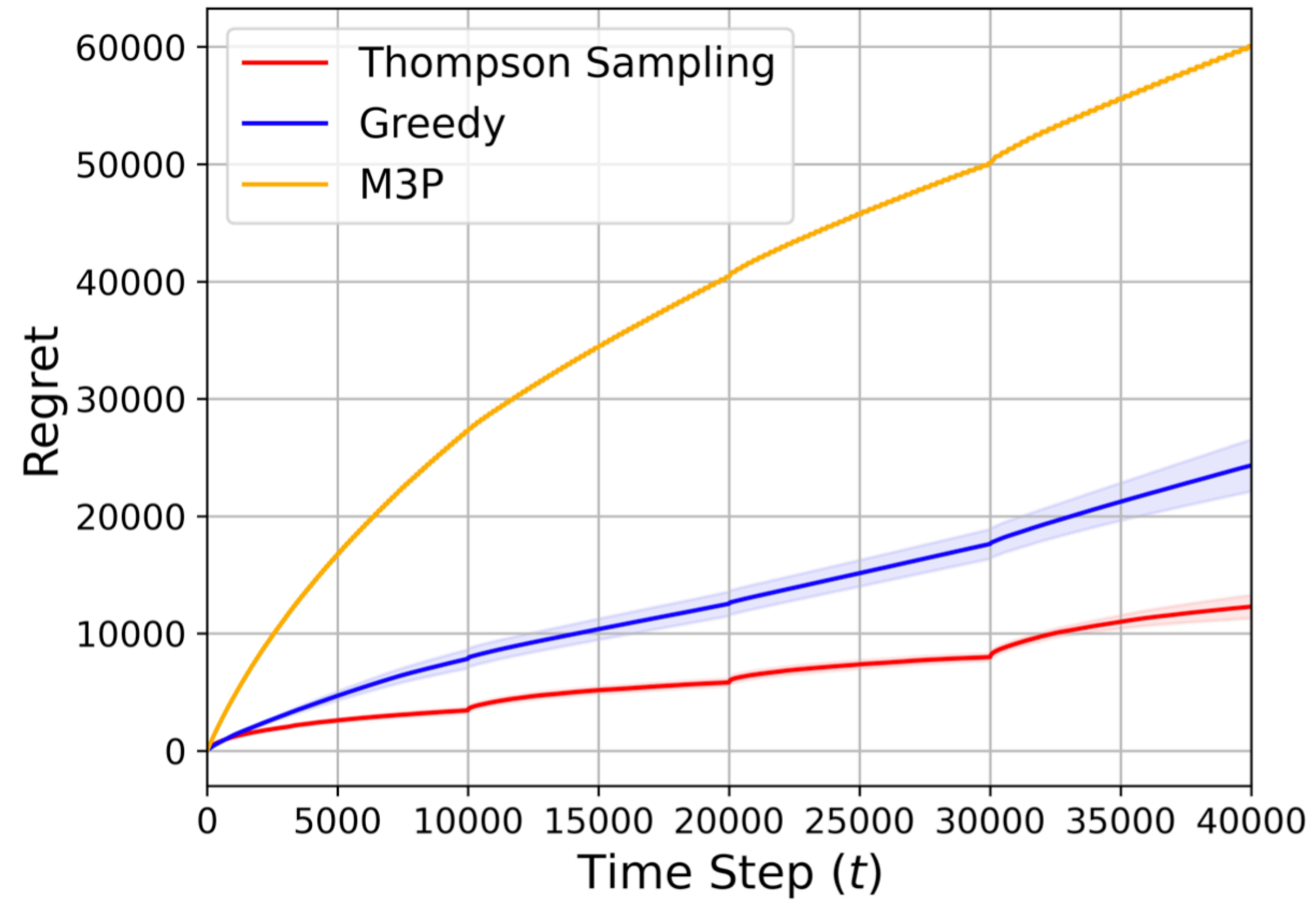
Where

$$\alpha_i(\mathbf{c}) = \alpha_{iQ_1}\mathbb{I}(Q_1) + \alpha_{iQ_2}\mathbb{I}(Q_2) + \alpha_{iQ_3}\mathbb{I}(Q_3) + \alpha_{iQ_4}\mathbb{I}(Q_4) + \alpha_{iS_1}\mathbb{I}(store = 1) + \alpha_{iS_2}\mathbb{I}(store = 2)$$

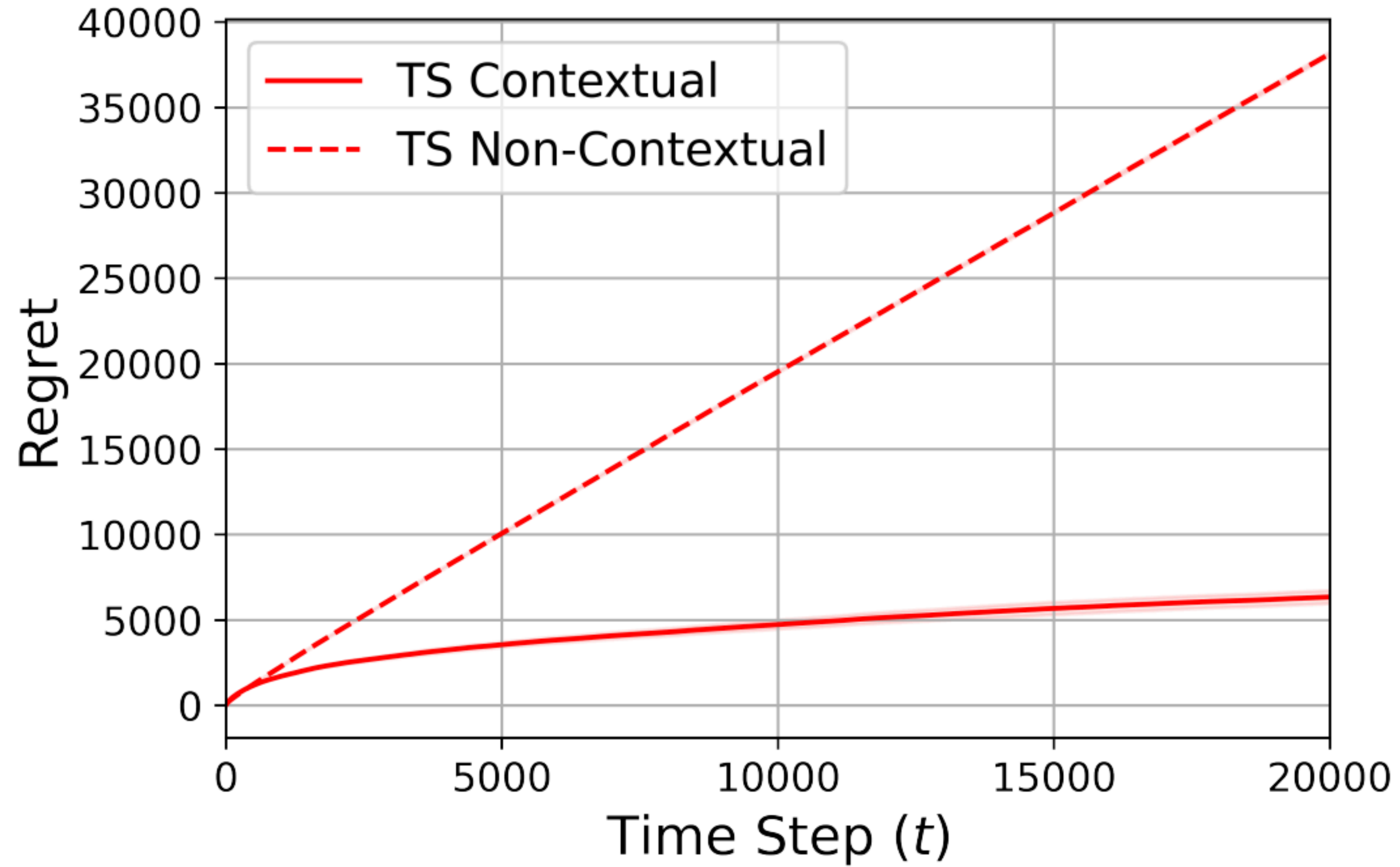
$$\beta_i(\mathbf{c}) = \beta_{iQ_1}\mathbb{I}(Q_1) + \beta_{iQ_2}\mathbb{I}(Q_2) + \beta_{iQ_3}\mathbb{I}(Q_3) + \beta_{iQ_4}\mathbb{I}(Q_4) + \beta_{iS_1}\mathbb{I}(store = 1) + \beta_{iS_2}\mathbb{I}(store = 2)$$

$$\gamma_i(\mathbf{c}) = \gamma_{iQ_1}\mathbb{I}(Q_1) + \gamma_{iQ_2}\mathbb{I}(Q_2) + \gamma_{iQ_3}\mathbb{I}(Q_3) + \gamma_{iQ_4}\mathbb{I}(Q_4) + \gamma_{iS_1}\mathbb{I}(store = 1) + \gamma_{iS_2}\mathbb{I}(store = 2).$$

Experiment: Simulation Results



Model Misspecification



Regret Guarantees in Linear Setting

Theorem: [JLMY] The Bayesian regret of the Thompson Sampling Procedure after a time horizon of T steps is

$$\approx Kd\sqrt{\kappa T}$$

With no assumption on the context distribution!

Nonlinear Pricing Experiments

$$u_{ik}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{c}) = \alpha_k(\mathbf{c}) - \beta_k(\mathbf{c})p_k + \gamma_k(\mathbf{c})x_k$$

What if $\alpha_k, \beta_k, \gamma_k$ are non-linear functions of the context \mathbf{c} ?

- Gradient Boosted Trees
- Neural Networks
- Gaussian Process Methods

Nonlinear Pricing Experiments

$$u_{ik}(\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{c}) = \alpha_k(\mathbf{c}) - \beta_k(\mathbf{c})p_k + \gamma_k(\mathbf{c})x_k$$

What if $\alpha_k, \beta_k, \gamma_k$ are non-linear functions of the context \mathbf{c} ?

- Gradient Boosted Trees
- Neural Networks
- Gaussian Process Methods

How do we adopt Posterior sampling to more general classes?

Answer: Langevin Dynamics as Deep Bayesian Posterior Approximation

Experiment: Clustered Customer Preferences

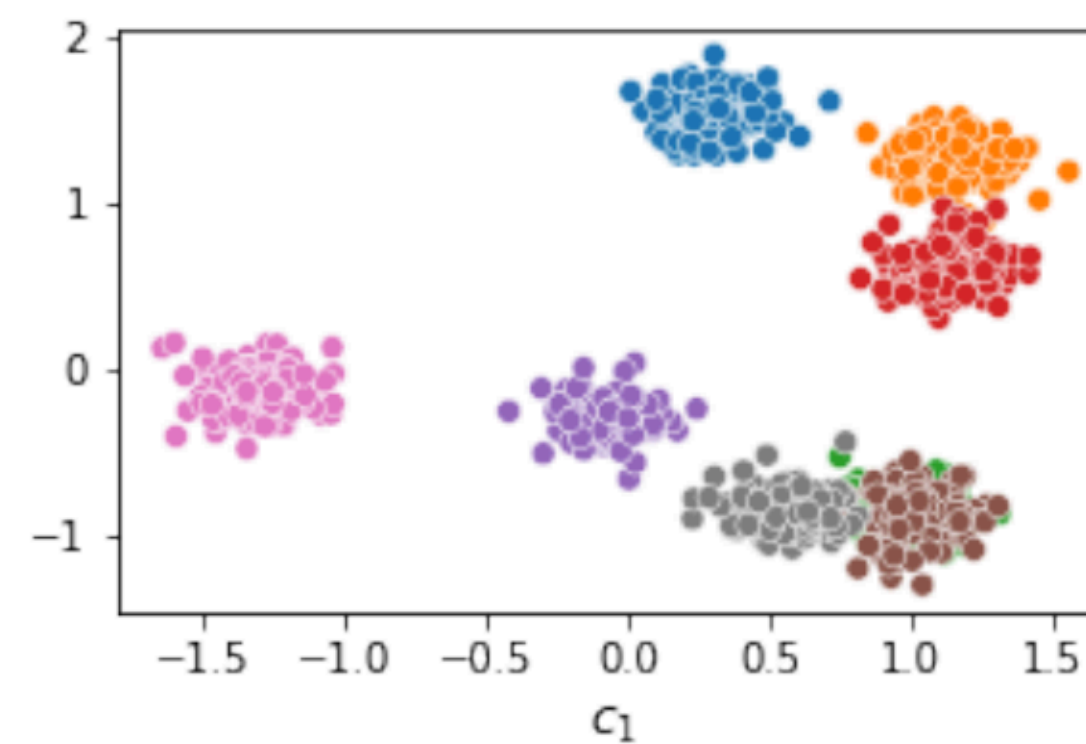
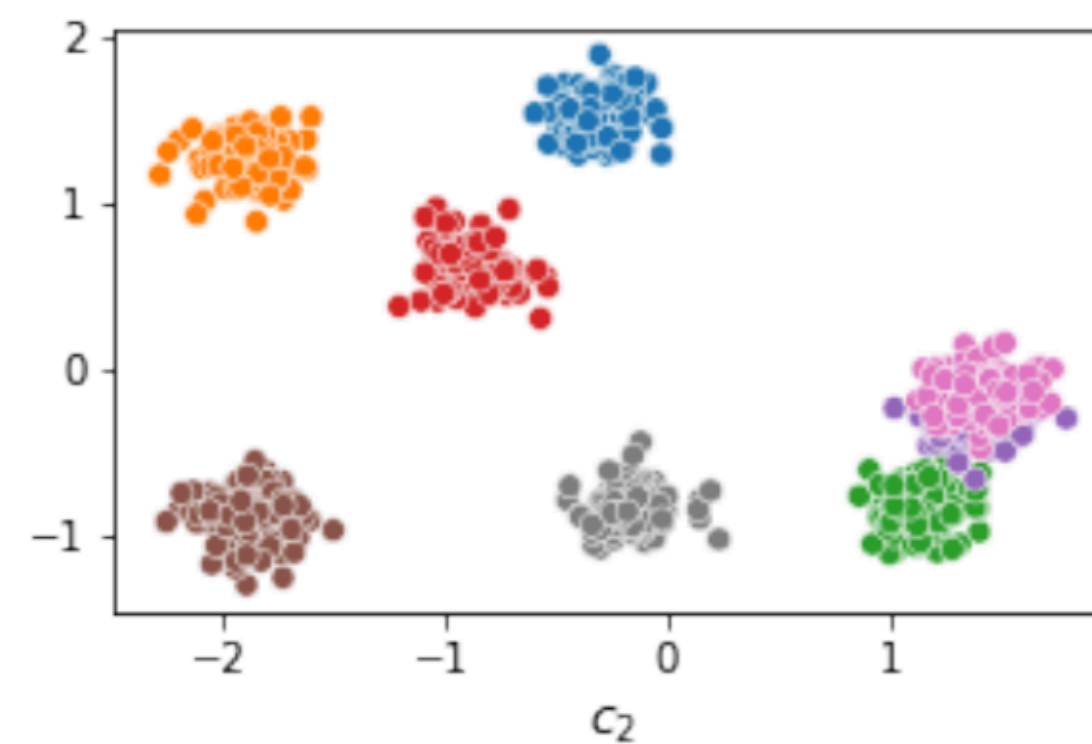
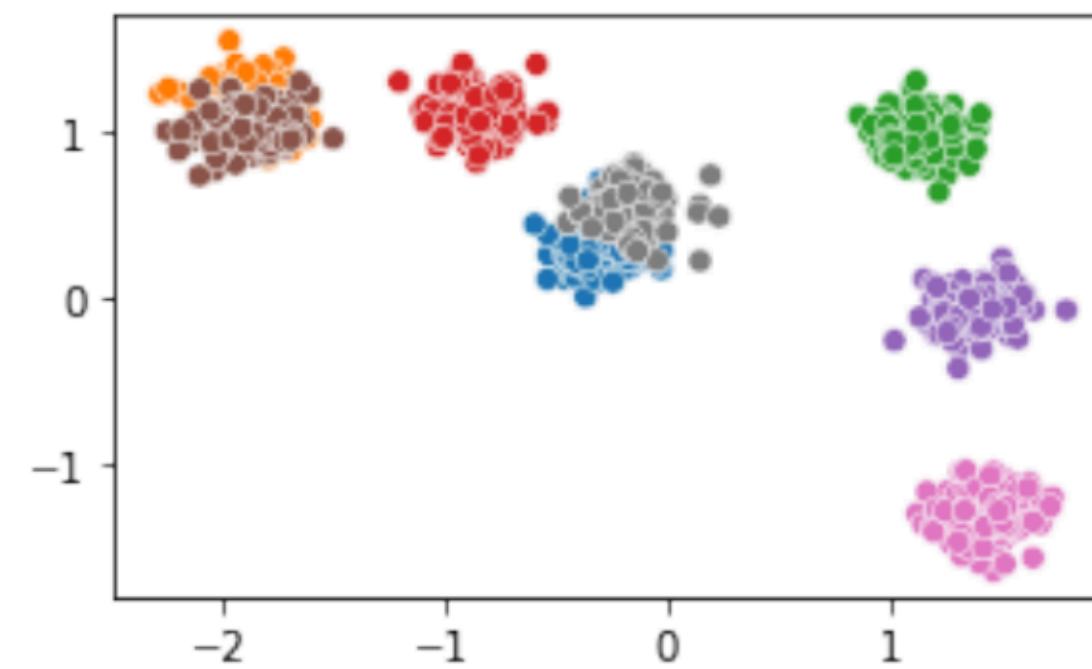
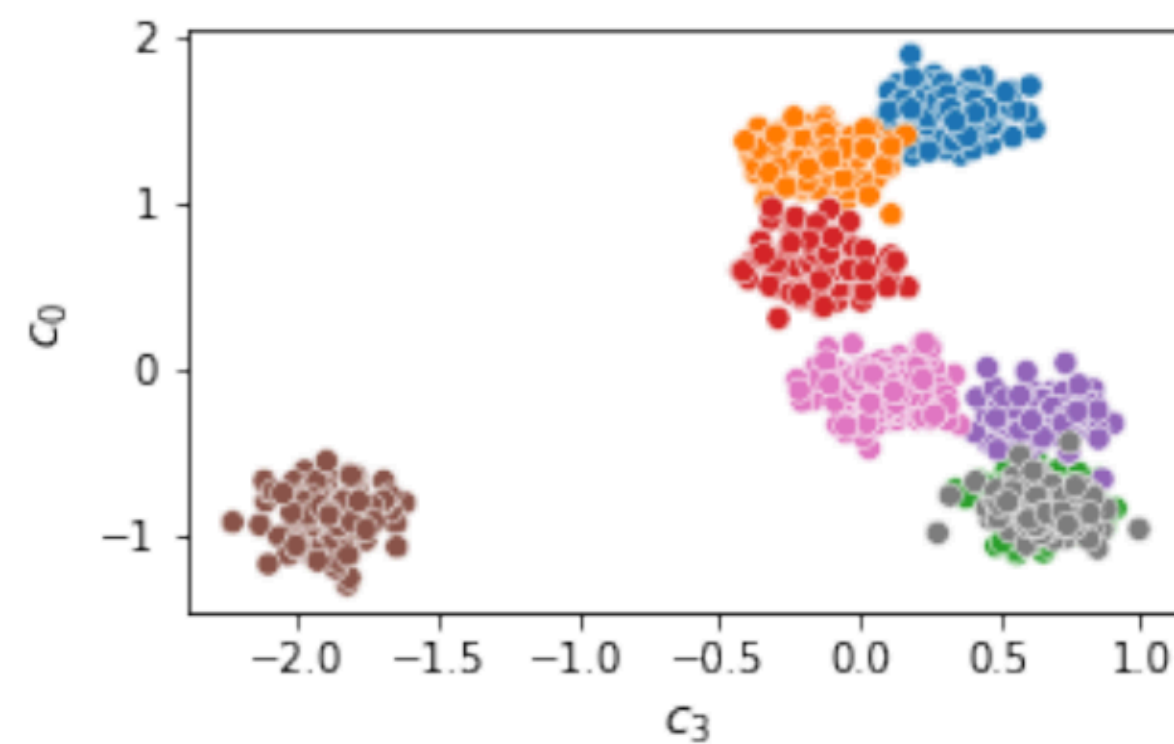
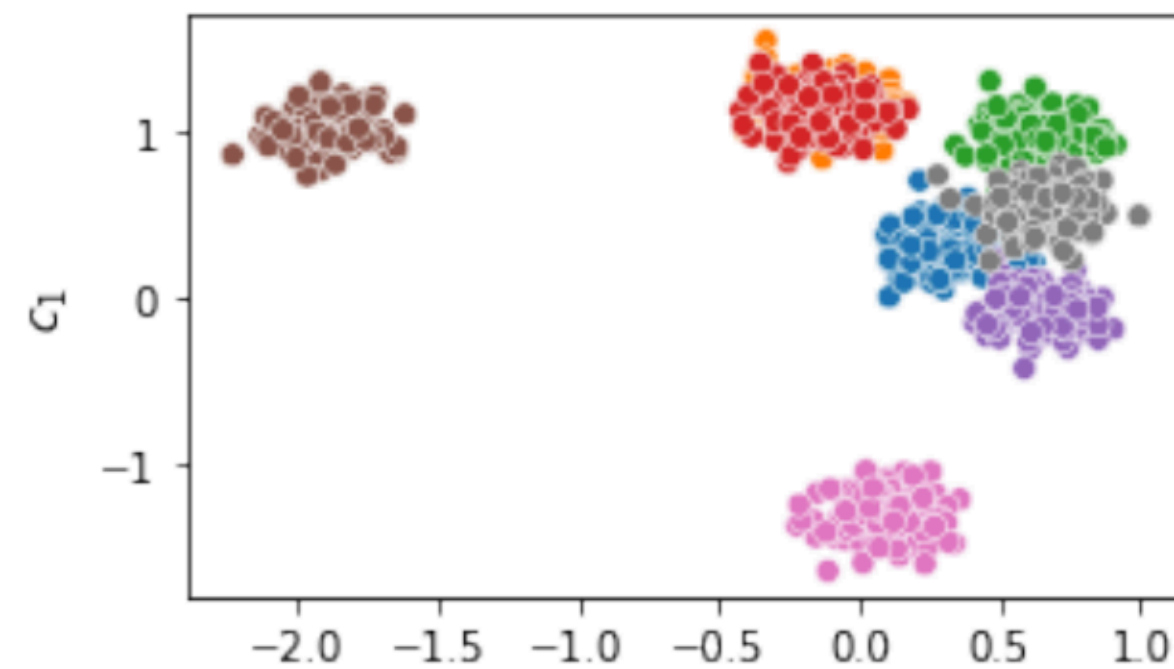
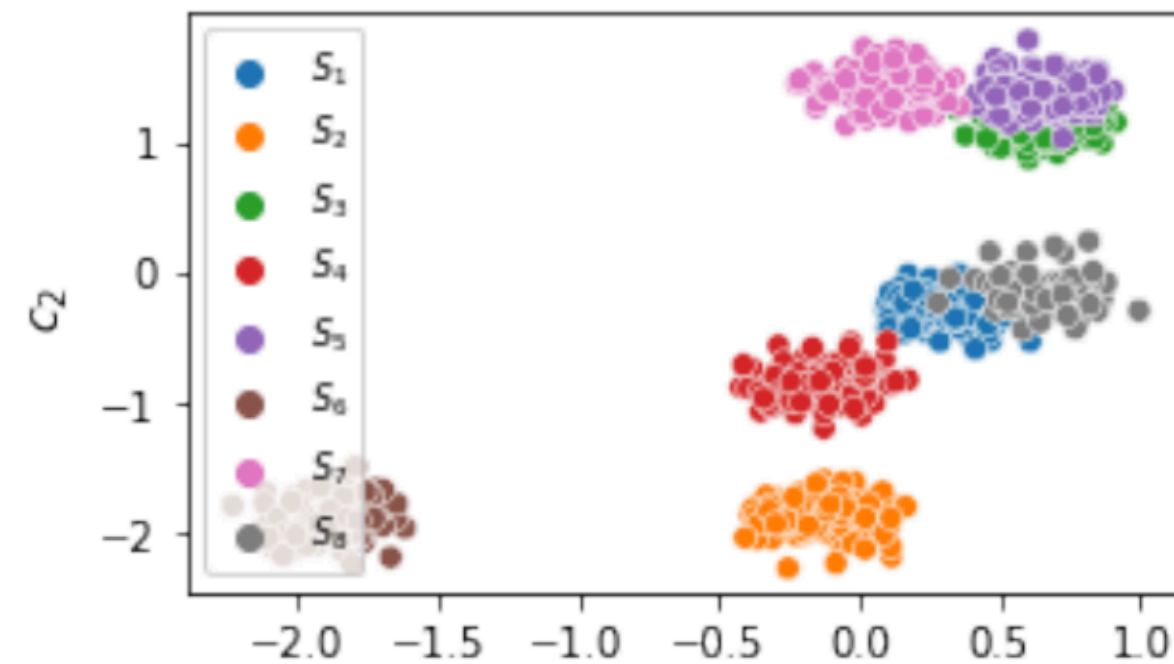
Context Distribution

$$\mathbf{c} \sim \sum_{i=1}^8 \frac{1}{8} N(S_i, 1) \in \mathbb{R}^4$$

Utility Parameters

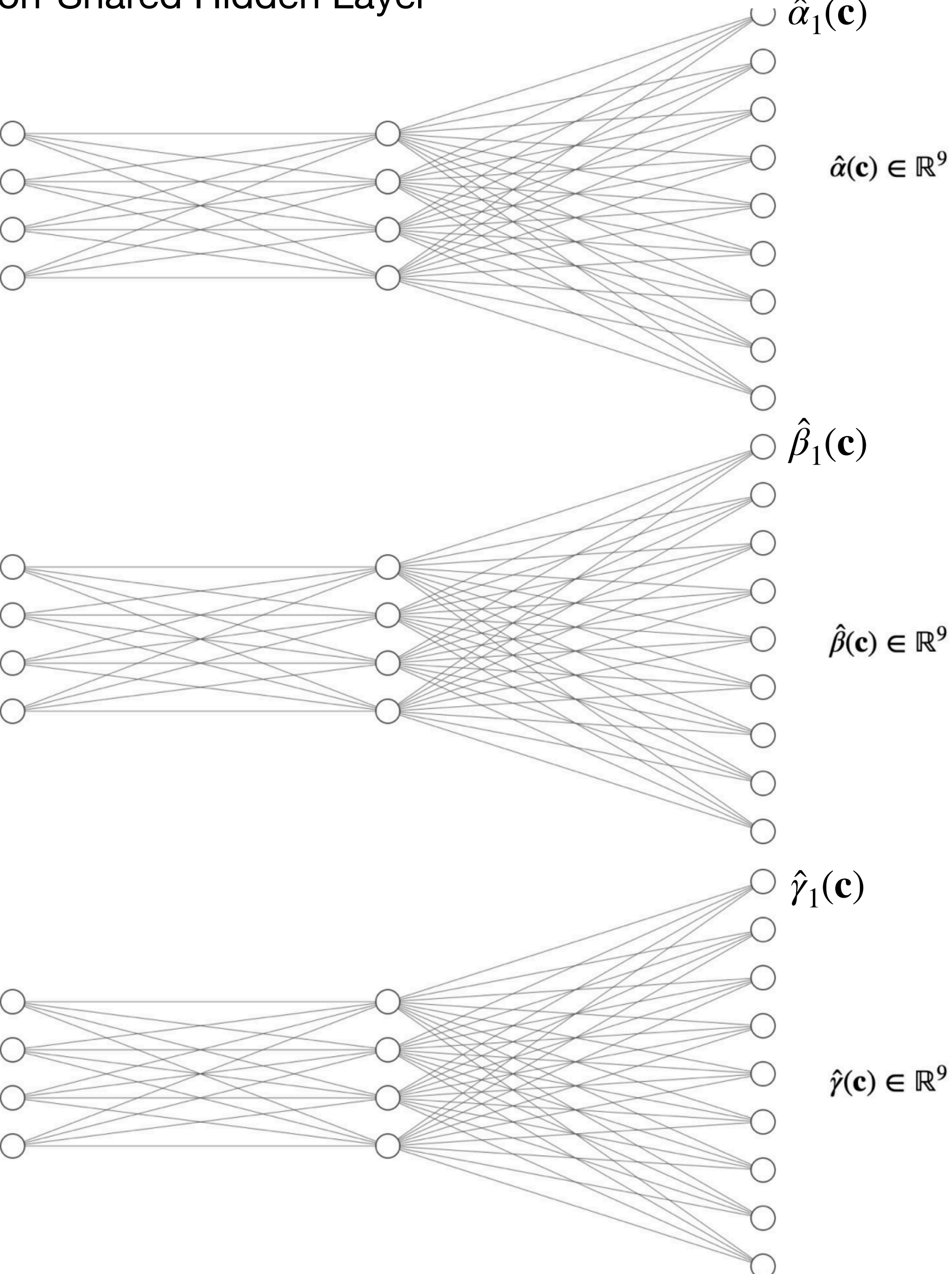
$$\alpha_k, \beta_k, \gamma_k : \mathbb{R}^4 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}, k \leq 9$$

Piecewise constant on each cluster - 27 parameters/cluster

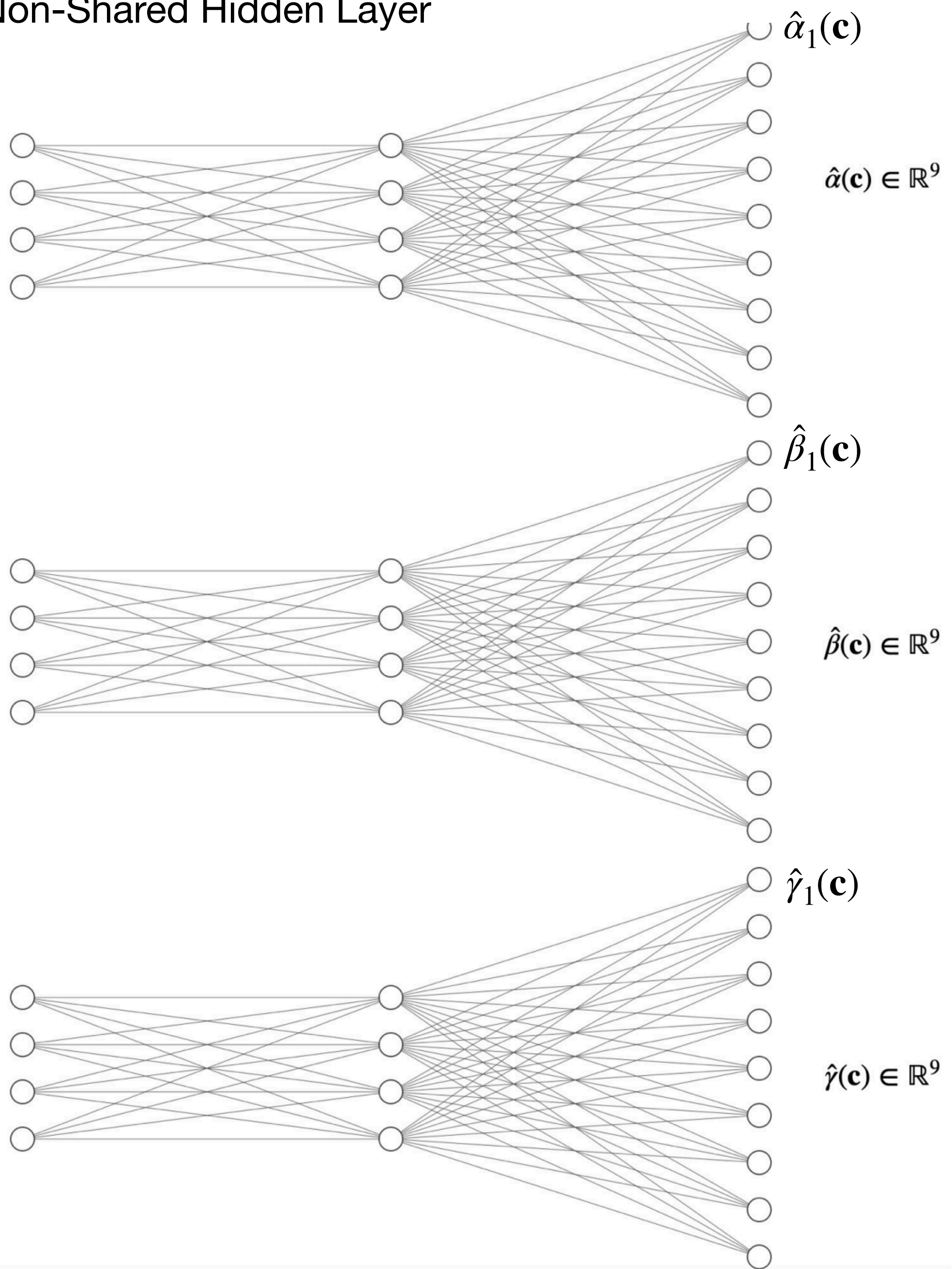


Eg: Mixture of Gaussians, with piecewise constant utility for each cluster

Non-Shared Hidden Layer

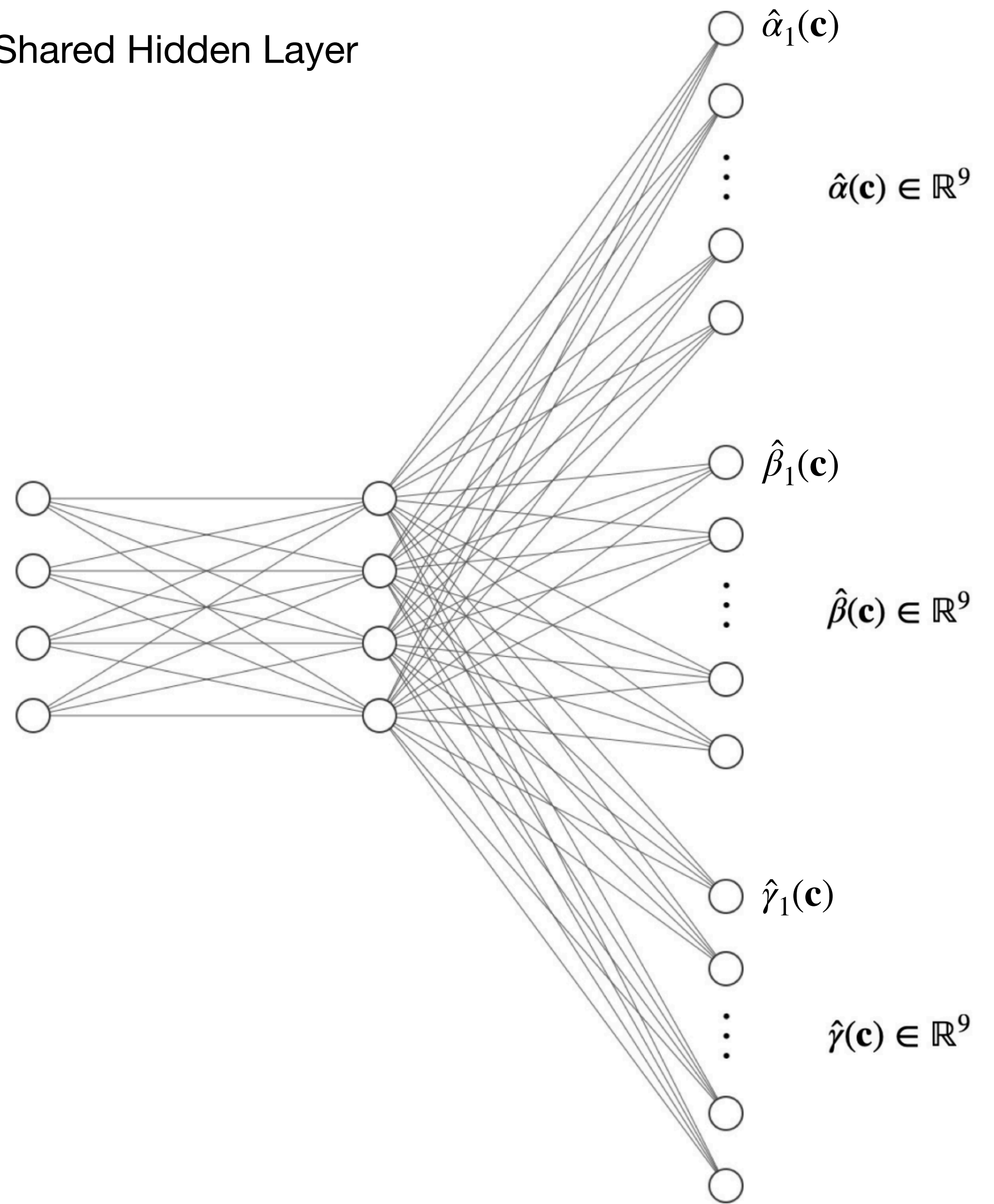


Non-Shared Hidden Layer



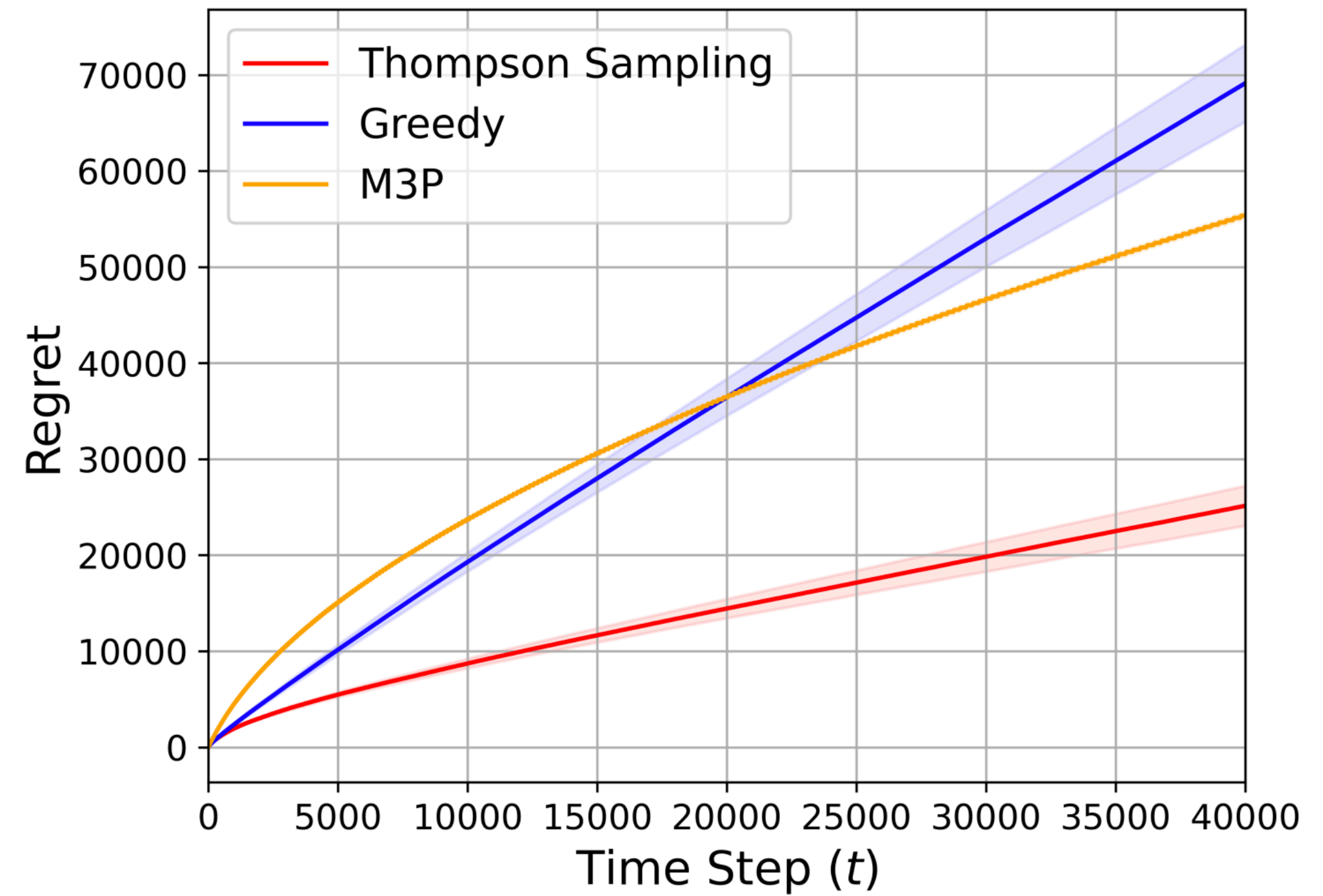
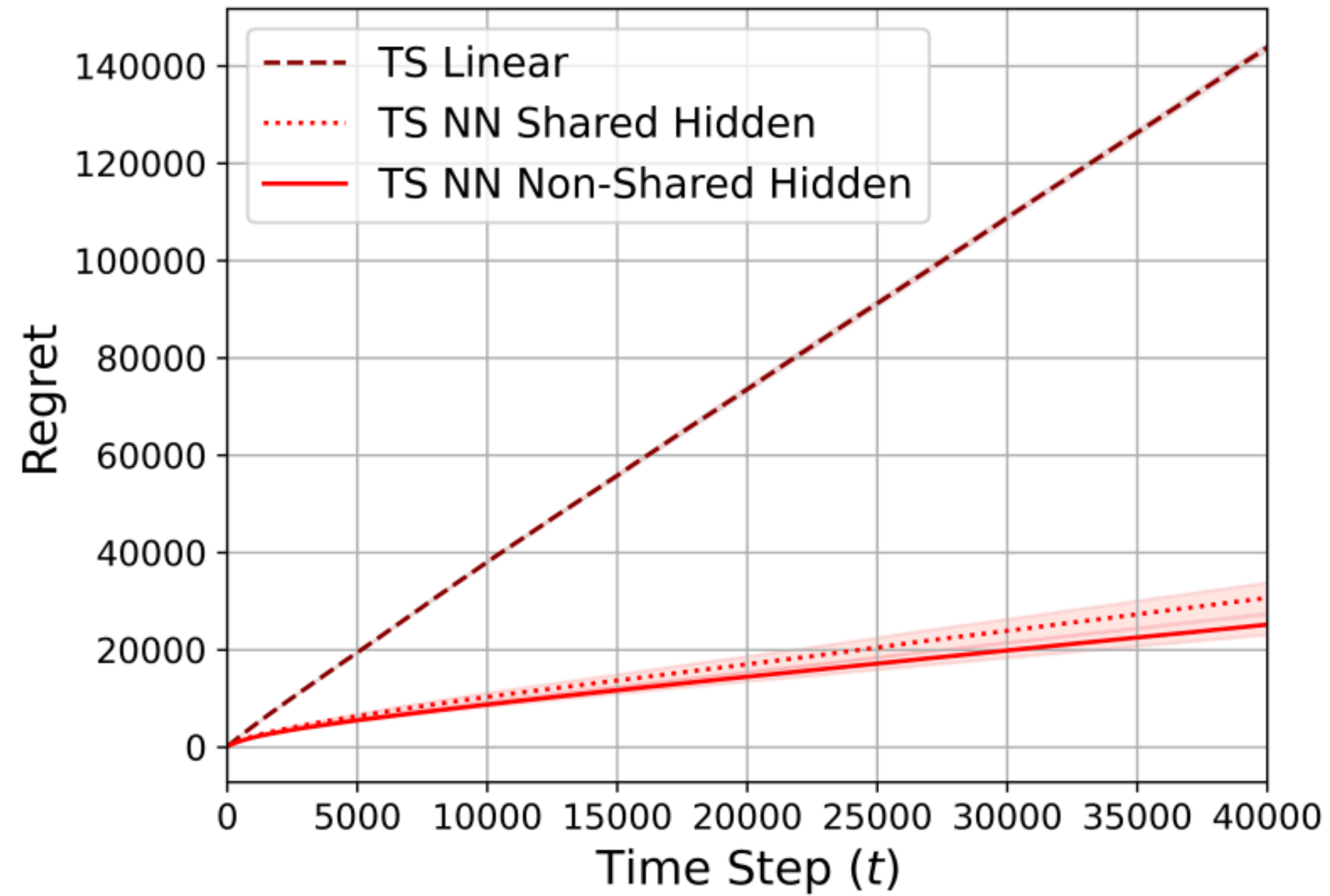
Input Layer Context $\mathbf{c} \in \mathbb{R}^4$ Hidden Layers, each $\in \mathbb{R}^4$ Output Layers

Shared Hidden Layer



Input Layer Context $\mathbf{c} \in \mathbb{R}^4$ Hidden Layer $\in \mathbb{R}^4$ Output Layer $\in \mathbb{R}^{27}$

Experiment: Results



Summary

- Introduced the new setting of adaptive pricing with promotions
- Bounded the regret of a Thompson Sampling procedure.
- Extended to settings with context and non-linear utility.
- Demonstrated the viability of this methodology on real-life inspired datasets.

Thank you!! Questions?