Search bias is not a function of Google's large share of overall searches. Rather, it is a feature of competition in the search engine market, as evidenced by the fact that its rivals also exercise editorial and algorithmic control over what information is provided to consumers and in what manner. Consumers rightly value competition between search engine providers on this margin; this fact alone suggests caution in regulating search bias at all, much less with an ex ante regulatory schema which defines the margins upon which search providers can compete.

The strength of economic theory and evidence demonstrating that regulatory restrictions on vertical integration are costly to consumers, impede innovation, and discourage experimentation in a dynamic marketplace support the conclusion that neither regulation of search bias nor antitrust intervention can be justified on economic terms.

Search neutrality advocates touting the non-economic virtues of their proposed regime should bear the burden of demonstrating that they exist beyond the Nirvana Fallacy of comparing an imperfect private actor to a perfect government decision-maker, and further, that any such benefits outweigh the economic costs.

Download the paper " If Search Neutrality is the Answer, What is the Question? "