

Information Overload and Screening

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Abstract

Comprehension is central to effective communication. Yet in many instances a sender purposely disrupts communication by exerting unproductive effort to undermine comprehension. We study the impact of strategic obfuscation on communication, decision making, and the dissemination of private information. Receivers who spend more effort trying to understand a sender's message may be counter-productive, because they may motivate the sender to obfuscate even more. We use our framework to study the impact of communication on the search for ideas, and we provide comparative statics to understand the impact of communication on environments where "ideas get harder to find."