

The Demand for, and Avoidance of, Information

Russell Golman

Abstract

We propose and experimentally test a new theory of information seeking and avoidance. Beyond the conventional desire for information as an input to decision making, people are driven by curiosity, which is a desire to fill information gaps, even in the absence of material benefits. People are additionally motivated to seek out information about issues they like thinking about (a “savoring effect”) and avoid information about issues they do not like thinking about (an “ostrich effect”) because information attracts attention. We test and find evidence supporting three of the primary hypotheses derived from our theory: people display stronger demand for information when it seems more important, when it is more salient, and when it has higher valence