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DECISION FATIGUE AND ONLINE PURCHASE INTENTION AMONG YOUNG CONSUMERS

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN MALAPPURAM DISTRICT

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Abstract
The rapid growth of e-commerce has increased the number of choices and the volume of information available to consumers, potentially creating decision fatigue during online shopping. This study examines the relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention among young consumers in Malappuram District, Kerala. A quantitative, descriptive and analytical research design was adopted, and primary data were collected from 200 young consumers aged 18–30 years with online shopping experience using purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and Pearson correlation. The findings indicate a moderate-to-high level of decision fatigue among respondents, with an overall mean score of 3.62. Online purchase intention was also found to be high, with an overall mean of 3.98. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention ($r = 0.286$, $p < 0.01$). The findings suggest that consumers experiencing higher levels of decision fatigue tend to report slightly higher intentions to purchase online, possibly because fatigue may encourage consumers to simplify their evaluation process and proceed towards a purchase. The study contributes to the emerging literature on behavioural aspects of online consumer decision-making by providing localized empirical evidence from Malappuram District. The findings also highlight the importance of designing online shopping environments that provide adequate information while reducing unnecessary complexity and cognitive effort.

Keywords: Decision Fatigue, Online Purchase Intention, Young Consumers, Online Shopping, Consumer Behaviour, E-commerce.

1. Introduction

The rapid growth of digital commerce has really changed how people search for information, compare options, and decide what to buy. Online shopping platforms offer easy access to a wide range of products, complete with descriptions, customer reviews, ratings, recommendations, price comparisons, promotions, and personalized suggestions. While these features make shopping more convenient and give consumers more choice, having so many options can also make decision-making more tiring. Shoppers often have to compare products, sift through information, eliminate unsuitable choices, and make several decisions before finally buying something. This can lead to mental strain from all the decision-making.

One idea that's getting a lot of attention is decision fatigue. This happens when someone's ability to make good decisions worsens after making many decisions in a row. Researchers like Pignatiello, Martin, and Hickman (2018) found that making repeated decisions causes decision fatigue, which can lead to difficulty choosing, avoidance, giving up easily, sticking to default options, or making impulsive choices. This is especially relevant today, when people face lots of decisions in a short time. Studies have looked at how making repeated choices online affects shoppers. For example, Wang, Mo, and Ho found that people feeling choice fatigue tend to use shortcuts when faced with long online shopping sessions.

Young consumers are an important group to study because they interact heavily with digital platforms and online shops. Their shopping often involves constant exposure to product options, reviews, ratings, promotions, and personalized content. This frequent engagement and repeated decision-making make them a key group to understand decision fatigue in e-commerce. So, this study focuses on young consumers in Malappuram District, exploring how decision fatigue affects their intention to buy online. It aims to measure how much decision fatigue they experience and whether it influences their purchase intentions. By focusing on decision fatigue specifically, rather than general digital fatigue or information overload, this research hopes to offer clearer insight into the mental challenges of modern online shopping behavior.

Justification of the Study

The rapid rise of e-commerce has made a huge variety of products, reviews, and offers easily accessible to consumers. While this is convenient, it also means shoppers often face many repeated decisions during a single online session, which can lead to decision fatigue. This fatigue has been linked to difficulties in thinking clearly, avoiding decisions, passivity, choosing defaults, and impulsive buying. This study focuses on young consumers in Malappuram District, who are heavy users of digital platforms and frequently face multiple buying choices. Understanding how decision fatigue affects their purchase intentions will provide useful local insights. The findings will also help online retailers and marketers design simpler, less overwhelming shopping experiences, present information more clearly, and offer better decision support to improve customer satisfaction and sales.

Statement of the Problem

Online shopping has changed how people make decisions by offering a huge number of choices and lots of information to compare like products, prices, reviews, and offers. But having so many options means shoppers often have to make many decisions quickly, which can lead to decision fatigue. When people feel this fatigue, they might avoid making more choices, take shortcuts, pick default options, or rush decisions. This can affect whether they want to buy something online. There remains a need to examine whether decision fatigue associated with online shopping is related to consumers' online purchase intention. While research has looked at decision fatigue and related ideas like choice fatigue and information overload, there's still a need to understand how decision fatigue specifically influences online purchase intentions. The study seeks to empirically examine whether the level of decision fatigue experienced by young consumers during online shopping is significantly related to their intention to make online purchases.

Scope of the Study

The study examines the relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention among young consumers aged 18–30 years in Malappuram District, Kerala. It focuses on decision fatigue arising from repeated choices and information evaluation during online shopping and its relationship with consumers' intention to purchase online. The study will use primary data from 200 respondents, selected through purposive sampling, and analyse the data using descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression. The study is limited to decision fatigue and online purchase intention and does not examine other factors such as trust, price, perceived risk, brand image, or social influence.

Research Gap

Existing studies have examined decision fatigue, choice overload, information overload and digital fatigue in relation to consumer decision-making. However, limited research has specifically examined the relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention, particularly among young consumers in the Indian context. Moreover, localized empirical evidence from Kerala, especially Malappuram District, remains limited. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap by examining the relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention among young online consumers in Malappuram District.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following three major objectives:

1. To assess the level of decision fatigue among young consumers in Malappuram District.
2. To understand the level of online purchase intention among young consumers in Malappuram District.
3. To examine the influence of decision fatigue on online purchase intention among young consumers in Malappuram District.

Methodology

The study adopts a quantitative, descriptive and analytical research design to examine the influence of decision fatigue on online purchase intention among young consumers in Malappuram District, Kerala. The study covers 200 young consumers with online shopping experience, selected through purposive sampling. Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of demographic and online shopping profile, decision fatigue, and online purchase intention. Decision fatigue was considered the independent variable, while online purchase intention was considered the dependent variable. The collected data were analysed using SPSS. Frequency and percentage were used to describe the respondents' demographic profile, while mean and standard deviation were used to assess the levels of decision fatigue and online purchase intention. Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention. Statistical significance was assessed at the 1% level ($p < 0.01$). Participation was voluntary, and the confidentiality of respondents' information was maintained.

Hypothesis

H_0: There is no significant relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention.

H_1: There is a significant relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention.

2. Literature Review

The literature shows that decision fatigue is the decline in our ability to make good choices after many decisions has become a key topic in behavioral science and consumer research. Pignatiello, Martin, and Hickman (2018) explain it arises from repeated decision-making, complexity, self-control demands, time of

day, and mental or physical tiredness, leading to procrastination, impulsive picks, or avoiding decisions. This is very relevant to online shopping, where consumers face countless choices and information.

Wang, Mo, and Ho (2023) found that choice overload on e-commerce platforms causes shoppers to rely on shortcuts, though bestseller tags don't always simplify decisions. Similarly, Furner and Zinko (2017) showed excessive information, especially on mobile, can overwhelm consumers and reduce trust and purchase intent. Olsen et al. (2017) highlighted that decision quality drops in the afternoon due to lower mental energy.

Kovshova and Savchenko (2023) linked decision fatigue with brand loyalty and purchasing behavior, noting mental exhaustion grows throughout the day. Serafimovska et al. (2025) introduced digital fatigue, showing it can speed up purchase decisions among younger consumers, who may act impulsively when fatigued but thoughtfully when rational. Echterhoff et al. (2024) demonstrated AI tools can reduce decision steps online, lowering fatigue and improving satisfaction. Ramli et al. found product complexity and similarity increase decision fatigue but strong brand positioning helps simplify choices.

In sum, decision fatigue relates to repeated decisions, excess information, and product complexity, causing avoidance, impulsive buying, and inconsistent choices. Though much research is Western-focused, this study targets young online shoppers in Malappuram District, Kerala, to explore decision fatigue's effect on their online purchase intentions.

3. Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on Prospect Theory and the concept of decision fatigue to understand how cognitive conditions may influence consumer decision-making in online shopping. The theory provides a behavioural perspective for explaining why consumers may not always make completely rational choices when faced with multiple alternatives, uncertainty and perceived gains and losses. In digital shopping environments, consumers are frequently exposed to numerous products, prices, discounts, reviews and recommendations, making the decision process increasingly complex. The theoretical framework of the study is therefore discussed under three major concepts:

Prospect Theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) explains that consumers assess choices based on perceived gains and losses rather than absolute values. In online shopping, prices, discounts, reviews, and promotions influence these perceptions. Decision fatigue may reduce consumers' ability to evaluate these factors carefully.

Decision fatigue (Pignatiello et al., 2018) refers to the decreased capacity to make effective decisions after many repeated choices, leading to avoidance, impulsive decisions, or reliance on defaults. Online shopping's many options increase cognitive load, causing fatigue and reliance on shortcuts (Wang, Mo & Ho, 2023).

Online purchase intention is the consumer's willingness or plan to buy through an online platform. It depends on factors like trust, perceived value, and convenience. Mental exhaustion from decision fatigue can alter how much effort consumers put into evaluating options, influencing purchase intentions. This link has been shown among young consumers experiencing digital fatigue (Serafimovska et al., 2025).

4.Results and Discussion

4.1. Demographic Profile

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18–20	38	19.0%
	21–23	62	31.0%
	24–26	57	28.5%
	27–30	43	21.5%

Gender	Male	92	46.0%
	Female	104	52.0%
	Prefer not to say	4	2.0%
Education	Higher Secondary	27	13.5%
	Undergraduate	76	38.0%
	Postgraduate	82	41.0%
	Other	15	7.5%
Occupation	Student	88	44.0%
	Employed	78	39.0%
	Self-employed	20	10.0%
	Other	14	7.0%
Online Shopping Frequency	Daily	12	6.0%
	Several times a week	32	16.0%
	Once a week	48	24.0%
	2–3 times a month	67	33.5%
	Once a month or less	41	20.5%
Major Purchase Category	Clothing/Fashion	68	34.0%
	Electronics	34	17.0%
	Beauty/Personal Care	31	15.5%
	Food/Groceries	29	14.5%
	Books/Educational Products	18	9.0%
	Other	20	10.0%
Monthly Online Expenditure	Below ₹1,000	61	30.5%
	₹1,000–₹2,500	63	31.5%
	₹2,501–₹5,000	44	22.0%
	₹5,001–₹10,000	23	11.5%
	Above ₹10,000	9	4.5%

Interpretation:

The demographic profile shows that the respondents are predominantly young adults aged 21–26 years, with a relatively balanced gender distribution and a slight majority of females. Most respondents are postgraduates or undergraduates, and students form the largest occupational group.

In terms of online shopping behaviour, most respondents shop online 2–3 times a month or weekly, indicating regular exposure to online shopping. Clothing and fashion is the most commonly purchased category, while most respondents spend below ₹5,000 per month on online purchases. Overall, the sample represents young, educated and regular online consumers, making it suitable for examining the relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention.

4.2. Descriptive Analysis of Decision Fatigue

Code	Statement	Mean	SD
DF1	After making many choices while shopping online, I find it difficult to make further decisions.	3.72	1.02
DF2	After comparing many products online, I find it difficult to concentrate on making another decision.	3.65	1.04
DF3	After evaluating many alternatives, I find it difficult to process additional information.	3.68	1.01
DF4	After making many online shopping decisions, I lack confidence in my ability to make a good decision.	3.51	1.08
DF5	Making many choices while shopping online requires too much mental effort from me.	3.79	0.98
DF6	After making many online shopping decisions, I sometimes wish someone else would make the decision for me.	3.42	1.12
DF7	After comparing many alternatives, I find it difficult to decide which option is best.	3.76	1.00
DF8	After making many choices online, I sometimes make decisions without thinking carefully about them.	3.58	1.07
DF9	After prolonged online shopping, my mood makes it difficult for me to make decisions.	3.46	1.10
	Overall Decision Fatigue	3.62	0.86*

Interpretation:

The descriptive analysis indicates a moderate-to-high level of decision fatigue among young consumers, with an overall mean score of 3.62. The highest mean was recorded for the statement that making numerous choices while shopping online requires considerable mental effort (M = 3.79, SD = 0.98). Difficulty in deciding which option is best after comparing alternatives also recorded a relatively high mean (M = 3.76, SD = 1.00). The findings indicate that extensive choice and repeated decision-making may contribute to perceived decision fatigue during online shopping.

4.3. Descriptive Analysis of Online Purchase Intention

Code	**Statement**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**
OPI1	I intend to buy products online in the future.	4.02	0.91
OPI2	I expect that I will buy products online in the future.	3.94	0.95
OPI3	I plan to buy products online in the future.	3.98	0.93
	Online Purchase Intention	**3.98**	**0.84**

Interpretation

The results indicate a high level of online purchase intention among the respondents, with an overall mean score of 3.98. Among the three statements, OPI1 recorded the highest mean (M = 4.02, SD = 0.91), indicating that respondents generally intend to purchase products online in the future. OPI3 also recorded a relatively high mean of 3.98, while OPI2 recorded a mean of 3.94. The relatively small differences between the three items indicate a consistent level of online purchase intention among the respondents. Overall, the findings suggest that the young consumers included in the study demonstrate a strong intention to continue purchasing through online platforms.

4.4. Correlation between Decision Fatigue and Online Purchase Intention

Variables	Decision Fatigue	Online Purchase Intention
Decision Fatigue	1	0.286**
Online Purchase Intention	0.286**	1

Note: $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed).

Interpretation:

The Pearson correlation analysis shows a positive and statistically significant relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention ($r = 0.286$, $p < 0.001$, $N = 200$). This indicates that decision fatigue has a weak positive association with online purchase intention among the respondents. Respondents experiencing higher levels of decision fatigue tend to report slightly higher intentions to purchase products online.

Decision: Since $p < 0.001$, H_0 is rejected and H_1 is accepted.

5.1 Findings of the Study

The study examined the relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention among young consumers in Malappuram District based on data collected from 200 respondents. The major findings of the study are as follows:

1. The study found that young consumers experience a measurable level of decision fatigue during online shopping, particularly when they are required to evaluate multiple alternatives and process extensive product-related information.
2. The analysis of online purchase intention indicates that respondents generally demonstrate a willingness to purchase products through online platforms.
3. The Pearson correlation analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention ($r = 0.286$, $p < 0.01$).
4. The finding suggests that consumers experiencing higher levels of decision fatigue tend to report slightly higher online purchase intention. This may indicate that fatigued consumers could be more inclined to simplify their decision process and proceed towards purchase rather than continuing to evaluate numerous alternatives.

5.2. Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are proposed:

1. Online shopping platforms should avoid unnecessarily overwhelming consumers with excessive alternatives and should provide well-organised product categories.
2. Product information should be presented clearly and concisely so that consumers can understand important features without processing excessive information.
3. Platforms should highlight relevant and reliable reviews rather than displaying excessive amounts of customer feedback.
4. Excessive notifications, advertisements and repeated promotional messages may contribute to digital and decision fatigue. Platforms should focus on relevant communication.
5. Consumers should be provided with sufficient information to make appropriate choices while avoiding unnecessary complexity.

5.3. Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention among young consumers in Malappuram District. The findings indicate that decision fatigue is a relevant factor in understanding consumer behaviour in online shopping environments. The study found a positive and statistically significant relationship between decision fatigue and online purchase intention ($r = 0.286$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that fatigue associated with repeated online decision-making may be accompanied by a greater tendency to proceed towards purchase, possibly because consumers seek to reduce the effort involved in further evaluation. The study contributes to the growing literature on behavioural aspects of online consumer decision-making by examining decision fatigue in a localized Indian context. It also highlights the importance of designing online shopping environments that balance the availability of information with simplicity and ease of decision-making.

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