



Decision Fatigue for the Online/Digital Shoppers: A Challenge for Survival in the E-Marketplace for the Grocery Brands in India

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Abstract – Exploring the e-market place has become a part and parcel for our routine lifestyle for meeting our everyday needs. From purchasing online groceries to placing online orders for our other necessities, e-market place has become a one stop solution for our day-to-day requirements. In such a milieu, where online shoppers used to be highly active over the e-market places and platforms, there are a lot of challenges exists for both the online/digital buyers in general and the brands surviving & competing over the e-market places in particular. Right from the choice of an appropriate e-commerce application, to making decision about the best product to be placed order for, or even the choice of payment options altogether- even a single online buying act involved so many decisions for one case itself. The decision fatigue which originated from the psychological and mental end of the online buyers, ends up as an economic challenge and fatigue for the brands who are competing hard among each other over e-market place. This research paper has taken online grocery shopping as its segment of study. This study aim to explore the impact of decision fatigue on the online shoppers while they used to navigate over the e-market place platforms online. And how the decision fatigue of the online shoppers ends up as a challenge for the online grocery brands of the e-market place. To achieve the purpose of the study, secondary data sources was collected and used, including citation of quality research work from the reputed scholars and academicians. The study reached a set of results including some possible findings and conclusions, which can be helpful for the online shoppers, online grocery brands as well as the future researchers in avoiding such decision fatigue and assist them to make hassle free shopping experience over e-market place while doing shopping for their grocery needs, without creating any economic hardship for the e-market place brands as well.

Keywords: Decision Fatigue, online shoppers, digital shoppers, e-market place, grocery brands.

1. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of digitalization, everything got shifted towards a digital space. Digitalization is often described as the way which have restructured many domains of our social life taking them around digital communication and media infrastructures **J Scott Brennen, Daniel Kreiss, (2016)**. Since the physical space is getting restructured for the entire society as a whole itself, we just can't escape from the digital reality. In fact, it has been observed that digitalization play a stellar role in understanding the fact that technology transforms the economy **Elvin Mammadli, Vsevolod Klivak, (2020)**. Now that economy and digitalization are in close proximity with each other, it is quintessential to explore new possibilities within digitalization which will shape our economic success. According to **Adel Ben Youssef, et al (2021)** Today most of the new entrepreneurial ventures and businesses are linked in some way or the other to the digital world. **Sobia Wassan et al., (2022)**. In the year 2022, Sobia Wassan and others has elaborated this that modern



entrepreneurs are entering into the digital space for the purpose of navigating business opportunities and to lure the online shoppers available in that space. Due to mass digitalization, digital marketplace will rule the future.

Now that it is already clear that mass digitalization is the future, because of availability of cheap smartphones and the internet connection, it become much easier for both the consumers as well as the brands to ensure their digital presence and connect digitally with each other for the future e-business opportunities. Today modern consumers are not only digitally educated but also very active over digital platforms. And their frequent association over mobile & social commerce platforms that comes with the feature of personalized algorithms, have totally altered the way the modern consumers interact with the brands and make purchase decisions **White Sonne, (2014)**.

Being a buyer is not at all an easy task today, the rigorous and sometime unfriendly shopping experiences over certain e-commerce/e-market place applications will end up adding burden to our current mental psychological state. As a result we feel tired, stressed and mentally depleted from overtime. But unfortunately, we just can't avoid shopping online due to the convenience and comfort it offers, despite we tend to experience decision fatigue to some extent, while doing online shopping over the e-market platform. The earlier studies have shown that making decisions can be a depleting task, if done for self. Whereas we always used to enjoy the decision making process, if we perform the same process for someone else. **Polman, E., & Vohs, K. D. (2016)**.

Thus, we understand that, Decision fatigue is an emerging psychological problem, commonly observed among the online or digital shoppers, who used to spend too much time online in doing online shopping. This research paper has taken online grocery shopping as its segment of study. The purpose of this research paper is to shed light on the decision fatigue of the online shoppers in this particular grocery brands shopping category.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW

E-Market Place

With the advent of technological development, one can expect fundamental changes in the how the brands and markets will manage the flow of goods and services in the economy **Malone et al. (1987)**. E-marketplace is reshaping the existing relationship between the buyer and the suppliers, improving the very core of the businesses and bringing the brands closer with the new markets over an electronic medium **Murtaza et al. (2004)**. Considering specifically the electronic marketplaces with respect to the grocery items, we can associate some opportunities and challenges for this particular category segment as well. E-grocery businesses is filled with multiple challenges like challenges in managing inventory, supply vs demand, roles & responsibility management. But most of such challenges are within the locus of control of the e-grocery brand **Mkansi et al. (2018)**. Nevertheless, we must not underestimate the potential of electronic market because of the challenges it presents. According to the report titled India: E-commerce Market Size 2030 by **Statista (2024)**, the market worth of the Indian e-commerce business and industry was estimated to be USD 123 Billion as of data of 2024. This figure for Indian e-commerce businesses was estimated to reach around USD 300 billion by the year 2030.

The growing e-marketplace

The term electronic marketplace is any virtual system where both the buyer and the seller interact virtually in order to satisfy their buying & selling needs. In this type of market information systems act as a mediating



forum between the buyers and the sellers. Such market reduce the search cost (cost for searching products/services in the marketplace) for the buyers, as a result it is becoming more popular day by day **J. Yannis Bakos, (1991)**. But this e-marketplace terminology is actually a much wider concept than just only being understood as a virtual platform where buyer meets the sellers. Instead the core services of the e-marketplace may include e-commerce with functionality of electronic catalogue and auctions with other electronic order fulfillment services such as tracing, financing and logistics **Peter Brunn et al., June (2002)**.

According to IBEF (**INDIA BRAND EQUITY FOUNDATION**) **Report** on Indian E-Commerce Industry Analysis, the Indian e-commerce industry is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of twenty seven percent so as to reach the figure of USD 163 Billion by the year 2026. Not only this, the same **IBEF Report** said that the Indian e-commerce industry is projected to register a significant growth expecting to reach revenue figures of around US Dollar 325 Billion by the year 2030. Considering the strong potential of the e-market place, more and more brands are making their entry in such lucrative electronic marketplace platform. According to an article titled, **"Transformed emergence of E-Commerce" by Wipro, (2021)** today more and more brands and companies will get added to the arena of digital business in the years to come.

As more new brands enters into the e-marketplace, the level of competition will raise more. Thus making it difficult for the brands to survive in such a tough competition; where thousands of brands are competing with each other and trying to create a space for themselves in such online market space. Today the buyer have plethora of options to shop from. Interestingly, the wide availability of brand on multiple platforms like brick and mortar establishment, e-commerce applications, direct messages to the start-ups entrepreneurs on their official social media handles, brands website and so on are only ending up adding more and more confusions for the psychological state of the buyers. The online shopper suffers from many modern consumer dilemmas.

Online Grocery Shopping

Today online grocery shopping is making the life of the customer more convenient with its shopping ease, attractive offers and best deals. As a result of this ease of buying experience, there has been an exponential growth recorded over these online grocery shopping platforms **Singh, A. K., & Pathak, N. (2021)**. Although India is on the transition path of observing the shift from traditional kirana store to the online shopping platforms of the e-marketplace, it is important to understand the benefits of the online grocery shopping, that is allowing this transition rapidly. While online customer put hand on doing online shopping, they are more interested to look forward for the quality at a price as well as the reputation **segment Gehrt et al. (2012)**. But searching appropriate quality product at the best price online is not at all an easy task for these online shoppers as well, especially when you are searching for the groceries items. Many consumers were hesitant about product freshness, delayed procession of the products and desire to touch and feel the grocery items **Courtney et al.,(2023)**.

They have to spend a lot of time searching appropriate brands, checking the discounts available, online availability of that required grocery product, delivery related details, order placing convenience on the application, payment options & COD (Cash on Delivery), order tracking facility and so on based on personal experience of an online grocery application. All these discussed task after task keeps on adding troubles for the online buyer to keep on making decision after decision and at the end of this decision full online shopping experience, online shopper may feel mentally exhausted. And this mental exhaustion of the online shopper originated due to fatigue online grocery shopping experience led the online customer feel the problem of decision fatigue.



The growing online grocery market of India:-

Online Grocery is among the growing sector in the e-marketplace. This particular business model of buying and selling groceries online is popularly used by professionals of business class, service-class as well as the retired people **Shalini Sinha and Md Hasrat Ali (2020)**. Groceries include a wide range of foods, dairy products, snack items, frozen food items, bakery items, beverages, drinking items, personal care, laundry items and other supplementary household goods of our day-to-day requirements. According to a **STATISTA report** titled **Online grocery shopping in India – statistics & facts (2024)**, Among the total expenditure that took place in the Indian economy, nearly 20 percent of that is expected to be spent as grocery expenditure. In fact the same report have evaluated the market value of the online groceries sold across the entire country to be approximately somewhere above 1 Trillion Indian Rupees as per the statistics for 2024.

These above discussed statistics are enough to highlight the economic potential of this chosen (Online Grocery Brands) segment in the current time. It is not this that the online grocery market is extremely vast, rather the options and the variety of brands it include are also among the gigantic ones, that too of consumer's day-to-day requirements. There can be multiple factors working behind the potential rise of online grocery shopping in India. The rise in the disposable income level, desire for convenient buying experience, easy access of smartphones with internet connectivity as well as changing lifestyle of the people promote them to adopt online mode of grocery shopping **Siddiqui and Tripathi (2016)**.

But sometimes; this extended variety of plethora of brands options within the grocery segment over the e-market place, ended up adding so many confusions for the online shoppers. According to the **McKinsey & Company Report (2022)**, there are around 60% of the Indian grocery retail business which is dominated by staples & fresh food items. As a result, leading grocery brands used to invest extensively on these two particular categories so as to attract as much customers as they can, by offering them distinct product/service quality along with price differences. Now that an average Indian consumers will be having so many grocery brands options available over one particular platform, that too of his/her regular staple & fresh product's needs, such information overload will create decision making difficulties for the online buyers. Too many brand options of same grocery product item may increase purchase related stress of the buyers, as he may got entangled in price/offer comparisons, discounts & quality comparisons, reviews and utility comparisons so on and so forth. All such comparisons will only add decision fatigue to the digital shoppers at the end of the day, while the shopper do online grocery shopping.

Decision Fatigue

According to the definition provided by the ATLISSIAN, the decision fatigue is somewhere exactly what it sounds like. It is like an experience when you are fed-up of making so many decisions. Currently the exodus flow of information over E-Commerce and e-marketplace used to inundate the online shoppers with various product options with choice fatigue issues along with overloading of information. At the same time the consumer needs to spend a lot of time in making product comparisons causing choice fatigue. This choice fatigue will deteriorate the decisions we made due to long session of decision making causing decision fatigue **Y. Wang, et al (2023)**.

Grocery shopping is almost like a routine job for both men and women today. And since we all are living in the digital world; where technology, digitalization and internet is the part and parcel of our everyday lifestyle & decision-making, a lot of people among us use online grocery shopping platforms to fulfill this routine job in a very less time at our own ease. As a result; humans surround themselves with so many decisions to be taken place for that, adopting online grocery shopping channel seems like inviting decision fatigue for our human body.



Since everything comes with both pros and cons and we just can't go enjoying benefits of online grocery shopping unilaterally. Now that this online grocery shopping is gradually taking space erstwhile owned by the traditional mom and pop stores (local kirana shops); provide more comfort and ease to the buyers to shop online, we have to accept its harms as well at the same time. There can be harmful consequences of the decision fatigue on human body. Earlier studies have shown that online shoppers may experience different psychological and health challenges like headaches, stress, irritation, dissatisfaction, impulsivity, mood swings and even sleep disorders. In the nutshell, we can conclude that Decision Fatigue is a peculiar concept of interest varying ramifications for policy making, healthcare science and other practices **Pignatiello et al. (2018)**

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1.To examine the reasons for decision fatigue faced by the online shoppers while doing online groceries shopping.
- 2.To access whether buying online groceries shopping is easy experience or there exist some psychological challenges for the online shoppers.
- 3.To determine how this decision fatigue of the online buyer can act as a challenge for the groceries brands who are providing services on such e-marketplaces.

Data Collection Source

For the purpose of our study for this particular research paper, we have used Secondary Data Collection sources including quality research works, putting citation of different research papers, who have studied the same topics prior to our study and other online website content whose reference has been shared in the reference (last) section of this research paper.

Findings

1. Psychological challenges experienced by the online shoppers while shopping groceries over E-marketplace

There will be some Psychological challenges for online shoppers while shopping on e-market place for groceries shopping. These challenges can be considered as potential reasons for Decision Fatigue to the Online Shoppers. The following points listed below are some challenges of online grocery shopping like Technical glitches in the grocery shopping website, Unavailability of the grocery items on the e-market place store, Lack of personal touch, Difficulty in searching desired brands at the desired price, Network and connectivity issue, Slow loading of the webpages, Inconvenience of receiving the one time password (OTP), Payment related issues, Hidden transaction cost issues on per order, Difficulty to track the order, Difficulty in cancelling the order placed by mistake, Unfriendly experience with the brand's customer care cell, Technical nature of the e-market place digital interface, Strict policy procedures of the brands with respect to return of products and Slow processing of grocery products order, as a result causing delayed delivery.

All the above stated reasons can become a potential cause of psychological challenge for the buyer, while shopping on e-market place for groceries.

2. The perspective of Decision-Fatigue & its evasion

According to the information published on the website of **American Medical Association (2021)** by **Dr. MacLean a psychiatrist**, in which they have defined that, decision fatigue is a concept of restlessness and



exhaustion due to the process of making many decisions. One's ability to frame more and more decisions become worse over the course of a day. The same website report highlighted that in a day on an average, a person made over thousands of decisions and all those decisions involve human efforts, energy as well as time. Our decision fatigue deplete us mentally directly and physically indirectly.

We don't need to go very far to note the actual psychological inconvenience of the digital shopper with respect to his online grocery shopping decisions. Many of us, while trying to shop or buy groceries online from the e-marketplace platforms experience certain point of inconvenience experience like- incomplete product information and labelling, difficulty in order cancellation along with other possible reasons as stated in the next heading can become a cause of decision fatigue for the online shopper.

In fact, many health experts have attempted to measure this decision fatigue of the shoppers by conducting a galvanic skin reaction and heart beat per minutes so as to reveal the exact people's reaction in the shopping centers. The study has shown certain changes in the galvanic skin reaction along with the varied frequency deviations in the cardiovascular rhythm of the shopper depending on duration of shopping. The results of the study can be used for planning and deciding the sales areas, shop location, sales result analysis, advertising campaigns designing and customer behavior analysis **Galkin, A., et al (2018)**. The result of the above study can be replicated to the e-marketplace business model after making the requisite adjustments and changes to best fit the needs of the online shopper.

In the nutshell, we can conclude that Decision fatigue is a common phenomenon for all of us; after all we are humans, and our mental ability functions differently than that of the machine. Human mind is bombarded with plethora of information and data on daily basis in this techade, and framing rational decision every time might not be possible for all of us. Doing online grocery shopping is itself a technical task, and it is generic to suffer choice as well as decision fatigue while shopping online. The decision fatigue of online shopper divert his focus and diminish his shopping interest, as a result the online shopper will attempt the following alternative remedies-

- ✓ Leaving/quitting shopping as soon as possible, by adding to cart the available options so displayed on the e-marketplace platform without navigating intensely about the desired product items.
- ✓ Compromising with the available options only.
- ✓ Skip the process of buying online in the fear of decision fatigue.
- ✓ Impulsive buying with the available brands to save the time.
- ✓ Repeating the orders, without giving a chance/experiencing to new groceries brands available online in the fear of decision fatigue.
- ✓ Returning to traditional kirana (mom and pop) stores for grocery shopping.

An online shopper may undergone the all the above discussed attempts, if he/she will experience decision fatigue. These attempts will act as a remedy in reducing his stress, fatigue and decision depletion level in the short-run and help him/her to continue shopping groceries online in the long-run.

3. Survival Challenge for the Online Grocery Brands on e-marketplace due to online shopper's Decision Fatigue

As we have discussed earlier that, there are some psychological challenges faced by the online shoppers while shopping on e-market place for groceries shopping. In this particular heading, we will try to establish



the correlation of the online shopper's decision fatigue as a survival challenge for the online grocery brands functioning on the e-marketplace. Although the attempt to prove the above statement, may not reach the actual purpose due to lack of primary research data, however we can relate the purpose taking into consideration the data available from the secondary data sources only. The intention of the study is to bring closer the possibilities which can assist in proofing the Survival Challenge for the Online Grocery Brands on e-marketplace due to online shopper's Decision Fatigue.

On the one hand according to **STATISTA, (2024)** report there are close to 31 percent adults across worldwide, who believe that stress was the one of the biggest cause of health problems. Another **STATISTA, (2024)** revealed that a quarter of global shoppers i.e. some twenty-five percent shoppers prefer online groceries shopping as per second quarter of the year 2023. Let's suppose if a small portion of online grocery shoppers will experience any one of the above stated decision fatigue cause or any other cause, they may feel stressed and such stressed shopping experience if practiced for longer time duration can cause harmful consequences on human body. In order to avoid such shopping related decision fatigueness, online shopper will start searching for alternative remedies (as discussed above) to escape from online grocery shopping originated decision fatigue.

In such a milieu, the grocery brands who are available over e-market place platforms will surely face an economic challenge due to reduced demands of the grocery products from the online shoppers. The digital survival for the small grocery brands become even more challenging in the case of low online demand, because digital presence of a brand involve some cost. Although due to lack of exact data availability during the time of this research study, it is difficult to the estimate how much it exactly cost to a grocery brand to ensure their presence on an e-marketplace platform before the online grocery shoppers. But one thing is surely clear, that there would be some cost for sure. If the brand will not be able to recoup that probable cost, their survival become challenging at the end of the day. Another point of contention is the competition level. Due to impulsive buying decision, many a times, our competitor get edge over our product. In the end it is important to highlight that this particular heading may be an area of conflict of interest as future and existing extensive primary and secondary data may proof more facts accordingly. Thus this heading lacks concrete correlation and proofing in this particular subject matter.

4. CONCLUSION

The following points are the conclusions that were observed during the research for this paper.

- India has a growing market for online shopping in the grocery segment. According to **STATISTA report (2024)** titled "**Online grocery shopping in India - statistics & facts**" by A. Minhas, the expected market worth of the online groceries businesses across the country (India) was estimated to be above one trillion Indian rupees as of the year 2024.
- Not every online shopper will be experiencing decision fatigue, but yes prolonged and frequent use of these online grocery shopping application available at the e-market place makes it a challenge for the online buyers directly and for the grocery brands indirectly. However stating any health and psychological consequences specifically would be a premature statement, as research data in this particular interest area is somewhat unavailable to be quoted.
- There can be endless reasons due to which decision fatigue can be happened to any online shoppers. For instance, unfriendly user interface of the online grocery shopping application, checking other customer's review, lack of time with the online shopper, long list of shopping items, poor functioning of application due



to interrupted internet connectivity, long time taken in product search, unavailability of desired brand, making of price comparisons, unavailability of desired quality, problem with payment interface and so on.

- There are certain solutions to be implemented as well, if someone is experiencing the problem of decision fatigue post online shopping experience. These solutions can be fruitful for the online shoppers of grocery segment as well. According to an article published in **Time Health (Mental Health)** it is actually inevitable to halt modern customers doing the online shopping, but we can adopt and adhere to certain measures from our side by making rational choices and decisions like no-buy month, taking gap between two shopping's and so on and so forth **Serrano (2024)**.
- An online shopper may go for impulsive buying due to decision fatigue, because shopper is more concerned about saving their time by adopting easy methods. Thus decision fatigue can be further studied as a propelling factor for the impulsive buying attitude.
- The result of this research paper need much deeper study and analysis as we lack framing hypothesis, applying research test and other statistical proofing, which could enhance the worthiness of this particular research topic. Meanwhile, this paper serve as a source of inspiration to dive deeper in the chosen field for improved results and research proofing's. We hope that our study will hint the future studies to go deeper study & analysis for more comprehensive results in this particular discipline. For any clash of interest with respect to statistics, findings and other headings like literature review & findings, the authors are not responsible. The findings are of suggestible nature only, with no compulsion of applying them exactly as a base ground for the future studies.

4.1 Limitations of study & Directions for Future Research

This study has certain limitations which can act as a possible opportunities for the purpose of conducting future research work in the same area of interest. The research is purely based on secondary data sources, findings and conclusion interpretations could be possibly more authentic, if the research work would be based on primary data sources. Furthermore, we can add more sub-segments within grocery brands to clearly identify the causes of decision fatigue. The study can also be extended to other psychological challenges apart from decision fatigue only. There is also lack of exact data available online during the time of this research study, which makes it difficult for us to exactly estimate how much it actually cost to a grocery brand to ensure their presence on an e-marketplace platform before the group of online grocery shoppers. The financial perspective can also be added to this study for the purpose of economic clarity. For instance, the percentage financial loss or revenue loss to the grocery brands for each case of decision fatigue in general. Addressing these challenges can become the foundation stone for the future studies on these topics.

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