The Effect of Information Overload on Decision Difficulty Mediated by Consumer Confusion in Generation Z in Jepara

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ARTICLE INFO

Jurnal Economic Resources
ISSN: 2620-6196
Vol. 8 Issue 1 (2025)

Article history:
Accepted – March 05, 2025
Revised – March 16, 2025
Accepted – March 16, 2025

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Keywords:
Information Overload, Consumer Confusion, Decision Difficulty

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze how Information Overload impacts decision difficulty mediated by Consumer Confusion on generation Z in Jepara. The target of this study is generation Z in Jepara. This study uses quantitative methods. The source of research data uses Primary Data. The survey was conducted through Google Form, the sampling method in this study was random sampling, and 310 respondents were taken as samples. This study uses Smart (PLS), with the SmartPLS Version 4.0 application to conduct statistical analysis. The results show that there are findings that Information overload has a positive relationship with decision difficulty, and between consumer confusion and decision difficulty, the results of consumer confusion mediation are positively correlated.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, information is accessible to many people from a nearly unlimited number of sources. This means that most people are frequently exposed to a variety of text, video, and audio messages. However, human information processing capabilities are limited. The impact of cognitive limitations on information processing is certainly not a new finding, but the broader impact on digital communication is not well understood due to the advent of digital communication technologies. Information overload can be defined as a condition in which a person is unable to comprehend or act on additional stimuli (Nematzadeh et al., 2019).

With the advancement of information technology (IT), consumers can choose products more freely and obtain more information (e.g., more information per product). Both of these create an environment that encourages consumer empowerment (Broniarczyk & Griffin, 2014). This excess information may be unnecessary or irrelevant to users, thus increasing their burden. Information overload can occur due to increased information processing needs because each person has limited cognitive capacity (Ji et al., 2014).

The term e-commerce is quite familiar to the public, especially Gen Z. E-commerce is often described as the process of purchasing goods over the internet, as well as transferring money and data to complete transactions. This term is also commonly referred to as electronic commerce or internet commerce (Nasri, 2024). This is relevant to previous research which states that the generation that is close to technology (digital native) is Gen Z because they were born in the smartphone era, grew up with better computer technology and have internet openness. This is easier compared to previous generations. Gen Z was born after 1995 (Francis et al., 2018). According to previous research, 33% of Z spend more than six hours a day using their mobile phones, and spend more time on social media than their predecessors (Sakitri, 2021).

Consumer confusion can occur due to various factors, such as high variety, high similarity between products with ambiguous products, and misleading descriptions. (Peukert & Kloker, 2020). (Walsh & Mitchell, 2010) said that consumer confusion is a disturbed mental condition that occurs during the pre-purchase process and has a negative impact on decision making that is not up to standard. According to several previous studies, almost every consumer decision is influenced by confusion.

The research GAP in this study according to (Hu & Krishen, 2019) the information overload felt by a person is positively related to decision difficulty, but research (Peng et al., 2021) that the information overload felt by a person does not affect decision difficulty. Based on these findings. This study is expected to determine how information overload and consumer confusion affect decision difficulty in generation Z in Jepara. This study is expected to provide further insight into how consumer behavior, especially generation Z, is influenced by these factors in the decision-making process when shopping online.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Information Overload

Information overload is a state of cognitive overload that triggers a person's response to stress. A person needs the ability to process and explain information, otherwise the person may behave suboptimally (Damayanti & Djastuti, 2023). This very large information limitation makes users effectively search for, process, and process appropriate information (Zhang et al., 2021). Any information that is ambiguous, vague, complex, or intense can be interpreted as IO (Mohammed et al., 2021). The cognitive ability of each individual is limited to a limit and therefore every time information exceeds the limit, it will cause IO (Hu & Krishen, 2019). In previous research conducted by (Hu & Krishen, 2019) there was a positive and significant influence between excess information and difficulty in decision making.

H1: Information Overload has a positive and significant effect on Decision Difficulty.

Consumer Confusion

Consumer confusion can be interpreted as a condition that can be experienced by someone, which means they behave differently or affect their decision-making behavior (Suban & Tumewu, 2019). Consumer confusion occurs when consumers do not understand or interpret a product or service correctly, which can cause them to make the wrong purchasing decision. Consumers may find many products in stores, and consumers can also find many similar products that are almost identical or have the same functions and capabilities but are still sold under different brands. It is not surprising that some companies can make the same product with different brands, prices, qualities, and tastes, but it is up to consumers which one is right for them (Suban & Tumewu, 2019). According to previous research (Özkan et al., 2015) there is a positive and significant effect of information overload on consumer confusion. This study is in line with research by (Dharmasena & Jayathilaka, 2021) and (Walsh & Mitchell, 2010) which states that excessive exposure to information in consumers can cause consumer confusion, feelings of stress/disappointment and bad decisions.

H2: Information overload has a positive and significant effect on consumer confusion.

Decision Difficulty

In the research conducted (Cheek et al., 2016) it was stated that decision difficulty as a result of maximization is considered more appropriate. Decision difficulty seems more important and encourages people to maximize. Specifically, individuals maintain a general understanding of metacognitive theory that decision difficulty is related to the importance of decision making (Sela & Berger, 2012). Research conducted (Walsh et al., 2007) found a positive and significant influence of consumer confusion on decision difficulty. That consumer confusion can cause decision difficulty which actually makes them more careful in making decisions.

H3: Consumer Confusion has a positive and significant effect on Decision Difficulty.

Theoretical Framework of Thought

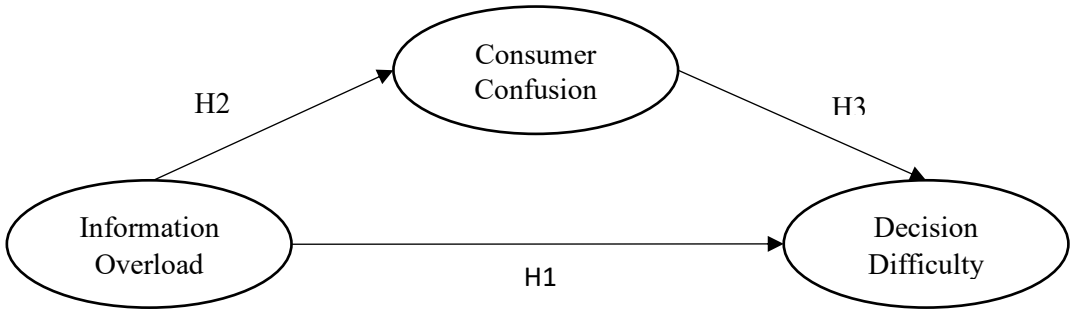

Figure 1 Theoretical Framework of Thought

1. RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a quantitative method (Roosdhani, 2024) For data collection, researchers used primary data obtained through the distribution of online questionnaires based on Google Form. In this study, there are three variables, namely information overload (X), consumer confusion (Z), and decision difficulty (Y) in Gen Z. The variables in this questionnaire are measured using a rating scale of 1-10 (learning, 2015). The population of this study is generation Z in Jepara. The population in this study is generation Z in Jepara, which is quite large and difficult to determine with certainty. Therefore, the sampling technique used is random sampling, namely by randomly selecting a small portion of individuals or members of the entire population. The sample size used in this study uses the formula (Rao, 1996):

$$\boldsymbol{n = \frac{Z^2}{4 + (M_{oe})^2}}$$

N= Sample size
Z Level of confidence in sample selection 95% = 1.96
The largest acceptable Margin of Error in this situation is set at 5%
With the formula above, the minimum sample size that must be achieved is:

$$\boldsymbol{n = \frac{1,96^2}{4 + (0,05)^2}}$$
$$\boldsymbol{n = 310}$$

The sample obtained from the distribution of questionnaires that had been carried out was 310 respondents. Hypothesis testing in this study was also used (Arifin, 2020) using the PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling) method. To conduct data analysis, using SmartPLS software version 4.0.

One type of Primary data was used in this study, which is data that researchers have directly gathered using online surveys distributed via Google Forms (Britania, 2024). In order to collect valid and reliable response data, a structured questionnaire with well-organized and systematic questions was used to collect data for this study (Komaryatin, 2024).

Table 1 Description of respondent data

Category	Description	Frequency (people)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Man	128	58,8%
	Woman	182	41,2%
Amount			100%
Age	< 20 Year	22	7,1%
	21-25 Year	279	90%

	26-28 Year	9	2,9%
Amount			100%
Marital Status	Marry	292	93,9%
	Unmarried	18	6,1%
Amount			100%
Work	Student/collage	186	59,8%
	PNS	5	1,9%
	Employee	83	26,7%
	Private	33	10,7%
Amount			100%

Sumber: Google Form/Kuesioner

Table 2 Measurement Indicators

Variables	Variable Name	Indicator	Source
Information Overload (IO)	IO1	I often get distracted by the amount of information on social media that I can access.	(Gao et al., 2018) (Hwang et al., 2020) (Lee et al., 2020)
	IO2	I get distracted by the amount of information I process every day on social media.	
	IO3	In my opinion, only a small portion of content on social media suits my needs.	
	IO4	The abundance of information on social media made me misunderstand some of its contents.	
	IO5	There was too much information presented, so I felt overwhelmed in handling it.	
	IO6	I am confident that the information presented meets my needs for making decisions.	
Consumer Confusion (CC)	CC1	It is difficult to recognize one e-commerce product from another because they are all similar.	(Anuradha Sharma et al., 2023) (A. Sharma et al., 2023) (Xue et al., 2020)
	CC2	Sometimes I experience confusion in buying products promoted on social media because of the many similarities.	
	CC3	I'm not sure which e-commerce product suits my needs.	
	CC4	I feel like I rarely get enough information when purchasing products through e-commerce.	
	CC5	When purchasing products on e-commerce, I am not sure about the important product attributes.	
	CC6	Some e-commerce sites look similar to me and it is difficult to tell them apart.	

Decision Difficulty (DD)	DD1	Making decisions is a complicated activity for me.	(Hu & Krishen, 2019) (Song et al., 2019)
	DD2	I feel frustrated when making decisions	
	DD3	For me, the decision to buy online was very difficult.	
	DD 4	It took me a long time to decide.	
	DD5	I feel confident about the choice I have to make.	

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research result

Outer Model (Measurement Model)

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is a form of validity that measures the extent to which indicators or items in one latent variable are highly correlated and measure the same construct. Validity test research is useful for determining whether the research results are acceptable according to certain standards. If the outer loading value is > 0.7 and the AVE value is > 0.5, then the value is considered good (Gio, 2022).

Table 3 Convergent Validity value

Variables	Indicator	*Outer Loading*	AVE	Results
Information Overload (IO)	IO1	0.880	0.684	Valid
	IO2	0.878		
	IO3	0.823		
	IO4	0.798		
	IO5	0.855		
	IO6	0.716		
Consumer Confusion (CC)	CC1	0.857	0.695	Valid
	CC2	0.787		
	CC3	0.852		
	CC4	0.832		
	CC5	0.842		
	CC6	0.829		
Decision Difficulty (DD)	DD1	0.848	0.684	Valid
	DD2	0.857		
	DD3	0.831		
	DD 4	0.829		
	DD5	0.726		

Source: Output data from SmartPLS 4.0 (Processed)

Based on table 3, it can be concluded that all indicators measuring the variables information overload, consumer confusion, and decision difficulty have values exceeding 0.7 in the convergent validate test. In addition, the AVE value for these variables also exceeds the minimum threshold of 0.5. Thus, it can be concluded that the variables measured by these indicators can be said to be valid in the analysis.

Reliability Test

Reliability is a measure that shows the extent to which an instrument or questionnaire can produce consistent results when tested repeatedly under the same conditions. Reliability testing is used to assess the stability and reliability of measuring instruments in measuring certain variables. Reliability testing is testing the level of validity (reliability) of indicators and their suitability as research tools so that measurements can be made on variables, where the expected reliability value is above 0.7.

This reliability test is conducted using Cronbach's alpha value and Composite Reliability value which are measured in a range of values between 0 and 1. If the Alpha value exceeds 0.7, then it can be interpreted as reliable. A deep understanding of both methods is essential in the context of accurate and reliable statistical analysis.

Table 4 Composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha value

Variables	Composite reliability	Alpha Cronbach	Information
IO	0.911	0.906	
CC	0.914	0.912	Reliable
DD	0.879	0.877	

Source: Output data from SmartPLS 4.0 (Processed)

In the reliability test, the results obtained show that the research variable indicators have values above 0.7. This shows that these indicators have a high level of consistency in measuring the intended construct. Thus, it can be concluded that these indicators can be said to be reliable in the context of this study.

Internal Model (Structural Model)

The tool used is the SmartPLS 4.0 program which was developed specifically for variance-based structural equation estimation. The structural model for this study is shown in the figure below:

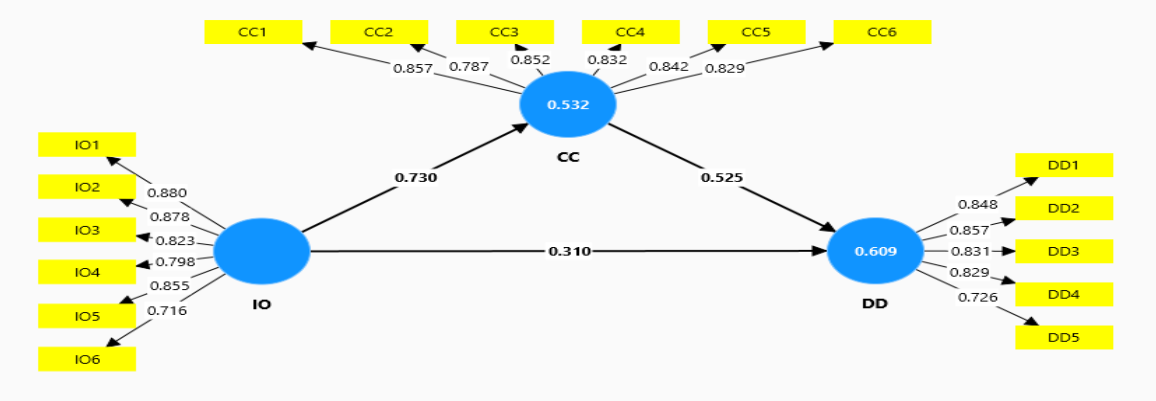

Figure 2 Structural Model

R-square

R-square is a metric used to measure the extent to which an independent variable affects a dependent variable in a statistical model. The R-square value helps us understand how much influence the dependent variable has on the independent variable. The R-square effect is considered significant if the value is close to 0.67, is considered moderate if it is close to 0.33, and is considered poor if it is close to 0.19.

Table 5 R-Square

Variables	R-square	Adjusted R-square
CC	0.532	0.531
DD	0.609	0.606

Source: Output data from SmartPLS 4.0 (Processed)

According to the table, the R-square value for Decision Difficulty Level is recorded at 0.609, while the Adjusted R-square value is 0.606. This indicates that the overall exogenous construct has a moderate influence on the dependent variable Y of 60.9%. However, the remaining 39.1% is due to other variables and indicators not included in this study. This suggests that additional components affecting the decision difficulty level should be considered in future analyses.

Mediation Test

The purpose of mediation is to determine whether the mediator variable functions as a mediator in mediating the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This helps understand direct and indirect effects, measure the significance of mediation, and determine whether full, partial, or no mediation exists. On the other hand, full mediation occurs when, after controlling for the mediator variable, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables becomes insignificant or negative, while the relationship between the mediator variable and the dependent variable remains positive. In partial mediation, the relationship between the independent and dependent variables is also positive.

The results of the analysis using the bootstrapping method with SmartPLS 4.0 can be interpreted through the P value. If the P value on the specific indirect effect is > 0.05, then it indicates that there is no statistically significant relationship. However, if the P value <0.05, then it indicates that there is a significant relationship.

Table 6 Path Coefficients

Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Value
CC -> DD	0.525	0.525	0.062	8,535	0.000
IO -> CC	0.730	0.731	0.032	23,046	0.000
IO -> DD	0.310	0.310	0.059	5.206	0.000

Source: Output data from SmartPLS 4.0 (Processed)

Table 7 Specific Indirect Effects

Variables	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Value
IO -> CC -> DD	0.383	0.384	0.046	8.36 1	0.000

Source: Output data from SmartPLS 4.0 (Processed)

From tables 6 and 7 it can be seen that:

The Effect of Information Overload on Decision Difficulty Mediated by Consumer Confusion

Identifying that the Path Coefficient coefficient between consumer confusion and decision difficulty shows a positive relationship, because the P value is 0.000 <0.05. Furthermore, from the Indirect Specific Effect, it can be seen that the indirect effect between information overload on decision difficulty

with consumer confusion as a mediator also shows a positive relationship, with a P value of 0.000 <0.05. Therefore, based on these findings, it can be concluded that there is Partial Mediation in the relationship between information overload and decision difficulty.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is a process of testing the significance, direction, and strength of the relationship between variables in a study. Hypothesis testing is the examination of the direction, significance, and strength of the relationship between variables in a study. The results of the data analysis, which were carried out using the Bootstrapping method in SmartPLS software version 4.0, were used to test the research hypothesis. The P-value was evaluated during hypothesis testing, and the results showed that the hypothesis was accepted if the value was <0.05.

Table 8 Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Analysis
Consumer Confusion -> Decision Difficulty	P value = 0.000 T statistic = 8.535 T-table = 1.650 T Statistics > T Table
Information Overload -> Consumer Confusion	P value = 0.000 T statistic = 23.046 T-table = 1.650 T Statistics > T Table
Information Overload -> Decision Difficulty	P value = 0.000 T statistic = 5.206 T-table = 1.650 T Statistics > T Table

Source: Output data from SmartPLS 4.0 (Processed)

The Effect of Information Overload on Decision Difficulty

Showing that the T-statistics value (5.206) > T-table value (1.650), and P value (0.000) < 0.05, then the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. This leads to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Ha1). In this context, it shows that there is a significant positive influence between the information overload variable and decision difficulty. In line with research (Sicilia et al., 2010) that a lot of information will further exacerbate the difficulty in decision making. It can be said that, the higher the level of information overload obtained, the higher the level of decision difficulty significantly. When someone receives too much information that exceeds their processing capacity, the ability to make clear and fast decisions decreases. This is caused by the cognitive load that makes individuals feel confused and anxious in sorting out relevant information.

The Impact of Information Overload on Consumer Confusion

Showing that the T-statistic value (23.046) > T-table value (1.650), and the P value (0.000) <0.05, then the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. This leads to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Ha2). In this context, it shows that there is a significant positive influence between the information overload

variable and consumer confusion. This is in line with research conducted by (Fang, 2019) it can be said that, the higher the level of information overload, the higher the level of consumer confusion significantly. When consumers are faced with too much information, they find it difficult to process and understand the details, so they experience consumer confusion.

The Impact of Consumer Confusion on Decision Difficulty

Showing that the T-statistic value (8.535) > T-table value (1.650), and the P value (0.000) < 0.05, then the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected. This leads to the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis (Ha3). In this context, it shows that there is a significant positive influence between the consumer confusion variable and decision difficulty. It can be said that, if the level of consumer confusion obtained is high, the level of decision difficulty is also significantly high. When consumers feel confused because of information that is too complex or confusing, their decision difficulty process is hampered. They often have difficulty in choosing or deciding which product is the most appropriate, because they cannot clearly distinguish relevant information.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that information overload has a positive and significant effect on decision difficulty in Generation Z in Jepara. This effect occurs directly and indirectly through consumer confusion as a mediating variable. This means that the more information received, the higher the level of confusion, which ultimately makes it more difficult for consumers to make choices when shopping online. This finding confirms that even though Generation Z is familiar with technology, they are still susceptible to confusing information overload. Therefore, it is important to present more concise, clear, and relevant information so that the decision-making process can run more effectively. This study also enriches the literature on digital consumer behavior and provides an overview of the importance of information management in an online shopping environment.

SUGGESTION

The suggestion in this study is that e-commerce players and digital platform managers pay more attention to how information is presented to consumers, especially Generation Z. The information presented should not be excessive, but clear, relevant, and easy to understand so as not to cause confusion that can hinder the decision-making process. In addition, further research is recommended to explore other variables such as digital literacy, consumer trust levels, or emotional factors that may also influence decision difficulty. The use of mixed methods or qualitative approaches can also be an alternative to gain a deeper understanding of consumer behavior in the digital era.

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