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Exploring The Influence of Information Overload on Purchasing Avoidance With Consumer Confusion as a Mediator

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Abstract

In the digital age, information overload occurs when individuals are overwhelmed by excessive and conflicting data, complicating decision-making. This overload leads to consumer confusion, making it hard to process available options and often resulting in purchasing avoidance. Studies show that consumer confusion mediates the relationship between information overload and purchasing avoidance, heightening anxiety and delaying decisions. While more information can sometimes help, it frequently causes confusion and fatigue, which ultimately hinders purchasing decisions. This study aims to examine whether consumer confusion mediates the effect of information overload on purchasing avoidance among university students who are active users of e-commerce platforms. The findings are expected to help digital marketers and e-commerce managers design clearer and less overwhelming information environments, since reducing consumer confusion may lower the purchasing avoidance triggered by information overload. Our study used quantitative sampling with a purpose to collect and analyze data from 156 students of Jenderal Soedirman University. After that, we used Structural Equation Modeling PLS data collected through questionnaires to test the model. Our findings show how effective consumer confusion can increase information overload and purchasing avoidance. Furthermore, business owners should focus on reducing consumer confusion to reduce negative impact of information overload on purchasing decisions.

Keywords: information overload, purchasing avoidance, consumer confusion, purchasing decisions, e-commerce.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital age, the rapid expansion of online information has led to information overload, where individuals are bombarded with excessive and often conflicting data. This overwhelming influx complicates decision-making processes in consumer behavior. Consumers now face a barrage of product options, promotions, and reviews from various platforms, making it challenging to filter relevant information. Consequently, consumer confusion arises when individuals struggle to process available information, which can lead to purchasing avoidance, where consumers delay or avoid purchases due to decision-making complexity. Information overload refers to a state where information volume exceeds cognitive capacity to process it effectively, reducing decision quality (Bawden & Robinson, 2009; Eppler & Mengis, 2004).

Empirical evidence supports these links. Kukar-Kinney et al. (2009) found that confusion from conflicting product information significantly increased consumers' reluctance to purchase, while Dote Pardo (2026) reported that information overload raised decision fatigue and lowered purchase intention. Research has also explored the mediating role of consumer confusion. Kukar-Kinney et al. (2009) found that confusion created by conflicting information significantly influenced reluctance to purchase. This mediating role has been confirmed by Agnihotri et al. (2024), who showed that confusion generated by information overload statistically transmits its effect onto purchasing avoidance.

Information overload is a major driver where consumers struggle to digest information, become fatigued, and do not make purchases (Agnihotri et al., 2024). This suggests the importance of simplifying choices so consumers can decide with greater ease and confidence (Cooper & Hawkins, 2019). However, Soto-Acosta et al. (2014) found that information overload does not always contribute to purchasing avoidance. Bretscher (2022) states that diverse information can enrich the experience, providing insights for better decisions. Although more variety can lead to choice overload, consumers with more information can increase their confidence (Gustafson et al., 2016) and knowledge (Andrews & Allen, 2016; Daume & Hüttl-Maack, 2020).

Consumer confusion plays an important mediating role between information overload and purchasing avoidance. Information overload causes confusion that ultimately leads to purchase avoidance. Without confusion, the effect of overload on purchasing avoidance may not be as significant. Research by Agnihotri et al. (2024) confirms that confusion generated by information overload mediates this relationship effectively.

This study examines the relationship between information overload and purchasing avoidance, focusing on how consumer confusion mediates this relationship among students at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Purwokerto. University students are active digital platform users and frequent online consumers, providing a suitable sample for analyzing these behavioral patterns. This research contributes to understanding how digital information overload affects consumer decision-making in an academic setting, where students routinely use e-commerce and digital platforms for both academic and personal purchases, exposing them to large volumes of online product information.

Information overload influences purchasing decisions by exceeding cognitive capacity, producing confusion, decision fatigue, and ultimately purchase postponement or avoidance. Identifying this mechanism is significant for firms' digital marketing strategy: by recognizing consumer confusion as the channel through which overload harms purchasing, companies can prioritize clearer product information, simplified choice architectures, and curated recommendations to reduce avoidance and protect conversion.

The central problem addressed is that, although information overload is widely assumed to deter purchasing, evidence on its direct effect on purchasing avoidance is inconsistent, and the mechanism remains unclear. This study aims to determine whether consumer confusion mediates the effect of information overload on purchasing avoidance among university students. Specifically, it seeks to answer four research questions: (1) Does information overload affect purchasing avoidance? (2) Does information overload affect consumer confusion? (3) Does consumer confusion affect purchasing avoidance? and (4) Does consumer confusion mediate the relationship between information overload and purchasing avoidance? By clarifying this mechanism, the study contributes theoretically by positioning consumer confusion as the explanatory link in the information-overload–avoidance relationship, and practically by guiding digital marketers in managing information presentation to reduce avoidance.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Information Overload

In the digital age, information overload has become a critical concern for consumers and organizations alike. Information overload refers to a state where individuals are exposed to more information than they can process effectively, leading to decreased decision-making quality, confusion, and stress (Eppler & Mengis, 2004). The proliferation of online media, social networks, and digital platforms has amplified this phenomenon, making it increasingly difficult for consumers to filter and process relevant information (Bawden & Robinson, 2009). Information overload is commonly defined as a situation in which the amount of information exceeds an individual's capacity to manage it, resulting in a diminished ability to make informed decisions (Hiltz & Plotnick, 2013).

Agnihotri et al. (2024) showed that in e-commerce environments, too much information can lead to confusion, lower trust in the platform, and ultimately avoidance behavior. More recently, Yeon et al. (2019) conducted research exploring how the increasing number of options in online shopping environments exacerbates information overload, leading to consumer confusion and avoidance of purchasing decisions. Similarly, Islam et al. (2020) found that IO, particularly on social media platforms, contributes to decision difficulty and stress, affecting overall consumer satisfaction. Information overload remains a significant challenge in the modern information age, affecting individuals' cognitive and emotional capacities and influencing consumer behavior. As digital environments continue to evolve, understanding and addressing the consequences of information overload will be crucial for marketers, businesses, and individuals alike.

Purchasing Avoidance

Purchasing avoidance refers to the behavior in which consumers deliberately delay or avoid making purchasing decisions, often due to various psychological and external factors (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000; V. W. Mitchell et al., 2005). This phenomenon has been widely studied in the context of consumer decision-making and behavioral economics One prominent factor influencing purchasing avoidance is decision difficulty, which occurs when consumers face an overwhelming number of choices. Iyengar and Lepper (2000) found that an excess of choices can lead to decision paralysis, ultimately causing consumers to avoid making a purchase altogether. This aligns with findings by Schwartz (1994), who emphasized the paradox of choice, where more options can lead to reduced satisfaction and a tendency to postpone decisions.

Consumer confusion is another significant predictor of purchasing avoidance. Mitchell et al. (2005) noted that when consumers are bombarded with complex information or similar product offerings, they are more likely to feel uncertain about their decisions, leading to avoidance behavior. This confusion is often exacerbated by information overload, where excessive and conflicting information hinders the ability to make confident purchasing decisions (Eppler & Mengis, 2004). Emotional factors also play a role in purchasing avoidance. Research by Kacen and Lee (2002) suggests that emotions such as anxiety or stress, often triggered by high-stakes decisions or unfamiliar products, can cause consumers to avoid purchases as a coping mechanism

Consumer Confusion

Consumer confusion refers to a state where individuals struggle to process information effectively due to excessive, unclear, or conflicting data, leading to decision-making uncertainty. This phenomenon is increasingly relevant in today's complex marketplaces, where consumers are inundated with vast information from numerous sources (V. Mitchell & Papavassiliou, 1999; Walsh et al., 2007). Research has categorized consumer confusion into three dimensions: similarity confusion (difficulty distinguishing between brands/products), overload confusion (being overwhelmed by excessive information), and ambiguity confusion (difficulty interpreting unclear or contradictory information) (V. Mitchell & Papavassiliou, 1999). Studies indicate that consumer confusion negatively impacts purchasing decisions and brand loyalty. Walsh et al. (2007) found that confusion leads to lower satisfaction, decreased trust, and reduced purchase intentions. Mathur (2021) discovered that product similarity confusion reduced brand differentiation and increased indecision, while Benhissi and Hamouda (2025) revealed that higher confusion levels correlated with postponed or abandoned purchases. In digital environments, Changani et al. (2026) argue that e-commerce platforms contribute to confusion due to excessive product options and inconsistent information.

Although these studies establish relationships among the constructs, they leave the central problem unanswered in three respects. First, prior work tests the direct effect of information overload on avoidance with inconsistent results. Second, consumer confusion is often treated as a parallel predictor rather than the mechanism transmitting overload's effect onto avoidance. Third, evidence is drawn largely from Western samples, leaving applicability to emerging e-commerce markets unverified. This study addresses these shortcomings by explicitly modeling consumer confusion as a mediator within such a population.

The Effects of Information Overload on Purchasing Avoidance

The phenomenon of information overload occurs when consumers are exposed to an excessive amount of information, leading to confusion and difficulty in decision-making. Research indicates that information overload can significantly impact consumer behavior, particularly in the context of purchasing decisions. For instance, Al-Fattal (2026) found that consumers facing too much information are more likely to experience decision fatigue, which can lead to avoidance of purchasing altogether. Additionally, the theory of consumer confusion posits that when individuals are overwhelmed by information, they struggle to process relevant data effectively, resulting in a tendency to delay or avoid decisions (Sharma, Pandher, et al., 2023). This aligns with the findings of Agnihotri et al. (2024), who assert that consumers often engage in purchasing avoidance as a coping mechanism to mitigate the stress associated with excessive information.

Despite extensive research on information overload, findings on its direct effect on purchasing avoidance remain mixed: some studies report a strong avoidance effect, whereas others find that consumers adapt so that overload does not directly deter purchasing. In addition, the mediating role of consumer confusion has rarely been tested empirically among digitally active university consumers in Indonesia. This study addresses that gap by testing consumer confusion as the mechanism linking information overload to purchasing avoidance in this population.

H_1: Information Overload has a positive and significant impact on Purchasing Avoidance.

The Effects of Information Overload on Consumer Confusion

Information overload occurs when consumers are exposed to an excessive amount of information, which can lead to difficulty in processing and making decisions (Bawden & Robinson, 2009). Previous studies have shown that information overload can create confusion, hindering consumers' ability to evaluate options effectively (Jacoby, 2002). Research by Häubl and Trifts (2000) indicates that when consumers face too many choices, they experience increased cognitive load, resulting in decision paralysis and confusion. This is further supported by the findings of Venkatesh et al. (2012), who argue that an overload of information reduces clarity, causing consumers to struggle with understanding product differences.

H_2: Information Overload has a positive and significant impact on Consumer Confusion.

The Effect of Consumer Confusion on Purchasing Avoidance

Consumer confusion, characterized by the inability to differentiate between various product choices, has been identified as a significant factor influencing purchasing decisions. According to V. Mitchell and Papavassiliou (1999), consumer confusion arises from three primary sources: similarity confusion, information overload, and ambiguity. This confusion often leads to decision paralysis, resulting in consumers avoiding purchases altogether, as they become overwhelmed and unsure about making the correct choice. Past research supports the notion that increased confusion negatively impacts consumer behavior. In their study, Benhissi and Hamouda (2025) found that consumers facing high levels of product-related confusion were more likely to postpone or entirely avoid purchasing decisions. This avoidance is driven by a desire to prevent making potentially incorrect decisions, which could lead to post-purchase regret. Additionally, Sharma et al. (2023) suggested that the complexity of product information and the abundance of choices in modern marketplaces exacerbate consumer confusion, leading to decision fatigue and ultimately avoidance behaviors.

H_3: Consumer Confusion has a positive and significant impact on Purchasing Avoidance.

The Mediating Role of Consumer Confusion

Information overload is not expected to affect purchasing avoidance solely in a direct manner. When consumers are exposed to excessive and conflicting information, they first experience confusion, which then drives them to delay or avoid purchases. Kukar-Kinney et al. (2009) provides empirical support that consumer confusion transmits the effect of information overload onto avoidance behaviour. Accordingly, consumer confusion is hypothesised to mediate this relationship.

H4: Consumer Confusion mediates the relationship between Information Overload and Purchasing Avoidance.

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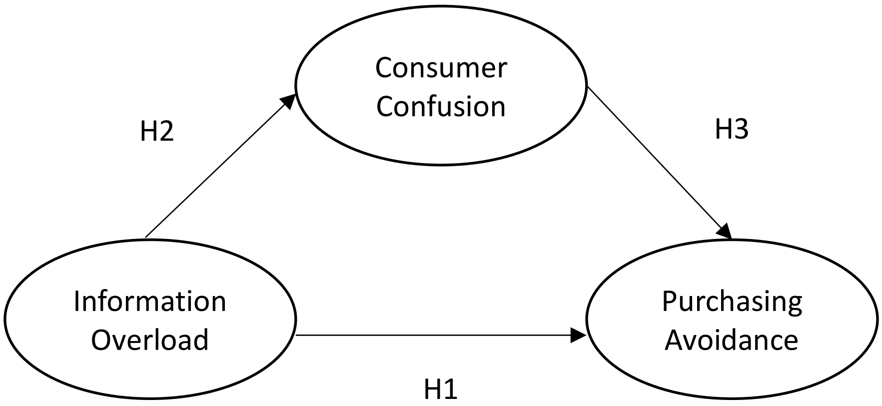

Figure 1. Research Model

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a causal research design to test hypotheses about relationships between variables. The research model was developed through a hypothetical approach and tested using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with PLS software. The study focuses on students of Jenderal Soedirman University, Purwokerto, with a sample of 156 students. Data were collected from September to October 2025 through a survey questionnaire using a Likert scale with ten alternative answers. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, with the criterion of having shopped on e-commerce platforms within the last 2 months. Students of the Faculty of Economics and Business were chosen because they are frequent e-commerce users routinely exposed to large volumes of online product information and possess sufficient familiarity with purchasing decisions to evaluate the constructs under study. The sample size exceeds the minimum requirement of 80 respondents based on the 10 times rule for PLS-SEM (Hair et al., 2017).

The analysis follows the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach, appropriate for predictive and mediation models as it does not require normally distributed data and performs reliably with modest sample sizes (Hair et al., 2017). The sample of 156 respondents satisfies the minimum requirements, supporting the adequacy of the sample size for the structural model tested. This study improves on previous research in two ways. First, whereas many earlier studies modeled only the direct effect of information overload on purchasing behavior, this study adds consumer confusion as an explicit mediating variable. Second, by applying the model to digitally active university students in an Indonesian e-commerce context, it supplies empirical evidence in a setting that prior, largely Western or general-population, studies have not examined. All instruments used in this study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Measurement Items

Constructs	Items	Statement Item	Coefficient Correlation
Information Overload	IO1	There is too much product information available on e-commerce platforms for me to process effectively.	Adopted from Chen et al. (2009), Eppler and Mengis (2004), Fu et al. (2020).
	IO2	I find it difficult to filter relevant information when shopping online.	
	IO3	The abundance of information from various sellers on e-commerce platforms confuses me.	
	IO4	I feel stressed or fatigued due to the excessive information presented while online shopping.	
	IO5	Only a small portion of the information on e-commerce platforms is relevant to my needs.	
	IO6	Sometimes I want to buy a product I've seen advertised, but can't identify it clearly among numerous similar products.	
	IO7	I find it challenging to locate the specific information I need on e-commerce platforms.	
Purchasing Avoidance	PA1	I avoid purchasing products that don't align with my emotional values.	Adopted from Sweeney & Soutar (2001).
	PA2	I refrain from buying items that might negatively impact my social image.	
	PA3	I hesitate to purchase products if I'm unsure about their quality or performance.	
	PA4	I avoid buying products that I feel are not worth the price.	
	PA5	I usually choose lower-priced products when shopping online.	
	PA6	I carefully search for the best value for my money on e-commerce sites.	
	PA7	I take time to shop carefully for the best deals on e-commerce platforms.	
	PA8	I would purchase a brand based on recommendations from social media influencers I follow.	

Constructs	Items	Statement Item	Coefficient Correlation
Consumer Confusion	CC1	I often feel unsure about which products best meet my needs.	Adopted from Walsh et al. (2007).
	CC2	There are so many brands available that I sometimes feel confused.	
	CC3	The abundance of stores makes it difficult to decide where to shop.	
	CC4	Most brands are very similar, making them hard to distinguish.	
	CC5	The information from advertisements is often vague, making it hard to understand a product's function.	
	CC6	I rarely feel adequately informed when purchasing a product.	
	CC7	The more I learn about products, the harder it seems to choose the best one.	
	CC8	I felt confused at the time of decision-making.	

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis Test

The data processing results indicate that two hypotheses are accepted, while one hypothesis, H1 (the effect of Information Overload on Purchasing Avoidance), is rejected.

Table 2. Hypothesis Test Result

Variable	T-Statistic	Probability Significance	Result
Hypothesis 1: Information Overload has a positive and significant impact on Purchasing Avoidance.	0.503	0.308	Rejected
Hypothesis 2: Information Overload has a positive and significant impact on Consumer Confusion.	19.876	0.000	Accepted
Hypothesis 3: Consumer Confusion has a positive and significant impact on Purchasing Avoidance.	3.054	0.001	Accepted
Hypothesis Mediation: Consumer Confusion mediates the relationship between Information Overload and Purchasing Avoidance.	2.932	0.002	Accepted

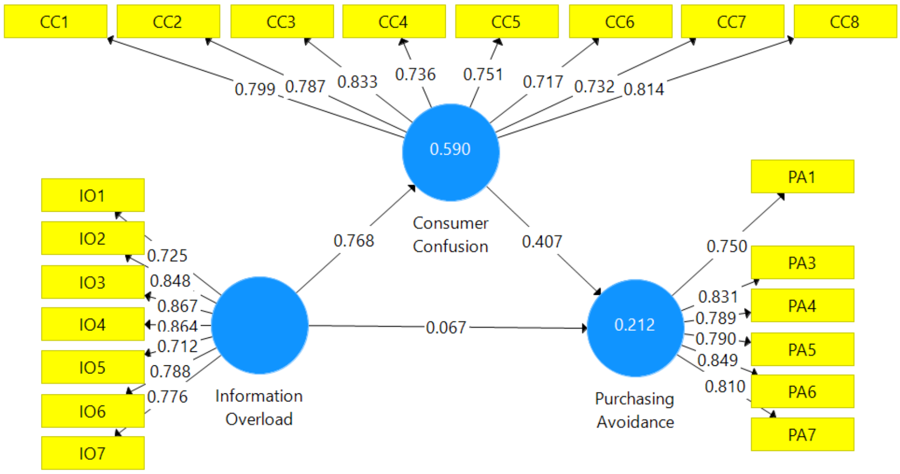

Figure 2. Outer Loading Result

The conclusions drawn from the hypothesis testing are as follows:

The findings of this study indicate that information overload does not have a significant direct effect on purchasing avoidance, as evidenced by the rejection of hypothesis 1. However, hypothesis 2, which posits that information overload has a significant influence on consumer confusion, is accepted. This suggests that excessive information can indeed lead to confusion among consumers. Additionally, hypothesis 3, which asserts that consumer confusion significantly impacts purchasing avoidance, is also accepted. This demonstrates that when consumers are confused, they are more likely to avoid making purchasing decisions. Last, the mediation hypothesis was accepted, demonstrating that consumer confusion mediates the relationship between information overload and purchasing avoidance. This implies that information overload leads to purchasing avoidance primarily through the increased confusion it creates for consumers. These results underscore the critical role of consumer confusion in understanding how information overload impacts purchasing behavior.
Hypotheses were evaluated using the t-statistic and significance probability obtained from the bootstrapping procedure, with a hypothesis accepted when the t-statistic exceeds 1.96 and the p-value is below 0.05. As shown in Table 2, H1 (Information Overload on Purchasing Avoidance) was rejected ($t = 0.503$; $p = 0.308$), H2 (Information Overload on Consumer Confusion) was strongly supported ($t = 19.876$; $p = 0.000$), and H3 (Consumer Confusion on Purchasing Avoidance) was supported ($t = 3.054$; $p = 0.001$). The mediation path was also significant ($t = 2.932$; $p = 0.002$). Because the direct effect (H1) is non-significant while the indirect path through consumer confusion is significant, the results indicate full mediation.

Taken together, the results present a coherent and convincing picture. The very high t-statistic for H2 ($t = 19.876$) signals a strong and robust effect of information overload on consumer confusion, while the significant paths for H3 ($t = 3.054$) and for the mediation test ($t = 2.932$) confirm that this confusion is carried through to purchasing avoidance. The combination of a non-significant direct path (H1) with a significant indirect path provides clear evidence of full mediation: information overload influences avoidance not on its own, but by first generating confusion. The consistency of these results with the proposed model strengthens confidence in the findings.

These findings also offer a novel contribution to knowledge. Rather than reaffirming the commonly assumed direct link between information overload and purchasing avoidance, the study shows that the relationship is fully mediated by consumer confusion, and it does so in a digitally active, non-Western student population that has rarely been studied. In this way the results refine existing theory by specifying the mechanism of the effect and extend the empirical evidence base to a new consumer context, advancing understanding of how information environments shape purchasing behaviour.

Discussion

Information Overload Has a Positive and Significant Impact on Purchasing Avoidance

The results of this study indicate that Information Overload does not have a significant positive impact on Purchasing Avoidance, leading to the rejection of Hypothesis 1. This finding contradicts the widely held assumption that excessive information leads consumers to avoid purchases due to overwhelming cognitive strain. Previous research has suggested that Information Overload can increase decision difficulty and reduce the ability to make choices, subsequently leading to Purchasing Avoidance (Bawden & Robinson, 2009). However, the results of this study diverge from these conclusions.

A potential explanation for this deviation might be attributed to the increased familiarity with digital environments among today's consumers. Recent studies have shown that consumers are developing coping mechanisms to filter and manage large volumes of information, reducing the paralyzing effect of overload on their purchasing behaviors (Cao et al., 2024). This is consistent with findings from Zhang et al. (2023), who observed that while information overload can initially create confusion and stress, consumers often turn to simplifying heuristics, such as relying on trusted brands or influencers, to make purchase decisions.

Moreover, consumer adaptation to digital shopping environments may have lessened the anticipated negative effects of information overload. The proliferation of recommendation algorithms, customer reviews, and personalized search tools on e-commerce platforms has empowered consumers to sift through vast amounts of information more efficiently (Romero Meza & D'Urso, 2025). Therefore, Information Overload may no longer trigger Purchasing Avoidance as strongly as it once did, as consumers have become adept at navigating information-rich environments.

It is also possible that Information Overload exerts a more nuanced effect on purchasing behavior. Rather than directly leading to Purchasing Avoidance, information overload might increase Consumer Confusion or Decision Difficulty, which can in turn affect purchasing behavior indirectly, as supported by findings from the study of Agnihotri et al. (2023). These factors could serve as mediators in the relationship between information overload and avoidance behavior, suggesting that Purchasing Avoidance is influenced by a more complex web of interactions rather than a straightforward causal link.

This pattern is consistent with the characteristics of the sample. As students of the Faculty of Economics and Business who are highly familiar with digital platforms, the respondents are likely to have developed coping strategies such as relying on reviews, trusted sellers, or comparison tools that buffer the direct effect of information overload on avoidance. For this digitally literate group, overload appears to operate indirectly, through consumer confusion, rather than directly deterring purchases, which may explain why H1 was rejected while the mediated path (H4) was supported.

Information Overload Has a Positive and Significant Impact on Consumer Confusion

The findings of this study support Hypothesis 2, which posits that *Information Overload* has a positive and significant impact on *Consumer Confusion.* This result aligns with previous research indicating that excessive information can overwhelm consumers, making it difficult for them to process and make informed decisions (Jacoby et al., 1974). When individuals are exposed to too much information, they experience cognitive overload, which often leads to confusion in their decision-making processes (Malhotra, 1984). This confusion stems from an inability to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information, ultimately impairing their capacity to make clear choices (Eppler & Mengis, 2004).

Recent studies also reinforce this finding, highlighting how the digital age and the rapid expansion of e-commerce have amplified the phenomenon of information overload. Consumers are now exposed to vast amounts of data from multiple sources, such as product reviews, specifications, advertisements, and social media influencers. For instance, research by Huang et al. (2022) demonstrated that online consumers often experience difficulty synthesizing large volumes of product information, leading to confusion and suboptimal purchasing decisions. Similarly, Agnihotri et al. (2024) found that information overload, especially in the context of online shopping, exacerbates consumer confusion and leads to indecision or purchasing avoidance.

The results of this study contribute to a deeper understanding of the negative consequences of information overload, especially in digital environments where consumers are inundated with choices. As highlighted by Hu and Krishen (2019), excessive information can hinder rather than help consumers by overwhelming their cognitive capacities, ultimately increasing confusion and negatively affecting their purchasing decisions. Furthermore, these findings underscore the importance for marketers and online platforms to present information in a concise and clear manner to minimize confusion and enhance the consumer decision-making experience.

Consumer Confusion Has a Positive and Significant Impact on Purchasing Avoidance

The findings of this study confirm that consumer confusion has a positive and significant impact on purchasing avoidance. This result supports the notion that when consumers experience confusion during the decision-making process, whether due to an overload of information, similarity of products, or unclear marketing messages, they are more likely to delay or avoid purchasing altogether. This is consistent with previous studies that have examined similar phenomena. For example, Walsh et al. (2007) found that high levels of consumer confusion can lead to decision postponement or avoidance as individuals struggle to differentiate between available options. Additionally, Hu et al. (2023) identified that in environments with excessive product choices and ambiguous information, consumer confusion heightens, resulting in negative emotional responses, including stress and frustration, which in turn encourage purchasing avoidance.

Furthermore, recent studies have emphasized the role of digital environments in exacerbating consumer confusion. Bansal and Thakur (2025) noted that in online retail settings, where consumers are bombarded with excessive options and information, decision fatigue becomes a significant issue, pushing consumers to avoid making purchases altogether. This aligns with our findings, where consumer confusion serves as a significant predictor of purchasing avoidance, particularly in complex or cluttered markets. The positive relationship between consumer confusion and purchasing avoidance also highlights the need for businesses to simplify their communication strategies. Marketers should aim to reduce information overload by presenting clear, concise, and easily distinguishable product offerings. Failure to do so can lead to diminished consumer trust and engagement, ultimately resulting in lost sales.

Consumer Confusion Mediates the Relationship Between Information Overload and Purchasing Avoidance

The findings support the hypothesis that consumer confusion mediates the relationship between information overload and purchasing avoidance. When consumers are overwhelmed by excessive information, they experience confusion, which subsequently leads to avoidance behaviors. This aligns with Eppler and Mengis (2004), who emphasized that cognitive overload negatively affects individuals' ability to process and make informed choices. As consumers struggle to distinguish between product features or brands, they become confused (Celik & Koc, 2026; Shiu, 2021), leading to frustration and decision fatigue.

The mediation role is significant as it highlights the mechanism through which information overload translates into purchasing avoidance. Prior studies have shown that confusion triggers decision postponement or avoidance (V. W. Mitchell et al., 2005). This study expands on this by confirming that consumer confusion actively mediates the impact of information overload, not merely co-existing with avoidance. Consumers who feel overwhelmed may delay or avoid purchases to prevent wrong decisions, consistent with Sharma et al. (2023), who observed that confusion-induced negative emotions drive consumers to disengage from purchasing. This provides empirical evidence that marketers should be mindful of information volume and clarity, as excessive information may backfire by pushing consumers away from purchase decisions.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to examine the relationship between information overload and purchasing avoidance, focusing on how consumer confusion mediates this relationship among students at Universitas Jenderal Soedirman, Purwokerto. Our results suggested that Information Overload alone did not result in substantial improvements to Purchasing Avoidance as evidenced by positive but statistically insignificant H1 results; However, using Consumer Confusion mediation on the relationship between Information Overload and Purchasing Avoidance has an impressive positive effect. Research findings reveal that integrating Information Overload can't enhance Purchasing Avoidance. More specifically, this study found a statistically significant positive relationship between Information Overload and Consumer Confusion (H2) and Consumer Confusion and Purchasing Avoidance (H3).

Our research offers new insight into this relationship while contributing to ongoing scholarly discourse. Furthermore, using Consumer Confusion as a mediator variable could increase its positive effect on Purchasing Avoidance. The practical implications of this research extend to business owner should focus on reducing consumer confusion to mitigate the negative impact of information overload on purchase decisions. Streamlined and well-organized information delivery should be a priority in marketing efforts to foster a more seamless consumer experience.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the sample is restricted to students of the Faculty of Economics and Business at a single university, so the results may not generalise to older consumers, less digitally literate groups, or other product categories; the findings should therefore be read as specific to young, digitally active consumers rather than the general population. Second, the cross-sectional design captures the relationships at a single point in time and cannot establish causality. Accordingly, the practical recommendation to reduce consumer confusion is most directly applicable to firms targeting young digital consumers similar to this sample. Future research should test the model on more diverse populations, employ longitudinal or experimental designs to strengthen causal inference, and consider additional mediators or moderators such as digital literacy and product involvement.

The findings are especially significant and relevant for the study's subjects, the students of the Faculty of Economics and Business. As prospective managers, marketers, and entrepreneurs who are themselves intensive e-commerce users, their behaviour offers a useful early indicator of how educated, digitally literate consumers respond to information-rich environments. For this group, the practical implication is direct: because information overload affects their purchasing behaviour mainly through confusion rather than directly, e-commerce providers and marketers targeting young, educated, digitally active consumers should prioritise reducing confusion through clearer, well-structured, and curated information rather than simply limiting the volume of information presented. This relevance also strengthens the study's value as a learning reference for these students in their future professional practice.

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