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Factors Influencing the Purchase Decision of Digital Gadgets Among Young Consumers – A Comprehensive Study on Decision Making Patterns

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ABSTRACT

The study explores the various determinants impacting digital gadget choices among young consumers in the district of Kerala. Using the Consumer Perceived Value (CPV) scale as a measurement tool, the research investigates six core dimensions: Functional Value, Emotional Value, Social Value, Conditional Value, Vale for Money and Epistemic Value. A questionnaire was developed to evaluate these factors, with statements addressing long-term use, ease of functionality, brand reputation, social image, and curiosity-driven motivations. Data was collected from young consumers to analyze how these variables shape their purchasing decisions. The findings highlight the role of technical specifications, price fairness, and marketing in influencing consumer behavior. Additionally, emotional attachment to brands and the impact of peer recommendations and eco-friendly features are emphasized. The study provides valuable insights into the decision-making patterns of young consumers, offering practical implications for marketers to better tailor their strategies in the competitive digital gadget market.

Key Words: Digital Gadgets, Consumer Perceived Value, Consumer Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the use of digital gadgets has become an integral part of the lives of youngsters. They consider these devices as extensions of themselves, and without them, they feel they cannot function properly. Due to the significant influence of digital gadgets like smartphones, laptops, and tablets, the purchase decisions regarding these items hold great relevance, especially for young consumers. The decision-making process for digital gadget purchases is shaped by multiple factors, ranging from technical specifications to social influences, and is further influenced by evolving consumer preferences in the digital age. According to

Shankar and Balasubramanian (2020), digital gadgets such as smartphones and tablets have become integral to consumers' lives, often reflecting their personalities and preferences. Young consumers particularly rely on peer recommendations and online reviews when making purchase decisions, suggesting that digital gadgets are not only utility-driven but are also seen as extensions of personal identity and status. This aligns with the observation of Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991), which categorizes perceived value into five dimensions: functional, emotional, social, conditional, and epistemic value. These dimensions provide a structured framework for examining the multi-faceted factors influencing purchase decisions among young consumers. Flanagin and Metzger (2021) emphasize the impact of user-generated content, such as reviews and forums, in influencing trustworthiness, which directly impacts purchase decisions. This aligns with the epistemic value in Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991) where consumers seek knowledge and novelty. Additionally, Goh, Heng, and Lin (2019) highlight the importance of social media, where brand communities play a crucial role in shaping the preferences of young consumers by exposing them to peer opinions and brand narratives. The influence of peer validation on young consumers underscores the significance of social value, as young consumers are likely to buy gadgets that enhance their social image and help them fit in with specific groups.

Another emerging trend influencing purchase behavior among young consumers is sustainability. With a growing awareness of eco-friendly practices, Seyfang and Longhurst (2020) observe that consumers are increasingly considering brands committed to green practices. This shift towards eco-conscious purchasing represents conditional value, where the purchase decision is influenced by external conditions, such as the sustainability credentials of a brand. Price sensitivity and emotional connections with brands have also become pivotal in purchase decisions among young consumers. As Zaichkowsky and White (2019) argue, perceived value and price fairness drive gadget purchases, with young consumers weighing product benefits against their costs more critically than older generations. Moreover, Park and Ko (2020) highlight the importance of emotional bonds with brands, as young consumers often derive satisfaction from branded products, reinforcing their loyalty. The CPV framework’s emotional value dimension addresses these insights, emphasizing how emotional satisfaction and brand affinity influence digital gadget purchases. Collectively,

these insights underscore the multidimensional factors impacting gadget purchases among young consumers, illustrating the complex interplay between personal preferences, social influence, and functional expectations that drive their decision-making processes.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kotler and Keller (2016) emphasized that brand image significantly influences the purchasing decisions of young consumers, particularly in the case of digital gadgets. A well-established brand reduces perceived risk and assures quality, which is vital when investing in technology. This trust leads young consumers to prefer brands like Apple, Samsung, or OnePlus. Supporting this, Park and Lee (2017) noted that specific product features such as camera clarity, battery life, and processor speed play a decisive role in gadget selection.

Nadeem et al. (2015) found that peer influence and social media platforms heavily affect the digital gadget buying behavior of the youth. Friends' recommendations and influencer reviews on platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok serve as modern word-of-mouth. Lim et al. (2020) further observed that young buyers often align their choices with what is trending in their peer groups to maintain social acceptance and digital identity.

Kumar and Kim (2014) highlighted that price sensitivity is a dominant factor in the purchase decisions of young consumers, especially those with limited disposable income. Their study found that affordability often trumps brand loyalty. In addition, Singh and Nayak (2019) observed that promotional schemes such as cashbacks, discounts, and EMI options greatly enhance the attractiveness of gadgets among this demographic.

Cheung and Thadani (2012) emphasized the power of online reviews and electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM) in influencing purchase decisions. Their study indicated that positive user feedback increases consumer trust and reduces uncertainty. Zhang et al. (2018) further noted that young consumers frequently rely on unboxing videos, user ratings, and detailed product comparisons before deciding on a purchase.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) explored the psychological drivers of consumer behavior and found that personal identity and self-expression significantly impact gadget purchases among youth. Digital gadgets are not just tools but extensions of personality. Similarly, Solomon et al. (2016) concluded that lifestyle

preferences, including multitasking needs and the pursuit of productivity, shape the digital preferences of students and young professionals alike.

THEORY OF PERCEIVED VALUE

The Consumer Perceived Value (CPV) framework was developed by Sheth, Newman, and Gross (1991). The CPV scale was designed to explain the factors driving consumer purchasing decisions by assessing the perceived value a product or service offers. According to Sheth et al. (1991), consumer choice is influenced by five distinct value dimensions: functional value, which focuses on the product's utility and performance; emotional value, related to the feelings or emotional benefits gained from the product; social value, which reflects how the product impacts the consumer's social standing; epistemic value, driven by curiosity and the desire for knowledge or new experiences; and conditional value, which arises from specific situations, such as promotions or special needs. This framework has been widely adopted in marketing literature, allowing researchers and businesses to understand the multidimensional factors that influence consumer preferences and ultimately drive their purchasing behavior. The CPV model remains a foundational tool for evaluating how consumers assess the trade-off between the costs and benefits of a product before making a decision.

RESEARCH GAP

While extensive research has been conducted on factors influencing consumer behavior in digital gadget purchases, some key gaps remain, particularly concerning the unique decision-making patterns of young consumers in the Indian context. Current literature underscores various elements affecting gadget choices, such as personal preferences, online reviews, and peer influence (Shankar & Balasubramanian, 2020; Flanagin & Metzger, 2021). However, the combined influence of values like sustainability, personalization, and social validation—particularly prevalent among young consumers—remains underexplored (Seyfang & Longhurst, 2020; Gupta & Harris, 2021). Additionally, while social media and online reviews are known to impact purchasing decisions, there is limited research on how these factors interact with emotional and epistemic values specific to young consumers' preferences for digital gadgets (Goh et al., 2019; Berlyne, 1960). This study seeks to bridge these gaps by analyzing how diverse, multi-dimensional factors, including

environmental considerations, curiosity, and perceived value, drive the purchase behavior of young consumers in India's rapidly evolving digital market.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The increasing reliance on digital gadgets among young consumers has made understanding the factors influencing their purchase decisions crucial for marketers and businesses. This study aims to explore the role of functional, emotional, social, epistemic, and conditional values in shaping these decisions. Young consumers are exposed to various influences, including technical specifications, brand reputation, peer pressure, and marketing strategies, but the extent to which these factors contribute to their final purchase decisions remains unclear. This research seeks to address the gap by examining how young consumers balance these perceived values when selecting digital gadgets. By understanding these decision-making patterns, businesses can better tailor their marketing strategies to meet the preferences and expectations of young consumers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The first objective, focused on analyzing the impact of demographic factors on purchase decisions, builds on studies showing that demographic variables such as age, gender, income level, and educational background significantly influence consumer behavior (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Research by Schiffman and Kanuk (2007) found that younger consumers often prioritize novelty and technological advancements, which can drive their purchasing decisions differently than older demographics. This objective aims to identify such patterns, offering insights into how demographic factors shape the decision-making process for digital gadgets.

The second objective assesses the purchase decision determinants based on five core dimensions of the Perceived Value scale: Functional, Emotional, Social, Conditional, and Epistemic Value. Previous research underscores the relevance of these dimensions in understanding consumer preferences and purchase motivations (Sheth et al., 1991). For example, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) demonstrated that Functional Value, which includes practical aspects like quality and performance, is pivotal in the decision-making process for technology products. Emotional and Social Values were also found to impact brand attachment and the influence of social circles on purchasing behaviors. Conditional Value, reflecting situational factors, and Epistemic Value, associated

with novelty and learning, further contribute to explaining consumer motivations for new technology adoption. By examining these dimensions in the context of digital gadgets, the study aims to provide a holistic view of young consumers' purchase decision-making patterns.

1. To determine the effect of demographic profile on various determinants of purchase decision on digital gadgets.
2. To evaluate various determinants and influence of purchase decision on digital gadgets based six core dimensions of Perceived Value scale such as Functional Value, Emotional Value, Social Value, Conditional Value, Value for Money and Epistemic Value.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical approach to understand the factors under investigation. The scale of study selected was the Consumer Perceived Value (CPV). The questions were framed in statements and five-point Likert Scale was applied to all measurement items with anchors of 1 for 'strongly agree' and 5 for 'strongly disagree''. A pretest of the questionnaire was conducted to get some feedback. It was conducted with 50 questionnaires, discussed the questions and necessary changes were made. Then the formal data were collected via Google Forms, targeting young respondents from Kerala. with a final sample size of 376 respondents, selected using the Convenience Sampling Technique. The sample size is fixed after removing outliers to improve data accuracy The data collection process maintained a gender and socioeconomic diversity.

The data was processed and analyzed using SPSS software and Smart PLS to ensure robust statistical evaluation. Analytical tools used in this study include the Kruskal-Wallis Test for comparing groups and SEM analysis for a clear understanding of how Functional Value, Emotional Value, Epistemic Value and Value for Money strongly influence Purchase Decision and the level of mediation of Social Value and Conditional Value. Each tool was selected to provide in-depth insights aligned with the study's objectives.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The study is limited by geographical boundaries, making it difficult to generalize findings to all young consumers globally.

2. It rely heavily on self-reported data, which may be influenced by personal bias or inaccurate recall.
3. Rapid technological changes and evolving consumer preferences may make the findings quickly outdated.
4. The study is not fully account for socioeconomic diversity, which can affect purchasing power and priorities.

TABLE 1: RESPONSE CHARACTERISTICS

Variables	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	158	42.0
	Female	196	52.1
	Not prefer to say	22	5.9
Age	Under 18	40	10.6
	18-24	232	61.7
	25-30	66	17.6
	Over 30	38	10.1
Educational Level	Undergraduate	126	33.5
	Graduate	171	45.5
	Postgraduate	73	19.4
	Ph.D.	6	1.6

DATA ANALYSIS

TABLE 2: NORMALITY TEST

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Functional Value	.178	376	.000	.883	376	.000
Emotional Value	.136	376	.000	.931	376	.000
Social Value	.157	376	.000	.914	376	.000
Conditional Value	.187	376	.000	.891	376	.000
Price/Value for Money	.142	376	.000	.913	376	.000
Epistemic Value	.159	376	.000	.914	376	.000
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction						

Here, the sig. value is less than 0.05 at 5% level significance; the data is deviated from the normal distribution. Hence tests that must performed here are non-parametric

TABLE 3: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Functional Value	376	1.00	3.00	1.5284	.46992
Emotional Value	376	1.00	3.20	1.7080	.55053
Social Value	376	1.00	4.00	1.7779	.65183
Conditional Valu	376	1.00	3.67	1.6684	.57038
Price/Value for Money	376	1.00	3.67	1.7048	.56308
Epistemic Value	376	1.00	3.67	1.7553	.62619

Here the table represents descriptive statistics of six different constructs of the study, the lower mean values represent that respondents strongly agree with all the varaibles of the study and especially they are giving more importance to Functional Value and Conditional Value while making purchase decision. Low standard deviation of the variables suggest that there is a strong agreement among respondents regarding the importance of that variables

HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

H0 = the distributions of Functional Value, Emotional Value, Social Value, Conditional Value, and Value for Money and Epistemic Value are the same across Age Groups.

H0 = the distributions of FV, EV, SV, CV, VM and EV are the same across Gender

H0 = the distributions of FV, EV, SV, CV, VM and EV are the same across Educational Level

H0 = there is no traces of strong influence of FV, EV, VM, EV on Purchase Decision and the constructs SV and CV have no moderation impact on Purchase Decision

The first null hypothesis suggests that the distributions of Functional Value, Emotional Value, Social Value, Conditional Value, and Epistemic Value are consistent across age groups. Literature highlights that factors like functional utility and emotional engagement tend to be universal in nature. Zeithaml (1988) and Richins (1997) argue that functional and emotional benefits are perceived similarly across demographics due to their fundamental roles in consumer decision-making. Similarly, curiosity and the desire for novelty, linked to epistemic value, are seen as intrinsic human traits not confined to specific age

groups (Berlyne, 1960). While intensity may vary, the core perception of these values often transcends generational differences. Here it is an attempt to varify it.

The second hypothesis assumes no significant gender-based differences in how these values are distributed. Studies, such as those by Sweeney and Soutar (2001), suggest that functional and social values are equally relevant across genders, driven by objective needs and societal dynamics, respectively. Richins (1997) adds that emotional value is often similarly experienced across men and women, focusing on feelings of happiness and satisfaction. Furthermore, curiosity-driven behaviors and situational factors tied to conditional value have been found to exhibit minimal gender variation, reflecting the influence of universal behavioral patterns rather than demographic distinctions (Mittal et al., 2001).

The final hypothesis posits that educational levels do not significantly influence the perception of these values. Functional value, for example, is driven more by product attributes than by education level, as noted by Zeithaml (1988). Emotional engagement and social validation, as highlighted by Richins (1997) and Sheth et al. (1991), are similarly significant across all educational groups, indicating that these values address fundamental psychological needs. Likewise, conditional and epistemic values are shaped by situational contexts and intrinsic curiosity, rather than educational attainment (Berlyne, 1960). These findings support the notion that educational differences may not lead to significant variations in value perceptions.

TABLE 4: Kruskal-Wallis Test

	Age (sig.)	Gender (sig.)	Educational Level (sig.)
The Distribution of FV is same across categories of Ages, Gender and Educational level	.000	.000	.057
The Distribution of EV is same across categories of Ages, Gender and Educational level	.001	.579	.000
The Distribution of SV is same across categories of Ages, Gender and Educational level	.000	.962	.000
The Distribution of CV is same across categories of Ages, Gender and Educational level	.000	.247	.000
The Distribution of VFM is same across categories of Ages, Gender and Educational level	.035	.451	.047
The Distribution of EPST is same across categories of Ages, Gender and Educational level	.000	.281	.000

The significance level is 0.05

In case of independent variable Age Groups, the test result shows a significance value which is less than .05. Because the p-value is very low, the decision is to reject the null hypothesis. This means that there is significant evidence to conclude that the distribution of different variables are not the same across age categories. Ie, age has a significant effect on each of these variables, implying that each variable vary depending on the age category.

In case of independent variable Gender, the test result shows a significance value which is more than .05 in all the cases except FV. Because the p-value is very high, the decision is to accept the null hypothesis, indicating no significant differences in these variables between gender categories. In case of FV, the decision is to reject the null hypothesis. This means that there is significant evidence to conclude that the distribution of FV is not the same across gender. Ie, gender has a significant effect on FV.

In case of independent variable Educational level, the test result shows a significance value which is less than .05 in all the cases except FV. Because the p-value is very low, the decision is to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is significant differences in these variables between Educational Level. In case of FV, the decision is to accept the null hypothesis. This means that there is significant evidence to conclude that the distribution of FV is same across Educational Level . Ie, Educational level has no significant effect on FV.

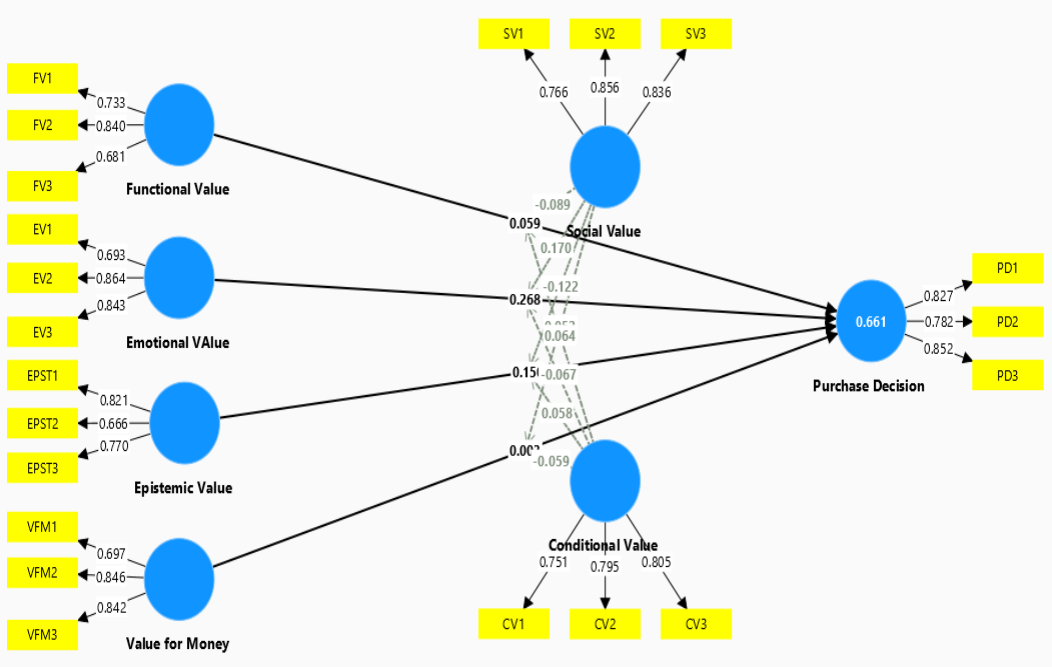
VALIDITY AND RELAIABILITY

The analysis of construct reliability and validity indicates that the measured constructs demonstrate overall acceptable reliability and validity, with some areas requiring attention. Cronbach's Alpha values, though slightly below the ideal threshold of 0.7 for constructs like Conditional Value (0.688), Epistemic Value (0.632), and Functional Value (0.628), are still near to the acceptable limit. Composite reliability values (rho_a and rho_c) exceed the threshold of 0.7 for all constructs, indicating strong internal consistency. Convergent validity, assessed through Average Variance Extracted (AVE), meets the threshold of 0.5 across all constructs, confirming that each construct captures sufficient variance relative to measurement error. Notably, constructs such as Purchase Decision (AVE = 0.673) and Social Value (AVE = 0.673) exhibit strong convergent validity, while Epistemic Value (AVE = 0.570) and Functional Value (AVE = 0.569) are marginally acceptable.

TABLE 5: VALIDITY AND RELIABLITY ANALYSIS

Constructs	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Convergent Validity (AVE)
Functional Value		0.628	0.669	0.797	0.569
FV1	0.733				
FV2	0.840				
FV3	0.681				
Emotional Value		0.727	0.760	0.845	0.646
EV1	0.693				
EV2	0.864				
EV3	0.843				
Social Value		0.756	0.761	0.860	0.673
SV1	0.766				
SV2	0.856				
SV3	0.836				
Conditional Value		0.628	0.694	0.827	0.615
CV1	0.751				
CV2	0.795				
CV3	0.805				
Price/Value for Money		0.713	0.735	0.839	0.637
VFM1	0.697				
VFM2	0.846				
VFR3	0.842				
Epistemic Value		0.632	0.798	0.798	0.570
EPST1	0.821				
EPST2	0.666				
EPST3	0.770				
Purchase Decision		0.757	0.765	0.861	0.673
PD1	0.827				
PD2	0.782				
PD3	0.852				

SEM ANALYSIS



The SEM analysis using Smart PLS reveals that the model is well-structured and highlights key predictors of Purchase Decision. The significant path coefficients, especially for Social Value (0.356), Emotional Value (0.268), and Epistemic Value (0.150), indicate that these variables strongly influence purchase behavior. While Functional Value and Conditional Value have weaker but positive effects, Value for Money has a negligible impact (0.003), suggesting it is not a primary factor in this context. The interaction terms provide further insights, with Social Value x Emotional Value (0.170) showing a positive moderating effect, while some, like Social Value x Epistemic Value (-0.122), exhibit negative moderation. Overall, the direct effects dominate the relationships, and the absence of indirect effects not matters much here.

The outer loadings validate the reliability of the measurement model, with most indicators exceeding the threshold of 0.7, indicating strong construct validity. Most indicators have strong loadings, confirming good measurement properties, especially CV1 (0.751), PD3 (0.852), SV2 (0.856). Some items like EPST2 (0.666) and FV3 (0.681) are slightly lower but still acceptable.

The findings confirm the model's appropriateness, emphasizing that Social Value and Emotional Value play the most critical roles in influencing purchase decisions. Other constructs like Epistemic Value, Functional Value and Conditional Value are also the drivers of Purchase Decision.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study reveals important insights into the factors influencing young consumers' digital gadget purchase decisions through the lens of the Consumer Perceived Value (CPV) framework. By examining Functional, Emotional, Social, Conditional, and Epistemic values, the research demonstrates that functional attributes like technical specifications and price fairness significantly influence purchase choices. Additionally, emotional connections to brands, social influence, and curiosity-driven factors like exploring new features also play pivotal roles. Statistical tests confirm that demographics such as age and education level have notable impacts on these value dimensions, while gender effects were mostly insignificant. SEM analysis prove that Social Value and Emotional Value play the most critical roles in influencing purchase decisions. At the same time, Epistemic Value, Functional Value and Conditional Value are also the drivers of Purchase Decision. These findings emphasize the complex, multifaceted nature of young consumers' decision-making patterns and provide marketers with targeted strategies to enhance brand engagement, such as emphasizing eco-friendly practices and promoting brand identity. This study contributes to a nuanced understanding of consumer behavior in the competitive digital gadget market, particularly for marketers targeting young consumers.

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