



The Attention Economy and Digital Fatigue: A Bibliometric Review of Consumer Resistance in Digital Marketing Research

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ABSTRACT

The swift growth of digital technologies has reshaped marketing practices by allowing organizations to compete intensely for consumer attention within the attention economy. Although tailored advertising, algorithm-based recommendations, and ongoing digital interaction have strengthened marketers' capacity to connect with consumers, these developments have also helped drive rising levels of digital fatigue. Digital fatigue, defined as cognitive, emotional, and psychological exhaustion that stems from excessive exposure to digital content, has become an important determinant of consumer behavior. Accordingly, this study offers a bibliometric review of the literature on the link between the attention economy, digital fatigue, and consumer resistance to digital marketing. Using secondary data drawn from scholarly articles, books, and conference proceedings, the study systematically examines major themes, patterns in research activity, and theoretical approaches within this rapidly developing area. The review points to information overload, advertising intrusiveness, excessive personalization, and sustained digital engagement as the main precursors of digital fatigue. In

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addition, the results show a robust relationship between digital fatigue and consumer resistance behaviors, including ad avoidance, decreased interaction with branded content, privacy-protective actions, and abandonment of online shopping carts. The study further identifies key thematic groupings that connect attention economy practices with consumer resistance and emphasizes the shortcomings of attention-maximization approaches in maintaining long-term consumer engagement. By integrating fragmented research and outlining future priorities for sustainable, consumer-centered digital marketing practices, the paper advances the existing literature in a way that aligns business goals with consumer well-being.

Introduction

Rapid advances in digital technologies have reshaped how businesses communicate, connect with consumers, and build ongoing relationships. The broad uptake of smartphones, social media platforms, e-commerce websites, and digital advertising tools allows marketers to reach consumers immediately and without interruption. Within this tightly connected setting, consumer attention has come to be regarded as one of the most valuable yet limited resources. Accordingly, organizations increasingly compete not only for market share but also for consumers' finite attention, which has led to the development of the attention economy concept.

The attention economy describes an economic landscape in which human attention is treated as a scarce asset that can be captured, tracked, and turned into revenue. Digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) are built to increase user engagement through personalized content, targeted advertising, and recommendation systems driven by algorithms. Although these approaches have strengthened marketing performance and expanded consumer reach, they have also generated an unprecedented volume of information and promotional material that competes for consumers' attention.

Ongoing exposure to digital content has given rise to what is commonly called digital fatigue. Digital fatigue is the mental, emotional, and cognitive exhaustion individuals experience when they interact excessively with digital technologies and online content. Today's consumers face a steady flow of advertisements, promotional emails, push notifications, sponsored posts, and tailored recommendations



across multiple devices and platforms. This highly demanding digital context frequently leads to information overload, decision fatigue, stress, and diminished attention spans, all of which undermine consumers' online experiences.

As digital fatigue grows, consumers are becoming more selective and more resistant to marketing communications. Such resistance appears in multiple ways, including avoiding advertisements, using ad-blocking software, engaging less with branded content, adopting privacy-protective practices, canceling subscriptions, and abandoning shopping carts. Consumers increasingly try to manage their digital experiences by filtering information, reducing screen time, and steering clear of intrusive marketing tactics. For marketers, these shifts create substantial obstacles because they depend heavily on digital channels to attract and retain customers.

The rising incidence of ad avoidance and shopping cart abandonment underscores the constraints of conventional strategies for capturing attention. Even though marketers invest heavily in personalization and targeted advertising, excessive exposure to promotions can backfire: it can overwhelm consumers and decrease their willingness to engage with brands. For this reason, examining how attention economy practices relate to digital fatigue and consumer resistance has become an important research focus for both scholars and practitioners.

Over the past decade, despite the growing volume of research on attention economy practices, digital fatigue, and consumer resistance, no comprehensive bibliometric review has systematically mapped the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and scholarly influence within this emerging research domain. Consequently, significant gaps remain regarding the development of knowledge clusters and future research opportunities.

Need of the study:

In this setting, bibliometric analysis offers a systematic and objective means of investigating how a research field develops. Through the examination of publication trends, citation linkages, author networks, and thematic groupings, bibliometric methods enable scholars to trace the progression of academic knowledge and to uncover emerging lines of inquiry. This strategy is especially useful for integrating a fast-expanding, interdisciplinary literature.

The current study, entitled “The Attention Economy and Digital Fatigue: A Bibliometric Review of Consumer Resistance to Digital Marketing,” is designed to deliver a thorough overview of the body of research in this area. It focuses on assessing publication trends, determining influential authors and journals,



charting thematic changes, and examining the intellectual relationships among the attention economy, digital fatigue, ad avoidance, cart abandonment, and consumer resistance. In addressing these objectives, the study advances a deeper understanding of how contemporary digital marketing practices shape consumer behavior, while also providing insights that can inform future research and managerial decision-making.

Research Objectives:

1. To identify the major factors contributing to digital fatigue among online consumers, including information overload, advertising intrusiveness, and excessive digital engagement.
2. To analyze the relationship between digital fatigue and consumer resistance behaviors such as ad avoidance, privacy concerns, reduced engagement, and cart abandonment.
3. To explore the key themes, trends, and theoretical perspectives emerging in the literature on digital fatigue and consumer resistance.
4. To identify major thematic clusters linking attention economy, digital fatigue, ad avoidance, and cart abandonment.
5. To propose future research directions based on emerging themes and research gaps.

Literature Review

1. **Simon, H. A. (1971)** In his influential work, “Designing Organizations for an Information-Rich World,” Simon proposed that an overabundance of information leads to a shortage of attention. He maintained that human attention is a finite resource and that greater access to information increases competition for consumers’ attention. This study provided the theoretical basis for the contemporary idea of the attention economy.
2. **Ram and Sheth (1989)** In “Consumer Resistance to Innovations,” the authors argued that resistance is a natural response by consumers to change. They outlined functional and psychological barriers that shape how resistance behavior emerges. As a result, this study continues to serve as a foundational contribution to understanding consumer resistance.
3. **Goldhaber (1997)** In his work, “The Attention Economy and the Net,” Goldhaber examined how online environments convert attention into a kind of currency. He argued that individuals and organizations can increase their influence and value by attracting and sustaining attention within digital settings.



4. **Edwards, Li, and Lee (2002)** In their investigation of advertising intrusiveness, the researchers found that highly intrusive advertisements trigger irritation and psychological reactance. These effects subsequently undermine consumer attitudes toward brands.
5. **Kelly, Kerr, and Drennan (2010)** In their study of social media advertising, the authors reported that consumers frequently interpret advertisements displayed on social networking sites as disruptions to their online experience. This interpretation plays a substantial role in both advertising avoidance and the formation of negative attitudes toward brands.
6. **Baek and Morimoto (2012)** The research investigated how consumers respond to personalized online advertising. The authors found that overly extensive personalization can prompt feelings of being monitored and a perceived breach of privacy, which in turn motivates consumers to resist digital marketing efforts
7. **Ravindran, Kuan, Chua et al. (2014)** The authors investigated social network fatigue among Facebook users. Their findings indicated that excessive interaction, information overload, and privacy concerns contribute to user withdrawal behaviors and reduced participation in online communities.
8. **Hubert et al. (2017)** The study focused on decision-making processes within online retail settings. The results indicated that having too many product options and facing information overload induces decision fatigue, thereby increasing the likelihood of abandoning a cart.
9. **Bright and Logan (2018)** In their study of social media fatigue, Bright and Logan analyzed the consequences of excessive use of social networking sites. Their results showed that information overload, communication overload, and social overload play a substantial role in driving user fatigue and lowering engagement with online platforms.
10. **Mani and Chouk (2018)** In their review of consumer resistance to innovation, the authors identified privacy concerns, trust deficiencies, and perceived risks as key drivers of resistance in digital settings. They also underscored the increasing importance of resistance behaviors in online environments.
11. **Sampedro (2019)** The study emphasized that intrusive pop-ups, repetitive promotional messages, and excessive retargeting advertisements undermine the customer experience and lead to greater cart abandonment behavior.



12. **Buvaneswari and Swetha (2024)** examined how privacy disruption and perceived intrusiveness influence consumers' ad avoidance behavior in digital advertising. The study found that privacy risk, privacy concern, and the perceived intrusiveness of digital advertisements significantly increase consumers' tendency to avoid advertisements. The findings suggest that excessive data collection and intrusive advertising practices erode consumer trust, highlighting the importance of privacy-sensitive and less intrusive digital marketing strategies.
13. **Essa Tayeb, Chebbi, Badawi, Ali Toumi, and Louail (2024)** investigated the effect of advertising overload on social media users' ad avoidance behavior. The study revealed that ad clutter and intrusive advertisements significantly increase social media fatigue and perceived goal impediment, which subsequently lead to higher levels of ad avoidance. The findings emphasize that excessive advertising not only reduces user engagement but also diminishes the effectiveness of digital marketing by creating cognitive overload and fatigue among consumers.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The present study adopts a bibliometric research design to systematically analyse the existing literature on the attention economy, digital fatigue, ad avoidance, cart abandonment, and consumer resistance to digital marketing. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative technique that examines patterns within academic publications to identify influential authors, leading journals, research trends, thematic structures, and collaborative networks.

The study aims to map the intellectual evolution of research in this domain and provide insights into emerging themes and future research directions.

Sources of Data

The study relies solely on secondary data gathered from a broad selection of authentic and credible sources. These sources comprise:

1. Peer-reviewed research articles published in national and international journals.
2. Academic books and edited volumes focusing on digital behaviour, psychology, sustainability, and media studies.
3. Conference proceedings and working papers Reports produced by reputable institutions and research organisations



Method of Data Collection

Relevant literature was identified through systematic searches of academic databases such as Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and SpringerLink. Keywords including *attention economy*, *digital fatigue*, *ad avoidance*, *cart abandonment*, and *consumer resistance to digital marketing* were used to locate pertinent studies. The assembled literature was then evaluated according to its relevance, credibility, and thematic fit with the study's objectives.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure relevance and quality, the following criteria were applied:

Inclusion Criteria

- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Review papers
- English-language publications
- Publications between 1970 and 2025
- Studies directly related to digital fatigue, attention economy, ad avoidance, or consumer resistance

Exclusion Criteria

- Non-English publications
- Editorials and book reviews
- Studies unrelated to marketing or consumer behavior
- Publications lacking complete bibliographic information

Method of Analysis

The collected secondary data were analysed using thematic content analysis. Key themes such as emotional impact of digital content, attention economy, digital fatigue, ad avoidance, cart abandonment, and consumer resistance to digital marketing were identified and examined.



Scope of the Study

This study is confined to a conceptual review of digital fatigue and involves no primary data collection or statistical analysis. Its purpose is to elucidate behavioral patterns and theoretical linkages, rather than to make broad claims that can be empirically generalized.

Limitation of the Study

The study's scope is further constrained by its reliance on published English-language literature and a selected set of document types, which may omit pertinent research available in other languages or from other sources. The conclusions also depend on the specific search keywords employed and may therefore fail to include studies that use different terminology. Because bibliometric analysis draws primarily on publication and citation trends, it does not evaluate the methodological rigor of individual studies in depth. In addition, the fast-changing character of digital marketing and consumer behavior implies that recently emerging research may not be represented in the analysis. Accordingly, the results should be interpreted in light of these limitations.

Discussion of Findings

The review of existing literature shows that the attention economy has fundamentally reshaped the digital marketing landscape by intensifying competition for consumers' attention. As digital platforms increasingly rely on personalized advertising, algorithm-driven recommendations, and ongoing engagement features, consumers encounter unprecedented volumes of information alongside promotional material. In line with Simon's (1971) theory of attention scarcity, the results indicate that an overabundance of information often overwhelms consumers rather than improving their decision-making.

A central insight from the literature is that information overload, advertising intrusiveness, excessive personalization, and continuous digital engagement are the main drivers of digital fatigue. Studies by Ravindran et al. (2014), Bright and Logan (2018), and Nguyen and Hsu (2022) collectively show that extended exposure to digital content produces cognitive exhaustion, emotional strain, and a decreased willingness to engage with online platforms. Taken together, these findings suggest that digital fatigue is an increasingly serious problem in today's consumer context.

The review also finds a strong link between digital fatigue and multiple forms of consumer resistance behavior. As consumers experience fatigue, they increasingly use coping strategies such as avoiding ads, reducing interaction with branded content, taking privacy-protective measures, and abandoning shopping



carts. Research by Edwards et al. (2002), Kelly et al. (2010), and Baek and Morimoto (2012) indicates that intrusive and highly personalized advertising frequently provokes irritation, raises privacy concerns, and elicits psychological reactance, which in turn leads consumers to resist marketing efforts. Similarly, studies of online retail behavior show that information overload and decision fatigue substantially increase the likelihood of cart abandonment.

The analysis further identifies several interconnected research clusters connecting attention-economy practices with consumer resistance. Prominent themes include information overload, social media fatigue, privacy concerns, advertising intrusiveness, decision fatigue, ad avoidance, and online shopping behavior. Collectively, these themes demonstrate that approaches intended to maximize consumers' attention can unintentionally produce adverse consumer outcomes, thereby diminishing the effectiveness of digital marketing initiatives.

Overall, the findings indicate that although attention-capturing mechanisms can boost short-term engagement, overdependence on such approaches may weaken consumer trust, satisfaction, and long-term engagement. Accordingly, the literature underscores the need for marketers to implement more balanced, consumer-centered, and less intrusive communication strategies that emphasize value creation and user well-being in addition to promotional goals. Moreover, the rising importance of digital fatigue points to the need for future research on sustainable digital marketing practices and their effects on consumer behavior in increasingly saturated digital environments.

Conclusion

This study investigated the expanding scholar work on the attention economy, digital fatigue, and consumers' resistance to digital marketing. The review shows that the growing reliance on digital platforms and attention-centered marketing strategies has substantially reshaped how consumers experience online environments. Although personalized advertising, algorithmic recommendations, and ongoing digital engagement improve marketers' capacity to reach consumers, these same practices also drive information overload, cognitive strain, and digital fatigue. The results suggest that digital fatigue is a key determinant of resistance behaviors, including avoiding advertisements, decreasing engagement, taking privacy-protective steps, and abandoning shopping carts. The literature repeatedly indicates that excessive exposure to promotions, intrusive advertising, and overwhelming digital interactions can undermine consumers' attitudes and reduce their purchase intentions. Taken together, these findings point to the constraints of attention-maximization strategies that pursue short-term engagement while compromising consumer well-being.



In addition, the study highlights salient thematic connections among attention economy practices, digital fatigue, ad avoidance, and consumer resistance, underscoring the interdisciplinary character of this emerging field. As consumers become more aware of their digital experiences, marketers need to go beyond strategies aimed solely at capturing attention and instead prioritize interactions that are meaningful, relevant, and less intrusive.

Overall, the study advances understanding of the difficulties associated with digital marketing amid information abundance. It calls for sustainable, consumer-centered marketing approaches that align business goals with consumer welfare. Future research should further examine emerging manifestations of digital fatigue, shifts in resistance behaviors, and novel strategies that support healthier and more effective digital engagement.

Implications

Managerial Implications

The results indicate that marketers should implement consumer-centered digital marketing strategies that emphasize relevance, value, and user experience rather than relying on excessive promotional visibility. Firms should limit intrusive advertising, repeated messaging, and forceful personalization approaches that drive digital fatigue and elicit consumer resistance. E-commerce businesses can lower cart abandonment by streamlining online shopping workflows and reducing information overload, while digital platforms should offer stronger control for users over notifications and advertisements. When companies align engagement goals with consumer well-being and privacy concerns, they can improve customer satisfaction, reinforce brand trust, and support long-term relationships with consumers.

Academic Implications

By bringing together attention economy, digital fatigue, and consumer resistance within a single framework, the study advances the existing literature. It shows how consumer behavior continues to evolve in digitally saturated contexts and pinpoints major themes, including information overload, advertising intrusiveness, privacy concerns, ad avoidance, and cart abandonment. The findings offer a basis for subsequent empirical and theoretical work, motivating scholars to examine the processes through which digital fatigue shapes consumer decision-making and to develop models that enable sustainable, consumer-oriented digital marketing practices.

Policy Implications



The study underscores the importance of requiring policymakers and regulatory bodies to encourage responsible digital marketing practices that shield consumers from excessive advertising exposure, information overload, and privacy violations. Rules that promote transparency in data collection, responsible deployment of personalization algorithms, and consumer control over digital communications can help mitigate digital fatigue and strengthen trust in online platforms. In addition, policies that foster digital well-being, uphold ethical advertising standards, and protect consumer data can support a more healthful and sustainable digital environment for both businesses and consumers.

Technological Implications

The study indicates that technology developers should build platforms and recommendation systems that foreground user well-being alongside engagement metrics. Adding capabilities such as content filtering, notification management, and digital wellness tools may help reduce digital fatigue.

Consumer Implications

The findings enable consumers to recognize the tactics used to capture attention in digital settings. Heightened awareness can help individuals manage screen time, safeguard their privacy, decrease information overload, and make better-informed choices when purchasing online.

Future Scope of Research

This study offers a conceptual account of the links among the attention economy, digital fatigue, and consumer resistance, yet several avenues for future research remain open. Subsequent work can use empirical approaches to test the relationships reported in the existing literature and to assess the causal impact of digital fatigue on consumer outcomes, including ad avoidance, privacy protection, and cart abandonment. Researchers can also explore whether susceptibility to digital fatigue differs across demographic groups, such as variations by age, culture, and levels of digital proficiency. In addition, novel technologies—such as artificial intelligence, immersive media, and algorithm-driven personalization—create new settings for examining consumer resistance in digital contexts. Longitudinal studies may further clarify how digital fatigue changes over time and how sustainable digital marketing practices can lessen its negative consequences. Collectively, these efforts would deepen and refine understanding of consumer behavior within an increasingly attention-centered digital economy.

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