

"A man is  
great by  
deeds, not by  
birth"  
-Chanakya

Welcome to IIMK



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF MANAGEMENT KOZHIKODE



Working Paper

**IIMK/WPS/706/MM/2026/04**

March 2026

**Choice Deferral: Why attribute description matters!**

Pronobesh Banerjee <sup>1</sup>

©

All rights belong to their respective author.

Please contact the corresponding author, if you would like to access the full paper.

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Marketing Management Area, Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode, IIMK Campus PO, Kunnamangalam, Kozhikode, Kerala 673 570, India; Email - pbanerjee@iimk.ac.in, Phone Number - 0495-2809239.

## **A Choice Deferral: Why attribute description matters!**

### **Abstract:**

Consumers often defer decisions when choosing among alternatives, particularly when the choice task is difficult or when available information is limited. Prior research suggests that individuals are more likely to defer choice when presented with a single alternative because it provides insufficient information for evaluating the option. Conversely, presenting multiple alternatives can increase evaluability by enabling comparisons across attribute values. However, additional alternatives may also introduce attribute trade-offs that increase decision conflict and lead to choice deferral. Recent large-scale replication research suggests that evaluability rather than decision conflict primarily drives choice deferral. Building on this literature, the present research examines how the format in which attribute values are expressed—quantitative versus qualitative—affects the evaluability of alternatives and, consequently, choice deferral. We propose that qualitative attribute descriptions (e.g., “fast processor” or “moderate weight”) enable consumers to evaluate alternatives more independently, reducing reliance on comparisons with other options. As a result, qualitative descriptions should lower choice deferral even when only a single alternative is available. Furthermore, when multiple alternatives are present, qualitative descriptions may signal a wider range of attribute combinations, further reducing choice deferral relative to quantitative descriptions. Across a series of studies, we test how attribute description formats influence evaluability and decision behavior. The findings contribute to the literature on choice deferral by identifying attribute description as an important contextual factor shaping consumer decision making. Key Words: Choice deferral, qualitative attribute values, quantitative attribute values



भारतीय प्रबंध संस्थान कोषिककोड  
**Indian Institute Management Kozhikode**  
*Globalizing Indian Thought*

Research Office  
Indian Institute of Management Kozhikode  
IIMK Campus P. O.,  
Kozhikode, Kerala, India,  
PIN - 673 570  
Phone: +91-495-2809237/ 238  
Email: [research@iimk.ac.in](mailto:research@iimk.ac.in)  
Web: <https://iimk.ac.in/publications>

