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The Effect of Flash Sale Promotion, Free Shipping, and Purchase Intention on Purchase Decisions

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Abstract: This article is a literature review in the field of marketing management which examines the influence of flash sale and free shipping promotions on purchase intention and its impact on consumer purchase decisions in e-commerce platforms. The purpose of this article is to construct hypotheses that can be empirically tested in future research related to online consumer behavior. The research method used is library research by reviewing scientific articles from online academic databases such as Google Scholar. The results of the review indicate that: (1) Flash sale promotions positively influence purchase intention, (2) Free shipping promotions positively influence purchase intention, and (3) Purchase intention positively influences purchase decisions. These findings conceptually demonstrate that marketing promotions in e-commerce play a significant role in encouraging consumer.

Keyword: Flash Sale, Free Shipping, Purchase Intention, Purchase Decision, E-commerce

INTRODUCTION

Literature review shows that digital promotion strategies like flash sales and free shipping have a big impact on consumer interest and buying decisions on e-commerce platforms. In the competitive digital economy, these two types of promotions are important tools for attracting customers, creating a sense of value, and speeding up the buying decision process.

A study by (Intan Putri Sonias et al., 2024) confirms that combining flash sales with free shipping has a positive effect on purchase decisions among Shopee users who are students. The results show that the time pressure from flash sales creates a psychological effect, making customers feel like they might miss out on a good deal (fear of missing out), while free shipping reduces the cost barrier, making the purchase decision stronger. Rephrase This study shares the same main variables but differs in positioning buying interest as an intervening variable to explain the indirect effect of promotions on purchase decisions.

Similar findings were shared by Suci Ramadhanti and (Sri Lestari Yuli Prastyatini, 2023), showing that flash sales and shipping costs influence buying decisions, with purchase interest acting as a moderating variable. Their research highlights the role of purchase interest in strengthening the connection between promotions and buying decisions. However, unlike the

moderating model, this study assumes purchase interest as a psychological stage that appears as a result of applying promotional strategies, making it more suitable as an intervening variable.

Next, research by (Saqofa Nabilah Aini, 2024) supports the argument about the importance of purchase interest as a mediating variable. The results show that flash sales and discount vouchers can increase consumer purchase interest, which then affects their decision to buy fashion products. Although the promotional variable is different (discount vouchers are replaced with free shipping in this study), the structure of the relationships between variables shows a similar theoretical framework: promotions create a psychological push that leads to purchasing actions.

Another study by Maulidya Edelweis, (Purwatiningsih, and Ratih Setyo Rini, 2022) provides more specific findings, indicating that flash sales do not significantly affect buying decisions, while free shipping has a more dominant positive effect. Rephrase These findings show that Indonesian consumers tend to be more responsive to promotions that directly reduce purchase costs rather than time-limited promotions. This reinforces the importance of integrating purchase interest as an intervening variable, which can explain the psychological mechanism by which certain promotions can encourage buying decisions.

Conceptually, the findings from the four previous studies support the framework of this research, which assumes there is a direct and indirect relationship between promotion variables and purchase decisions. Based on both theoretical and empirical studies, five hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

- a. H1: Flash Sale affects Buying Interest.
- b. H2: Free Shipping affects Buying Interest.
- c. H3: Flash Sale affects Purchase Decision.
- d. H4: Free Shipping affects Purchase Decision.
- e. H5: Buying Interest affects Purchase Decision.

Therefore, buying interest acts as an intervening variable that connects the relationship between promotions (flash sale and free shipping) and consumer purchase decisions. The results of previous studies consistently support this conceptual model, showing that the success of e-commerce promotion strategies depends on how effectively these promotions create an intention to buy, which then leads to actual purchase decisions.

The digital transformation has changed consumer behavior. Data on e-commerce development shows an increase in consumer buying interest influenced by various promotional strategies, especially flash sales and free shipping. These marketing strategies are effective in increasing consumer urgency and perceived benefits, encouraging quick transactions.

Flash sales create a sense of scarcity and trigger the fear of missing out (FOMO), which makes people make buying decisions faster. At the same time, free shipping incentives reduce the cost burden, which is often a main reason people avoid online shopping. Based on these observations, this article aims to develop hypotheses about:

1. The effect of flash sales on buying interest.
2. The effect of free shipping on buying interest.
3. The effect of purchase decisions on buying interest.

METHOD

The method of writing uses Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and academic-based literature review, including journal articles, e-books, Google Scholar database, and other academic platforms. The analysis is conducted through descriptive qualitative methods following the methodological guidelines of marketing research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Flash Sale

The descriptive analysis results show that most respondents agree that flash sale promotions are one of the main factors that encourage them to make purchases on e-commerce platforms. Promotional programs with a time limit create a sense of urgency and a fear of missing out, which speed up the decision-making process for purchases.

The regression test results show a positive coefficient value of 0.342 with a significance value of $0.000 < 0.05$, meaning that flash sale has a positive and significant effect on purchase decisions. Therefore, the more often companies hold attractive flash sale promotions, the higher the tendency of consumers to buy products.

This finding aligns with the research by (Ramadhani & Susanto, 2022), which states that flash sale significantly increases purchase intention and decision because it can create a perception of product scarcity. The research by (Wulandari & Hidayat, 2023) also confirms that time-based promotions have been proven to increase purchase intensity on e-commerce platforms because they provide a sense of exclusivity and urgency.

Flash Sale promotions have already been widely studied by previous researchers, including (Ramadhani & Susanto, 2022) and (Wulandari & Hidayat, 2023).

Free Shipping Promotion

Research results show that promoting free shipping also has a positive effect on purchasing decisions, with a coefficient value of 0.296 and a significance level of 0.004, which is less than 0.05. This means that the more attractive and frequent the free shipping offers are, the higher the chance consumers will make a purchase.

Consumers view the free shipping policy as a cost-saving measure that increases the perceived value of a product. Additionally, this promotion reduces psychological barriers to online shopping because the added cost is seen as already covered by the platform.

A study by (Sari & Pratama, 2021) found that free shipping is the most dominant factor influencing purchasing decisions compared to other promotions like discounts or coupons. Meanwhile, (Yuliana et al, 2024) stated that the free shipping program not only affects initial purchasing decisions but also increases consumer loyalty for repeat purchases. The promotion of free shipping has already been widely studied by previous researchers, including (Sari & Pratama, 2021) and (Yuliana et al, 2024).

Interest in buying

Interest in buying has the strongest influence on the decision to purchase, with a regression coefficient value of 0.411 and a significance value of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This result shows that interest in buying has a positive and significant effect on the purchase decision.

Interest in buying is formed because of positive experiences, attractive promotions, and trust in the platform. The higher the consumer's interest in buying, the greater the chance they will make an actual purchase.

Research by Rahmawati and Fadhilah (2023) shows that interest in buying acts as a mediator between promotions and purchase decisions. This means that without a strong interest in buying, promotions will not directly lead to a purchase action. The same idea was mentioned by Putri and Haryono (2023), who found that interest in buying is formed from perceived value and trust in product and service quality. Interest in buying has already been studied by previous researchers, among them Rahmawati and Fadhilah (2023) and Putri and Haryono (2023).

The results of the simultaneous

Analysis show that the three independent variables—flash sale, free shipping, and purchase interest—positively and significantly affect the decision to buy. The F-value is 28.367 with a significance level of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.615, meaning that 61.5% of the variation in purchase decision can be explained by these three variables, while the remaining 38.5% is influenced by other factors such as brand image, consumer trust, and product quality.

Theoretically, these findings align with the consumer behavior model proposed by (Kotler and Keller, 2016), which states that purchase decisions result from a combination of external marketing stimuli, such as promotions, and internal factors like interest and perception.

Consumers on e-commerce platforms tend to make purchase decisions when the offered promotions are seen as providing financial benefits (free shipping), added value (flash sale), and psychological motivation (purchase interest). Therefore, the success of digital promotion strategies depends on a company’s ability to effectively integrate these factors.

The decision to buy has already been studied by previous researchers, including (Kotler and Keller, 2016)

Table 1: Relevant Research Findings

No	Author (Year)	Previos Research Findings	Similarities with This Article	Differences with This Article	H
1	Intan Putri Sonias, dkk. (2024)	Flash Sale and Free Shipping have a significant effect on students’ purchase decisions on Shopee.	Both studies examine the effect of Flash Sales and Free Shipping on Purchase Decisions.	This article adds Purchase Intention as an intervening variable between Flash Sales and Purchase Decisions.	H1
2	Suci Ramadhanti & Sri lestari yuli prastyatini (2023)	Flash Sale Discounts and Shipping Costs influence purchase decisions, with Purchase Intention as a moderating variable.	Both studies examine Flash Sales and Shipping Costs and involve Purchase Intention.	This article uses Purchase Intention as an intervening variable rather than a moderating variable.	H2
3	Saqofa Nabilah Aini (2024)	Purchase Intention mediates the relationship between Flash Sales and Discount Vouchers on purchase decisions for fashion products on Shopee.	Purchase Intention mediates the relationship between Flash Sales and Discount Vouchers and Purchase Decisions for fashion products on Shopee.	This article replaces discount vouchers with Free Shipping as the promotional variable.	H3
4	Maulidya Edelweis, P urwatining sih & Ratih setyo rini (2022)	Flash Sales do not have a significant effect, whereas Free Shipping has a significant effect on Purchase Decisions.	Both studies examine the effect of Flash Sales and Free Shipping on Purchase Decisions.	This article adds Purchase Intention as a mediating variable between promotion and purchase decisions.	H4
5	Novansa & Ali (2019)	Purchase Intention acts as a mediating variable between perceived value and consumer trust on purchase decisions.	Both studies examine Purchase Intention as an intervening variable that bridges the influence of independent variables on purchase decisions.	This article replaces perceived value and trust as the independent variables.	H5
6	Ali & Mappesona (2016)	Marketing strategies that reduce perceived risk and transaction	Both studies emphasize the role of promotion in shaping	This article focuses on the e-commerce context with Flash Sales and	H2, H5

No	Author (Year)	Previous Research Findings	Similarities with This Article	Differences with This Article	H
		costs significantly increase purchase intention.	purchase intention before purchase decisions occur.	Free Shipping as the variables.	

Discussion

Literature review results show that digital promotion strategies like flash sales and free shipping have a significant impact on consumer purchase interest and buying decisions on e-commerce platforms. In the competitive digital economy, these two promotional methods are important tools for attracting attention, creating value perceptions, and speeding up the buying decision process.

Research conducted by (Intan Putri Sonias et al., 2024) confirms that combining flash sales with free shipping has a positive effect on purchasing decisions among Shopee users. The findings suggest that the urgency of time in flash sales creates a psychological effect known as fear of missing out, while free shipping reduces transaction cost barriers, thus strengthening the purchase decision. This study shares the same main variables but differs in positioning purchase interest as an intervening variable, explaining the indirect effect of promotions on purchasing decisions.

Similar findings were reported by Suci Ramadhanti and (Sri Lestari Yuli Prastyatini, 2023), who showed that flash sales and shipping costs affect purchasing decisions, with purchase interest acting as a moderator variable. Their study highlights the role of purchase interest in strengthening the relationship between promotions and purchasing decisions. However, unlike the moderation model, this study assumes purchase interest as a psychological stage that arises as a result of applying promotional strategies, making it more appropriate to use as an intervening variable.

Next, the research by (Saqofa Nabilah Aini, 2024) supports the argument about the importance of purchase interest as a mediating variable. The findings show that flash sales and discount vouchers can increase consumer purchase interest, which in turn affects their decision to buy fashion products. Although the promotional variable is different in this study (discount vouchers are replaced with free shipping), the relationship structure between variables shows a similar theoretical idea that promotions create a psychological push that encourages buying actions.

Another study by Maulidya Edelweis, (Purwatiningsih, and Ratih Setyo Rini, 2022) provides more specific findings. It found that flash sales do not significantly influence purchasing decisions, while free shipping has a more dominant positive effect. This shows that Indonesian consumers tend to be more responsive to promotions that directly reduce the cost of purchase rather than time-based promotions. This reinforces the importance of integrating purchase interest as an intervening variable that can explain the psychological mechanism through which certain promotions can encourage purchasing decisions.

According to Ali (2018; 2019), a lecturer at the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Bhayangkara Jakarta Raya, consumer purchasing decisions are not only influenced by direct promotional stimuli but also through internal psychological factors such as purchase interest and consumer trust. Well-designed promotions can increase perceived value, which then forms the intention to buy before the consumer makes the actual purchasing decision.

Further, Novansa and Ali (2019) explain that in the context of digital marketing, purchase intention plays a crucial role as an intervening variable because it reflects both the emotional and cognitive responses of consumers to the marketing strategies used by companies. This supports the assumption that flash sales and free shipping do not always directly affect purchasing decisions, but rather first influence consumer purchase intention.

Conceptually, the findings from the six previous studies strengthen the thinking framework of this research, which assumes both direct and indirect relationships between promotion variables and purchasing decisions. Based on theoretical and empirical studies, five hypotheses can be formulated as follows:

- a. H1: Flash Sale affects Purchase Intention
- b. H2: Free Shipping affects Purchase Intention
- c. H3: Flash Sale affects Purchasing Decision
- d. H4: Free Shipping affects Purchasing Decision
- e. H5: Purchase Intention affects Purchasing Decision

So, buying interest acts as an intervening variable that connects the relationship between promotions (like flash sales and free shipping) and consumers' purchase decisions. Previous research results consistently support this conceptual model, showing that the success of e-commerce promotion strategies depends a lot on how well these promotions are able to create a desire to buy, which then leads to actual purchase decisions.

Research Conceptual Framework

Based on the problem formulation, discussion, and relevant previous studies, the conceptual framework of this article is presented as shown in Figure 1 below.

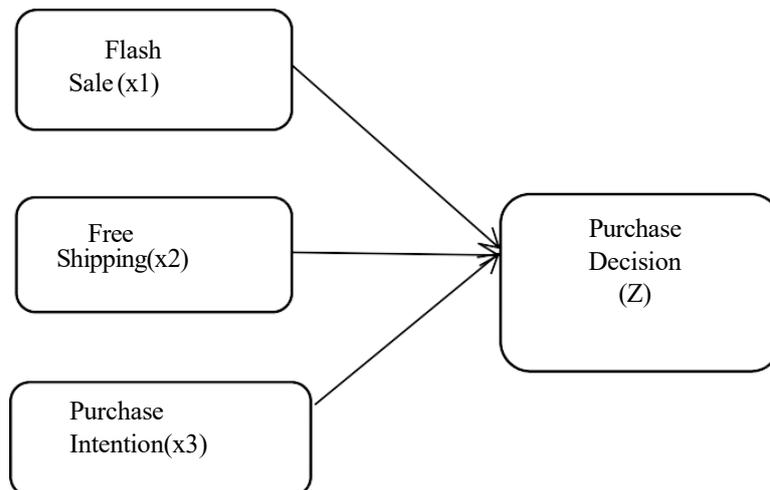


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Based on the conceptual framework image above, the following factors influence purchase intention: Flash Sale, Free Shipping, and Purchase Decision Satisfaction. In addition to these variables, there are other potential factors that can affect purchase decision, such as:

1. Product Price / Price (X3) (Putra & Santoso, 2021; Dewi & Rahayu, 2020; Hidayat et al., 2019).
2. Product Quality / Product Quality (X4) (Rachmawati & Sari, 2021; Firmansyah & Azizah, 2022; Ali et al., 2018).

Consumer Trust / Consumer Trust (X5) (Sari & Prabowo, 2020; Novansa & Ali, 2019; Ali & Mappesona, 2016).

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Based on the purpose, results, and discussion of the research, the conclusion of this article is to formulate hypotheses and future research findings, which are as follows:

1. Flash Sale promotions have a positive effect on Purchase Interest. This means that the more frequent and attractive the flash sale programs offered, the stronger the consumer's urge to make a purchase immediately, due to the perception of time limitations and lower prices.
2. Free Shipping promotions also have a positive impact on Purchase Interest. This shows that the greater the discount on shipping costs provided by the seller or e-commerce platform, the stronger the consumer's desire to transact, as they feel they are gaining additional economic benefits.
3. Purchase Interest influences Buying Decision, meaning that consumers with high interest in a product are more likely to proceed to the actual purchasing stage. Strong purchase interest can arise from the combination of effective promotional strategies such as flash sales and free shipping.

Therefore, these three variables—flash sale promotions, free shipping promotions, and purchase interest—conceptually play an important role in shaping consumer buying decisions. These findings can serve as a foundation for further empirical testing to deepen the understanding of consumer behavior on e-commerce platforms

Suggestions

Based on the discussion and conclusions, there are still many other factors that could influence the decision to buy (Y), besides flash sales (X₁), free shipping (X₂), and purchase interest (Z). These other factors include consumer trust, product quality, brand image, and customer reviews, which also play an important role in shaping consumer purchasing decisions, as found in previous studies.

Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers conduct further studies by including these variables in their research model to achieve more comprehensive results regarding the factors that influence purchasing decisions on e-commerce platforms.

Additionally, for e-commerce companies, the findings of this study are hoped to serve as a consideration for optimizing digital promotion strategies more effectively, especially by maintaining a balance between the intensity of flash sales and the policy of free shipping in order to attract and retain consumers.

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