



The Effect of Discounts and Free Shipping on Shopee E-Commerce Purchase Decisions Among Students of Institut Rahmadiyah Sekayu

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Abstract: This study aims to determine the effect of discounts and free shipping on Shopee *e-commerce* purchase decisions among students of Institut Rahmadiyah Sekayu. A quantitative method with a descriptive approach was employed. Primary and secondary data were collected through observation and questionnaires. The population consisted of 620 students of Institut Rahmadiyah Sekayu, from which a sample of 243 respondents was drawn using the Slovin formula and a purposive sampling technique. Data were processed using SPSS 22 through multiple linear regression analysis. The results show that discount (X1) and free shipping (X2) significantly affect purchase decisions (Y), with a correlation coefficient of 0.955, indicating a very strong relationship, and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.913, meaning discount and free shipping jointly explain 91.3 percent of the variation in purchase decisions, while the remaining 8.7 percent is explained by variables outside this study.

Keywords: Discount; Free Shipping; Purchase Decision; E-commerce; Shopee

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INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of technology, supported by adequate infrastructure and favorable regulatory policy, has become a major driver of digital business growth. Economic activity conducted through *online* platforms, including *e-commerce*, continues to expand significantly. Indonesia is recorded as the country with the highest percentage of e-commerce users in the world, reaching 88.1 percent of total internet users (Lidwina, 2021). *E-commerce* is a form of business activity that uses information technology through internet networks to increase sales, accelerate business processes, and provide products and services efficiently (Saraswati & Indriani, 2021).

Among the various *marketplaces* operating in Indonesia, Shopee was the most frequently accessed platform in 2025, reaching 53.22 percent of respondents, followed by TikTok Shop (27.37 percent), Tokopedia (9.57 percent), Lazada (9.09 percent), Blibli (0.29 percent), and Facebook Marketplace (0.25 percent) (Onatan, 2025). Amid intensifying competition in the e-commerce sector, marketplaces such as Shopee rely on effective promotional strategies to retain their competitive position, with discounts

and free-shipping subsidies being the two most frequently applied strategies because both have proven to significantly increase consumer purchase interest and intent.

A discount is a price reduction offered by a seller to a buyer, either as a form of appreciation or as compensation for certain commercial activities that benefit the seller (Nasution & Kurniawati, 2022). Discounts function as a marketing strategy applied by businesses to maintain the stability of cash flow while stimulating purchase volume (Prilano et al., 2020), although they may also encourage *impulsive buying* behavior, that is, purchasing without prior planning (Trimulyani & Herlina, 2022). Free shipping, meanwhile, addresses shipping cost as one of the main barriers to online purchase decisions, particularly for lower-value products; by subsidizing this cost, platforms such as Shopee can reduce the financial burden on consumers and encourage purchase decisions.

These two strategies are particularly relevant for student consumers, who as digital consumers tend to be responsive to promotions that provide financial benefits. Students favor online shopping because of ease of access, time efficiency, and affordable prices, which strengthens the influence of discount and free-shipping strategies on their purchasing behavior.

Although discount and free-shipping strategies have been studied extensively in the context of national and multi-city consumer samples, relatively few studies have examined their combined effect within a single, geographically defined student population, where budget constraints and price sensitivity may differ from those of the general public. This gap forms the basis of the present study, which focuses specifically on students of Institut Rahmadiyah Sekayu as a bounded and homogeneous research context.

Based on this background, the present study examines the effect of discount and free shipping on purchase decisions in Shopee *e-commerce* among students of Institut Rahmadiyah Sekayu. The research questions are: (1) how does discount affect purchase decisions; (2) how does free shipping affect purchase decisions; and (3) how do discount and free shipping jointly affect purchase decisions. The findings are expected to contribute practically to Shopee's marketing strategy formulation and academically to the marketing management literature on price-based promotion in the student segment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing Management

Marketing management is a process that involves the analysis and influence of a company's overall operational activities to meet customer needs and wants. Kotler and Keller (2020) define marketing management as a blend of art and science concerned with selecting target markets and strengthening customer relationships through the delivery and creation of superior value. This view is consistent with Kotler and Keller (2012), who emphasize that marketing decisions should be grounded in a thorough

understanding of customer needs, targeted strategy formulation, and effective communication between producer and consumer.

In the context of *e-commerce* platforms such as Shopee, digital marketing strategies including price discounts, *cashback*, and free-shipping policies play a crucial role in attracting consumer interest and reinforcing customer loyalty. Fatmawati (2023) argues that digital promotion combined with price incentives is more effective in influencing consumer behavior, particularly among technologically literate younger generations.

Discount

A discount is a price reduction given by a seller to a buyer as an appreciation for certain purchasing activity that benefits the seller (Rachmawati et al., 2020). According to Baskara (2018), a discount is a price-reduction strategy applied by a company from its established price in order to encourage purchase decisions and increase product sales. Consumers favor discounts because they directly reduce the perceived financial loss associated with a purchase (Baskara, 2018). Based on Tjiptono (2022), discounts can be classified into cash discounts, quantity discounts, seasonal discounts, promotional discounts, and loyalty discounts. Indicators of discount used in this study, adapted from Sutisna (2012), include the magnitude of the price reduction, the duration of the discount period, and the type of product receiving the discount.

Free Shipping

Free-shipping promotion is a form of sales promotion intended to stimulate purchases through special selling efforts (Razali, Andamisari, & Saputra, 2022). Because many consumers hesitate to shop *online* due to shipping costs that may exceed the value of the product itself, free-shipping subsidies reduce this psychological and financial barrier and encourage purchase decisions (Shoffi'ul Auli, Basalamah, & Millannintyas, 2021). Indicators of free shipping adapted from Sari and Nugroho (2019), as cited in Razali et al. (2022), include attractiveness, the arousal of purchase desire, encouragement to complete a purchase, and the ability to draw consumer attention.

Purchase Decision

Purchase decision is the outcome of a consumer's evaluation of the available alternatives prior to making a purchase (Solomon, 2017). It can be understood as a selection process that a consumer goes through across several evaluative stages before arriving at a final decision to buy, ultimately choosing the product or service that best matches their needs and preferences. Setyowati (2022) adds that in the context of online marketplaces, this decision is also shaped by product reviews and platform usability, factors that operate alongside price-based promotions such as discount and free shipping.

Previous Research

Several prior studies provide empirical support for the relationship examined in this study. Jannah, Wahono, and Khalikussabir (2021) found that flash-sale discounts, product ratings, and free shipping jointly influence purchase decisions on the Shopee marketplace. Razali, Andamisari, and Saputra (2022) reported that discount and free-shipping promotions jointly and significantly affect purchase decisions on Lazada Indonesia. Alvin Yusro et al. (2025) examined discount and free shipping among students of private Muhammadiyah universities in the Greater Jakarta area and found a positive and significant effect of discount on purchase decisions, while Hendrianto (2025) found that free shipping positively and significantly affects purchase decisions on the Lazada platform. These studies consistently indicate that price-based promotions are strong predictors of online purchase behavior, which supports the hypotheses developed in this study.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Building on the theoretical review above, this study positions discount (X_1) and free shipping (X_2) as independent variables that jointly and individually influence purchase decision (Y) as the dependent variable. Based on the theoretical review and prior research, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H₁: Discount has a significant effect on purchase decisions.

H₂: Free shipping has a significant effect on purchase decisions.

H₃: Discount and free shipping simultaneously have a significant effect on purchase decisions.

METHOD

This study employs a quantitative method with a descriptive approach. Data sources consist of primary data, obtained through a questionnaire distributed to respondents, and secondary data obtained from literature and institutional records. The population comprises six hundred and twenty (620) students of Institut Rahmadiyah Sekayu across the Faculty of Economics and Business and the Faculty of Law. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a five percent error tolerance:

$$n = N / (1 + N(e)^2) = 620 / (1 + (620)(0,05)^2) = 243 \text{ respondents}$$

Respondents were selected using a *purposive sampling* technique, considered appropriate for quantitative research that does not aim at broad generalization. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) and processed with SPSS 22. Data processing followed four stages: editing, coding, scoring, and tabulating, after which the tabulated data were analyzed statistically.

Instrument quality was assessed through a validity test, using the product-moment correlation between each item score and the total score, and a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha, with an item considered reliable if the coefficient exceeds 0.60 (Ghozali, 2016). This was followed by classical assumption tests: a normality test to confirm that the regression residuals are normally distributed, a multicollinearity test to confirm the absence of strong linear relationships among the independent variables, and a heteroscedasticity test to confirm that the residual variance is constant across observations (Priyanto, 2014).

The relationship between variables was analyzed using multiple linear regression, expressed as:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \varepsilon$$

where Y is purchase decision, X1 is discount, X2 is free shipping, α is the constant, β_1 and β_2 are the regression coefficients, and ε is the error term. Hypotheses were tested using the t-test for the partial effect of each independent variable and the F-test for the simultaneous effect of both independent variables, both at a five percent significance level. The strength of the relationship between variables was further assessed through the correlation coefficient (R) and the coefficient of determination (R^2).

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Profile

The sample consisted of 243 respondents, with female students making up the larger share, in line with the prevailing gender composition of the selected study programs. Respondents were also distributed quite evenly among the Management, Accounting, and Law programs. Therefore, the sample can be considered reasonably representative of the broader student body at Institut Rahmadiyah Sekayu.

Instrument Testing

All items in the discount, free-shipping, and purchase-decision questionnaires were declared valid, with calculated r-values exceeding the r-table value at the five percent significance level. The reliability test produced Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.60 for all three variables, indicating that the instruments were reliable and internally consistent. The classical assumption tests confirmed that the residuals were normally distributed, no multicollinearity was present between the independent variables (tolerance greater than 0.10 and VIF below 10), and no heteroscedasticity was detected in the regression model, so the ordinary least squares assumptions required for multiple linear regression were satisfied.

Multiple Linear Regression

The multiple linear regression analysis, processed with SPSS 22, produced the following results:

Table 1. Multiple Linear Regression Coefficients

Model	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.502	0.751	0.668	0.505
Discount (X1)	0.660	0.082	8.087	0.000
Free Shipping (X2)	0.759	0.059	12.875	0.000

Dependent variable: Purchase Decision. Source: primary data, processed (2026).

Based on Table 1, the regression equation is formulated as:

$$Y = 0.502 + 0.660X1 + 0.759X2$$

The constant of 0.502 indicates the value of purchase decision when discount and free shipping are held at zero. Each one-unit increase in discount (X1) raises purchase decision by 0.660, while each one-unit increase in free shipping (X2) raises purchase decision by 0.759, holding the other variable constant. The positive sign of both coefficients confirms that discount and free shipping move in the same direction as purchase decision.

Correlation and Coefficient of Determination

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
1	0.955	0.913	0.912	2.960

Predictors: (Constant), Discount, Free Shipping. Source: primary data, processed (2026).

The correlation coefficient (R) of 0.955 falls within the 0.80-1.00 range, indicating a very strong relationship between discount, free shipping, and purchase decisions. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.913 indicates that discount and free shipping jointly explain 91.3 percent of the variation in purchase decisions, while the remaining 8.7 percent is explained by variables outside this study, such as product quality, brand trust, or service experience.

Hypothesis Testing

The partial effect of each independent variable was tested using the t-test, comparing the calculated t-value against the t-table value of 1.651 (df = 240, $\alpha = 0.05$):

Table 3. Partial Test (t-Test) Results

Variable	t-count	t-table	Sig.	Conclusion
Discount (X1)	8.087	1.651	0.000	H1 accepted
Free Shipping (X2)	12.875	1.651	0.000	H2 accepted

Dependent variable: Purchase Decision. Source: primary data, processed (2026).

Both calculated t-values exceed the t-table value, with a significance value of 0.000 below the 0.05 threshold for both variables. H1 and H2 are therefore accepted: discount and free shipping each have a significant partial effect on purchase decisions.

Table 4. Simultaneous Test (F-Test) Results

Model	F-count	F-table	Sig.	Conclusion
Regression	1254.384	3.03	0.000	H3 accepted

Dependent variable: Purchase Decision. Predictors: (Constant), Discount, Free Shipping. Source: primary data, processed (2026).

The simultaneous F-test produced a calculated F-value of 1254.384, exceeding the F-table value of 3.03, with a significance value of 0.000 below 0.05. H3 is therefore accepted: discount and free shipping jointly and significantly affect purchase decisions.

Discussion

The significant positive effect of discount on purchase decisions is consistent with the findings of Alvin Yusro et al. (2025) on discount and free shipping in e-commerce purchase decisions among students of private Muhammadiyah universities in the Greater Jakarta area, which likewise found a positive and significant effect of discount. Similarly, the significant effect of free shipping corroborates Hendrianto (2025), who found that free shipping positively and significantly affects purchase decisions on the Lazada e-commerce platform. The combined effect of discount and free shipping is also in line with Razali et al. (2022), who found that both promotional variables jointly and significantly affect purchase decisions on Lazada Indonesia.

These findings confirm that price-based promotions remain highly effective in driving online purchase behavior among student consumers, who are generally price-sensitive and responsive to cost-saving offers. The very strong correlation ($R = 0.955$) and high explanatory power ($R^2 = 91.3$ percent) suggest that discount and free shipping are dominant determinants of purchase decisions in this context, leaving relatively little variance to be explained by other factors.

Managerial Implications

The very strong relationship between discount, free shipping, and purchase decision suggests that Shopee's promotional strategy is well aligned with student consumer preferences, and that continued investment in these two levers is likely to sustain purchase volume within this segment. At the same time, because discount and free shipping together account for the great majority of the variance in purchase decisions, sellers and platform managers should also safeguard product quality and accurate product descriptions, since a heavy reliance on price-based incentives without

corresponding attention to product and service quality may erode consumer trust over time, particularly in a highly price-sensitive *marketplace* environment.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that discount and free shipping each have a significant positive effect on purchase decisions among students of Institut Rahmadiyah Sekayu, both partially and simultaneously. The correlation coefficient of 0.955 indicates a very strong relationship, and the coefficient of determination of 0.913 shows that 91.3 percent of the variation in purchase decisions is explained by discount and free shipping combined, while the remaining 8.7 percent is explained by other variables outside this study. Shopee is advised to ensure that stores on its platform sell quality products consistent with their descriptions, provide clear information regarding price and quality differences among visually similar products, and regularly evaluate sellers to ensure that displayed advertisements accurately represent the products offered, thereby strengthening consumer trust in the platform. Future research may extend this model by incorporating additional variables such as product quality, brand trust, or service experience to explain the remaining variance in purchase decisions.

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