

Purchasing Decisions: The Role of Brand Ambassador and Free Shipping Mediated by Purchase Intention in Online Stores

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Abstract—This study aims to determine the factors that influence consumer behavior in making purchasing decisions in online shops. The sample of this study was 200 respondents from online shop application users in Medan City. This study uses a quantitative method with data analysis using SEM (*Structural Equational Modeling*) assisted by the PLS4 program. The results of the study obtained partially brand ambassadors influence purchasing decisions, free shipping influences purchasing decisions, brand ambassadors influence purchasing intentions, free shipping influences purchasing intentions, brand ambassadors influence purchasing intentions, purchasing decisions are mediated by purchasing intentions and free shipping influences purchasing intentions mediated by purchasing intentions. Purchasing intentions influences purchasing decisions of Medan City residents in online shops. The findings of this study provide implications, purchasing decisions in online shops are influenced by brand ambassadors and free shipping, so marketers must implement marketing strategies that make consumers confident in products recommended by brand ambassadors and provide free shipping.

Keywords: Consumers; E-Commerce; Marketing; Quality Product

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesians spend the most time on social media. Based on data, Indonesia ranks third after India and Brazil. Social media technology has become a necessity for Indonesians. Social media is a part of many activities carried out by Indonesians everywhere. Each individual spends an average of 3 hours per day on social media (data). Furthermore, social media comes in various forms, allowing individuals to choose how to use their time. This variety of social media platforms leads to a continuous increase in access time and visits. India is the country with the highest number of social media users, followed by Brazil. Indonesia is third, followed by the Philippines, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, South Africa, Malaysia, and Turkey in 10th place. (Databoks, 2024)

Social media has changed the rules of marketers to struggle to understand online consumer behavior on social networks and try to maneuver business to survive in the computer-mediated social environment (CMSE) (Arora & Sanni, 2019). Social media has become an important marketing and communication channel for businesses, organizations, and institutions, including the political sector (Appel et al., 2020). Various types of social media applications adopted by customers show the need and convenience of online shopping (Alalwan et al., 2017). Covid opens a huge opportunity for online purchases and continues to increase even though the outbreak has passed. With online shops, shopping can be done anywhere and anytime. Data obtained shows that almost all people have used online shops (Databoks, 2024) and the number of people shopping online has also experienced a significant increase with the number of online shops continuing to grow along with increasing demand. Online marketing provides extraordinary benefits for various businesses because it is cost-effective, flexible, global reach and fast (Ostlere, 2019).

The existence of online shops offers many conveniences for consumers in shopping. Marketers use social media as a marketing tool, including providing attractive brands, services, customer relations, management, and sales promotions to encourage consumers to make purchases (Alves et al., 2016). This convenience means consumers don't need to leave the house, wasting time and transportation costs, even if they are relatively small. However, online shopping is not without its challenges. Some problems often arise even though marketers have tried various strategies to attract consumers' interest in buying.

Marketers employ various factors to attract consumers to make purchases, including price, free shipping, attractive promotions, by presenting brand ambassadors as public figures to convince the market about the products being sold, thereby increasing sales. Extensive research has been conducted on consumer purchasing intention. (Barkah & Forever, 2023) examined consumer purchasing interest influenced by *e-service quality*, sales promotions, *perceived ease of use*, and *perceived usefulness*. Other studies have shown that purchasing decisions are influenced by experiential marketing variables mediated by satisfaction (Febrini et al., 2019). Research conducted by the author indicates that consumers desire low prices and costs for products or services but with good service (Daulay et al., 2024). Research by (Cheong, 2019) examines how reviews and promotions influence purchasing decisions. The authors used online shop purchasing decisions influenced by free shipping and brand ambassadors, which generate purchasing intention.

In general, online buyers occur when sellers offer attractive discounts with free shipping and quality products recommended by trusted people such as public figures who are made into brand purchases that match the quality of the brand ambassador of the product offered or from reviews. The problem that occurs when free shipping is given but the product price is high, so the product price has been added to the shipping cost. Likewise, the chosen public figure is not someone who is liked by consumers so that it can influence interest and purchasing decisions. Research on brand

ambassadors in online marketing has not been done much. Therefore, this study is considered important to be carried out considering that online purchases are increasingly increasing sales turnover so that public figures are needed who are able to provide a strong influence on increasing sales by paying attention to the relevance of credibility, the attractiveness of the chosen public figure and free shipping are one of the reasons that make consumers buy. Purchase Decision is statement mental from from consumer Which reflects the purchase plan for a number of products with a particular brand. This very required for marketers For understand purchasing decisions consumertowards a product, both marketers and economists influence purchasing interest which can be an internal indicator predict behavior consumers in the future Which will come (Jufrizen et al., 2020) .

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1 Framework Basic Research

type of research is survey research, which is a research method used to collect data from a sample population using data from a sample population using questionnaires and interviews. The goal is to understand the opinions, behavior, or characteristics of a broader population. This study uses an explanatory research approach, which aims to explain the causal relationship between research variables and testing hypotheses (Nasution, Fahmi, Jufrizen, Muslih, & Prayogi, 2020) consisting of purchasing decision variables, brand ambassadors, free shipping and purchase interest. The research approach used in this study is an associative approach, namely a researcher's question that connects two or more variables (Prahawan & Simbolon, 2014) . Furthermore, the population of this study is all people who have made purchases in online stores and a research sample of 200 respondents taken using a purposive sampling technique. The respondents of this study are consumers who have purchased in online stores in the last six months, namely people who reside in Medan City.

Furthermore, this research uses SEM PLS (Structural Equation Modeling) data analysis techniques to conduct path analysis. *This analysis* is often referred to as the second generation of multivariate analysis. Structural equation analysis is based on variance, which can simultaneously test measurement models and structural models. This analysis technique method PLS that carried out: 1) Outer model analysis, used for ensure that the measurement used worthy For measurement (valid and reliable) with do measurement: Discriminant validity that mark crossloading useful factors whether construct own adequate discriminant with compare mark the intended construct must more big with mark another construct, Average Variance Extracted (AVE)/ Convergent validity is factor loading values on latent variables and composite reliability > 0.7. Convergent validity is confirmed if the factor loading and AVE > 0,5. 2) Inner model analysis, used for test connection between latent construction. With do Measurement: a. R-Square is the coefficient of determination on the endogenous construct that shows the level of explanatory ability of the model, with criteria of 0.67 (strong/substantial), 0.33 (moderate), and 0.19 (weak). b. Effect size (F-Square) is used to assess the magnitude of the influence of variables in the structural model, where a value of 0.02 indicates a small influence, 0.15 a medium influence, and 0.35 a large influence. 3) Hypothesis Testing. Hypothesis testing is carried out based on the t-statistic and probability values. At a significance level of 5%, the t-statistic value used is 1.96, so the alternative hypothesis (Ha) is accepted and the null hypothesis (H0) is rejected if the t-statistic > 1.96). In addition, based on the probability value, Ha is accepted if the p value < 0.05. Testing the intervening effect uses the bootstrapping method. Furthermore, the indicators of the purchasing decision variable are measured with five (5) indicators (Kotler & Keller, 2016) . The brand ambassador variable is measured using six (6) indicators, the free shipping variable is measured using five (5) indicators and the purchase intention variable is measured using four (4) indicators (Schiffman & Lazar;, 2014) .

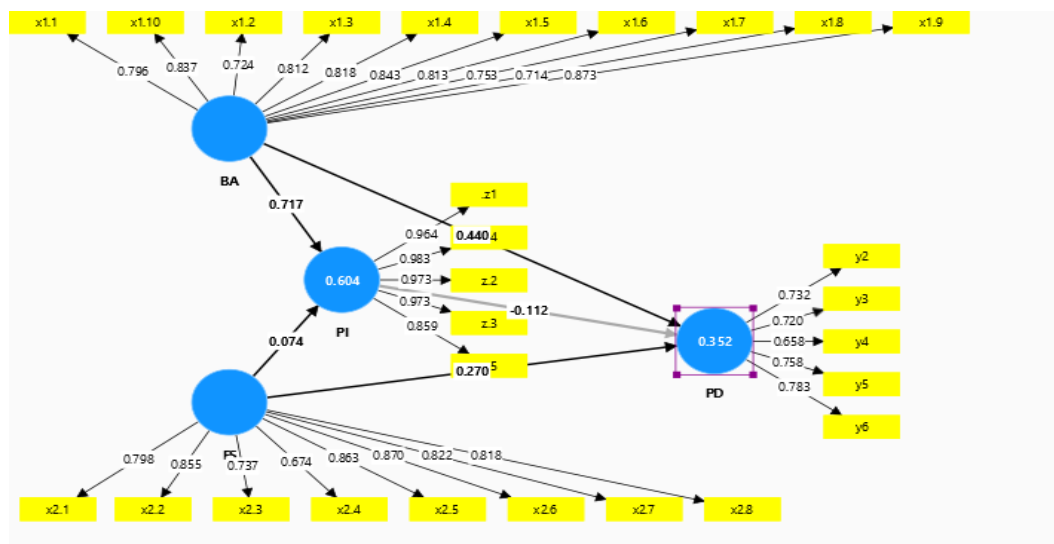


Figure 1. Research Model

Figure 1. Shows framework think study This shows: 1) The influence of brand ambassadors on decisions purchases in online shops, 2) The influence of free shipping on purchasing decisions purchases in online shops, 3) The influence of brand ambassadors on interest buy in online shops, 4) The influence of free shipping on interest buy in online shop, 5) Influence interest purchase decision on purchasing decisions in online shops, 6) The relationship between brand ambassadors and purchasing decisions purchase in mediation interest Buy in online shops, 7) The influence of free shipping on purchasing decisions mediated interest buy in online shop.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of data processing, the majority of respondents' identities are those aged 21-30 years, namely 116 people, then 31-40 years are 54 people, and those aged >40 years are 22 people, and finally consumers aged <21 years are 8 people. The largest gender (majority) in this study is male, as many as 90 people, while females are 110 people. The education (majority) of respondents in this study were respondents with a bachelor's degree (S1) of 164 people, then a master's degree (S2) of 20 people and high school of 14 people, then others of 2 people.

Next, a convergent validity test is performed to determine the extent to which a measurement is positively correlated with alternative measurements of the same construct. To determine whether an indicator of a construct variable is valid or not, its *outer loading value is examined*. If the *outer loading value is loading* is greater than (0.6) then an indicator is valid. The results of this study all construct variables are valid because they have a value greater than 0.6. The *outer loading value* for the brand ambassador variable is greater than 0.6 then all indicators in the brand ambassador variable are declared valid. The *outer loading value* for the free shipping variable is greater than 0.6 then all indicators in the free shipping variable are declared valid. The *outer loading value* for the purchase interest variable is greater than 0.6 then all indicators in the purchase interest variable are declared valid. The *outer loading value* for the purchase decision variable is greater than 0.6 then all indicators in the purchase decision variable are declared valid.

Furthermore, structural model analysis (*inner model*) aims to test the research hypothesis. The parts that need to be analyzed in the structural model are collinearity, hypothesis testing, and the coefficient of determination (*R-square*).

Table 1. Collinearity Collinearity

Inner VIF	Free Shipping	Purchase Interest	Buying decision	Brand Ambassador
Free Shipping		4.128	4,535	
Purchase Interest			4,376	
Buying decision				
Brand Ambassador		4.128	4.128	

From the data above, it can be described as follows:

- a. VIF for correlation between Brand Ambassador and Purchase Decision is $4.128 < 5.00$ (no collinearity problem occurs);
- b) VIF for correlation between free shipping and Purchase Decision is $4.535 < 5.00$ (no collinearity problem occurs);
- c) VIF for correlation between Brand Ambassador and Purchase Decision is $4.128 < 5.00$ (no collinearity problem occurs);
- d) VIF for correlation between Price and Purchase Decision is $4.128 < 5.00$ (no collinearity problem occurs); and
- e) VIF for correlation between Purchase Intention and Purchase Decision is $4.376 < 5.00$ (no collinearity problem occurs). Thus, from the data above, the structural model in this case is not all correlations that are free from collinearity problems.

This test consists of two stages: testing the direct effect hypothesis and testing the indirect effect hypothesis. The path coefficients for the hypothesis testing are shown in the figure below:

Table 2. Direct Effect Hypothesis

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Brand Ambassador -> Purchase Decision	0.244	0.265	0.092	2,645	0.008
Free Shipping -> Purchase Decision	0.460	0.441	0.126	3,645	0.000
Brand Ambassador -> Purchase Interest	0.303	0.207	0.108	3,023	0.001
Free shipping -> Interested in buying	0.932	0.934	0.092	10,077	0.000
Purchase Interest -> Purchase Decision	0.258	0.253	0.111	2,312	0.021

Based on table 2. above, the direct influence of the Brand Ambassador variable on the Purchase Decision variable has a path coefficient of 0.244 (positive), so an increase in the value of the Brand Ambassador variable will be followed by an increase in the Purchase Decision variable. The influence of the Brand Ambassador variable on Purchase Interest has a *P- Value* of $0.008 < 0.05$, so it can be stated that the influence of the Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decision is significant.

The direct influence of the Free Shipping variable on the Purchase Decision variable has a path coefficient of 0.460 (positive), so an increase in the value of the free shipping variable will be followed by an increase in the Purchase Decision variable. The effect of the free shipping variable on the Purchase Decision has a *P- Value* of 0.000 <0.05, so it can be stated that the effect of free shipping on the Purchase Decision is significant.

The direct influence of the Brand Ambassador variable on the Purchase Interest variable has a path coefficient of 0.303 (positive), so an increase in the value of the Brand Ambassador variable will be followed by an increase in the purchase interest variable. The influence of the Brand Ambassador variable on purchase interest has a *P- Value* of 0.001 <0.05, so it can be stated that the influence of Brand Ambassador on purchase interest is significant.

The direct effect of the free shipping variable on the purchase intention variable has a path coefficient of 0.932 (positive), so a decrease in the value of the free shipping variable will be followed by an increase in the purchase intention variable. The effect of the free shipping variable on purchase intention has a *P- Value* of 0.000 <0.05, so it can be stated that the effect of free shipping on purchase intention is significant.

The direct influence of the purchase intention variable on the Purchase Decision variable has a path coefficient of 0.258 (positive), so an increase in the value of the Purchase Interest variable will be followed by an increase in the Purchase Decision variable. The influence of the Purchase Interest variable on the Purchase Decision has a *P- Value* of 0.021 < 0.05, so it can be stated that the influence between Purchase Interest and Purchase Decision is significant.

Testing the indirect influence hypothesis aims to prove the hypotheses of the influence of one variable on another variable indirectly (through an intermediary).

Table 3. Indirect Effect Hypothesis

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
Brand Ambassador -> Purchase interest -> Purchase decision	0.240	0.236	0.105	2,279	0.023
Free Shipping -> Purchase Interest -> Purchase Decision	0.301	0.301	0.028	0.023	0.002

Based on table 3. above, the *P Values obtained* for the indirect influence of the Brand Ambassador variable on the Purchasing Decision are 0.023 <0.05, thus it can be stated that purchasing interest mediates the influence between Brand Ambassador on Purchasing Decision. The *P Values* for the indirect influence of the Free Shipping variable on Purchasing Decision are 0.002 <0.05, thus it can be stated that purchasing interest mediates the influence between free shipping on Purchasing Decision.

Coefficient of Determination (*R Square*), the coefficient of determination (*R Square*) aims to evaluate the accuracy of a variable's prediction. In other words, it evaluates how variations in the value of the dependent variable are influenced by variations in the value of the independent variable in a path model. An *R Square* value of 0.75 indicates a strong PLS model, an *R Square* of 0.50 indicates a moderate PLS model and an *R Square* value of 0.25 indicates a weak PLS model (MI Nasution et al., 2020) .

Table 4. Determination Coefficient Test

	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Y	0.864	0.862
Z	0.870	0.866

In table 4. above, the results of the influence of Brand Ambassador and free shipping on purchasing decisions are 0.864, meaning the magnitude of the influence is 86.4%, this means it shows a strong PLS. Then, Brand Ambassador and Free shipping on purchasing interest are 0.870, meaning the magnitude of the influence of Brand Ambassador and Free shipping on purchasing interest is 87.0%, this means it shows a strong PLS. The results show that both variables Brand Ambassador and Free shipping have a strong influence on the variables Purchase decisions and purchasing interest.

3.1 Discussion

3.1.1 Brand Ambassador on Purchasing Decisions

Every company competes to increase its sales by improving product quality by offering advantages so that consumers who buy will feel happy and return to buy. The better the product quality, the more it will increase consumer purchasing decisions. In online shops, product quality is strongly supported by the role of brand ambassadors as public figures who are liked by consumers who buy. The direct influence of the brand ambassador variable on consumer purchasing variables has a path coefficient of 0.244 (positive), so an increase in the value of the brand ambassador variable will be followed by an increase in the consumer purchasing variable. The influence of the brand ambassador variable on consumer purchases has a *P- Value* of 0.001 <0.05, so it can be stated that the influence between brand ambassadors on consumer purchases is significant. This research is in line with research conducted, (Anindya et al., 2025) showing the results that brand ambassadors influence consumer purchases.

3.1.2 Free Shipping on Purchase Decisions

Free shipping is an effort made to increase company sales. Prices in online shops are the result of policies regarding product pricing, which include product value, discounts, shipping costs, payment periods, or other policies. Low prices usually increase purchasing decisions. The direct effect of the free shipping variable on the purchasing decision variable has a path coefficient of 0.460 (positive), so an increase in the value of the free shipping variable will be followed by an increase in the purchasing decision variable. The effect of the free shipping variable on purchasing decisions has a *P-value* of $0.000 < 0.05$, thus it can be stated that the influence of free shipping on purchasing decisions is significant. This research is in line with the results of research (Feng et al., 2022) that free shipping influences purchasing decisions.

3.1.3 Brand Ambassador on Purchase Intention

The direct influence of the Brand ambassador variable on the Purchase intention has a path coefficient of 0.303 (positive), so an increase in the value of the Brand ambassador variable will be followed by an increase in the Purchase intention variable. The influence of the Brand ambassador variable is < 0.05 , so it can be stated that the influence between Brand ambassadors and Purchase intention is significant. This study is in line with research (Daulay et al., 2021), showing the results that Brand ambassadors influence purchasing intention. In online purchases, product quality is sometimes doubted because there is no physical meeting between the buyer and the goods being sold. Recommendations from figures or public figures will influence consumers for purchasing intention (Yu et al., 2024).

3.1.4 Free Shipping for Purchase Interest

Shipping costs are part of the product price. Shipping costs can be a determinant of the value of the product itself. The value of a product attracts consumers to buy, when a product with good quality but low certainly raises questions for consumers. It is necessary to set the price of the product and services attached to a product to create an attraction to buy, especially in online shops where the product price includes shipping costs, service fees, and applications. The direct effect of the free shipping variable on the purchase intention variable has a path coefficient of 0.932, so an increase in the value of the free shipping variable will be followed by an increase in the purchase intention variable. The effect of the free shipping variable on purchase intention has a *P-Value* of $0.000 < 0.05$, so it can be stated that the influence of free shipping on purchase intention is significant. Price is a determinant in purchases, especially among women who enjoy shopping. The results of Katija Vojvodic and Matic's research on online shop consumers in Croatia are influenced by two main factors: impulsive and recreational factors, low prices will cause impulsiveness (Flores et al., 2025).

3.1.5 Purchase Interest in Purchasing Decisions

Purchase interest is a stage before consumers consider making a decision to purchase an item. Purchase interest with considerations that support the existence of information about a desired product will cause consumers to be interested in purchasing the product because consumers are very interested in products with free shipping. The direct influence of the purchase interest variable on purchasing decisions has a path coefficient of 0.258, so an increase in the value of the purchase interest variable will be followed by an increase in the purchase decision variable. The influence of the purchase interest variable on purchasing decisions has a *P-Value* of $0.021 < 0.05$, so it can be stated that the influence between purchase interest and purchasing decisions is significant. The results of this study are in line with research (Ashby et al., 2025), showing that purchase interest influences purchasing decisions, sellers who provide convenience in making consumer purchases will increase purchases.

3.1.6 Brand Ambassador on Purchase Decisions is Mediated by Purchase Interest

Purchasing decisions are a continuation of the attention of a desired product with information provided by figures such as celebrities who become brand ambassadors of the desired product brand. The desire to own an item will turn into a decision to purchase, consumers are increasingly confident in buying a product in an online shop supported by recommendations from famous figures. The better the quality of the product recommended by the brand ambassador will increase the purchasing decision. The *P Value* of the indirect effect of the Brand ambassador variable on purchasing decisions is $0.023 < 0.05$, thus it can be said that purchasing interest mediates the influence between brand ambassadors on purchasing decisions. This study is in line with research, (Tirtayasa et al., 2021), The results of the study show that online consumers will buy again when they feel comfortable in shopping online will become a store brand that is perceived to be visited again. Consumers become interested in buying when the people they follow have an influence (Kong & You, 2026; Shao, 2026).

3.1.7 Free Shipping on Purchase Decisions Mediated by Purchase Interest

Shipping costs are the value set by the seller, which is part of the overall value of the product in online sales, determining the quality of a product. An appropriate price will give consumers the ability to recognize the quality of a product. The price of a product in an online shop includes shipping costs and services provided, as well as the availability of an application that makes it easy to make online purchases. The existence of free shipping provided is a discount that reduces the price paid, thereby increasing purchasing interest and increasing purchasing decisions. The *P Value* of the indirect effect of the Free Shipping variable on purchasing decisions is $0.002 < 0.05$, thus it can be concluded that purchasing interest mediates the influence between free shipping on purchasing decisions. The company's social media perspective influences consumer perceptions in purchasing decisions, such as the presence of discounts (Alves et al., 2016). Social

media information such as the existence of free shipping is an attraction to make purchases of products/brands that are re-conveyed on social media (Kim, 2025) .

4. CONCLUSION

Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant influence on purchasing interest in online shops. Free shipping has a positive and significant influence on purchasing interest in online shops. Brand ambassadors have a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions in online shops. Free shipping also has a positive and significant influence on purchasing decisions in online shops. The relationship between brand ambassadors and purchasing decisions mediated by purchasing interest has a strong influence. The relationship between free shipping and purchasing decisions mediated by purchasing interest has a strong influence. This study has limitations that only use brand ambassador and free shipping variables, so it is necessary to conduct research with different independent variables and with the survey conducted there is a possibility of bias in data collection. so improvements are needed in further research by expanding the sample to increase the generalization of the results, can add other variables such as product quality and price, and can use other research methods such as experiments to increase the validity of the results. The results of the study provide answers to the problem that brand ambassadors and free shipping on purchasing decisions with purchasing interest as an intervening variable. From the results of this study, it implies that brand ambassadors have and free shipping has a strong influence on decision making and purchasing interest. Therefore, marketers can use the results of this study as a reference in making marketing decisions by using effective brand ambassador and free shipping strategies to increase purchasing decisions.

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