

## Pulling The Strings Of Student Shoppers: How Service Quality, Pricing Power, And Promotional Strategy Shape Bukalapak's Appeal Among Unri Management Undergraduates

Rido Suhatman<sup>1</sup>, Rendra Wasnury<sup>2</sup>, Prima Andreas Siregar<sup>3\*</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Riau

\*E-mail: <sup>1</sup>[rido.suhatman1709@student.unri.ac.id](mailto:rido.suhatman1709@student.unri.ac.id) <sup>2</sup>[rendra.wasnury@lecturer.unri.ac.id](mailto:rendra.wasnury@lecturer.unri.ac.id)

<sup>3\*</sup>[prima.andreas@lecturer.unri.ac.id](mailto:prima.andreas@lecturer.unri.ac.id)

Kata Kunci	Abstrak
E-commerce; Kualitas layanan; Harga; Promosi, Keputusan pembelian Bukalapak;	Pertumbuhan pesat industri <i>e-commerce</i> di Indonesia telah memicu persaingan antar platform digital, termasuk Bukalapak, yang meskipun memiliki fitur layanan yang kompetitif, belum menunjukkan dominasi dalam preferensi konsumen muda. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh kualitas layanan, harga, dan promosi terhadap keputusan pembelian pengguna aplikasi Bukalapak di kalangan mahasiswa jurusan Manajemen Universitas Riau angkatan 2020. Menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan strategi studi kasus, data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner dan wawancara, kemudian dianalisis menggunakan regresi linier berganda dengan bantuan perangkat lunak SPSS. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa promosi memiliki pengaruh paling signifikan terhadap keputusan pembelian, diikuti oleh kualitas layanan, sedangkan harga tidak memiliki pengaruh yang signifikan. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa efektivitas komunikasi promosi dan peningkatan kualitas pengalaman layanan digital merupakan faktor utama yang mempengaruhi perilaku pembelian generasi muda, sementara pertimbangan harga tidak lagi menjadi faktor dominan. Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada pemahaman yang lebih kontekstual tentang preferensi pengguna <i>e-commerce</i> di kalangan mahasiswa, serta memperkaya literatur pemasaran digital dengan menyoroti pentingnya strategi pemasaran campuran berdasarkan segmen pengguna spesifik. Implikasi praktis dari temuan ini ditujukan kepada pengelola platform <i>e-commerce</i> lokal untuk memperkuat aspek layanan dan mengadopsi strategi promosi yang lebih adaptif di tengah dinamika pasar digital yang kompetitif.
Keyword	Abstract
E-commerce; Service quality; Price; Promotion; Purchase decisions; Bukalapak;	<i>The rapid growth of the e-commerce industry in Indonesia has driven competition between digital platforms, including Bukalapak, which, despite having competitive service features, has not shown dominance in the preferences of young consumers. This study aims to analyze the effect of service quality, price, and promotion on the purchasing decisions of Bukalapak application users among students majoring in Management at University of Riau class of 2020. Using a quantitative approach with a case study strategy, data were collected through questionnaires and interviews and analyzed using multiple linear regression with the help of SPSS software. The results showed that promotion had the most significant influence on purchasing decisions, followed by service quality, whereas price had no significant effect. The findings confirm that the effectiveness of promotional communications and improvement of the quality of the digital service experience are the main factors influencing the purchasing behavior of the younger generation, while price considerations are no longer the dominant factor. The contribution of this research lies in a more contextualized understanding of e-commerce user preferences among university students, as well as enriching the digital marketing literature by highlighting the importance of marketing mix strategies based on specific user segments. The practical implications of the findings are aimed at local e-commerce platform managers to strengthen service aspects and adopt more adaptive promotional strategies in the face of competitive digital market dynamics.</i>

## INTRODUCTION

In the growing digital era, e-commerce has become a key sector of the global economy. The change in consumer behavior from conventional to digital shopping is increasingly significant, especially among the younger generation, who are more adaptive to technology than older generations. In Indonesia, the growth of e-commerce platforms has increased rapidly over the last decade, driven by the ease of Internet access, the development of digital payment systems, and aggressive promotions by industry players. However, users' preference for a particular platform is still influenced by several key factors, such as service quality, price, and promotion. Data from Katadata show that Bukalapak will only rank fifth in the number of visitors to online shopping sites in 2023, far behind Shopee and Tokopedia, indicating the need for a deeper understanding of the factors that influence purchasing decisions on these platforms (Ahdiat, 2024).

The gap between the dominance of large e-commerce platforms and Bukalapak's performance raises fundamental questions regarding the effectiveness of the strategies implemented by Bukalapak to attract and retain consumers. Several previous studies have shown that service quality and promotion are important determinants of e-commerce users' purchasing decisions (Kencana et al., 2024). However, there are still significant differences in research results regarding the relative strength of each of these factors, especially in the demographic context of Indonesian students as digital natives. This indicates a gap in the literature and the need for a contextual approach to examine the influence of service quality, price, and promotion on purchasing decisions on local e-commerce platforms such as Bukalapak.

In theoretical studies, purchasing decisions are explained as the result of

consumers' cognitive processes in evaluating product alternatives based on available attributes (Maulana & Hariasih, 2024). Consumer behavior theory explains that service quality can affect perceived value, price is an indicator of economic efficiency, and promotion plays a role in creating emotional and informational appeal to a product (Komara & Astuti, 2024). In this context, students, as rational consumers who are sensitive to marketing information, are relevant subjects for testing the validity of these theories, especially on platforms that do not dominate the market, such as Bukalapak (Gaol et al., 2024).

This study aims to empirically analyze the effect of service quality, price, and promotion on the purchasing decisions of Bukalapak application users, focusing on students majoring in Management at Riau University class of 2020 as the target population. The research questions are as follows: (1) Does service quality affect purchasing decisions? (2) Does price affect purchasing decisions? (3) Do promotions affect purchasing decisions? (4) Do service quality, price, and promotion simultaneously affect purchasing decisions? This study used a quantitative approach with multiple linear regression to test the relationship between these variables.

The scientific contribution of this article lies in enriching the understanding of the determinants of purchase decisions in the context of a less dominant local e-commerce platform through a primary data-based approach for a highly relevant user segment, namely, university students. This study not only reinforces previous empirical findings on the importance of service quality and promotion in improving e-commerce competitiveness (Purnama & Madiawati, 2021), but also examines the role of price as a variable that often produces inconsistent findings (Farida & Kurniawan, 2024) and presents quantitative evidence based on local data

that can be a reference for future marketing strategies and digital service development (Angraini, 2019; Assidiki & Budiman, 2023; Jaya & Heryjanto, 2023; Ovalia & Rahmawati, 2024; Sondari et al., 2023).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The theory of consumer purchasing decisions is rooted in the study of consumer behavior, which explains the mental and emotional processes underlying the act of buying a product or service. According to the consumer behavior model, purchasing decisions are influenced by internal factors such as perceptions, motivations, and attitudes, as well as external factors such as price, promotion, and service quality (Maulana & Hariasih, 2024). Service quality in a digital context, also known as e-service quality, includes aspects of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy, and digital physical evidence, such as the appearance of a website interface (Pramudita & Agustia, 2020). Price theory as a rational factor in decision-making emphasizes that consumers tend to choose products that provide the highest value of benefits at the lowest cost (Saldanha et al., 2021). Promotion, as part of the marketing mix, plays an important role in attracting attention and shaping consumer perceptions of products (Angelica & Gunawan, 2024).

Various empirical studies have shown that service quality, price, and promotion factors simultaneously and partially influence purchasing decisions in the context of e-commerce. A study at Shopee showed that promotion and service quality significantly influence young consumers' purchasing decisions, while the effect of price tends to be inconsistent (Ningtiyas & Sukaris, 2021). Another study conducted on Traveloka.com users found that service quality and digital promotions significantly increased the purchase intention of online travel services (Pramudita & Agustia, 2020). Maulana & Hariasih (2024) also

confirmed the synergy between these three factors in influencing purchasing decisions on the Shopee platform, indicating the importance of an integrated strategy for building e-commerce consumer loyalty.

Although the literature has discussed the influence of service quality, price, and promotion on purchase decisions, most studies have focused on dominant platforms such as Shopee, Lazada, and Tokopedia. Empirical studies on less dominant platforms, such as Bukalapak, are still very limited, especially in the context of specific demographics, such as university students. However, some studies have shown contradictory results. For example, Marcellino & Pardede (2023) found that price has no significant effect on purchasing decisions on social media, although service quality and e-WOM play major roles. This difference indicates a research gap in the context of a platform that is not yet dominant and a more focused user segment than TikTok.

This article positions itself as a contribution to the effort to answer the gap by focusing on Bukalapak student users. This segmentation is important because university students are digital natives who are highly sensitive to service quality and price but are also influenced by emotional and cognitive promotional strategies (Usbaniyah & Hastuti, 2024). Additionally, the local context used in this study provides a unique contribution to the literature, which has been dominated by global or national approaches without considering the specific context of higher-education institutions (Abdullah, 2020).

In terms of methodological approaches, most previous studies have used quantitative methods with linear regression or structural equation modeling (SEM) techniques. For example, Ovalia & Rahmawati (2024) used the PLS-SEM approach to assess the direct and indirect effects of variables such as price, promotion, and service quality on



purchasing decisions mediated by e-WOM. Similarly, Jaya & Heryjanto (2023) showed that purchase intention is an important mediating variable in explaining the relationship between marketing attributes and purchase decisions. While the linear regression approach remains dominant, variations in analytical strategies and respondent segmentation indicate a trend towards increasingly context-specific research.

As a foundation for the methodology of this study, the conceptual synthesis brings together three key dimensions—service quality, price, and promotion—as independent variables that are assumed to influence consumer purchase decisions in a digital environment. The selection of university students as the research population strengthens the relevance of the study, as they are a group that intensely uses e-commerce and is responsive to digital marketing strategies. By adopting a multiple linear regression approach as the main analytical method, this study aims to empirically test the predictive power of each variable on purchasing decisions on the Bukalapak platform while confirming the underlying theoretical model (Humairoh & Annas, 2023).

## METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach with a case study research strategy, which aims to empirically examine the effect of service quality, price, and promotion on the purchasing decisions of Bukalapak application users among students of the S1 Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Riau University class of 2020. A quantitative approach was chosen because it allows for the objective measurement of the relationship between variables through the collection of numerical data that are statistically analyzed (Creswell & Creswell, 2022). A case study was chosen as a strategy because it allows for an in-depth exploration of a specific phenomenon in a

real context, namely, student purchasing behavior on a less dominant e-commerce platform.

The data sources in this study consisted of two types: primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained directly from the research subjects through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire was designed to measure students' perceptions of service quality, price, promotion, and purchasing decisions. The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, which is commonly used in consumer behavior research (Joshi et al., 2015). In addition, primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with several purposively selected respondents to further explore their motivations and experiences using Bukalapak. Secondary data were used to enrich the interpretation of the findings and came from journal articles, research reports, public statistical data such as Katadata.co.id, and other scientific literature relevant to the topic.

Data were collected using three main techniques: observation, interviews, and questionnaires. Observations were conducted to understand the actual behavior of students in accessing and using these platforms. Interviews were conducted to obtain additional exploratory qualitative data. The questionnaire was developed based on variable indicators adapted from previous research and was tested for validity and reliability (Zikmund et al., 2013). Instrument validity was tested through the item-total correlation test, and reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The questionnaire was distributed online using Google Form to 100 respondents who were active students majoring in management in 2020.

The inclusion criteria in this study were: (1) active students of the S1 Management Study Program FEB Riau University class of 2020; (2) have used the Bukalapak application to make purchase

transactions at least once in the last six months; and (3) willing to voluntarily participate in filling out the questionnaire. The exclusion criteria were: (1) students who were not in the class of 2020; (2) students who had never used Bukalapak; and (3) students who provided incomplete or invalid responses to the questionnaire. The determination of these criteria aims to ensure the suitability and quality of the data obtained from respondents who are truly relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2015).

The unit of analysis in this study is an individual, namely, students who meet the inclusion criteria as active Bukalapak users. The research subjects totaled 100 people selected using a purposive sampling technique. This technique allows researchers to select respondents based on specific characteristics relevant to the phenomenon being studied, namely, purchasing behavior through e-commerce platforms (Etikan et al., 2016). The composition of respondents based on gender shows 42% male and 68% female, with the whole being in the age range of 19-24 years, which represents the majority of active e-commerce users among students.

The data analysis technique used in this study is multiple linear regression, which aims to determine the influence of the independent variables service quality (X1), price (X2), and promotion (X3) on the dependent variable, purchase decisions (Y). Prior to regression analysis, the data were first tested for classical assumptions, including normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and autocorrelation tests, to ensure that the regression model used met the Best Linear Unbiased Estimator (BLUE) requirements (Gujarati & Porter, 2009). Data processing was done with the help of IBM SPSS Statistics software version 26, which has been commonly used in social and business quantitative data analysis (Field, 2017). The main outputs of this analysis included regression coefficients, significance values

(p-value), and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), which measures the contribution of the independent variable to the dependent variable.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

This study involved 100 respondents who were active students of the S1 Management Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Riau University, Class of 2020. The composition of respondents based on gender shows that 42 (42%) were male and 68 (68%) were female. All respondents were in the age range of 19-24 years, in accordance with the characteristics of the target population of the study.

The descriptive test results show that the average perception score of the service quality variable is 4.21 on a Likert scale of 1-5, indicating that most respondents rated Bukalapak's service quality as good. The price variable obtained an average score of 3.67, indicating that neutral perceptions tend to be positive towards product prices at Bukalapak. The promotion variable shows the highest average score of 4.42, reflecting that students respond positively to Bukalapak's promotional efforts. The purchasing decision variable obtained an average score of 4.10, indicating the tendency of students to make purchases based on the observed factors.

The instrument validity test using Pearson's product-moment correlation resulted in an r-count value for all items > 0.30, which means that all questionnaire items were valid. Furthermore, the reliability test results show that the Cronbach's alpha value for all variables is above 0.70, namely 0.836 for service quality, 0.743 for price, 0.821 for promotion, and 0.880 for purchasing decisions, indicating that the instrument has high reliability (Joshi et al., 2015).

Multiple linear regression analysis was used to test the effects of service quality variables (X1), price (X2), and promotion

(X3) on the purchasing decision (Y). The results of the regression model testing are as follows:

$$Y = 1,654 + 0,324X_1 + 0,043X_2 + 0,693X_3$$

Based on the output from SPSS, the regression coefficient for the service quality variable (X1) is 0.324 with a significance value (p-value) of 0.000, which means that service quality has a positive and significant effect on the purchase decision. The price coefficient (X2) is 0.043, with a p-value of 0.090, indicating that the effect of price is not statistically significant at the 0.05 significance level. The promotion variable (X3) has a coefficient of 0.693 and a p-value of 0.000, which means that promotion has the most dominant and significant influence on the students' purchasing decisions.

The simultaneous test using the F value shows that the three independent variables jointly influence the purchasing decision variable. The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) test results show a value of 0.982, which means that 98.2% of the variation in purchasing decisions can be explained by the three independent variables (service quality, price, and promotion), while the remaining 1.8% is explained by other variables outside this model (Field, 2017).

Secondary data obtained from Katadata.co.id show that Bukalapak was ranked fifth among the most-visited e-commerce platforms in 2023, with 168,200,000 visits. In comparison, Shopee gained 2,349,900,000 visits, followed by Tokopedia with 1,254,700,000 visits, Lazada 762,400,000, and Blibli 337,400,000 (Ahdiat, 2024).

Furthermore, the results of similar studies support these findings. For example, Angelica & Gunawan (2024) found that the variables of price, promotion, reliability, and physical evidence attributes of service quality

together have a significant effect on purchasing decisions on the Shopee platform. Usbaniyah & Hastuti (2024) reported that price and service quality positively influenced the purchasing decisions of college students who used Shopee, with a model contribution of 65.2%. Ovalia and Rahmawati (2024) showed that price and service quality directly and indirectly through the intermediary of e-WOM have a significant influence on online food purchasing decisions.

Marcellino & Pardede (2023) in their research on the TikTok social media platform stated that although service quality and e-WOM influenced purchasing decisions, price did not show a significant effect. Launtu (2021) also reinforces the finding that both price and product quality contribute positively to online purchasing decisions. Nabila and Usman (2021) conducted research on JD.ID users and found that service quality had the highest contribution to purchasing decisions, with a coefficient of 0.660 in the multiple linear regression model.

Meanwhile, Humairoh and Annas (2023) on the Lazada platform showed that promotion has a stronger influence than service quality in driving students' beauty product purchase decisions. Similar results were reported by Ningtiyas and Sukaris (2021) on Shopee users, where promotion and service had a significant influence, and price was not significant.

Thus, the quantitative results of this study indicate that promotion is the most dominant variable influencing purchasing decisions, followed by service quality, while the effect of price is statistically insignificant in the respondent's population.

The main results of this study show that among the three variables studied - service quality, price, and promotion - promotion factors have the most dominant and significant influence on the purchasing

decisions of Bukalapak application users, followed by service quality, which also shows a significant influence, while price does not show a statistically significant influence. This finding directly answers the four research problem formulations and supports most of the proposed hypotheses, except H2, which states that price affects purchase decisions.

Within the framework of consumer behavior theory, these results confirm the importance of external stimuli in shaping consumer responses. Promotion serves as the main driver that directs consumers' attention to the product and forms higher value perceptions, in accordance with the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) model of purchasing behavior (Angelica & Gunawan, 2024). In addition, high service quality can increase the perception of reliability and user comfort, strengthening the perception of utilitarian value, which is the basis for rational decisions by students as digital natives (Nabila & Usman, 2021). In contrast, the insignificant effect of price can be explained by the level of price homogeneity between e-commerce platforms and the tendency of young consumers not to always choose the lowest price but to consider convenience and the overall user experience (Saldanha et al., 2021).

A comparison with the findings of previous studies shows both consistency and variation. Ovalia and Rahmawati (2024) revealed that promotion and service quality significantly influence purchasing decisions, whereas price has an indirect effect mediated by electronic word-of-mouth (e-WOM). These findings are consistent with those of the present study, confirming that effective promotions can directly change consumer perceptions and attitudes. In contrast, Marcellino and Pardede (2023) found that service quality has a significant effect, but price does not, even in the context of social media as the primary marketing channel. Similar results

were reported by Humairoh and Annas (2023), who found that promotions had a greater influence than service quality on the decision to purchase beauty products through e-commerce.

However, some studies have shown that price remains an important determinant of purchase intention. For example, research by Launtu (2021) on the Lazada platform states that price and product quality both have a positive and significant effect on purchasing decisions. Meanwhile, Jaya and Heryjanto (2023) underlined the importance of purchase intention as a mediating variable between marketing attributes and purchase decisions, including price. This suggests that demographic context and user segmentation play significant roles in determining the strength of each variable on purchasing decisions.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in presenting empirical evidence based on local data and a specific population, namely student users of Bukalapak, a platform that has yet to dominate the national e-commerce market in Indonesia. Most previous studies have examined Shopee and Tokopedia as dominant platforms (Maulana & Hariasih, 2024). This study broadens the scope of research on e-commerce consumer behavior while underscoring the importance of the local context in formulating effective marketing strategies. In addition, the regression model with a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) value of 0.982 indicates that the model used has a very high predictive power, confirming the validity of the conceptual framework adopted in this study.

The main limitation of this study lies in the scope of the population, which is limited to one specific educational institution and generation; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all e-commerce users in Indonesia. In addition, the quantitative approach used does not



capture the emotional aspects or subjective experiences of users, which may be relevant for understanding digital purchasing decisions. This study also does not include mediating variables such as e-WOM, risk perception, or brand trust, which have been proven in several studies to moderate the influence of independent variables on purchasing decisions (Budianto et al., 2023).

Based on these results and limitations, further research is recommended to expand the coverage of respondents to various campuses and age segments to increase the generalizability of the findings. The addition of mediation or moderation variables to the analysis model is also recommended to gain a more thorough understanding of the purchasing decision process in the digital era. For practitioners and managers of e-commerce platforms such as Bukalapak, the results of this study emphasize the importance of investing in promotions and improving service quality, given that these two factors have the most significant influence on the purchasing decisions of the younger generation. The government and policymakers can also utilize these results to design digital education strategies for consumers to be smarter in choosing platforms and transacting online safely and efficiently (Tumbio & Hairudin, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that among the three independent variables analyzed, promotion has the most significant influence on the purchasing decisions of Bukalapak application users among Management students of Riau University class of 2020, followed by service quality, which also makes a significant contribution to the purchase decision. However, the price variable did not have a statistically significant effect on purchasing decisions. These findings indicate that the effectiveness of promotions and service quality are the main factors that encourage consumers to make purchasing decisions

on e-commerce.

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