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Government & Resilience

Journal Homepage: https//journal.dealingsfoundation.com/index.php/GR/
ISSN: 3032-2820 (Online) / 3032-7601 (Print)

Digital Market Governance: Examining the Role of Sales Promotions and Brand Trust in Shaping Purchase Decisions on Online Marketplaces

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Received: 3 April 2026; Revised: 7 April 2026; Accepted: 10 April 2026

Abstract

Rapid growth in Indonesian digital commerce has sharpened rivalry between marketplace platforms, pushing firms to design sharper promotional tactics aimed at young shoppers. Shopee, a leading e-commerce player, regularly uses incentives like cashback and flash sales to draw in users, especially those from Generation Z. Yet an appealing promotion may fail to produce a purchase if consumers do not also trust the brand. This research investigates how sales promotions (cashback and flash sales) and brand trust shape the buying decisions of Indonesian Generation Z Shopee users, and whether brand trust carries part of the promotional effect to purchase decisions. Using a quantitative design, we analyzed data from 102 qualified respondents with Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Results show that sales promotions significantly affect brand trust as well as purchase decisions. Brand trust also exerts a positive, significant effect on purchase decisions and serves as a mediator that amplifies the impact of promotions. Promotional success on digital marketplaces therefore depends not just on how attractive the incentive is but also on how well the platform builds and sustains consumer trust. The study deepens understanding of how Generation Z buys on digital marketplaces and offers e-commerce platforms practical guidance for making promotions work better by investing in trust.

Keywords: Digital market governance, Sales promotion, Purchase decision, Generation Z, E-commerce

How to Cite: Yusuf, M. M., Pradana, M., Wardhana, A., Saifullah, A., & Nugraha, D. W. (2026). Digital Market Governance: Examining the Role of Sales Promotions and Brand Trust in Shaping Purchase Decisions on Online Marketplace. *Government & Resilience, 4*(2), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.62503/gr.v4i2.61

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Introduction

As Indonesia's digital commerce sector keeps expanding, e-commerce platforms compete ever more fiercely, and Generation Z has become the largest and most influential group of online marketplace shoppers. Online transaction value, which climbed to hundreds of trillions of rupiah in 2024, signals both a growing digital economy and the rising weight of price incentives, accessibility, and promotions in how people buy (Katadata, 2024). Amid this intense competition, Shopee has reinforced its position by running promotional programs such as cashback and flash sales that pull in younger buyers and speed up their purchase decisions.

How well these promotions work depends heavily on Generation Z's behavioral profile, as this cohort reacts strongly to price incentives and to offers framed around urgency. Earlier research shows that flash sales and cashback substantially raise impulsive buying, notably in digital and live-streaming commerce (Adytya et al., 2024), and that limited-time deals provoke strong emotional and behavioral reactions from Gen Z shoppers (Aqsa et al., 2024). Moreover, over half of Indonesians shop online regularly, and Generation Z forms the biggest and most reactive group of these users (Kompas, 2023). It is therefore strategically important to understand how promotional mechanisms shape this cohort's decision-making on digital marketplaces.

Attractive offers by themselves, however, cannot guarantee that purchasing remains steady and lasting. Online shoppers increasingly expect promotions to be transparent, credible, and fair. Brand trust thus emerges as a key psychological factor that lowers perceived risk and raises confidence in transactions. Kurniadi and Rana (2023) stress that trust is central to sustaining customer satisfaction and loyalty in digital businesses. Likewise, Alfatika (2024) shows that cashback works better when backed by strong brand trust, which in turn reinforces purchase decisions on Shopee. Wider e-commerce research adds that consumers grow more confident when platforms prove credible, dependable, and consistent in delivering value (Kartawinata et al., 2021; Wardhana et al., 2021). Taken together, these studies imply that cashback and flash sales reach their full effect only when the platform is strongly trusted. Where trust is lacking, promotions may catch the eye yet not convert into actual purchases.

Indonesian Generation Z is digitally literate, scrutinizes promotional claims, and readily moves between platforms, which makes the links among sales promotion, brand trust, and purchase decisions more intricate. Promotions that are opaque or inconsistent can erode trust, while credible, well-run promotions can boost platform credibility and purchase intention. Many studies have looked at e-commerce promotions, but few have tested, within a mediation model, how cashback and flash sales work together with brand trust, especially for Indonesian Generation Z Shopee users. We therefore lack a clear picture of how promotional stimuli become purchase decisions through internal psychological processes.

Accordingly, this research sets out to examine how sales promotion and brand trust affect purchase decisions of Generation Z Shopee users and to test whether brand trust mediates this link. Specifically, we ask: how strongly do cashback and flash sale promotions affect purchase decisions, and in what way does brand trust mediate that effect on digital marketplaces?

Literature Review

Conceptual Foundation

According to the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) model, outside stimuli (S) set off internal psychological processes (O) that then shape behavior (R). On digital marketplaces, promotions like cashback and flash sales serve as outside stimuli that prompt shoppers to weigh perceived value and platform performance. Such cues can capture attention and spur buying, above all among Generation Z consumers, who react strongly to price incentives (Adytya et al., 2024; Asyafa, 2026).

This internal appraisal is tied closely to brand trust, meaning consumers' belief that the platform is dependable, credible, and secure. Brand trust is a central psychological mechanism that magnifies promotional stimuli by lowering perceived risk and raising confidence in transactions (Kurniadi & Rana, 2023). We apply the S–O–R framework by treating sales promotion as the stimulus (S), brand trust as the organism (O), and purchase decision as the response (R), which gives an orderly account of how outside promotional activity becomes buying behavior.

The framework fits digital marketplaces well, since shoppers there face many promotional cues yet in the end depend on internal judgements, trust among them, to decide whether to complete a purchase. The S–O–R framework thus provides a solid basis for examining both the direct effect of sales promotion on purchase decisions and its indirect effect via brand trust.

Sales Promotion

Sales promotion covers short-term marketing tactics that encourage buying by adding extra value, for example discounts, cashback, and time-limited deals. On digital marketplaces, tools such as cashback and flash sales are commonly used to grab shoppers' attention and prompt quick purchases. They work especially well in crowded e-commerce markets where consumers face a constant stream of offers (Katadata, 2024; Wardhana et al., 2021).

Earlier research finds that promotions strongly affect consumer behavior, particularly for Generation Z, whose members react readily to price incentives and urgency cues. Flash sales and cashback have been shown to raise impulsive buying and to increase the perceived value of a transaction (Adytya et al., 2024; Aqsa et al., 2024). Promotions viewed as useful and delivered reliably can also build consumer trust, which then supports better behavioral outcomes on digital platforms (Kurniadi & Rana, 2023). Sales promotion thus does more than draw attention; it is central to forming purchase motivation on digital marketplaces.

Brand Trust

Brand trust is the consumer's belief that a brand is dependable, credible, and able to provide value consistently. Online, trust matters greatly because buyers and sellers do not meet physically. Shoppers judge whether a brand is trustworthy based on how they see the platform's security, openness, and service quality (Kurniadi & Rana, 2023; Yunus, 2023).

Trust lowers the risk and uncertainty consumers sense in online transactions, which eventually shapes satisfaction and loyalty. Evidence shows that shoppers engage more with, and stay longer on, platforms that perform consistently and appear credible (Alfatika, 2024; Setyawan et al., 2024). Brand trust can therefore be regarded as a core psychological factor that bolsters consumer confidence and aids decision-making on digital marketplaces.

Purchase Decision

A purchase decision is the process by which consumers weigh options and finally choose to buy a product or service. In e-commerce, such decisions depend on several factors, among them perceived value, promotional appeal, platform dependability, and transaction ease (Shofa et al., 2024; Wardhana et al., 2021; Asyafa, 2026).

For Generation Z, buying decisions are more fluid and are swayed by outside stimuli such as promotions, peer influence, and digital engagement. Research shows that appealing offers and convenient platform features markedly raise the chance that consumers complete a purchase (Guo, 2024; Lestari et al., 2023). Purchase decisions on digital marketplaces thus stem not only from rational appraisal but also from emotional reactions and the benefits that promotions make salient.

Relationship Among Variables The S–O–R framework helps explain how sales promotion, brand trust, and purchase decision are connected. Sales promotion is an outside stimulus that affects how consumers evaluate a platform internally, especially how much they trust it. Cashback and flash sales generate perceived value and draw attention, which can raise consumers' confidence in the platform (Adytya et al., 2024; Jose, 2024).

Brand trust, in turn, largely decides whether shoppers go ahead and buy. Consumers who trust a platform tend to regard transactions as safe and dependable, which increases their readiness to purchase (Kurniadi & Rana, 2023; Setyawan et al., 2024). Sales promotion may also shape purchase decisions directly by generating urgency and a sense of savings that push consumers to complete the transaction (Lestari et al., 2023; Wardhana et al., 2021).

Sales promotion therefore appears to influence purchase decisions both directly and indirectly, with brand trust acting as an internal psychological channel. Grasping how these variables interact is thus key to explaining consumer behavior on digital marketplaces, especially among Generation Z.

Sales Promotion and Brand Trust

In the S–O–R framework, sales promotion is an outside stimulus that shapes consumers' internal judgements, notably their brand trust. Cashback and flash sales create impressions of value, fairness, and dependability, and these impressions raise confidence in the platform. Beyond drawing attention, such incentives signal that the platform can provide its users with steady and reliable benefits.

Earlier work shows that how intense promotional offers are can strongly shape the emotional and cognitive reactions of Generation Z shoppers, who are at home in digital settings and react to price incentives (Adytya et al., 2024). Promotions carried out openly and consistently also signal platform credibility, strengthening trust because consumers see the brand as offering stable and dependable value (Kartawinata et al., 2021; Wardhana et al., 2021a).

Still, whether a promotion builds trust depends not only on how appealing the offer is but also on whether consumers see its execution as credible and consistent. Promotions viewed as deceptive or too aggressive can undermine trust, while clear and dependable promotional mechanisms can increase confidence in the platform.

Accordingly, we expect cashback and flash sales to act as stimuli that shape consumers' internal judgement of platform reliability and thereby reinforce brand trust, a key driver of later consumer behavior. This reasoning leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: Sales promotion positively and significantly affects brand trust.

Sales Promotion and Purchase Decision

Sales promotion is a strong outside stimulus that shapes buying behavior directly, especially for Generation Z shoppers, who react readily to price incentives. Flash sales and cashback produce urgency, emotional arousal, and perceived monetary gains, all of which can raise purchase intention (Aqsa et al., 2024). On digital marketplaces, promotional signals have been found to affect every step of decision-making, from first consideration to final checkout (Wardhana et al., 2021b).

Promotions also work better on platforms that are dependable, accessible, and simple to use. If shoppers see the promotional benefit clearly and find checkout easy, they respond more favorably and are more likely to buy. This applies especially to Generation Z, whose purchases are frequently driven by speed, convenience, and how appealing the promotional value appears (Shofa et al., 2024).

Under the S–O–R framework, sales promotion is a stimulus able to prompt behavior directly when shoppers judge an offer useful, well-timed, and worth acting on. Its effect may nonetheless differ according to how consumers read the promotion's credibility and fairness, particularly on digital marketplaces where information is easy to find and compare.

We therefore expect sales promotion to serve not merely as an attention-getter but as a direct driver of purchase decisions in competitive digital marketplaces. This reasoning leads to the second hypothesis:

H2: Sales promotion positively and significantly affects purchase decisions

Brand Trust and Purchase Decision

In the S–O–R framework, brand trust is an internal psychological state capturing how secure, confident, and comfortable consumers feel when using a platform. Consumers who trust a brand are more willing to transact, share personal data, and follow the platform's suggestions. This state strongly influences how shoppers interpret and react to outside stimuli on digital marketplaces.

Earlier studies identify trust as a major driver of purchase decisions, since shoppers prefer brands that show dependability, integrity, and steady service quality (Kurniadi & Rana, 2023). Trust matters even more for Generation Z, who judge platforms on perceived authenticity and accountability as well as on functionality (Jose, 2024). Trust further lowers the perceived risk of online transactions, raising the chance that a purchase is completed (Wardhana et al., 2021b).

On digital marketplaces, where uncertainty and information asymmetry run fairly high, trust is a vital mechanism that carries consumers from hesitation to a final purchase. When trust is insufficient, shoppers may postpone or skip transactions even when facing attractive offers.

In S–O–R terms, brand trust is the organism component converting outside stimuli into behavior, so greater trust should directly raise consumers' willingness to complete a purchase. This reasoning leads to the third hypothesis:

H3: Brand trust positively and significantly affects purchase decision.

The Mediating Role of Brand Trust

In the S–O–R framework, brand trust is an internal psychological mechanism that links sales promotion, the stimulus, with purchase decision, the behavioral response. Promotions can capture attention and create perceived value, but whether shoppers go on to buy depends largely on whether trust is present.

Empirical findings show that trust is vital for turning promotional appeal into real buying, since consumers act on offers more readily when they view the platform as credible and dependable (Setyawan et al., 2024). Trust also raises the perceived credibility of promotional programs, making them more effective in shaping decisions. On digital marketplaces, where uncertainty and perceived risk are fairly high, trust eases consumer worries and builds confidence in transactions (Kartawinata et al., 2021; Wardhana et al., 2021a).

Hence, sales promotion affects purchase decision not only through a direct route but also through an indirect one in which brand trust is central. Put differently, promotions work better once consumers come to trust the platform offering them.

In S–O–R terms, sales promotion is the stimulus that starts consumer evaluation, brand trust is the internal state that shapes perception, and purchase decision is the resulting behavior. Brand trust is thus expected to link promotional activity with buying behavior on digital marketplaces. This reasoning leads to the fourth hypothesis:

H4: Sales promotion positively and significantly affects purchase decision, with brand trust as a mediating variable.

Figure 1 shows the Research Model for this research.

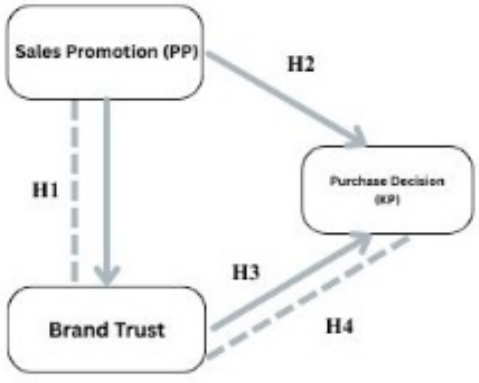


Figure 1. Research Model. Source: Processed by the researcher, 2026

Research Methods

Data in this study were collected through an online survey distributed via Google Forms, utilizing a convenience sampling technique due to its efficiency in digital consumer research contexts

(Sugiyono, 2022). A total of 200 responses were initially obtained from Shopee users through various social media platforms. After the screening process was conducted based on the research criteria, including respondent suitability for the Generation Z category, prior experience using Shopee promotional features such as cashback and flash sale, and completeness of questionnaire responses, 102 valid responses were retained for further analysis. The final sample is considered adequate for PLS-SEM analysis, which is suitable for moderate sample sizes and does not require strict normal data distribution (Ghozali, 2023; Hair et al., 2021). The questionnaire was disseminated through various social media platforms to ensure broader reach, following approaches commonly used in prior e-commerce studies (Kartawinata et al., 2021).

This research examined four constructs—Sales Promotion, Brand Trust, Purchase Decision, and the mediating role of Brand Trust—measured using 20 indicators adapted from established instruments and adjusted to fit the Shopee marketplace context. Sales Promotion assessed perceived benefits, attractiveness of cashback, and urgency from flash sale programs; Brand Trust captured perceptions related to reliability, integrity, and transaction security; while Purchase Decision measured purchase intention and consumer confidence. All indicators were evaluated using a five-point Likert scale, consistent with standard practices in digital consumer behavior research (Wardhana et al., 2021a, 2021b). The use of a five-point Likert scale was intended to facilitate respondents in expressing their level of agreement toward each statement in a clear and structured manner. The measurement items were structured based on the proposed hypotheses, including direct and mediating relationships (H1: X→Y, H2: X→Z, H3: Y→Z, H4: X→Y→Z).

SmartPLS 4.0 was employed as the analytical tool due to its ability to handle complex structural models and mediation analysis under moderate sample conditions. The analysis followed two main stages: assessment of the measurement model to ensure validity and reliability, and evaluation of the structural model to examine path coefficients, R-square values, effect sizes, and predictive relevance. Bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples was conducted to test the significance of both direct and indirect relationships, while mediation analysis adhered to the procedures outlined by Hair et al. (2021). In addition, discriminant validity was assessed to confirm that each construct was empirically distinct from the others, while the indirect effect analysis was used to determine the mediating role of brand trust in the relationship between sales promotion and purchase decision. This approach is consistent with established methodologies used in prior studies investigating the relationship between promotional strategies, consumer trust, and purchasing behavior in digital marketplace settings as shown in Table 1 (Kartawinata et al., 2021; Wardhana et al., 2021a).

Table 1. Indicators/ Measurement Items

Variable	Indicator	Description
Sales Promotion (SP)	SP1	The amount of cashback offered by Shopee is attractive to me.
	SP2	I find it easy to claim cashback after making a transaction.
	SP3	Shopee often holds flash sale programs.
	SP4	The quality of the flash sale promotions on Shopee caught my attention to shop.
	SP5	The timing of the Shopee flash sale suits my needs.
	SP6	Shopee's flash sale program is right on target and fits its target market.
Brand Trust (BT)	BT1	I feel Shopee has a reliable system to ensure customer satisfaction.
	BT2	I feel comfortable using the Shopee app and services.

	BT3	I have had a positive experience using Shopee for shopping.
	BT4	Shopee has an efficient and professional service system.
	BT5	I believe Shopee is capable of managing transactions well and safely.
	BT6	Shopee is known as a trusted marketplace in Indonesia.
	BT7	Shopee has a good reputation among e-commerce users.
	BT8	Shopee is honest and transparent in providing product information.
	BT9	Shopee treats its customers fairly and responsibly.
Purchase Decision (PD)	PD1	I know that Shopee is a marketplace that often offers promotional programs such as cashback and flash sales.
	PD2	I was interested to find out more about the product after seeing the Shopee promotion.
	PD3	I know the benefits and conditions that apply to the Shopee promotional program.
	PD4	I have a positive view of Shopee promotions.
	PD5	I made a purchase after seeing the Shopee promotion.

Source: Author Research, 2026.

Results and Findings

The dataset comprises 102 Generation Z Shopee users who answered an online questionnaire shared through several social media platforms under convenience sampling. The sample satisfies the minimum recommended for PLS-SEM, which suits models with several latent variables and mediation paths (Ghozali, 2023; Aisyah et al., 2026). Items were rated on a five-point Likert scale and analyzed in SmartPLS 4.0. Respondents had been screened against the study criteria beforehand, so the final dataset matches the research objectives.

Assessment of the measurement model showed adequate loadings for every indicator, AVE above 0.50, and reliability coefficients above 0.70, confirming that Sales Promotion, Brand Trust, and Purchase Decision are valid and reliable constructs. The measurement model thus satisfies the standards for convergent validity and internal consistency, which permits examination of the structural paths between variables.

In the structural model, Sales Promotion significantly affected both Brand Trust and Purchase Decision, and Brand Trust significantly affected purchasing as well. The mediation test showed that Brand Trust partially mediates between Sales Promotion and Purchase Decision, meaning promotions work better when consumers strongly trust the platform. Sales promotion thus shapes purchase decision directly and also indirectly by building consumer trust in the platform.

In sum, every hypothesis is supported, showing that Shopee's promotions positively shape Generation Z buying behavior both directly and indirectly via stronger brand trust. The results lend empirical backing to the research model and underline the usefulness of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework for explaining consumer behavior on digital marketplaces as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Respondent's Profile

Profile Category	Criteria	Frequency
Age	13–28 years	101

	Over 28 years	1
Gender	Female	52
	Male	50
Occupation	Students	71
	Employee	22
	Merchant	1
	Freelance	8

Source: Author Research, 2026.

Measurement Model (Outer Model)

The evaluation of the measurement model was conducted to ensure that each indicator accurately represented its respective construct. The results indicate that all indicator loadings exceeded the 0.70 threshold, demonstrating strong indicator reliability for the constructs of Sales Promotion, Brand Trust, and Purchase Decision. In addition, the values of Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability for all variables were above 0.70, while the AVE values were greater than 0.50, confirming adequate internal consistency and satisfactory convergent validity in accordance with established PLS-SEM guidelines (Ghozali, 2023). These findings show that the indicators used in this study were able to measure their respective constructs consistently and appropriately.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion, where the square root of the AVE for each construct was higher than its correlations with other constructs. Furthermore, the SRMR value was within the acceptable threshold, indicating a satisfactory overall model fit. This result suggests that each construct in the model is empirically distinct and not excessively overlapping with the others. Based on these findings, the measurement model can be considered valid and reliable, allowing the analysis to proceed to the structural model for further examination of the relationships among the study variables. Accordingly, the outer model assessment provides sufficient evidence that the measurement quality is adequate for hypothesis testing.

Measurement Model Assessment

To assess the adequacy of the measurement model, the outer model was evaluated using several key indicators, including factor loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). These measures are commonly used in PLS-SEM to determine the reliability and validity of the constructs employed in the study. The evaluation of these indicators ensures that each construct is measured accurately and consistently before proceeding to structural model analysis.

1. Factor Loadings

The results of the factor loading analysis indicate that the majority of indicators for Sales Promotion (SP), Brand Trust (BT), and Purchase Decision (PD) exceed the 0.70 threshold, demonstrating strong convergent validity and confirming that each construct is well represented. The indicators for Brand Trust show consistently high values, suggesting that respondents have a clear and consistent perception of platform reliability. Similarly, the indicators for Sales Promotion perform well, indicating that respondents interpret cashback and flash sale features consistently. In addition, the Purchase Decision indicators exhibit stable loading values, reflecting a reliable measurement of consumers' decision-making behavior.

These results indicate that the relationship between indicators and their respective constructs is strong, suggesting that each measurement item contributes meaningfully to representing the underlying latent variable.

2. Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha is used to assess the internal consistency of indicators measuring a specific construct. A value greater than 0.70 indicates acceptable reliability and suggests that the indicators consistently reflect the underlying variable. Based on the SmartPLS output, all constructs in this study exceed the recommended threshold, with Brand Trust scoring 0.942, Purchase Decision 0.878, and Sales Promotion 0.894.

These findings demonstrate that the indicators within each construct exhibit a high level of consistency, indicating that respondents interpreted the measurement items in a stable and coherent manner.

3. Composite Reliability (CR)

Composite Reliability (CR) provides a more precise evaluation of internal consistency in PLS-SEM, as it accounts for the contribution of each indicator's loading. A CR value exceeding 0.70 indicates strong construct reliability. The findings show that all constructs meet this criterion, with Brand Trust achieving a CR value of 0.944, Purchase Decision 0.889, and Sales Promotion 0.896.

This further confirms that each construct is measured reliably and that the indicators collectively provide a consistent representation of the latent variables.

4. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) reflects the extent to which a construct explains the variance of its indicators relative to measurement error. An AVE value above 0.50 indicates adequate convergent validity. In this study, all constructs satisfy this requirement, with Brand Trust obtaining an AVE of 0.683, Purchase Decision 0.672, and Sales Promotion 0.653.

These results indicate that the majority of the variance in the indicators is explained by their respective constructs, confirming that the measurement model demonstrates satisfactory convergent validity and is suitable for further structural analysis as shown in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3. Convergent Validity

Variables	Indicator/ Items	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reability	AVE
Brand Trust (BT)	BT1	0,812	0,942	0,944	0,683
	BT2	0,843			
	BT3	0,810			
	BT4	0,789			
	BT5	0,838			
	BT6	0,857			
	BT7	0,844			
	BT8	0,841			
	BT9	0,800			
Purchase Decision (PD)	PD1	0,873	0,878	0,889	0,672
	PD2	0,861			

	PD3	0,774			
	PD4	0,824			
	PD5	0,759			
Sales Promotion (SP)	SP1	0,790	0,894	0,896	0,653
	SP2	0,860			
	SP3	0,832			
	SP4	0,841			
	SP5	0,782			
	SP6	0,796			

Source: Author Research, 2026.

Table 4. Fornell-Lacker Result

	Brand Trust (BT)	Purchase Decision (PD)	Sales Promotion (SP)
Brand Trust (BT)	0,826		
Purchase Decision (KP)	0,785	0,820	
Sales Promotion (PP)	0,734	0,750	0,808

Source: Author Research, 2026.

The results of the discriminant validity assessment using the Fornell–Larcker criterion indicate that the square root of the AVE for each construct is higher than its correlations with the other constructs, suggesting that the model satisfies the required standards of discriminant validity. The Brand Trust (BT) construct has an AVE square root of 0.826, which is greater than its correlations with Purchase Decision (0.785) and Sales Promotion (0.734). Similarly, the Purchase Decision (PD) construct records an AVE square root of 0.820, exceeding its correlations with Brand Trust (0.785) and Sales Promotion (0.750). The Sales Promotion (SP) construct also shows an AVE square root of 0.808, which is higher than its correlations with Brand Trust (0.734) and Purchase Decision (0.750).

These findings indicate that each construct shares more variance with its own indicators than with other constructs in the model. As a result, the constructs can be considered empirically distinct and clearly separable from one another. This confirms that the model has satisfactory discriminant validity and supports the appropriateness of proceeding to the structural model analysis as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Path Coefficient

	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard deviation	T-statistics	P-Values	Result
Brand Trust (BT) → Purchase Decision (PD)	0,507	0,510	0,089	5,685	0	
Sales Promotion (PP) → Brand Trust	0,734	0,731	0,076	9,716	0	
Sales Promotion (PP) → Purchase Decision (KP)	0,378	0,370	0,094	4,024	0	

Source: Author Research, 2026.

Every hypothesized path in the structural model is statistically significant. Sales Promotion (SP) has a strong positive effect on Brand Trust (BT), with a coefficient of 0.734, t-statistic of 9.716,

and p-value of 0.000. Cashback and flash sales therefore succeed in raising Generation Z consumers' trust in Shopee. Promotions appear to be seen not merely as transactional rewards but also as signs that the platform is credible and delivers value consistently.

Brand Trust (BT) also positively and significantly affects Purchase Decision (PD), with a coefficient of 0.507, t-statistic of 5.685, and p-value of 0.000. Greater trust thus makes consumers more likely to decide to buy. Put simply, shoppers who view the platform as dependable, secure, and credible feel surer about completing a transaction.

Sales Promotion (SP) further has a direct effect on Purchase Decision (PD), with a coefficient of 0.378, t-statistic of 4.024, and p-value of 0.000. Appealing promotions are therefore important in getting Generation Z consumers to finish transactions on the platform. This direct effect is, however, smaller than the effect of Sales Promotion on Brand Trust, suggesting that promotions may work more through building trust than through direct behavioral stimulation by itself.

Regarding predictive accuracy, the model's explanatory power is satisfactory. Brand Trust has an R-square of 0.539, so Sales Promotion explains 53.9% of its variance. Purchase Decision has an R-square of 0.682, meaning Sales Promotion and Brand Trust together explain 68.2% of its variance. The specific indirect effect analysis also shows significant mediation by Brand Trust between Sales Promotion and Purchase Decision.

Overall, these structural model results provide empirical support for the proposed research model and confirm that both direct and indirect relationships among the variables are statistically meaningful.

The results of the hypotheses are:

H1 (Accepted): Sales Promotion positively and significantly affects Brand Trust. Generation Z Shopee users thus build stronger trust in the platform when exposed to appealing programs such as cashback and flash sales. They see these offers as useful incentives and also as indications that the platform is reliable and delivers value consistently.

H2 (Accepted): Sales Promotion positively and significantly affects Purchase Decision. Promotional offers push Generation Z consumers to complete purchases by generating urgency, emotional appeal, and a sense of monetary gain. Sales promotion is thus a key outside stimulus that directly shapes consumer decisions on digital marketplaces.

H3 (Accepted): Brand Trust positively and significantly affects Purchase Decision. Generation Z consumers who regard Shopee as credible, secure, and dependable feel more confident when deciding to buy. Trust thus helps lower uncertainty and increases readiness to complete online transactions.

H4 (Accepted): Brand Trust mediates the effect of Sales Promotion on Purchase Decision. Promotions are more effective when consumers strongly trust the platform. Put differently, sales promotion shapes purchase decision through a direct route and through an indirect one in which trust serves as an internal psychological driver of buying (See Figure 2).

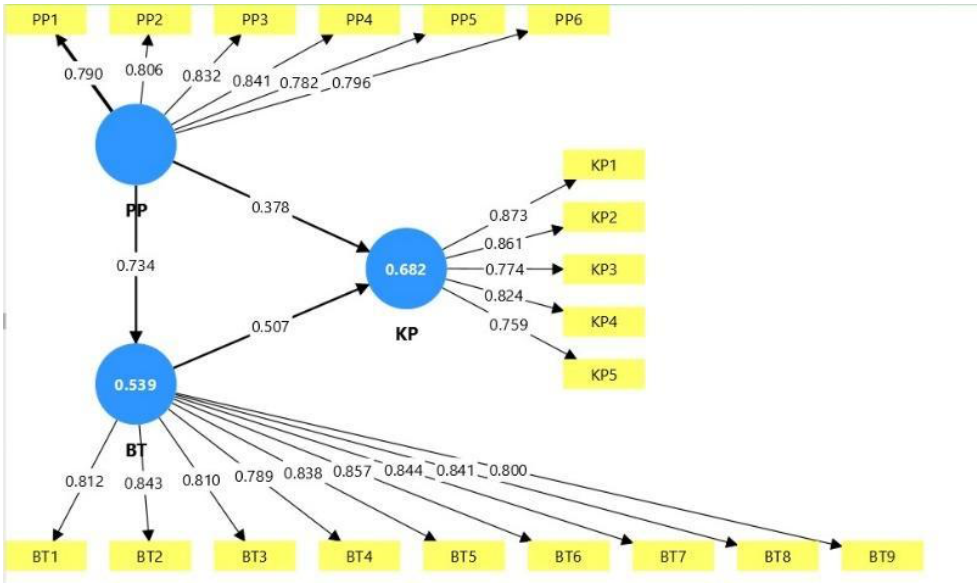


Figure 2. Research analyzed using SmartPLS. Source: Author Research, 2026.

Discussion

The results of the structural model (as depicted in Figure 2) indicate that all hypothesized relationships are statistically significant. The findings show that sales promotion has a significant positive impact on brand trust among Generation Z Shopee users. Promotional activities such as cashback and flash sale programs create strong perceptions of value, convenience, and reliability, which in turn increase consumers' confidence in the platform. This result is consistent with previous studies indicating that well-designed promotional strategies not only attract consumer attention but also foster favorable attitudes toward e-commerce platforms (Kurniadi & Rana, 2023; Kartawinata et al., 2021). In the context of the S–O–R framework, this finding suggests that sales promotion functions as an external stimulus capable of shaping consumers' internal psychological evaluations, particularly their trust in the platform. The relatively strong path coefficient between sales promotion and brand trust also indicates that promotional strategies may be more effective in building trust first before directly encouraging transactional behavior.

In addition, the study demonstrates that both sales promotion and brand trust significantly affect purchase decisions. Promotional offers encourage purchase intentions by generating a sense of urgency and perceived economic benefits, while brand trust helps reduce perceived risk and enhances consumers' willingness to complete transactions. This finding highlights the combined role of promotional attractiveness and platform credibility in influencing purchasing behavior in digital marketplace settings, aligning with prior research that emphasizes the dual importance of economic incentives and security (McKinsey & Company, 2023; Wardhana et al., 2021). This means that Generation Z consumers do not respond to promotional offers solely because of their economic appeal, but also because they interpret such offers within the broader context of platform credibility and transaction security. Accordingly, purchase decisions in digital marketplaces are shaped not only by external incentives, but also by internal evaluations regarding whether the platform is trustworthy enough to support the transaction process.

The results further show that brand trust mediates between sales promotion and purchase decisions. Promotions may spark interest, but trust is what turns that interest into real purchases. The finding adds to e-commerce research by showing that for Generation Z, often described as impulsive buyers, trust is still an essential condition for closing digital transactions.

Conclusion

We find that sales promotion substantially shapes the buying behavior of Generation Z Shopee users, since cashback and flash sales raise brand trust by reinforcing perceived value and dependability. Brand trust in turn strongly affects purchase decisions, underlining how much platform credibility and consumer security matter in online shopping.

Sales promotion also affects purchase decisions both directly and indirectly, the latter through brand trust as a mediator. How well a promotion works thus hinges not only on the appeal of the incentive but also on how much consumers trust the platform offering it.

Theoretically, the study backs the use of the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework to explain how outside promotional stimuli turn into buying behavior via internal psychological mechanisms. The results also indicate that trust is a key mechanism reinforcing the link between promotional strategies and consumer decisions on digital marketplaces.

In short, e-commerce platforms should combine appealing promotions with ongoing work to build and keep consumer trust if they want to drive Generation Z purchases effectively. Without lasting trust, promotions may win attention yet fail to produce purchases reliably. We offer the following practical recommendations for e-commerce platforms serving Indonesian Generation Z consumers:

- Optimize Promotional Strategies: Platforms should keep refining cashback, flash sales, and similar incentive programs, given their importance for raising trust and prompting purchases. Attention should go beyond the appeal of each offer to the consistency and clarity with which it is run, so that consumers view it favorably.

- Enhance Trust-Building Efforts: Platforms should stress transparency, guarantee that products are genuine, and keep transaction systems secure to preserve consumer confidence. Trust-building deserves treatment as a long-term strategic priority, not a short-term marketing target.

- Integrate Promotions with Credibility Signals: Campaigns should come with clear messages about platform reliability, for instance verified sellers, transparent prices, and secure payments. Linking the two helps consumers see promotions as credible and not merely as persuasion.

- Emphasize Long-Term Engagement: Loyalty schemes, personalized suggestions, and reliable after-sales support help sustain trust once promotional periods end. These measures can convert brief promotional engagement into lasting customer relationships.

- Apply an Integrated Communication Strategy: Promotions should carry messages about transaction security and genuine products, building trust and encouraging purchases. In this way, promotional and trust-building efforts operate together rather than in isolation.

Research Limitations and Suggestions For Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the relatively small sample size of 102 respondents may limit the generalizability of the findings to a broader population. In addition, the study focuses exclusively on Generation Z Shopee users, which may restrict the applicability of the results to other demographic groups or e-commerce platforms. Therefore, future research is encouraged to involve larger and more diverse samples to improve the external validity of the findings.

Second, the data were collected using self-reported questionnaires, which may introduce response bias and subjective interpretation. Respondents may provide socially desirable answers or may not fully reflect their actual purchasing behaviour. Therefore, future studies are recommended to incorporate mixed method approaches or utilize behavioural data to obtain more objective and comprehensive insights.

Third, this study examines a limited number of variables, namely sales promotion, brand trust, and purchase decision. This narrow scope may not fully capture the complexity of consumer behaviour in digital marketplace environments. Future research may consider including additional variables such as perceived risk, customer satisfaction, or perceived value to provide a more comprehensive understanding of consumer decision-making.

Furthermore, this study focuses on a single platform, namely Shopee, which may limit the generalizability of the findings across different e-commerce contexts. Future studies are encouraged to conduct comparative analyses across multiple platforms to identify potential differences in consumer behaviour and promotional effectiveness.

Lastly, this study employs a cross-sectional research design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships among the variables. Future research may consider using longitudinal approaches to better capture changes in consumer behaviour over time.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)-Assisted Technology

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the preparation, analysis, or writing of this manuscript. All aspects of the research, including data collection, interpretation, and manuscript preparation, were carried out entirely by the authors without the assistance of AI-based technologies.

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