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Promotional Asymmetry in Retail: Why Special Offers Matter More Than Conventional Discounts

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of Discount Programs and Special Offers on consumer Purchasing Decisions at Matahari Department Store, Thamrin Plaza Medan. The research is important because promotional strategies are widely used in retail, yet different promotional formats may generate unequal consumer responses. A quantitative explanatory design with a cross-sectional survey approach was employed. Primary data were collected through questionnaires administered to 70 consumers selected from a population of 230 customers using incidental sampling. The data were analyzed using multiple linear regression, partial t-tests, simultaneous F-tests, and the adjusted coefficient of determination with SPSS version 16. The findings show that Discount Programs have a positive but statistically insignificant effect on Purchasing Decisions, with a regression coefficient of 0.242, a t-value of 1.698, and a significance value of 0.094. In contrast, Special Offers have a positive, significant, and dominant effect, with a coefficient of 0.686, a t-value of 5.869, and a significance value of 0.000. Simultaneously, both variables significantly affect Purchasing Decisions and explain 44.9% of their variation. These findings imply that retailers should prioritize relevant, transparent, and value-added Special Offers while using conventional discounts selectively. The originality of this study lies in revealing the differential and complementary effects of two promotional mechanisms within an offline department-store context, showing that consumers respond more strongly to additional value, urgency, and exclusivity than to price reductions alone.

Keywords: Discount Programs, Special Offers, Purchasing Decisions, Sales Promotion, Retail Consumer Behavior.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis pengaruh Program Diskon dan Penawaran Khusus terhadap Keputusan Pembelian konsumen di Matahari Department Store, Thamrin Plaza Medan. Penelitian ini penting dilakukan karena strategi promosi banyak digunakan dalam bisnis ritel, tetapi setiap bentuk promosi belum tentu menghasilkan respons konsumen yang sama. Penelitian menggunakan desain kuantitatif eksplanatori dengan pendekatan survei potong lintang. Data primer dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner kepada 70 konsumen yang dipilih dari populasi sebanyak 230 pelanggan menggunakan teknik incidental sampling. Data dianalisis melalui regresi linear berganda, uji t parsial, uji F simultan, dan koefisien determinasi yang disesuaikan dengan bantuan SPSS versi 16. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Program Diskon berpengaruh positif, tetapi tidak signifikan terhadap Keputusan Pembelian, dengan koefisien regresi 0,242, nilai t sebesar 1,698, dan signifikansi 0,094. Sebaliknya, Penawaran Khusus berpengaruh positif, signifikan, dan dominan, dengan koefisien 0,686, nilai t sebesar 5,869, dan signifikansi 0,000. Secara simultan, kedua variabel berpengaruh signifikan dan mampu menjelaskan 44,9% variasi Keputusan Pembelian. Temuan ini mengimplikasikan bahwa peritel perlu memprioritaskan Penawaran Khusus yang relevan, transparan, dan memberikan nilai tambah, sementara diskon konvensional digunakan secara selektif. Orisinalitas penelitian terletak pada pembuktian adanya pengaruh yang berbeda sekaligus saling melengkapi antara dua mekanisme promosi dalam konteks department store luring.

Kata kunci: Program Diskon, Penawaran Khusus, Keputusan Pembelian, Promosi Penjualan, Perilaku Konsumen Ritel.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's retail sector is facing increasingly intense competition amid fluctuating consumer purchasing power. Bank Indonesia reported that retail sales growth during 2024 varied across periods and product categories, with clothing remaining one of the sectors that supported sales during seasonal shopping periods (Bank Indonesia, 2025). This pattern indicates that department stores operate in a market strongly influenced by seasonality, consumer confidence, and promotional momentum. The challenge is also reflected in Matahari's 2024 performance, when total sales declined by 2.0% and same-store sales decreased by 1.7%, partly due to weaker middle-class spending and softer demand during key shopping periods (P.T Matahari Department Store Tbk, 2025). These conditions show that physical retailers can no longer rely solely on product availability and store presence to maintain sales performance.

In this context, discount programs and special offers have become important promotional instruments for attracting consumers and encouraging purchases. However, the widespread use of promotions across physical and digital retail channels may reduce the effectiveness of ordinary price discounts because consumers are increasingly accustomed to promotional messages. Discounts may attract initial attention, but their influence on final purchasing decisions depends on perceived credibility, relevance, timing, and value. Special offers, including product bundles, limited-time incentives, membership benefits, and purchase rewards, may produce a stronger response because they combine economic benefits with urgency and exclusivity. Therefore, the central issue is not merely whether retailers provide promotions, but which promotional format is more effective in shaping purchasing decisions at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan.

Previous studies on promotional strategies can be grouped into three main categories. First, research on price discounts shows that their influence on purchase intention depends on internal reference prices, perceived value, store image, discount format, and consumers' utilitarian and hedonic evaluations rather than on the size of the price reduction alone (Altun & Yengin Sarkaya, 2020a; Grewal et al., 1998; Santini et al., 2015; Sheehan et al., 2019) Second, studies on promotional framing indicate that consumers respond differently to percentage discounts, monetary reductions, coupons, bundles, and other special-offer formats because the structure and presentation of an incentive shape perceived savings and product value (Compeau & Grewal, 1998; González et al., 2016; Raghubir, 2004). Third, research on the psychological and contextual dimensions of promotion demonstrates that emotions, retailer image, price fairness, and shopping context also influence purchasing responses (Yoon et al., 2014; Zielke, 2014). However, prior studies have rarely compared the independent and combined effects of conventional Discount Programs and value-added Special Offers within an offline department-store setting. This gap provides the basis for examining whether both promotional mechanisms generate different levels of influence on purchasing decisions at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan.

This study aims to examine the influence of Discount Programs and Special Offers on consumer Purchasing Decisions at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan. Specifically, the research seeks to determine the partial effect of Discount Programs, assess the partial effect of Special Offers, and evaluate the simultaneous contribution of both promotional strategies to Purchasing Decisions. By addressing these objectives, the study is expected to clarify whether different promotional formats generate distinct consumer responses and to provide empirical evidence on which strategy contributes more strongly to purchasing behavior in an offline department-store context.

Based on consumer-behavior and sales-promotion literature, this study argues that promotional incentives influence purchasing decisions by increasing perceived value, reducing perceived financial sacrifice, and strengthening consumers' motivation to complete a transaction. Discount Programs are expected to positively influence Purchasing Decisions because lower prices can enhance perceived savings and transaction value, although their effectiveness may depend on the credibility, depth, and relevance of the discount (Compeau & Grewal, 1998; Santini et al., 2015). Special Offers are also expected to exert a positive influence because bundles, limited-time incentives, exclusive benefits, and purchase rewards can create additional value, urgency, and psychological attractiveness beyond ordinary price reductions (Ku et al., 2012; Palazón & Delgado-Ballester, 2009). Accordingly, the study proposes three hypotheses: **H1:** Discount Programs have a positive and significant effect on Purchasing Decisions; **H2:** Special Offers have a positive and significant effect on Purchasing Decisions; and **H3:** Discount Programs and Special Offers simultaneously have a positive and significant effect on Purchasing Decisions at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan.

METODE PENELITIAN

The unit of analysis in this study comprises individual consumers who had previously purchased products at Matahari Department Store, Thamrin Plaza Medan. The study examines three constructs: Discount Programs, Special Offers, and Purchasing Decisions. Data were collected at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan, Medan, North Sumatra.

This study used a quantitative explanatory design with a causal-associative approach. The design was selected to examine the statistical influence of Discount Programs and Special Offers on Purchasing Decisions, both partially and simultaneously. A cross-sectional survey was applied because the data were collected during a specific period without manipulating the promotional conditions experienced by consumers.

Primary data were obtained through questionnaires distributed to consumers who had previously shopped at the research location. The population consisted of 230 consumers, while 70 respondents were selected using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error. Respondents were recruited through incidental sampling based on their accessibility and prior purchasing experience. Secondary data were drawn from relevant books, journal articles, and marketing literature.

Data were collected through questionnaires and direct observation. The questionnaire measured respondents' perceptions of Discount Programs, Special Offers, and Purchasing Decisions using structured statements, while observation provided contextual information about promotional activities and shopping conditions. Before hypothesis testing, the instrument was evaluated through validity and reliability tests.

The data were processed using SPSS version 16. The analysis included coding, tabulation, validity and reliability testing, and classical assumption tests comprising normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity. Multiple linear regression was then used to estimate the influence of the independent variables on Purchasing Decisions. Partial effects were tested using the t-test, simultaneous effects using the F-test, and model explanatory power using Adjusted R2R^2R2, with a significance level of 5% (α=0.05\alpha = 0.05α=0.05).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Effect of Discount Programs on Purchasing Decisions

The statistical analysis indicates that the Discount Program variable has a positive unstandardized regression coefficient of 0.242 and a standardized beta coefficient of 0.170. These values show that an increase in the perceived attractiveness of discount programs tends to be followed by an increase in consumers' purchasing decision scores. However, the magnitude of the standardized coefficient is relatively low compared with the other predictor in the model, suggesting that discount programs make only a limited independent contribution to purchasing decisions at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan.

The partial hypothesis test produced a t-value of 1.698 with a significance value of 0.094. Because the significance value is greater than the 0.05 threshold, the effect of discount programs on purchasing decisions is not statistically significant. This finding means that although discounts may attract consumers' attention and create initial purchase interest, they are not sufficiently strong to independently determine final purchasing decisions. Thus, the data provide evidence that conventional price reductions alone do not constitute a decisive factor in shaping consumer purchasing behavior in the observed retail setting.

To clarify the statistical evidence, the results of the multiple linear regression and partial hypothesis testing for the Discount Program variable are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Partial Effect of Discount Programs on Purchasing Decisions

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	t-value	Sig.	Decision
Discount Program	0.242	0.143	0.170	1.698	0.094	Not significant

Note: Dependent variable: Purchasing Decision; significance level α = 0.05.

Table 1 shows that the Discount Program variable has a positive regression coefficient of 0.242, indicating that a one-unit increase in the discount program score is associated with a 0.242-unit increase in the predicted purchasing decision score, assuming that other variables remain constant. Nevertheless, the significance value of 0.094 is higher than the predetermined significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the positive coefficient does not provide sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that discount programs independently influence purchasing decisions.

The relatively low standardized beta coefficient of 0.170 further indicates that the contribution of discount programs to purchasing decisions is limited. Visually, the results demonstrate a clear distinction between the positive direction of the relationship and its statistical strength: discount programs tend to increase purchasing decision scores, but the magnitude of this effect is insufficient to reach statistical significance within the observed sample.

The data reveal several notable patterns regarding the relationship between discount programs and consumer purchasing decisions. First, the regression coefficient is positive, indicating that more attractive discount programs are generally associated with higher purchasing decision scores. Second, the standardized beta value of 0.170 shows that the strength of this relationship is relatively weak. Third, the significance value of 0.094 exceeds the 0.05 threshold, demonstrating that the observed positive relationship is not statistically strong enough to support a significant partial effect. Fourth, the t-value of 1.698 confirms that the contribution of discount programs remains limited when examined independently within the regression model.

These patterns suggest that discount programs may function more effectively as an initial stimulus that attracts consumer attention rather than as a decisive factor that directly determines purchasing decisions. Consumers may notice and respond positively to price reductions, but their final decisions are likely influenced by additional considerations, including product suitability, perceived value, brand preference, purchasing needs, and other promotional incentives. Therefore, the preliminary conclusion is that discount programs have a positive directional relationship with purchasing decisions, although their independent contribution is not statistically significant in the context of Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan.

The Effect of Special Offers on Purchasing Decisions

The statistical analysis shows that the Special Offer variable has a positive unstandardized regression coefficient of 0.686 and a standardized beta coefficient of 0.588. These values indicate that an increase in the attractiveness of special offers is associated with a substantial increase in consumers' purchasing decision scores. Compared with the Discount Program variable, Special Offers demonstrate a considerably stronger contribution within the regression model, as reflected in the higher standardized beta coefficient.

The partial hypothesis test produced a t-value of 5.869 with a significance value of 0.000. Since the significance value is lower than the 0.05 threshold, Special Offers have a positive and statistically significant effect on consumer purchasing decisions. This finding provides strong empirical evidence that promotional schemes such as limited-time offers, bundled products, exclusive deals, or other value-added incentives play an important role in encouraging consumers to complete purchases at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan.

To provide a clearer representation of the statistical evidence, the regression coefficient and partial hypothesis testing results for the Special Offer variable are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Partial Effect of Special Offers on Purchasing Decisions

Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Beta	t-value	Sig.	Decision
Special Offer	0.686	0.117	0.588	5.869	0.000	Significant

Note: Dependent variable: Purchasing Decision; significance level α = 0.05.

Table 2 shows that the Special Offer variable has a positive regression coefficient of 0.686. This means that a one-unit increase in the special offer score is associated with a 0.686-unit increase in the predicted purchasing decision score, assuming that the Discount Program variable remains constant. The standardized beta coefficient of 0.588 indicates that Special Offers make a relatively strong contribution to purchasing decisions within the estimated regression model.

The statistical significance of this relationship is supported by a t-value of 5.869 and a significance value of 0.000, which is lower than the 0.05 threshold. The visualised results therefore demonstrate that Special Offers are not only positively associated with purchasing decisions but also provide statistically strong evidence of an independent effect. Among the two promotional variables examined, Special Offers emerge as the more dominant predictor of consumer purchasing decisions at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan.

The statistical results reveal several important patterns concerning the relationship between Special Offers and consumer purchasing decisions. First, the positive regression coefficient of 0.686 indicates that more attractive special offers are consistently associated with higher purchasing decision scores. Second, the standardized beta coefficient of 0.588 shows that Special Offers have a relatively strong contribution within the regression model and exert a greater influence than the Discount Program variable. Third, the t-value of 5.869 substantially exceeds the critical value, while the significance value of 0.000 is below the 0.05 threshold. These results demonstrate that the relationship is not only positive but also statistically significant.

A further pattern is the dominant role of Special Offers in shaping purchasing decisions. Consumers appear to respond more strongly to promotional mechanisms that provide additional value, exclusivity, urgency, or bundled benefits than to conventional price reductions alone.

Thus, the preliminary conclusion is that Special Offers constitute the most influential promotional factor in the model and have a meaningful independent effect on consumer purchasing decisions at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan.

The significant effect of Special Offers indicates that consumers respond more strongly to promotional incentives that provide clear additional value, urgency, and exclusivity than to conventional price reductions alone. Offers such as limited-time deals, product bundles, membership benefits, and purchase rewards may reduce consumer hesitation by increasing the perceived economic value of a transaction. The relatively high standardized beta coefficient further confirms that the structure and perceived benefits of a promotion are important determinants of purchasing decisions. Therefore, the finding suggests that retailers should prioritize carefully designed Special Offers that combine monetary benefits with urgency and exclusivity to strengthen consumer response and encourage actual purchases.

The Combined Effect of Discount Programs and Special Offers on Purchasing Decisions

The simultaneous test results show that Discount Programs and Special Offers jointly have a statistically significant effect on consumer purchasing decisions. The regression model produced an F-value of 29.146 with a significance value of 0.000, which is below the 0.05 threshold. These results indicate that the two promotional variables, when considered together, provide meaningful explanatory power for variations in purchasing decisions at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan. The model also generated an adjusted coefficient of determination of 0.449, indicating that Discount Programs and Special Offers collectively explain 44.9% of the variation in consumer purchasing decisions, while the remaining 55.1% is associated with other factors outside the model.

To clarify the simultaneous influence of the two promotional variables, the results of the F-test and coefficient of determination are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Simultaneous Effect of Discount Programs and Special Offers on Purchasing Decisions

Statistical Indicator	Value	Interpretation
F-value	29.146	The regression model is statistically significant
Significance	0.000	Significant at $\alpha = 0.05$
Adjusted R^2	0.449	The model explains 44.9% of the variation in purchasing

Statistical Indicator	Value	Interpretation
		decisions
Unexplained Variation	55.1%	Explained by other factors outside the model

Note: Independent variables: Discount Program and Special Offer; dependent variable: Purchasing Decision.

Table 3 shows that the F-value of 29.146 is accompanied by a significance value of 0.000, confirming that Discount Programs and Special Offers jointly have a statistically significant effect on purchasing decisions. The adjusted R^2 value of 0.449 indicates that the combined promotional model accounts for 44.9% of the observed variation in consumer purchasing decisions, while the remaining 55.1% is associated with other factors not included in the analysis, such as product quality, brand image, consumer income, service quality, and personal preferences.

The simultaneous test reveals several important patterns in the relationship between promotional strategies and purchasing decisions. First, the F-value of 29.146 with a significance value of 0.000 confirms that Discount Programs and Special Offers jointly form a statistically significant regression model. Second, the adjusted R^2 value of 0.449 shows that the two variables explain a moderate proportion of purchasing decision variation. Third, more than half of the variation, or 55.1%, remains attributable to factors outside the model, indicating that consumer purchasing decisions are shaped by broader considerations. Overall, the results suggest that promotional strategies are important determinants of purchasing decisions, but their effectiveness depends on how different promotional mechanisms operate together.

The significant combined effect indicates that Discount Programs and Special Offers are more effective when viewed as complementary elements of an integrated promotional strategy. Although Discount Programs do not independently produce a significant effect, their inclusion alongside Special Offers contributes to a model that significantly explains consumer purchasing decisions. This finding implies that retailers should not rely on a single promotional mechanism, but should combine price reductions with offers that create additional value, urgency, and exclusivity. At the same time, the adjusted R^2 value confirms that promotional strategies alone are insufficient to fully explain purchasing behavior, so factors such as product quality, service experience, brand image, consumer income, and personal preferences must also be considered.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that promotional strategies do not produce uniform effects on consumer purchasing decisions. Although Discount Programs and Special Offers are both designed to increase consumer interest and encourage transactions, the statistical results reveal clear differences in their individual influence. Discount Programs show a positive but statistically insignificant effect, whereas Special Offers exert a stronger and significant influence on purchasing decisions. Simultaneously, both promotional strategies contribute significantly to explaining consumer purchasing behavior, although a substantial proportion of the variation remains associated with factors outside the model. These findings suggest that promotional effectiveness depends not merely on the existence of an incentive, but also on how consumers perceive its value, relevance, urgency, and overall benefit. The following discussion therefore examines the limited role of Discount Programs, the dominant contribution of Special Offers, and the broader managerial implications of integrating both strategies.

The Limited Effect of Discount Programs on Purchasing Decisions

The findings show that Discount Programs have a positive but statistically insignificant effect on consumer purchasing decisions at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan. Although the regression coefficient indicates that more attractive discount programs tend to be associated with higher purchasing decision scores, the relatively low standardized coefficient and the significance value above the 0.05 threshold demonstrate that discounts do not independently provide a sufficiently strong influence on final purchasing decisions. This result suggests that conventional price reductions may attract consumers' attention and generate initial interest, but they are not necessarily decisive in converting interest into actual purchase behavior.

This limited effect may occur because consumers evaluate more than price reductions when making purchasing decisions. In a department-store context, purchasing behavior is also shaped by product quality, brand preference, product suitability, available sizes, purchasing needs, service experience, and consumers' financial capacity. In addition, frequent discount campaigns may reduce the perceived uniqueness of the promotion because consumers become accustomed to discounted prices and may regard them as part of the normal pricing pattern. As a result, discounts can lose their ability to create urgency or a strong sense of additional value. The effect of a discount may also depend on its depth, credibility, timing, and relevance to the products sought by consumers. Therefore, the positive but insignificant relationship indicates that discount programs function mainly as a supporting promotional stimulus rather than as the primary determinant of purchasing decisions.

The finding is consistent with previous research showing that price discounts do not generate uniform purchasing responses across consumers and retail contexts. The effectiveness of a discount depends not only on the amount of the price reduction but also on its presentation, timing, and the consumer's evaluation of the benefits offered. Yildirim and Aydin (2020b), for example, found that different discount formats produced different perceptions of price attractiveness and purchase intention. Similarly, Grewal et al. (1998) demonstrated that price discounts influence purchase intention indirectly through perceived value, internal reference prices, and store image. Consumers may therefore recognize the economic benefit of a discount without considering it sufficient to complete a purchase. This interpretation is also supported by Kalwani and Yim (1992), who found that the frequency and depth of promotions shape consumers' expected prices. When discounts are offered repeatedly, consumers may regard promotional prices as normal prices and become less responsive to subsequent discount programs. Nevertheless, the result of the present study differs from Darke and Chung (2005) and Santini et al. (2015), who showed that discount promotions can positively influence deal evaluation, attitude, and behavioral intention when consumers perceive meaningful utilitarian and hedonic benefits.

The novelty of the present study lies in demonstrating that conventional discount programs have only a limited independent effect within an offline department-store environment. Unlike studies that treat price discounts as direct drivers of purchasing intention, the present findings reveal a distinction between attracting consumer attention and determining the final purchasing decision. This result suggests that consumers at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan evaluate discounts together with product relevance, brand preference, quality, shopping needs, and alternative promotional benefits. More broadly, the finding indicates that consumer behavior cannot be understood as a mechanical response to lower prices. Discounts acquire meaning through consumers' perceptions of credibility, fairness, savings, and transaction value (As-Shidqi, 2025). As Grewal et al. (1998) explained, purchasing intention is shaped by the value perceived from the overall transaction rather than by nominal price reductions alone. Therefore, this study contributes to retail promotion literature by showing that the existence of a discount is less important than whether the discount is perceived as credible, relevant, and sufficiently valuable to alter the consumer's final decision.

The finding that discount programs have a positive but insignificant effect reflects both the functional and dysfunctional consequences of price-based promotions. Functionally, discounts can attract consumer attention, communicate short-term economic benefits, increase store traffic, and encourage consumers to evaluate promoted products. Price reductions may also strengthen perceived transaction value when consumers consider the discounted price credible and relevant to their needs. However, repeated or predictable discounts may create dysfunctional effects by shifting consumers' internal reference prices and encouraging them to postpone purchases until another promotional period occurs. Consumers who frequently encounter price promotions may begin to perceive discounted prices as normal, thereby reducing the persuasive power of subsequent campaigns (Lattin & Bucklin, 1989). Excessive reliance on discounts may also produce price-sensitive purchasing patterns, weaken consumers' willingness to buy at regular prices, and potentially reduce profitability when higher sales volume does not compensate for lower margins. Thus, although discount programs can support short-term marketing objectives, their routine use may weaken their distinctiveness and long-term strategic value.

Based on these findings, Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan should reposition discount programs as selective instruments rather than permanent promotional mechanisms. Management should evaluate discount depth, duration, product relevance, customer segments, and profitability before implementing each campaign. Discounts should be concentrated on products with clear inventory, seasonal, or customer-acquisition objectives and communicated through transparent reference prices to maintain consumer trust. The retailer should also conduct periodic evaluations using indicators such as purchase conversion, average transaction value, gross margin, inventory turnover, and repeat purchases rather than assessing success solely from sales volume. Moreover, conventional discounts should be integrated with product quality, service improvement, loyalty programs, and personalized offers because purchase intention is influenced by perceived value and store image in addition to price reductions (Grewal et al., 1998). This approach would allow the company to preserve the positive attention-generating function of discounts while minimizing consumer dependence on promotions and protecting the store's long-term pricing credibility.

The Dominant Role of Special Offers in Purchasing Decisions

The findings indicate that Special Offers have a positive and statistically significant effect on consumer purchasing decisions at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan. Compared with Discount Programs, Special Offers show a substantially stronger standardized coefficient, confirming that they constitute the most influential promotional variable in the model. This result suggests that consumers respond more decisively to promotional schemes that provide additional value beyond a simple price reduction, such as limited-time deals, bundled products, member-exclusive benefits, purchase rewards, or other forms of special incentives.

This stronger effect may arise because Special Offers combine several psychological and economic mechanisms at the same time. They not only increase perceived transaction value, but may also create urgency, exclusivity, and a sense of opportunity that is not easily repeated. Such conditions can reduce consumer hesitation and accelerate the transition from purchase interest to actual purchasing decisions. In addition, Special Offers are often perceived as more concrete and distinctive because they provide benefits that are easier to recognize than ordinary discounts. Therefore, the significant relationship found in this study indicates that consumers are more responsive to promotional formats that offer clear added value and a stronger reason to act immediately.

The finding is consistent with previous studies demonstrating that special offers can strengthen purchasing responses by increasing perceived value, decision urgency, and consumer engagement. Jee et al. (2021) showed that consumers evaluate sales promotions through both utilitarian benefits, such as economic savings, and hedonic benefits, such as enjoyment and the feeling of making a smart purchase. Similarly, Santini et al. (2015) found that promotional benefits enhance perceived value, although their effectiveness may vary across product categories. The significant effect identified in the present study is also aligned with Ku et al. (2012), who found that scarcity-based messages can increase purchase intention when the promotional appeal is compatible with consumers' motivations. Time-limited availability may accelerate purchasing because consumers perceive that postponement could result in losing a valuable opportunity (Aggarwal & Vaidyanathan, 2003). More recent evidence further indicates that promotional offers which give consumers greater choice can improve perceived offer value and encourage purchasing decisions by strengthening their sense of decision freedom (Mukherjee et al., 2024).

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of special offers is not unconditional. Excessive time pressure may complicate decision-making and reduce the positive effect of perceived value, especially when consumers require more information before purchasing(Peng & Kim, 2020). Free gifts or bundled incentives can also generate negative evaluations when the additional item is perceived as irrelevant or incompatible with the promoted product (Park & Yi, 2019). The present study therefore extends earlier findings by demonstrating that, in an offline department-store context, special offers are substantially more influential than conventional discount programs. Its novelty lies in identifying a differentiated consumer response to promotional formats: consumers are not merely attracted by lower prices, but respond more strongly to offers that combine additional value, exclusivity, relevance, and limited availability. This finding suggests that promotional effectiveness is determined by the overall value structure of the offer rather than by monetary savings alone.

The broader interpretation of this result is that purchasing decisions emerge from both economic evaluation and psychological meaning. Special offers can transform an ordinary transaction into a perceived opportunity by allowing consumers to obtain benefits that appear uncommon, personally relevant, or temporarily available. In this sense, the offer functions not only as a price incentive but also as a symbolic signal of advantage, exclusivity, and intelligent consumption. The finding contributes to consumer-behavior literature by confirming that perceived value is multidimensional: consumers evaluate what they receive, the effort or cost they sacrifice, and the emotional satisfaction associated with securing a beneficial deal. Consequently, the dominant role of Special Offers at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan indicates that contemporary retail consumers increasingly assess promotions according to their total experiential and transactional benefits rather than according to price reductions in isolation.

The dominant effect of Special Offers reflects both functional and dysfunctional consequences for retail marketing. Functionally, special offers can increase perceived value, create urgency, stimulate unplanned purchases, and strengthen consumers' perceptions that they are receiving benefits beyond ordinary price reductions. Promotional formats such as bundled packages, limited-time offers, member-exclusive rewards, and purchase bonuses may also enhance shopping excitement and encourage faster decision-making because consumers perceive the transaction as more advantageous and difficult to obtain at another time. This function is consistent with the view that sales promotions can strengthen purchasing responses when they provide clear economic and psychological benefits (Adizka et al., 2024; Kotler et al., 2022). Nevertheless, excessive reliance on special offers may produce dysfunctional consequences. Consumers may become conditioned to purchase only when additional incentives are available, while poorly designed bundles may encourage unnecessary consumption or create dissatisfaction when the accompanying benefit is irrelevant. Repeated claims of exclusivity or urgency may also reduce consumer trust when the same offer appears too frequently. Therefore, special offers can improve short-term sales performance, but their long-term effectiveness depends on transparency, relevance, and consistency with the retailer's value proposition.

Based on these findings, Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan should develop a more selective and data-driven special-offer policy. Management should prioritize offers that provide relevant and easily understood benefits, such as product bundles involving complementary items, limited-time incentives for selected categories, loyalty rewards, and exclusive offers based on customer purchasing history. Each campaign should be evaluated not only through sales volume but also through conversion rates, average transaction value, gross margins, inventory turnover, customer satisfaction, and repeat purchases. The retailer should also avoid overly complex terms and ensure that information concerning duration, eligibility, and benefits is communicated transparently. Special offers should be integrated with service quality, product availability, and brand credibility because promotional effectiveness is stronger when consumers perceive the overall shopping experience as trustworthy and valuable (Afifah & Sakti, 2024; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Through this approach, the company can maximize the persuasive function of special offers while minimizing promotional dependence, consumer disappointment, and potential erosion of long-term brand value.

The Integrated Effect of Promotional Strategies and Its Managerial Implications

The findings demonstrate that Discount Programs and Special Offers jointly have a significant effect on consumer purchasing decisions at Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan. The simultaneous significance of the regression model indicates that purchasing decisions are better explained when both promotional mechanisms are considered together rather than separately. The adjusted coefficient of determination further shows that the two variables explain 44.9% of the variation in purchasing decisions, whereas the remaining 55.1% is associated with other factors outside the model. This result confirms that promotional strategies constitute an important component of consumer decision-making, although they are not the sole determinants of purchasing behavior.

The significant combined effect can be explained by the complementary functions of the two promotional strategies. Discount Programs provide direct economic savings and may initially attract consumers' attention, while Special Offers strengthen the perceived benefits of the transaction through additional value, urgency, exclusivity, or product combinations. Although discounts do not independently produce a significant effect, they may become more persuasive when integrated with special offers that provide consumers with clearer and more relevant benefits. This relationship suggests that consumers assess promotional campaigns as a complete value proposition rather than as isolated incentives. In line with integrated marketing principles, the interaction of price-based and value-added promotions may create a stronger purchasing stimulus because consumers simultaneously perceive monetary savings and additional transactional advantages (Kotler et al., 2022). Nevertheless, the unexplained proportion of 55.1% indicates that purchase decisions also depend on product quality, brand image, service quality, consumer income, personal preferences, and the overall shopping experience.

The simultaneous effect found in this study is consistent with previous research showing that purchasing responses become stronger when promotional instruments collectively enhance consumers' perceived value. Jee (2021) found that discount sales promotions influence consumer purchase decisions through utilitarian benefits, including price–quality evaluation, and hedonic benefits, particularly the perception of being a smart shopper. Similarly, Sinha and Verma (2020) demonstrated that the benefits generated by sales promotions contribute to perceived value, although the relative influence of utilitarian and hedonic benefits varies across product categories. In a department-store context, Gorji and Siami (2020) found that sales promotion displays significantly affect purchase and repurchase intentions, while perceived product quality and price fairness strengthen or weaken the effectiveness of promotional displays. These studies support the present finding that combining direct monetary savings from Discount Programs with the additional value provided by Special Offers may create a more meaningful purchasing stimulus than relying on a single promotional mechanism.

Nevertheless, this study offers a more specific empirical contribution by revealing an asymmetrical but complementary pattern. Discount Programs are not significant when examined independently, whereas Special Offers have a strong individual effect; yet, both variables become significant when assessed simultaneously. This finding indicates that an individually weak promotional instrument may still contribute to consumer decision-making when embedded within a broader value proposition. The result extends previous research that has generally emphasized the positive effects of promotional benefits by demonstrating that promotional effectiveness is determined not only by the strength of each instrument but also by the configuration of benefits presented to consumers. Consumer participation and choice in promotional offers may further strengthen perceived value, satisfaction, and purchase intention because consumers can select incentives that correspond to their preferences. More recent evidence also shows that allowing consumers to choose among promotional rewards can increase offer value and reduce negative responses to incentives with relatively low monetary value (Mukherjee et al., 2024). Thus, the novelty of this study lies in identifying the complementary contribution of conventional discounts and value-added offers within an offline department-store setting.

The broader meaning of these findings is that promotional effectiveness should be understood as part of consumers' overall value assessment rather than as an automatic response to isolated financial incentives. Consumers evaluate both what they gain and what they must sacrifice, while also considering product quality, convenience, emotional satisfaction, and confidence in the retailer. Promotional strategies can therefore influence purchasing decisions by combining monetary savings with psychological and experiential benefits. However, the adjusted R^2 of 44.9% indicates that promotional mechanisms explain only part of consumer behavior. This result contributes to a more comprehensive interpretation of retail purchasing decisions by confirming that promotions operate alongside product attributes, service quality, brand image, price fairness, income, and personal preferences. Accordingly, an integrated promotional strategy should not be interpreted as the accumulation of multiple incentives, but as the coordinated creation of a credible, relevant, and consumer-oriented value proposition.

The integrated effect of Discount Programs and Special Offers presents both functional and dysfunctional implications for retail management. Functionally, combining price reductions with value-added offers can strengthen consumers' overall perception of transaction value, attract store visits, accelerate inventory turnover, and increase the likelihood of purchase. The two instruments may perform complementary roles: discounts communicate immediate monetary savings, while Special Offers provide additional utilitarian and hedonic benefits. However, the simultaneous use of multiple promotions may become dysfunctional when campaigns are too frequent, poorly targeted, or financially inefficient. Excessive promotional intensity can increase consumers' sensitivity to deals, weaken their willingness to purchase at regular prices, and negatively affect brand equity over time (Valette-Florence et al., 2011). Excessive or poorly evaluated promotional incentives may create inefficient marketing practices and produce varying post-promotion effects on brand preference. Retailers often make price-promotion decisions based on intuition rather than systematic evidence, while the long-term effect of promotions may be positive or negative depending on the promotional format and product characteristics (Bogomolova, S., Szabo, M., & Kennedy, 2017; DelVecchio, D., Henard, D. H., & Freling, 2006). Therefore, the significant combined effect should not be interpreted as justification for continuously adding promotions, but as evidence that promotional instruments must be coordinated according to consumer needs, product characteristics, and long-term brand objectives.

Based on these findings, Matahari Thamrin Plaza Medan should implement an integrated, selective, and performance-based promotional policy. Management should combine discounts with Special Offers only when the two instruments provide complementary benefits, such as pairing a limited discount with relevant product bundles, loyalty rewards, member-exclusive incentives, or offers for complementary products. Promotional campaigns should be segmented according to customer profiles, purchasing history, product category, inventory conditions, and margin objectives because consumers may differ considerably in their responses to price promotions (Palazón & Delgado-Ballester, 2009). Each campaign should be evaluated through incremental sales, conversion rates, average transaction value, gross profit, inventory turnover, repeat purchases, and post-promotion sales rather than through transaction volume alone. Because the model explains only 44.9% of purchasing-decision variation, management must also integrate promotional policies with product quality, assortment availability, service quality, price fairness, store convenience, and brand image. This coordinated approach would allow the retailer to maximize the short-term benefits of promotions while controlling margin erosion, promotional dependence, and possible deterioration of long-term customer value.

Table 4. Summary of Research Findings

Research Focus	Statistical Evidence	Main Finding	Explanatory Interpretation
Effect of	B = 0.242; β	Discount Programs	Discounts may attract consumer

Research Focus	Statistical Evidence	Main Finding	Explanatory Interpretation
Discount Programs on Purchasing Decisions	= 0.170; t = 1.698; Sig. = 0.094	have a positive but statistically insignificant effect on Purchasing Decisions.	attention and stimulate initial interest, but they are not sufficiently strong to independently determine final purchasing decisions. Consumers may also consider product quality, brand preference, shopping needs, financial capacity, and overall shopping experience.
Effect of Special Offers on Purchasing Decisions	B = 0.686; β = 0.588; t = 5.869; Sig. = 0.000	Special Offers have a positive, statistically significant, and dominant effect on Purchasing Decisions.	Special Offers provide clearer added value through urgency, exclusivity, bundled benefits, rewards, or limited availability. These benefits strengthen perceived transaction value and reduce consumer hesitation in making purchases.
Combined Effect of Discount Programs and Special Offers	F = 29.146; Sig. = 0.000; Adjusted R^2 = 0.449	Discount Programs and Special Offers jointly have a significant effect and explain 44.9% of the variation in Purchasing Decisions.	The two promotional strategies perform complementary functions. Discounts provide direct monetary savings, while Special Offers increase perceived value through additional benefits. However, 55.1% of purchasing-decision variation remains associated with other factors outside the model.

Note: B = unstandardized regression coefficient; β = standardized regression coefficient; Sig. = significance value; Adjusted R^2 = adjusted coefficient of determination; significance level α = 0.05.

CONCLUSION

The principal lesson derived from this study is that promotional strategies do not produce uniform effects on consumer purchasing decisions. Discount Programs show a positive but statistically insignificant influence, indicating that conventional price reductions may attract attention but are not sufficient to independently determine final purchasing decisions. In contrast, Special Offers demonstrate a stronger, positive, and significant effect, confirming that consumers respond more decisively to promotions that provide additional value, urgency, exclusivity, or bundled benefits. When examined simultaneously, both promotional strategies significantly influence purchasing decisions and explain 44.9% of the observed variation. These findings indicate that promotional effectiveness depends not merely on lowering prices, but on how consumers perceive the overall value and relevance of the offer.

Scientifically, this study contributes to the literature on consumer behavior and retail promotion by demonstrating the differential and complementary effects of two promotional mechanisms within an offline department-store context. The findings provide empirical evidence that Discount Programs and Special Offers should not be treated as equivalent promotional constructs because they generate different levels of consumer response. The study also introduces an important contextual insight: an individually weak promotional instrument may still contribute to a significant overall model when combined with a more influential value-added offer. Thus, the main contribution of this research lies in refining the understanding of promotional effectiveness by emphasizing the structure, perceived value, and configuration of promotional benefits as important determinants of purchasing decisions.

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