

The influence of discount framing on purchase intention and actual behaviour of e-customers through brand values on Shopee Vietnam

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Abstract:

Discounting is one of the most effective types of promotion to attract customers and help businesses improve their brand value, while also increasing their revenues. Due to the rapid growth of e-commerce, revenue from online platforms is increasingly contributing an important part to firms' business results. Therefore, it is crucial to study factors influencing online customers' shopping intention and behaviour, in order to help firms increase their online revenue. Only a few researches concentrate on the relation among discount framing (DF), brand reputation (BR), brand image (BI), and none of them has been conducted in Vietnam. Hence, the research team conducted a quantitative study with 251 valid samples from respondents in Hanoi who have been using Shopee, an e-commerce platform commonly used in Vietnam, using the theory of reasoned action (TRA). The results show that DF has an effect on BR, while both BI and BR influence purchase intention (PI), which was also found to affect final actual behaviour (AB) of online clients.

Keywords: actual behaviour, brand values, discount framing, e-commerce, purchase intention, theory of reasoned action.

Classification numbers: 2.1, 2.2, 4.1

1. Introduction

In a rapidly competitive and turbulent business landscape that requires continuous improvements and top performance, process innovation has been identified as an essential competitiveness source. As Internet information technology is flourishing, retail sales via online platforms have witnessed explosive growth in the past few years. This trend is beneficial for retailers as it enables them to expand their businesses via online platforms [1]. A commonly implemented strategy to increase sales is offering discounts and this strategy is also found to be effective in the case of online purchasing. However, the impact of DF on PIs can be moderated by BR and BI. In the digital marketing and consumer behaviour literature point of view, BI and BR were mentioned as the antecedents of PI as well as AB [2].

Price discounts can dramatically increase sales volume in social e-commerce due to the interaction of

online consumers [3]. On top of that, different ways of framing discounts result in different PIs. About the relation between BR and BI, it is suggested that BR has a direct positive impact on BI [4]. For example, damage to BR will cause a bad impression on the brand, thus discouraging customers from making purchases. However, only a little research has factored in DF, BR, BI, PI and AB all at once. Other studies suggested that BR and BI are influential in PI, however, they did not involve DF as an important factor. Moreover, conflicts exist between the results of different studies.

We noticed that there were limitations in the range of products in those conflicted studies. Besides, many studies got data only from a particular mall or supermarket. Those factors might render the result less reliable due to the lack of diversity. Meanwhile, on e-commerce platforms, consumers usually have a plethora of choices. Yet again, there are only a few studies about the impact of DF on PI and AB through BR and BI, in the context of e-commerce.

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Since 2016, the e-commerce industry in Vietnam has witnessed significant growth, even during the time of the global pandemic. The most prevalent online shopping platform is Shopee. To increase sales, Shopee applies promotional strategies, usually discounts. Consumers usually come across discounted products while browsing this site. However, there were only a few Vietnamese studies about the impact of promotions on consumers' behaviours, especially on online sites. Therefore, it's urgent for our team to conduct a study on Shopee, to see whether Shopee's DF affects its users' perception of brands, hence stimulating their purchase decisions and their purchase behaviours.

Examining how to properly frame a price promotion is crucial to give retailers an insight into the relationship between these factors and help them make the most suitable decision, especially in terms of pricing strategies.

We created a model which includes different factors that are interdependent on each other, to examine the impact of one factor on another that is related to it, specifically:

1. Examine whether there is an impact of DF through brand values - BI and BR - on PI and AB, and if so, is the effect in each case significant or insignificant?
2. Examine the influence of PI on customers' AB.
3. From the research results, we propose solutions to improve sales for businesses that have their stores on Shopee to attract more young customers in Hanoi, as they are the customer segment that accounts for a high proportion of businesses' online revenue.

This study applies Smart PLS 4.0 to examine the effect of DF on PI and AB through BR and BI. It consists of six parts. Part two provides the theoretical background of TRA, overview of e-commerce, DF, BR, BI, PI and AB of online customers. Part three offers the methodology including research design and data analysis techniques. Part four shows the results. Part five provides findings and implications. Part six presents conclusions.

2. Literature review

Following the strong emergence of e-commerce business, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic which transformed the population's shopping habits, studying customers' behaviour on online sites has been capturing the attention of researchers. Among studies regarding this topic, TRA is a widely used theory to find out factors impacting the intention and the behaviours of consumers when shopping online.

The TRA was developed by M. Fishbein, et al. (1975) [5], being the premise for many studies about the consumers' intention and behaviours. TRA suggests that intention leads to behaviours and is dictated by personal attitudes towards behaviours. TRA relates to consumers' behaviours, which are determined by their intentions and Subjective Norms. The theory predicts the attention to perform a behaviour by the consumer's attitudes towards that behaviour rather than their attitudes towards the product or service. Online PI is the likelihood of a consumer purchasing online [6].

The research team employed TRA in our study with the purpose of examining the impact of DF towards the perception of BR and image, and eventually the intention and final purchasing decision of customers in the particular context of the online shopping platform Shopee Vietnam.

2.1. Discount framing

Discount framing is defined as a method to frame a promotional price within a given offer [7]. DF can also be the method in which the price of a particular product is offered to influence consumer response. Most stores use discount brackets to offer bundled products. When a consumer sees a certain discount that represents the nominal price crossed out and the new price lower as its comparison, the consumer thinks of a cost-saving opportunity [8]. Thus, creating a discount framework can increase a consumer's intention to purchase the product. Previous research shows that consumers don't really feel guilty about buying a product with a discount [8]. As a result, framing discounts can increase a product's sales.

2.2. Brand reputation

Brand reputation is defined as the consumer's perception of product quality in relation to the

brand name. Good reputation could lead to positive expectations and bad reputation could lead to negative expectations [9].

Therefore, BR is important. The value of a brand lies in what consumers have experienced and learned about the brand. Consumers want to enhance their social self-actualisation by connecting with a brand that has a high reputation. Some research stated that consumers purchase images, not products. When they choose brands with high reputation, other people will perceive their high life status. The research found that consumers who purchase from reputable brands are consumers who want to show their social status. When consumers buy any product, they think about the reputation of the brand. They see a smaller risk for well-known brands. Therefore, it can stimulate purchasing decisions.

2.3. Brand image

The definition of BI is unstable and varies between authors. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines BI as “the perception of a brand in people’s minds. It’s what people believe about a brand - their thoughts, feelings, expectations” (AMA). BIs are the numerous perceptions that customers have in their minds about brand induced from introducing brand to the market.

Nowadays, organisations are aware that customers’ positive notion about branding creates strategic asset and competitive advantage. BI is regarded as an important factor in determining purchaser’s behaviour.

When consumers buy a product, they are also buying an image of that product. Earlier research has shown that the desired BI can lead to brand loyalty [10], brand equity [11], purchase behaviour [12]. Hence, a positive BI exceeds customer expectations. A positive BI enhances the goodwill and brand value of an organisation.

2.4. Purchase intention

Intention expresses the probability to implement behaviours of an individual in the future. Intention can be defined as a willingness to do a specific behaviour of an individual [13].

Purchase intention is often related to consumer behaviour, perception and attitude. PI is defined as

a tool for predicting the buying process. PI can be changed under the influence of price, or perceived quality and value. In addition, consumers are influenced by internal or external motivations in the purchasing process. Customers tend to think that buying something with a low cost, simple packaging and low-profile is a high risk because the quality of these products is not reliable.

2.5. Actual behaviour

AB is defined as consumer behaviour that is influenced by their intention to act and influenced by their attitudes [14]. Furthermore, AB refers to how people make decisions in spending their time, money, and effort in terms of consuming a product or service [14]. Realistic behaviour is related to the TRA which explains how people’s perceptions of others’ opinions are influenced by people’s intentions and attitudes [5]. The primary purpose of TRA is to determine consumer behaviour to engage or opt out of their intentions. Behavioural humanity is determined by behaviour and prior intentions such as attitudes towards subjective and normative behaviour. Because of these three determinants, this study uses this theory.

2.6. Research hypotheses

This section presents the hypothesised development based on earlier studies’ findings. They are tested through quantitative analysis. From there, the results of the quantitative analysis will answer the research question raised in the introduction.

It is concluded that while consumers show direct responses to price promotions, the effectiveness of the promotion itself is also influenced by sellers’ reputation [15]. Although there are several studies about the impact of BR on consumers’ purchasing intention, surprisingly, most of them did not examine how BR influences their promotions.

In the case of never-before-purchased goods, consumers will consider the promotional price based on other external cues such as BR to form their reviews on products [16].

We assume that consumers make inferences based on BR and respond more positively to promotions from those same brands. Therefore, we propose the first hypothesis (Fig. 1):

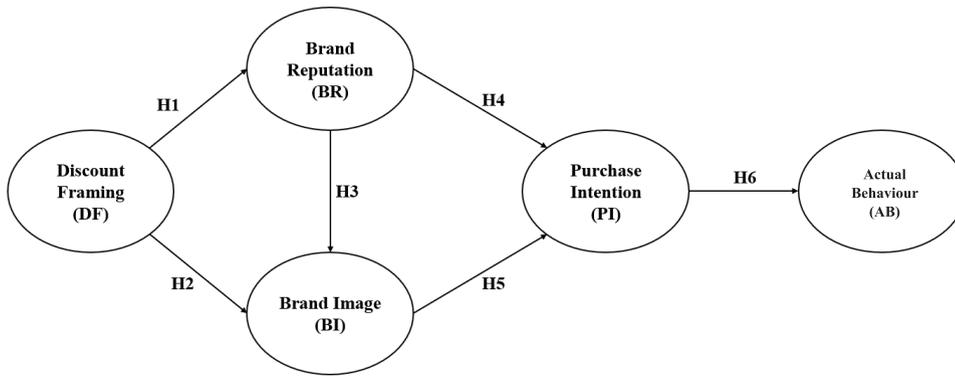


Fig. 1. Research model.

- H1: DF has an impact on BR.

Consumer perceptions of price promotions have been linked empirically to a brand's price image. For example, a low-priced luxury brand product may affect the perceived quality and image of that brand because the lower price is often associated with a lower quality [4]. When customers have to compare the quality of two different brands based on price, they will rate the higher priced product as having higher quality.

It was also found that frequent promotions have an effect on customers' evaluation of BI [17].

However, in a study conducted with 307 people in the Greater Jakarta Area, Indonesia in 2017, DF was found to have no effect on BI [8].

From the aforementioned disagreements between those studies, we propose the second hypothesis:

- H2: DF has an impact on BI.

BR and BI can be linked. Industries that are highly competitive, such as the culinary industry, should have high BR to create consumer trust as well as to reduce uncertainty [18]. When making a purchase, the customer wants to see if the product has enough credibility and reputation. A number of people prefer to purchase reputable brands' product to increase their pride [18]. A well-established brand will lead to customers' loyalty [10]. Hence, customers' perception regarding the brand, or BI, is improved. If a reputation crisis befalls a brand, it is important for managers, marketers and brand owners to manage the crisis as quickly and effectively as possible. However, due to the limited number of studies on the influence of reputation on BI, we propose the third hypothesis:

- H3: BR has a positive impact on BI.

When making a purchase, the customer wants to see if the product has enough credibility and reputation. If someone has positive feelings about buying a product from a certain brand, or a member of their family, friend or colleague recommends the product, that further reinforces PI. Therefore, they are more likely

to make purchasing decisions. BR has been proven to have a positive and significant relationship with customers' PI [19].

On the contrary, in another research, the hypothesis that BR has an effect on PI is rejected [8]. Therefore, to examine the relationship between BR and online PI more clearly, we propose the fourth hypothesis:

- H4: BR has an impact on PI.

Understanding the influence of BI on customer purchase is one of the core issues in current brand management research. BI is considered an important indicator in the purchasing decision process, in which positive brand information affects perceived quality, perceived value, and willingness to buy a product [16]. Consumers tend to prefer products with a more positive BI. According to research done in the US and Europe, a popular store tends to have a larger profit margin because the BI can make consumers feel like buying or not buying. Therefore, this study suggests that BI has an influence on customers' purchasing decisions. From the above discussion, we propose the fifth hypothesis:

- H5: BR has an impact on PI.

In earlier studies, behavioural intentions have been found to be immediate predictors of ABs [20]. Moreover, in the green product industry, some research concludes that consumers' attention to the environment and green products will affect their purchase decisions. As for sustainable clothing, PI for

sustainable clothes has a positive impact on actual purchase behaviour. Overall, since PI ultimately leads to purchase behaviour, it has been suggested as a key predictive component. Interestingly, however, the relationship between PI and AB can vary depending on culture.

As can be seen, earlier results are not in complete consensus. Therefore, we propose the sixth hypothesis:

- H6: PI has an impact on AB.

Figure 1 shows the research model for this study.

3. Data and methodology

3.1. Research design

The questionnaire consisted of 22 items, not including the participants' demographics section. The respondents were asked to choose one of five levels on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). The construction of the questionnaire was based on the consideration of research concepts, combined with qualitative research through collecting opinions from selected experts and teachers. The questionnaire was designed with clear, easy-to-understand questions so that participants could answer in accordance with their thoughts and ensure acceptable reliability. The questionnaire was then sent directly or online via Google Forms to survey subjects between 21 December 2022 to 21 February 2023.

Data for the research was primary data which were responses from young people, whether college students, graduates or people who have already got a job, in the city of Hanoi. Observations must satisfy specific criteria; the respondents age must be under 29 and have made any purchase via Shopee. Each respondent is allowed to fill in the form once only.

3.2. Data analysis techniques

To analyse the collected data set, the research team used PLS-SEM, which is currently one of the most widely applied approaches to analysing data in various research models and contexts, using SmartPLS 4.0 software.

The PLS-SEM method works efficiently with small sample sizes and complex models, makes no distributional assumptions and can easily handle reflective and formative measurement models, as well as single-item constructs, with no identification problems. Moreover, PLS-SEM also has greater statistical power in comparison to CB-SEM. Therefore, PLS-SEM is an appropriate method considering the model as well as the aim of the research.

There are two main steps in PLS-SEM: measurement model evaluation and structural model evaluation. The factors were coded as follows: DF=DF; BR=BR; BI=BI; PI=PI; AB=AB.

4. Results

4.1. Demographic distribution

The research team managed to collect 266 responses. The responses were then entered into a spreadsheet for cleaning and validating. After being checked, 15 biased observations were eliminated, leaving 251 valid responses that can be used for research analysis. These valid responses were then entered into the SPSS and SmartPLS software for data analysis.

Table 1 summarises the demographic distribution of the respondents.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of participants' demographics.

Variables	N	%
Gender		
Male	88	35.1
Female	163	64.9
Income		
<2 million VND/month	121	48.1
2-5 million VND/month	60	23.9
5-10 million VND/month	30	12.0
10-15 million VND/month	17	6.8
>15 million VND/month	23	9.2
Shopping frequency on Shopee		
Sometimes (<3 times/month)	158	62.9
Often (3-5 times/month)	76	30.3
Very often (>= 6 times/month)		

Source: Author's calculation.

4.2. T-test

The results of the t-test and Levene’s test indicate a difference in actual buying decisions (AB) between the two groups of surveyed subjects by gender as shown in Tables 2 and 3 below.

With $p=0.000 < 0.05$, the results indicate that there is a difference in online purchase decision between the two gender groups of male and female.

Table 2. Summary of t-test and Levene’s test results.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
AB	Male	88	3.3932	.87754	.09355
	Female	163	3.8528	.68198	.05342

Source: Author’s calculation.

Table 3. Summary of t-test and Levene’s test results.

F	Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)		
AB	Equal variances assumed	7.150	.008	-4.595	249	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.266	144.723	.000

Source: Author’s calculation

4.3. Measurement proposed research model assessment

There are four constructs in the model, namely: DF, BR, BI and PI.

First, the collected data set was evaluated for their outer loadings to assess the quality of the observations. Based on the algorithm index, three indicators were found to be invalid as their outer loadings index were below the threshold of 0.7: DF2 (outer loadings=0.217), PI3 (outer loadings=0.539) and AB5 (outer loadings=0.642). As a result, these three observed variables were excluded from the model. The re-evaluation after the invalid indicators were eliminated indicated that all the remaining variables were satisfactory as their index of outer loadings (Table 4).

Table 4. Outer loadings.

	AB	BI	BR	DF	PI
AB1	0.748				
AB2	0.887				
AB3	0.891				
AB4	0.838				
BI1		0.754			
BI2		0.861			
BI3		0.869			
BI4		0.864			
BR1			0.782		
BR2			0.742		
BR3			0.752		
BR4			0.755		
BR5			0.764		
DF1				0.825	
DF3				0.862	
DF4				0.876	
PI1					0.891
PI2					0.831
PI4					0.878

Source: Author’s calculation.

The index of composite reliability (rho_a and rho_c), and average variance extracted (AVE)’s result were demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 5. Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability.

	Cronbach’s alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
AB	0.862	0.866	0.907	0.711
BI	0.858	0.861	0.904	0.703
BR	0.819	0.827	0.872	0.576
DF	0.816	0.822	0.890	0.730
PI	0.835	0.840	0.901	0.752

Source: Author’s calculation.

The Discriminant validity was tested using Fornell - Lacker Criterion, the results of which are shown in Table 6. This result indicates that each construct in the model explains better the variance of its own indicator than the variance of other constructs.

Table 6. Fornell - Lacker Criterion.

	AB	BI	BR	DF	PI
AB	0.843				
BI	0.634	0.838			
BR	0.681	0.798	0.759		
DF	0.576	0.503	0.654	0.855	
PI	0.780	0.684	0.703	0.624	0.867

Source: Author's calculation.

Next, the structural model is assessed. The Collinearity Statistics (VIF) was checked in order to ensure that there is no multicollinearity among the variables in the research model. The results shown in Table 7 indicate that latent variable in the research model may not be collinear as all Collinearity Statistics indices are lower than 3.

Table 7. The Collinearity Statistics.

	AB	BI	BR	DF	PI
AB					
BI					2.757
BR		1.749			2.757
DF		1.749	1.000		
PI	1.000				

Source: Author's calculation.

The higher R² means the better explanatory power of the model. The results for this index are shown in Table 8 and Fig. 2.

Table 8. R-Square and R-Square adjusted.

	R-square	R-square adjusted
AB	0.609	0.607
BI	0.638	0.635
BR	0.428	0.426
PI	0.535	0.532

Source: Author's calculation.

4.4. Testing research hypotheses

The study performed Bootstrap analysis with N=5000 to test the significance of the effects in order to draw conclusions about the hypotheses, the results are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Bootstrapping analysis.

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
BI -> PI	0.339	0.344	0.078	4.335	0.000
BR -> BI	0.820	0.822	0.047	17.429	0.000
BR -> PI	0.432	0.425	0.081	5.320	0.000
DF -> BI	-0.033	-0.036	0.056	0.587	0.557
DF -> BR	0.654	0.657	0.040	16.251	0.000
PI -> AB	0.780	0.780	0.033	23.770	0.000

Source: Author's calculation.

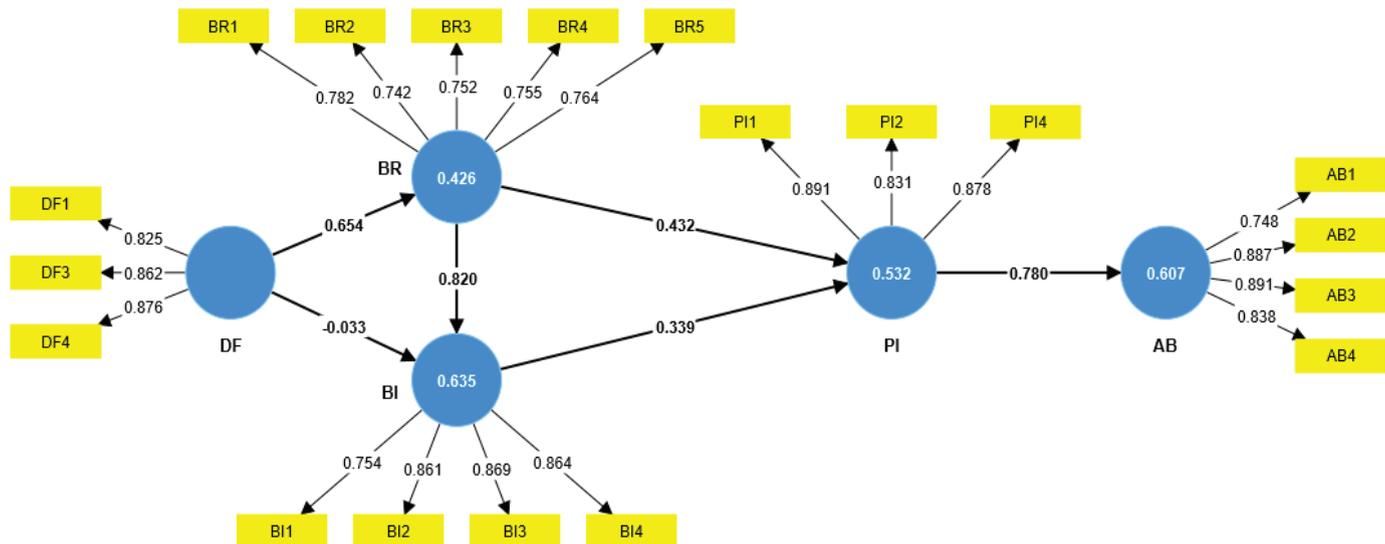


Fig. 2. Confirmatory factor analysis results.

It can be seen from the bootstrapping results that DF ($p=0.000<0.05$) has a significant effect on BR; BR has a significant relationship with both BI and PI ($p=0.000<0.05$ in both cases); BI displayed significant relationship with PI ($p=0.000<0.05$) and PI was proven to have a significant relationship with AB. Therefore, five out of six hypotheses were accepted. However, DF shows no direct impact on BI ($p=0.557>0.05$), thus Hypothesis 2 was rejected.

The effect size of DF on BR, BR on BI and PI on AB ($f^2=0.749, 1.062, 1.555$, respectively) signified large effects as they all exceeded 0.35. The indices for the effect of BR on PI were 0.145, which indicates that the effect size is medium ($0.15 \leq f^2 < 0.35$). The effect was small in the case of BI's impact on PI ($f^2=0.090$). Finally, the effect size of discount on BI ($f^2=0.002<0.02$) suggested that there is almost no effect between these two variables. The calculations of f^2 are shown in Table 10 as follows.

Table 10. Effect size.

	AB	BI	BR	DF	PI
AB					
BI					0.090
BR		1.062			0.145
DF		0.002	0.749		
PI	1.555				

Source: Author's calculation.

5. Conclusions and discussion

The main purpose of this study is to utilise the TRA to examine the effect of DF towards e-customers' PI via the factors of BI and BR. From the data analysis result above, the following conclusions can be made:

Firstly, DF has a significant impact on BR, which indicates that discount programs have positive effects on the reputation of e-commerce platforms, in this case Shopee Vietnam. This also means that offering discount programs to consumers may result in an enhanced position of a certain brand in customers' perception. However, other previous studies have found different results. S.A.S Wowling, et al. (2022) [21] found that the price has no effect on BR. S.E. Ali (2008) [22] suggested that a BR

gives an image of superior quality and added value, which justifies a premium price, and some consumers may choose a brand just because it has the highest perceived price inferring that it is of high quality.

Secondly, DF is found to have no influence on BI, which appears to contradict several previous studies. As mentioned above, price promotion can affect various aspects of a brand, including perceived image and quality [4]. However, it is concluded that discounts have a negative impact on a brand's image, especially discounts of more than 20% [4]. Researchers also pointed out that frequent price promotion leads to a more conservative estimation of the quality of products as well as BI since they often correlate low price with low quality [17].

Thirdly, there exists a significant relationship between BR and BI. The uses of corporate reputation were proved to be somewhat significantly associated with BI strategy [23]. D. Grewal, et al. (1998) [15] accepted the hypothesis that the more positive the reputation associated with the store, the more positive the buyers' perceptions of store image.

Fourthly, BR shows a positive effect at a medium level in its relationship with PI. Several previous researches have found similar results. All of these researches indicated that BR positively influenced customer's intention of purchasing certain products and thus increased the likelihood of them actually deciding to buy the merchandise. Another study also supports this by stating that "Well-known products were of the strongest preference to customers when they were considering which e-commerce products to buy in the future" [24]. However, it is possible that in stark contrast, BR has no influence on customers' PI [8].

Fifthly, BI does have an impact towards PI although the influence appears to be minimal. Meanwhile, other authors also suggested a positive, but significant relationship between BI and PI or in other words, a decent BI can increase the probability of customer purchasing the products [25]. In addition, if the brand has a good image, customers will be more susceptible to information in advertisements, which may induce their purchase desires [26].

Finally, a significant relationship between PI and AB exists. Other research has found similar results [27]. It is also suggested that actual purchase behaviour is remarkably affected by the prior intention of customers [18].

Based on the aforementioned results, it can be concluded that DF shows effects on PI and through PI influences buyers' final decision to purchase any product on Shopee's platform.

The research questions are answered as follows: First, DF has a significant and positive impact on BR. Second, DF was unrelated to BI. Third, BR displays a significant and positive impact on BI. Fourth, BR shows an insignificant but positive impact on PI. Fifth, BI has a positive but marginal relationship with PI. Finally, PI and AB have a close and remarkable relationship with each other.

About the contribution of the research, firstly, the research contributes to the literature in the field of marketing, customer behaviour and e-commerce. Secondly, another contribution of this research is to help online sellers and entrepreneurs come up with strategies to improve their business by providing a deeper insight into the influence of DF towards customers' perception and behaviour. Online retailers should offer discounts on their products to stimulate consumer demand and increase customers' PI and AB. Moreover, to improve BR, e-commerce platforms can either independently implement or collaborate with their retailers to execute special discount programs. Finally, there is a difference in online purchase decision between the two gender groups. Therefore, e-commerce platforms and online sellers need to have an understanding of the needs and preferences of each gender group in order to offer suitable promotions for their products.

Nonetheless, there are limitations to this study. Firstly, the respondents are young people aged 18 to less than 29 in the city of Hanoi, which means that this study hasn't considered other age groups as well as people from regions other than Hanoi city. In addition, both BR and image are customers' perception of Shopee. The research team hasn't considered other online shopping websites in Vietnam such as Lazada,

Sendo or Tiki, though each of them has its own distinct features. At the same time, the research team has not studied the brand perception of the product. Finally, discounts come in many different forms including discount by a percentage of original price or cut down a specific amount of money and each type of discount may have different effects on BR and image. These suggest new research directions for future studies.

CRedit author statement

Do Anh Duc, Pham Minh Hang, To Ngoc Ha, Vu Nguyen Tra Mi, Pham Quoc Viet: Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing, Editing.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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