

## Optimizing Digital Marketing and Pricing to Strengthen Consumer Loyalty in Startup Businesses

Rizky Fatmawati<sup>1</sup>, Eka Rahma Salsabila<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Institut Syekh Abdul Halim Hasan Binjai, Indonesia

Email: [rizkyfatmawati@insan.ac.id](mailto:rizkyfatmawati@insan.ac.id)

### ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi penerapan strategi *digital marketing* serta pengelolaan harga dalam rangka memperkuat loyalitas konsumen pada bisnis *startup*. Latar belakang studi ini didasarkan pada meningkatnya pemanfaatan internet dan media sosial sebagai sarana promosi yang belum dimaksimalkan oleh para bisnis *startup*. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dengan metode pengumpulan data melalui observasi, wawancara, dan dokumentasi terhadap pelaku bisnis *startup*. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan integrasi antara *digital marketing* dan optimalisasi harga melalui *behavioral economics* pada platform bisnis *startup* seperti Shopee dan Blibli berdampak positif terhadap peningkatan loyalitas konsumen. Kebaruan dari studi ini terletak pada pendekatan integratif yang menggabungkan strategi harga berbasis psikologi perilaku dengan teknik pemasaran *digital* untuk membangun loyalitas konsumen *startupprenneur*. Pendekatan ini belum banyak dijelajahi dalam konteks *startup* di negara berkembang, khususnya Indonesia, sehingga menawarkan perspektif baru yang relevan untuk model bisnis digital yang berkelanjutan.

**Keyword:** Digital Marketing; Optimalisasi Harga; Loyalitas; Bisnis Startup

### ABSTRACT

*This study aims to evaluate the implementation of digital marketing strategies and pricing management to strengthen consumer loyalty in startup businesses. The background of this study is based on the increasing use of the internet and social media as promotional tools that are not being maximized by startup businesses. The study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with data collection methods through observation, interviews, and documentation of startup business actors. The results show that the use of integrated digital marketing and price optimization through behavioral economics on startup business platforms such as Shopee and Blibli has a positive impact on increasing consumer loyalty. The novelty of this study lies in the integrative approach that combines behavioral psychology-based pricing strategies with digital marketing techniques to build consumer loyalty among startupprenneurs. This approach has not been widely explored in the context of startups in developing countries, particularly Indonesia, thus offering a new perspective relevant to sustainable digital business models.*

**Keyword:** Digital Marketing; Price Optimization; Loyalty; Startup Business

### Corresponding Author:

Rizky Fatmawati,  
Institut Syekh Abdul Halim Hasan Binjai,  
Jl. Insinyur H. Juanda No.5, Timbang Langkat, Kec. Binjai Tim., Kota  
Binjai, Sumatera Utara 20737, Indonesia  
Email: [rizkyfatmawati@insan.ac.id](mailto:rizkyfatmawati@insan.ac.id)



## 1. INTRODUCTION

The number of internet users in Indonesia has experienced significant growth. According to data from the Indonesian Association of Indonesian Journalists (APJII) in 2024, there were 221 million internet users, or approximately 79.5% of the population. This presents a strategic opportunity for businesses, including MSMEs and startups, to utilize digital marketing as an effective promotional tool (APJII Survey, 2024).

Technological transformation has also changed marketing communication patterns, where transactions no longer require face-to-face meetings between sellers and buyers. The rise in social media usage has driven the trend of online shopping, which is considered practical and efficient. In this context, digital

marketing has become a crucial tool for marketing products through social media and other digital platforms, allowing for more flexible promotion without the constraints of time and place (Paranoan & Palalangan, 2022).

In addition to digital marketing, competitive pricing aligned with product quality is also key to competitive success. Optimizing prices must consider *behavioral economics*, which has emerged as a relevant approach to explain how individual economic decisions are often not rational but instead influenced by psychological and environmental factors. *Behavioral economics* integrates economic approaches with psychology to analyze how cognitive biases and emotions can influence individual economic decision-making (Arnold Dewi et al., 2022).

In the context of e-commerce, various strategies such as *anchoring*, *loss aversion*, and the *framing effect* are often used by businesses to shape consumer perceptions of a product's price and value. One example is the use of time-limited *flash sales*, designed to create the impression of lower prices and urge consumers to make immediate purchases. This approach has proven effective in encouraging impulsive consumer behavior, despite the risk of leading to unsustainable consumption.

As an illustration, the application of the principle of *loss aversion*, which aims to encourage quick purchases, can cause psychological pressure on consumers, often leading to purchasing decisions that ignore long-term impacts. Therefore, it is crucial to incorporate sustainability principles into pricing strategies on e-commerce platforms. Industry players are expected to prioritize consumer education, provide transparent pricing information, and encourage the consumption of more environmentally friendly products. Based on this background, this study aims to further explore the application of *behavioral economics* principles in e-commerce pricing strategies and their impact on consumers' digital consumption patterns.

Based on this, the importance of focusing on digital marketing and price optimization is clear. However, some startups still have not optimized pricing strategies that strengthen consumer loyalty through digital marketplaces to their full potential. Utilizing promotional channels through social media and other digital technologies is crucial for increasing company sales in the digital era. Integrated marketing will take businesses to the next level, becoming social businesses that listen to and connect with customer conversations to provide a better customer experience (Rindi, 2023).

Therefore, this study aims to analyze digital marketing strategies and price optimization in increasing consumer loyalty to startup businesses. Advances in information technology are believed to be a turning point in product marketing methods, shifting from conventional methods to digital marketing. This shift not only impacts marketing but also the entire business process, for both large companies and small businesses (Karim & Purba, 2022).

Digital marketing is a form of product marketing that utilizes technology such as the web, social media, and e-commerce (Hendra & F. R. Y, 2023). This approach enables direct interaction between consumers and companies, thereby accelerating responses and building closer relationships. One form of digital marketing is internet marketing, also known as *e-marketing* (Fatmawati, 2021).

Digital marketing is undoubtedly very beneficial for a company. Its effectiveness can be seen in the way customers can respond directly to companies. Digital marketing is also highly adaptable to user preferences, leading to rapid development and widespread usage (Indrapura & Fadli, 2023).

In addition to digital marketing optimization, the equally important variable is price. Price is a measure of the value of goods and services and one of the factors controlled in line with a company's objectives. Price is key in consumers' decisions to purchase goods or services offered by a company. As one element of the marketing mix, price generates revenue, while other elements generate costs. Many consumers consider price as an indicator of product quality (Luqmanul et al., 2023).

Several previous studies have examined the use of the *anchoring* principle in e-commerce pricing strategies, often implemented through product prices ending in “.999” to create the illusion of a lower price. This makes consumers perceive higher value even though the product price remains relatively high. Such tactics have proven effective in increasing product value perceptions and driving consumer purchases, but their impact on sustainable consumption patterns is often overlooked.

Other strategies frequently used in e-commerce include *loss aversion* and the *scarcity effect*. Research shows that tactics like *flash sales* or limited-time offers can create a sense of urgency that encourages impulse purchases. However, using these techniques can exacerbate patterns of overconsumption, which can be detrimental to consumers in the long run. The use of these psychological tactics can encourage irrational purchasing decisions, contributing to unsustainable consumption.

While numerous studies have examined the influence of *behavioral economics* in e-commerce, few have addressed how these strategies can be implemented with sustainability in mind. This study aims to fill this gap by highlighting the importance of implementing pricing strategies based on more ethical and sustainable *behavioral economic* principles, as well as emphasizing the importance of price transparency and consumer education as part of efforts to support more conscious and responsible consumption.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in this study is qualitative research. This study aims to explore the optimization of the use of *digital marketing* features and pricing strategies on the *e-commerce* platforms Shopee and Blibli. Data collection tools usually use direct observation, interviews, and document studies. In the steps of qualitative research data analysis: Data collection through observation, in-depth interviews and documentation or a combination of the three. The results of this study are expected to provide insights into more responsible marketing practices and in accordance with the principles of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly regarding responsible consumption and production.

This study uses two main data sources: primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through direct observation and interviews with consumers on major *e-commerce* platforms in Indonesia, such as Shopee and Blibli. These observations focused on consumer responses to pricing tactics such as limited-time discounts and low prices on double-dates. Secondary data was collected from literature studies, scientific journals, industry reports, and documents. This data provides theoretical context regarding sustainability and responsible consumption. The combination of these two types of data allows for a more in-depth analysis of the application of *behavioral economics* principles in *e-commerce*.

To collect primary data, this study used participant observation on selected *e-commerce* platforms, such as Shopee and Blibli. Researchers directly monitored and recorded various pricing strategies implemented on product pages, such as limited-time discounts and low prices on double-dates. Additionally, consumer interviews were conducted to gain deeper insight into how they responded to these pricing tactics and their impact.

This study was conducted on 40 digital commerce startups in North Sumatra, using survey and in-depth interview methods. Researchers examined the effect of price optimization (dynamic pricing strategies and loyalty discounts) and *digital marketing* (social media advertising) on consumer loyalty (repeat purchases and advocacy).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research reveals that *behavioral economics* principles, such as *anchoring*, *loss aversion*, and *framing*, have been widely applied in pricing strategies on *e-commerce* platforms. *Anchoring*, which involves setting a higher initial price before offering a discount, has been shown to create a greater perception of value in consumers' minds. This approach increases conversion rates because consumers perceive a greater benefit from the transaction. Meanwhile, *loss aversion*, which exploits consumers' tendency to avoid losses rather than pursue gains, has been shown to be effective in encouraging impulse purchases, especially when discounts are limited in time or in the form of exclusive offers.

*Framing* techniques also contribute significantly to shaping price and value perceptions. For example, promotions that read "save 30%" are often more appealing than direct price reductions, as the emphasis on potential savings encourages quick purchasing decisions, even if they are not always based on rational needs.

However, the use of these principles also has consequences that require caution, particularly in the context of sustainable consumption. Tactics such as *flash sales* and dynamic pricing encourage impulsive shopping behavior, which, while profitable in the short term, can exacerbate patterns of overconsumption. This contradicts the principles of responsible consumption and production as outlined in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12.

This research provides practical implications for startup businesses, demonstrating that implementing effective pricing strategies and utilizing *digital marketing* appropriately not only drives short-term sales increases but also significantly contributes to building long-term customer loyalty. Formulating a pricing strategy that considers consumer segmentation—for example, by implementing dynamic pricing that responds to changing market demand and providing incentives for loyal customers—can increase customer retention and satisfaction.

Meanwhile, implementing data-driven *digital marketing*, such as personalized social media campaigns, tailored email marketing, and interactive content, has been shown to strengthen the emotional connection between consumers and brands. The synergy between pricing strategy and *digital marketing* can encourage repeat purchases, increase the likelihood of consumers recommending products to others, and create a competitive advantage in the ever-changing digital era.

From an academic perspective, this study also expands the literature on *digital marketing* for startups by emphasizing the importance of a customer-centric approach in developing digital pricing and communication strategies. The findings regarding the positive relationship between *digital marketing* and customer loyalty reinforce the view that digitalization is not merely a promotional tool but a key strategy for building valuable, long-term relationships with consumers.

In addition, this research opens up opportunities for further studies, such as designing a machine learning-based loyalty predictive model, further studies on consumer behavior-based pricing strategies, as well

as cross-sector and demographic experiments to broaden the scope of generalizations and strengthen theoretical contributions to sustainable *digital marketing*.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The use of *behavioral economic* principles such as *anchoring* (initial pricing), *loss aversion*, and *framing* (information presentation) in pricing strategies on *e-commerce* platforms significantly influences consumer purchasing decisions. *Anchoring*, which involves displaying a higher initial price before offering a discount, has been shown to create a greater perception of value in consumers' minds. Similarly, *loss aversion*, which exploits the fear of missing out on a limited-time offer, effectively triggers impulsive purchasing behavior. *Framing*, meanwhile, plays a role in shaping how consumers interpret price offers by presenting discounts in a format that emphasizes the potential for greater savings or profits.

While these approaches can drive short-term sales increases, their implementation can also have consequences for long-term consumption patterns. Such psychological tactics have the potential to foster uncontrolled and wasteful consumption behavior, increasing the risk of imbalance in individual consumption management and the impact on the environment. Therefore, it is important to review the social and ecological implications of pricing strategies, particularly within a sustainability framework. Consumers who are encouraged to overbuy can experience financial hardship, while increased overconsumption exacerbates environmental problems.

In response to these challenges, *e-commerce* platforms are advised to implement more ethically responsible pricing strategies. It is crucial to promote transparency in pricing and educate consumers about the benefits of making more informed purchasing decisions. When consumers have a better understanding of the pricing process and discount mechanisms, they are more likely to make more rational decisions. This approach not only contributes to the formation of more conscious and sustainable consumption patterns but also strengthens customer loyalty and supports long-term business growth without neglecting social and environmental responsibility.

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