


THE INFLUENCE OF STORE ASSOCIATES ON BOOK PURCHASE DECISIONS AT GRAMEDIA BOOKSTORE LIPPO PLAZA KENDARI

Dzulfikri Azis Muthalib^{*1}, Conny²

^{1,2}Halu Oleo University, Kendari, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: fikriazis12@uho.ac.id

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| <p>Info Article</p> <p>Received: 25 Maret 2025</p> <p>Revised: 27 April 2025</p> <p>Accepted: 05 Mei 2025</p> <p>Publication: 30 Mei 2025</p> | <p>Abstract: <i>This study aims to determine and explain the influence of store associates on book purchase decisions at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. The population in this study consists of all customers at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. The sample for this study is 60 customers from the bookstore. This research employs simple linear regression analysis. The results indicate that store associates have a positive and significant influence on book purchase decisions at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. An increase in the quality of store associates positively and significantly affects the improvement of book purchase decisions at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. This finding shows that well-performing store associates contribute to the enhancement of purchase decisions.</i></p> |
| <p>Keywords: Store Associate, Purchase Decision</p> <p>Kata Kunci: Store Associate, Keputusan Pembelian</p> | <p>Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dan menjelaskan pengaruh store associate terhadap keputusan pembelian Buku-Buku Di Toko Buku Gramedia Lippo Plaza Kendari. Populasi dalam penelitian ini adalah seluruh pelanggan pada Toko Buku Gramedia Lippo Plaza Kendari. Sampel penelitian sebanyak 60 pelanggan pada Toko Buku Gramedia Lippo Plaza Kendari. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis regresi linear sederhana. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa store associate berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap keputusan pembelian Buku-Buku di Toko Buku Gramedia Lippo Plaza Kendari. Perubahan peningkatan store associate searah positif dan nyata terhadap peningkatan keputusan pembelian Buku-Buku di Toko Buku Gramedia Lippo Plaza Kendari. Fakta ini menunjukkan store associate yang baik memiliki kontribusi dalam peningkatan keputusan pembelian.</p> |
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INTRODUCTION

In the highly competitive modern business world, marketing strategy is an important element in determining the long-term success of the company. Companies are not only required to understand consumers, but also to be able to deeply analyze their wants and needs (Kotler, 2008). This understanding allows companies to divide the market into more specific segments, while creating products or services that match the preferences of each segment (Ha & Stoel, 2009).

The increase in people's purchasing power and high expectations for product and service quality have led to fierce competition between companies (Rahma & Septrizola, 2019). Companies must optimize all available resources, including effective promotional strategies to retain customers and attract new customers (Mattila & Wirtz, 2008). One form of promotional strategy that has proven effective is through the role of store associates, namely salespeople who not only serve customers, but also have the special ability to attract consumer attention and interest directly (Sudarsono, 2017).

Store associates act as a direct link between the company and customers, assisting consumers in understanding products, as well as providing information and a pleasant shopping experience (Belch & Belch, 2009; Djaslim, 2002). Previous studies have shown that a friendly attitude, good product knowledge, and responsiveness to customer requests are key indicators of the quality of service provided by store associates (Ellis & Kelly, 1993).

In the context of modern retail such as Gramedia bookstores, especially at the Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari branch, the presence of store associates is an important factor in the consumer purchasing decision-making process. Despite having a good reputation in the community, Gramedia still needs an adaptive promotional strategy to encourage increased sales. This is where the role of store associates becomes vital, especially in creating a pleasant shopping experience and providing added value compared to competitors (Utami, 2017; Samuri, Rahman, & Khalid, 2018).

In addition, consumer behavior in making purchasing decisions is also increasingly complex, influenced by psychological, social, and environmental factors (Park & Lennon, 2006; Swastha & Irawan, 2003). In several studies, including by Rook & Fisher (1995) and Verplanken & Sato (2011), it was found that impulse purchases can be influenced by positive emotional experiences offered during the shopping process, including interactions with store associates.

Therefore, this study was conducted to examine more deeply the influence of store associates on purchasing decisions at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. The results of this study are expected to provide practical insights for companies in designing personal service-based marketing strategies that are more effective and oriented towards customer satisfaction.

METHOD

This study was conducted at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari, focusing on the object of study, which consists of store associates and customer purchase decisions. The population in this study is all customers of Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. According to Sugiyono (2001:55), a population refers to a group of people or objects that share similarities in aspects relevant to the research problem. Singarimbun and Effendi (1995:152) further explain that a population is the entire set of analysis units that are the subject of the research. In this study, the population refers to all customers of Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. Given the large number of the population and the difficulty in obtaining precise population data, this study assumes an infinite population.

The sample size in this study was determined using the approach proposed by Roscoe (1982), who suggests that an appropriate sample size ranges from 30 to 500 respondents. Based on this guideline, the sample size was set at 60 respondents. The sampling technique used is accidental sampling, which involves selecting respondents based on spontaneity (Silalahi, 2009:272), where anyone who happens to meet the researcher and is a customer of Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari will be included in the sample.

The data collection methods used in this study include three main techniques: first, direct interviews with customers who are the objects of the study; second, questionnaires, which involve distributing a set of questions to customers; and third, documentation, which aims to gather relevant data from Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari.

To test the validity of the instruments, validity tests were conducted with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ using Pearson's Product Moment correlation method. An instrument is considered valid if the Pearson correlation value is greater than 0.30 (Solimun, 2002). Reliability testing of the instrument was carried out to measure the consistency of the measurement tools used, with the same confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$)

and using Pearson's Product Moment correlation analysis. The instrument is considered reliable if it meets the Cronbach alpha criterion of at least 0.60 (Malhotra, 1999).

After the data was collected using these data collection techniques, the data processing steps were as follows: first, data selection (editing) to choose representative data that is ready to be processed further; second, data classification (coding) to categorize respondents' answers into specific categories for quantitative analysis; third, data tabulation (tabulation) to arrange respondents' answer frequencies into the designated table format.

Data analysis in this study used inferential statistical analysis with a simple linear regression model. This regression model was used to test the effect of store associates on purchase decisions. To test the effect of the independent variable partially, a t-test was used. If the significance value (tsig) is smaller than α (0.05), the independent variable significantly influences the dependent variable. Conversely, if tsig is greater than α (0.05), the independent variable does not significantly affect the dependent variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

To test the hypothesis proposed in this study, a simple linear regression method was used with the following analysis results:

Table 1. Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results

| Independent Variable (X) | Regression Coefficient | Significance | Description |
|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Store Associate</i> | 0,780 | 0,000 | Significant |
| β_0 = 5,140 | | | N = 60 α = 0,05 |
| R Square = 0,608 | | | |
| R = 0,780 | | | |
| Standard error = 89,945 | | | |

Source: Processed Primary Data

Based on Table 1, the regression model generated to explain the influence of store associates on the book purchase decision at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari is as follows:

$$Y = 5,140 + 0,780 X_1$$

The explanation based on the above calculations is as follows:

1. The constant (β_0) of 5,140 indicates that the purchase decision before being influenced by the store associate is positive at 5,140 when measured using the Likert scale.

2. The regression coefficient for the store associate variable of 0,780 indicates a significant positive effect of changes in store associates on the purchase decision.
3. The R2 (R-Square) value of 0,608 shows that the contribution of the store associate variable to the purchase decision is 60.8%. Therefore, the influence of other variables not explained by this model is 39.2%.
4. The R value of 0,780 shows that the strength of the direct relationship between store associates and the purchase decision is 0,780. This relationship is statistically considered very strong, as stated by Sugiyono (1999:216), who mentions that a relationship with an R value between 0.80-1,000 is categorized as very strong. Therefore, the resulting regression model can be considered as a "Fit" model, or a good predictive model in explaining the effect of store associates on the book purchase decision at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari.

Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis proposed in this study is that store associates have a positive and significant impact on book purchase decisions at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. Based on the results of the simple linear regression analysis, the store associate variable shows a significance value of 0.000. When compared to the significance level of 0.05, the significance value (0.000) < $\alpha = 0.05$. This indicates that there is a positive and significant effect of the store associate variable on book purchase decisions at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. Therefore, the hypothesis proposed in this study is accepted.

Discussion

Based on the data analysis results in this study, a regression coefficient was obtained that shows a positive and significant effect of store associates on book purchase decisions at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. This indicates that the role of store associates significantly contributes to enhancing purchase decisions.

The hypothesis testing results show that store associates indeed have a positive and significant impact on book purchase decisions at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. Each element of the indicators used to measure store associates proves to be a determining factor in the purchase decision. In this case, store associates contribute 60.8% to purchase decisions. Therefore, it can be concluded that store associates have a strong and significant influence on purchase decisions at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari.

The main reason behind this finding is that store associates play a vital role in branch services. They act as the primary link between the company and the customer. Purchase decisions are greatly influenced by factors occurring at the branch, where store associates have a key role in the decision-making process of customers.

This finding is consistent with Kotler's (1993) view that businesses with a focus on branch service should have salespeople or store associates who are ready to assist customers in every phase, from searching, comparing, to selecting products. This highlights the importance of having high-quality store associates to provide excellent service to customers.

A quality store associate is someone who is knowledgeable about the products, including new product packages, which greatly helps customers in the selection process. Additionally, a friendly and pleasant attitude from store associates is key in improving service quality that is customer-oriented. By providing fast and responsive service, store associates can meet customers' needs and desires, thereby creating a better shopping experience.

This study also supports previous research findings by Arifin (2011), Venisia (2010), Syahrul (2014), and Susanto (2007), who stated that store associates have a significant influence on purchase decisions. This indicates that store associates are a crucial factor in branch services and play a major role in influencing customers' purchasing decisions.

Building good relationships with customers is essential in branch business, and store associates are at the forefront of this. Therefore, branches must ensure that they recruit and employ skilled and quality store associates. Store associates who are disciplined and have in-depth product knowledge can provide the best service to customers. Important aspects to consider are the associates' attitude towards customers, product knowledge, and their ability to gather relevant information related to customers' needs.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis results and the discussion of the research findings, it can be concluded that store associates have a positive and significant influence on book purchase decisions at Gramedia Bookstore Lippo Plaza Kendari. Improvements in the quality of store associates directly and positively impact the increase in book purchase

decisions at the store. This finding demonstrates that high-quality store associates play a significant role in driving an increase in customer purchase decisions.

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