"A Comparative Analysis of Promotional Strategies of Major E-Commerce Players in India"

By

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Submitted to

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

B.B.A. (Honours) in Marketing Management

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"A Comparative Analysis of Promotional Strategies of Major E-Commerce Players in India"

By

Vivek Singh

CAPSTONE PROJECT

Submitted To

DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

B.B.A. (Honours) in Marketing Management

Nagindas Khandwala College of Commerce, Arts and Management Studies, Mumbai-400064

FUTURE VARSITY

DECLARATION

I declare that this written submission represents my original ideas, conveyed in my own words. In cases where the ideas or words of others have been incorporated, I have diligently edited and referenced the sources. I confirm that I have followed all the guidelines of academic honesty and integrity, and I have not misrepresented manipulated or falsified any information, data, ideas, or sources in my submissions. I understand that breaking the rules above may result in disciplinary action by the institute. It may also lead to legal action from the source whose content has been used without proper editing or without obtaining the necessary permissions.

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Certificate

This is to certify that **Vivek Singh** has successfully completed the Capstone Project as a part of the B.B.A. (Honours) in Marketing Management Semester VI titled **"A Comparative Analysis of Promotional Strategies of Major E-Commerce Players in India"** during the Academic Year 2023-24.

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Vivek Singh

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Chapter 1: Introduction

- Covers the background of the study, including the introduction and the growth of e-commerce development in India.

- Discusses the e-tailing market by business model, types of e-commerce, the origin of e-commerce, and a comparison of the e-commerce industry in India.

- Provides an overview of e-commerce definitions, promotional strategies by Indian e-commerce players, and a review of articles related to the broad dimension of e-commerce, promotion, promotional tools, online marketing, online consumer sales promotion, and tools.

- Provides key definitions of e-commerce, sales promotion, and descriptions of various sales promotion tools in the context of online shopping.

- Offers a conceptual background of constructs influencing Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal's sales promotion strategies.

- Emphasizes the significance of the demographic profile of customers in online shopping and major studies in the area of study.

- Focuses on analyzing sales promotion strategies of major e-commerce players (Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal) and their influence on customers' shopping experience.

- Chapter 2: Research Methodology

- Discusses the methodological approach employed throughout the study.

- Addresses the statement of the problem, need for the study, research gap, sample size, data collection method, research objectives and hypotheses, scope of the study, significance of the study, and limitations of the study.

- Chapter 3: Review of Literature

- Summarizes the information that is acquired after reviewing previous studies.

- The compilation of this chapter covers the subject of the effectiveness of sales promotion tools.

- Chapter 4: Data Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation

- This chapter holds significant importance within the research project.

- This chapter presents data analyses of the study.

- Begins with an analysis of the demographic profile of respondents followed by other questions.

- Includes information gathered via a structured questionnaire.

- Chapter 5: Recommendations, Suggestions and Conclusions

- Offers a comprehensive overview of the comparison of the Loyalty Membership Program, suggestions, and scope for further research, and ends with a conclusion.

- Provides a brief conclusion of the thesis report and presents useful recommendations for the ecommerce industry.

- Begins with findings based on the objectives of the research, followed by findings on the demographic profile of respondents and indicators used as sales promotion strategy by e-commerce players influencing customers' shopping experience.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Online retailers are commonly referred to as e-tailers or engaged in electronic commerce. "Electronic commerce" encompasses the seamless application of information and communication technology throughout the entire value chain of electronically conducted business processes. These partial or complete processes include transactions between businesses, consumers, and consumer-to-business interactions (Wigand, 1997). Notable online retailers like Snapdeal, Flipkart, and Amazon have been examining the purchasing behaviour of Indian consumers through digital interactions for over a decade. According to the IBEF Report from August 2019, digital transformation is expected to increase India's internet user base to 829 million by 2021. With the growing number of internet users and increased rural penetration, e-commerce companies are employing innovative techniques to boost web traffic and expand their presence across various geographical territories.

During the festive season, e-tailers have heavily invested in print and television media to create awareness. According to a Red-Seer report, 15% of respondents learned about sales through word of mouth, 38% through newspapers, and 40% through social media (ET Online, 2018, October 8).

Online players have explored various promotional tactics, including flash sales, cashback, regular offers, same-day delivery, coupons, search engine marketing, buy more save more, online contests, bank tie-ups, etc. These strategies have proven successful in driving a shift in the modern retail industry (Lamb et al., 2009). Companies can utilize different online consumer sales promotional tools, such as coupons, refunds, premiums, customer loyalty programs, online contests, free shipping, point of purchase (POP), samples, bonus packs, cross-promotions, discounts, sweepstakes, and advertising specialities.

1.2 Promotion

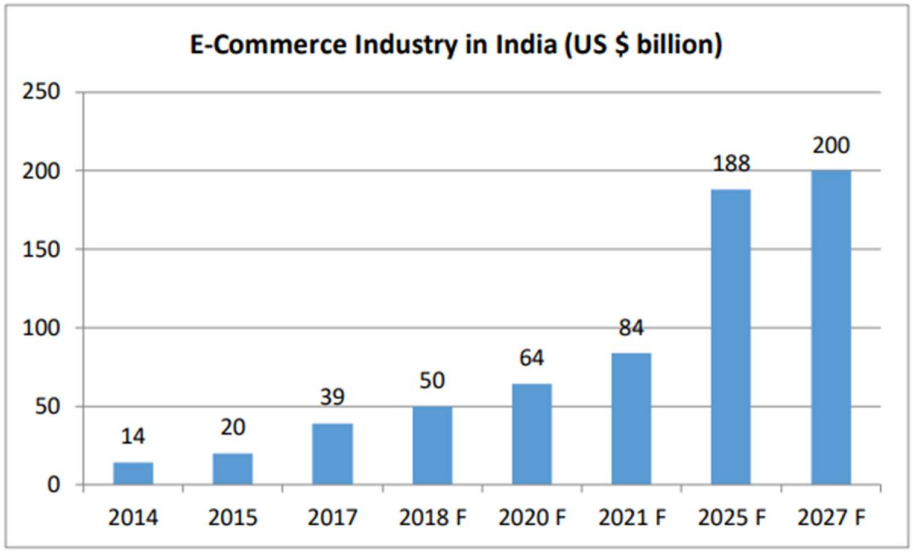
Promotion is crucial for a company to communicate with customers about its products or services. The five types of communication tools for promotions are advertisements, sales promotions, public relations, direct sales, and direct marketing (Kotler et al., 2005). Online advertising comes in various forms, such as banner ads, pop-up ads, and in-line ads. Personal selling promotional tools are less feasible online due to the virtual presence and the necessity of personal interaction (Fill, 2006). Online public relations tools include product publicity, corporate communication, press relations, and counselling. Email marketing is a direct form of online marketing (Kotler et al., 2005), while sales promotion involves adding short-term value to stimulate purchases (Altstiel et al., 2006).

1.2.1 Sales promotions tool

Electronic word of mouth (eWOM) significantly influences consumers searching for product information online (Lin et al., 2012). Research on eWOM has focused on the amount generated (Okazaki, 2009) and its effects on consumer buying behaviour (Park et al., 2009). The quality of eWOM positively affects online trust, impacting perceived usefulness, shopping intention, and perceived ease of use (Kim & Song, 2010). Customer reviews play a major role in influencing customer buying decisions, and marketers may provide incentives for anonymous reviews to shape customer responses in online product evaluations (Mayzlin, 2006; Nan et al., 2017).

Indian culture is renowned for its consumption rituals during festive seasons like Diwali, where consumers await auspicious occasions to purchase. Festive seasons in India stand out as highly lucrative shopping environments, with major e-tailers offering attractive deals and discounts. Price-sensitive consumers are significantly influenced by these promotional strategies (Khanna & Sampat, 2015). Providing coupons, free delivery, and discounts has proven to be an effective strategy, especially in the realm of online fashion products (Yahya et al., 2019). Despite various researchers emphasizing the impact of promotional factors on consumer buying behaviour, some argue that promotions are not necessarily viewed as crucial attributes. Instead, they assert that robust instrumental aspects of online shopping websites play a more significant role (Rakesh and Khare, 2012).

The growth of e-commerce development in India has transformed the way people buy and sell goods and services. Online retail or e-commerce has revolutionized consumers' shopping experiences, and the sector has recently experienced unprecedented growth. Technology adoption, including smartphones, laptops, and advanced networks like 3G, 4G, Wi-Fi, and high-speed broadband, has contributed to an increasing number of online clients. Banks and other participants in the e-commerce ecosystem provide secure online platforms for convenient payments across gateways. Home-grown players in the market have demonstrated remarkable growth, attracting significant investments. Global giants like Amazon and Alibaba have elevated the competition to new levels. E-tailers differentiate themselves by offering innovative services such as same-day delivery, 30-day warranty replacements, cash-on-delivery (COD) options, cashback deals, and mobile wallets. The supply chain has significantly improved, with e-tailers even leveraging Indian Post services for broader reach across the country (Deloitte report on Future of e-Commerce: Uncovering Innovation, Assocham India).



Source: Media sources, BCG – The $250 billion Digital Volcano, BCG – Digital Consumer Spending in India, Bain & Company – Unlocking Digital for Bharat, Morgan Stanley

Figure 1

The anticipated growth of the Indian e-commerce market is substantial, projected to surge from US$ 38.5 billion in 2017 to a staggering US$ 200 billion by 2027. This growth trajectory is attributed to several factors, including the rising prevalence of mobile devices, the introduction of 4G networks, and the steady increase in consumer income.

1.3 E-Tailing Market by Business Model

E-commerce in India operates on two primary models, namely the Marketplace Model and the Inventory-Based Model. The Marketplace Model refers to platforms where third-party merchants (B2C) or individuals (C2C) can sell their digital or physical products online. In this model, the marketplace operator serves as an intermediary, facilitating transactions (Global E-Commerce Marketplaces Report, 2018). On the other hand, the Inventory-Based Model involves marketplace owners owning the goods and overseeing the entire end-to-end distribution process. In this model, the e-commerce firm directly owns and distributes the inventory of items to consumers.

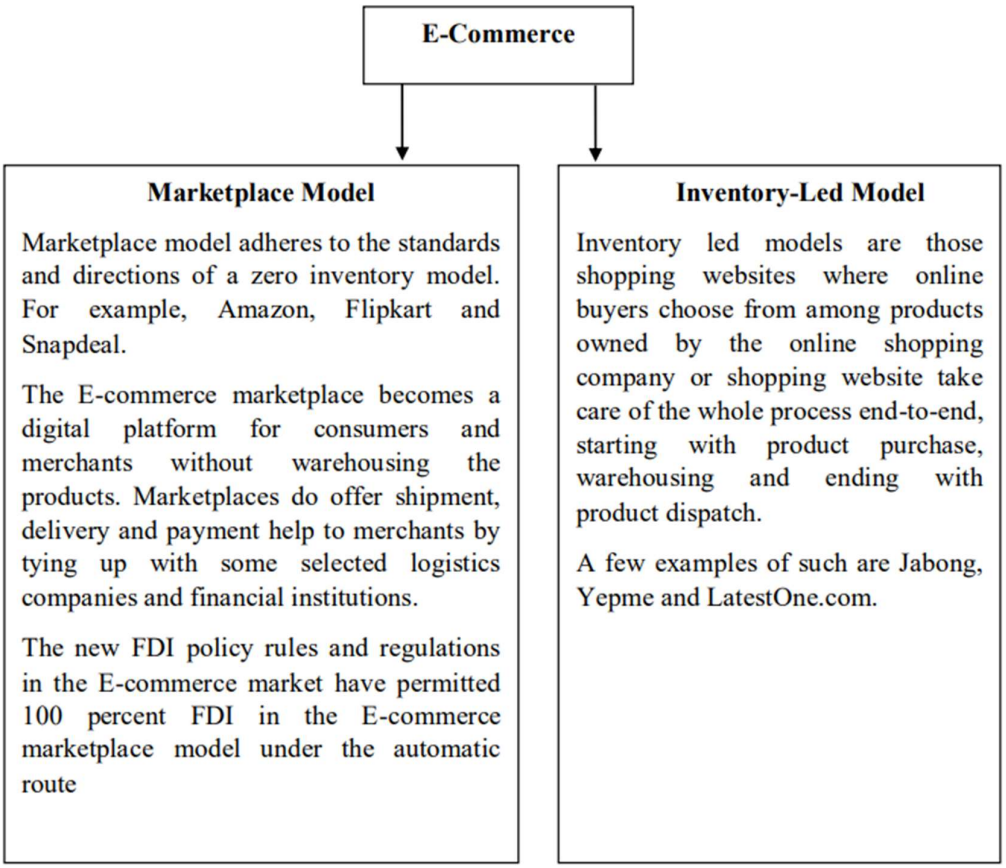


Figure 2

1.4 Origin of E-Commerce

The concept of electronic commerce originated in the 70s, but the use of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) in its early form has been prevalent since the late 60s. Initially focused on simplifying commercial transactions electronically, technologies like Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) and EDI were introduced in the late 1970s, allowing businesses to electronically exchange documents such as invoices and purchase orders. The 1980s witnessed significant developments with the widespread adoption of credit cards, automated teller machines (ATMs), and telephone banking as forms of electronic commerce.

1.5 Definition of E-Commerce

According to Philip Kotler, e-commerce is a comprehensive term referring to the buying and selling processes facilitated by electronic means. It involves the exchange of information, products, and

services over the Internet. Kotler emphasizes that e-commerce serves as a driving force, advancing various aspects by allowing organizations, merchants, and customers to reduce costs, enhance the quality of goods and services, and accelerate service delivery.

Wigand's definition aligns with the seamless application of information and communication technology throughout the entire value chain of electronically conducted business processes. This application is designed to achieve specific business goals, encompassing both business-to-business and business-to-consumer transactions, as well as consumer-to-business transactions. These processes may be either partial or complete.

In summary, e-commerce stands out as a pivotal concept in the online commercial revolution, involving the exchange of commercial information without paper, utilizing electronic fund transfer, email, electronic data interchange (EDI), and other digital means. It encompasses various activities such as online shopping, online stock transactions, and the trade of digital goods like software documents, music, and graphics.

1.6 Types of E-Commerce:

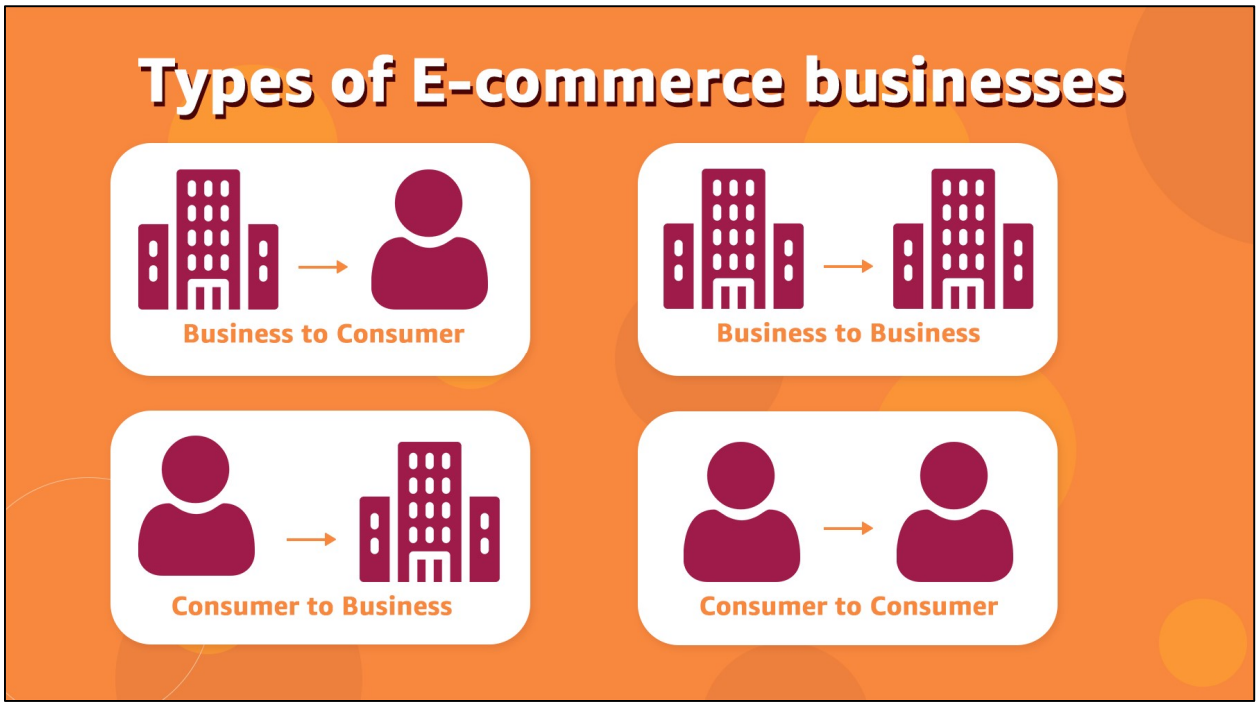


Figure 3

1. Business to Business (B2B): Transactions between more than two companies.

2. Business to Customer (B2C): Transactions between customers and companies.

3. Customer to Business (C2B): Transactions between companies and customers.

4. Customer to Customer (C2C): Transactions between more than two customers.

1. Business-to-Business (B2B):

- Encompasses all goods and services used by businesses.

- Covers various e-commerce activities between two or more companies, including purchase, procurement, supply, logistics, and inventory management.

- Popular Indian B2B portals include Tradeindia.com, AuctionIndia.com, Indiamart.com, MetalJunction.com, etc.

2. Business-to-Consumer (B2C):

- Involves businesses directly selling to end customers.

- Offers a range of products and services online, such as fashion apparel, electronic accessories, furniture, books, CDs, tickets, etc.

- Notable Indian B2C sites include Snapdeal, Amazon, and Flipkart.

3. Consumer-to-Business (C2B):

- Clients (individuals) offer goods and services to corporations, and corporations pay them.

- Represents a reversal of the traditional business model.

- C2B transactions are at an early stage in India due to factors like web accessibility and technological limitations.

4. Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C):

- Involves transactions between two or more customers.

- Websites like eBay, OLX, and Quikr facilitate the sale and auction of goods.

- Challenges include the lack of trust and authenticity between buyers and sellers.

1.7 Conceptual background

This section delves into the Indian e-commerce industry, categorizing it broadly into four segments: Business-to-business (B2B), Business-to-customer (B2C), Customer-to-business (C2B), and Customer-to-Customer (C2C). The focus of this study is on the B2C category, specifically within the e-commerce players Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal, which adopt the marketplace model in India.

The theoretical framework guiding the examination of the effect of online shopping promotion strategy on customer engagement is John B. Watson's (1913) Stimulus (S) – Response (R) theory. This theory posits that human behaviour can be influenced by internal and external stimuli and responses. In the context of major e-commerce players like Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal, their promotional events, such as Amazon's Great Indian Sale, Flipkart's Big Billion Day Sale, and Snapdeal's Unbox Zindagi Sale, act as external stimuli. The Stimulus-Response theory proves effective in understanding consumer behaviour related to online promotional strategies and their impact on actual purchases and impulse buying.

The study identifies various factors or constructs influencing the online shopping experience concerning the promotion strategies of Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal:

1. Psychological Construct: Explores how consumer buying choices are influenced by psychological factors like motivation, perception, learning, beliefs, and attitude. The study examines how consumers react to online promotions considering the psychological processing of information on advertisements and website navigation.

2. Consciousness Construct: Focuses on the value consciousness derived from online shopping, considering factors like price consciousness, deal proneness, and consumer traits such as innovativeness and impulsiveness.

3. Perception Construct: Examines how consumers judge and perceive information when purchasing a product online, emphasizing the impact of price on consumer purchase intention and value perception.

4. Savings Construct: Investigate how sales promotions create a perception of monetary savings through price reductions, free offerings, and refunds, influencing consumer responses to promotions.

5. Attitude Construct: Considers the significance of attitudes in predicting behavioural adoption intent, especially in the context of online shopping, where attitudes are shaped by pricing, service attributes, website reputation, trust, and perceived web image.

6. Motivation Construct: Explores the motivations that drive online and offline purchases, with a focus on consumers' attraction to offers and the shaping of the need to buy a product.

7. Frugal Construct: Examines the frugal factor as an individual's shopping habit, focusing on making wise decisions in response to sales promotions and the psychological aspects associated with being a responsible and smart shopper.

These constructs collectively form the basis for understanding the influence of promotion strategies on the online shopping experience.

1.8 Comparing Retail versus e-commerce Worldwide

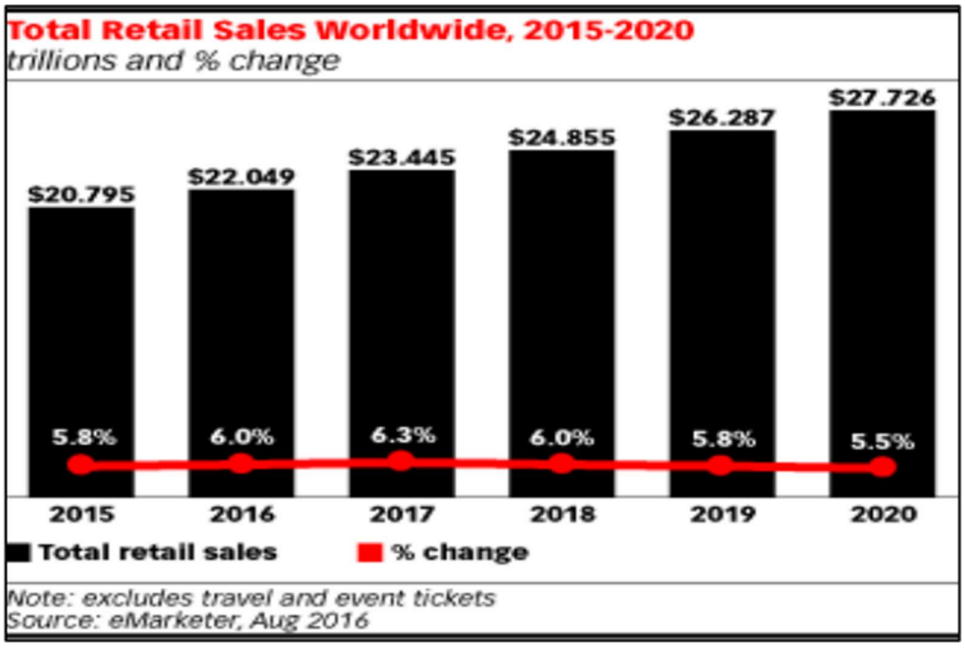


Figure 4

The above chart reveals total Retail Sales Worldwide in trillions and the % change in five years from 2015 to 2020. There has been a stable increase in the total retail sales worldwide and fraction modification has been nearly continuous throughout the years. This tells us the steadiness in the retail sector worldwide

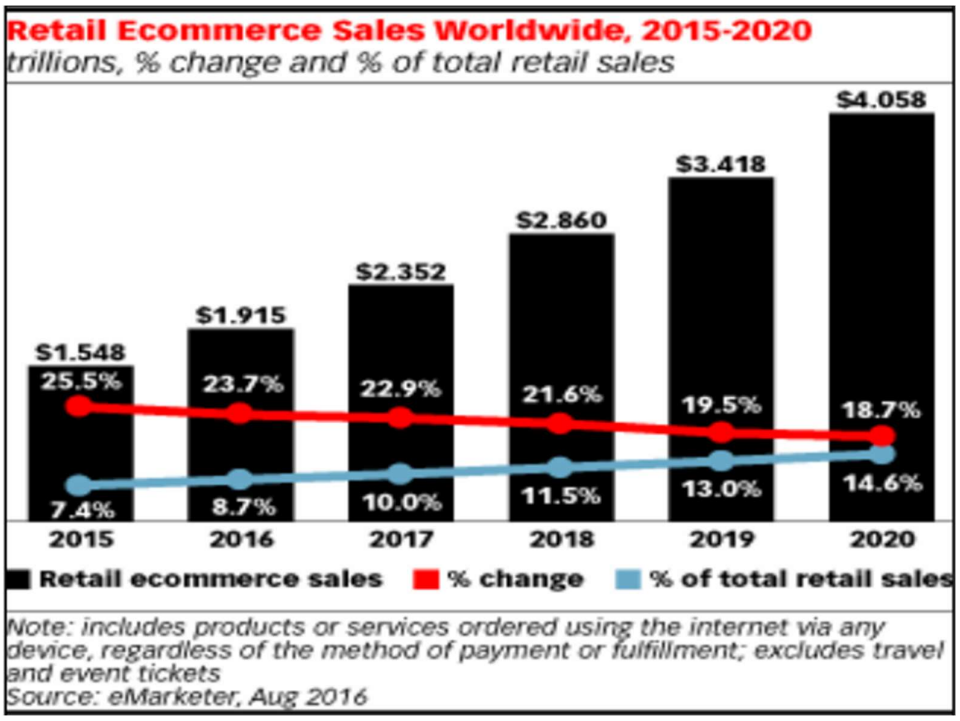


Figure 5

The above chart tells us about Total Retail E-commerce Sales Worldwide in trillions and the % change in five years from 2015 to 2020. A firm increase in the total retail e-commerce sales around the world is noticed. This shows that countries worldwide are gradually accepting the digital revolution style of shopping and a reasonable shift in customer fondness for online trade. Though there is a downhill trend in percentage alteration the dramatic sales have been snowballing.

1.8.1 Comparing Retail versus e-commerce in India

Total Retail and Retail Ecommerce* Sales in India, 2015-2020

billions, % change and % of total retail sales

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total retail sales	**$818.33**	**$941.08**	**$1,082.24**	**$1,244.58**	**$1,418.82**	**$1,599.01**
—% change	14.0%	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%	14.0%	12.7%
Retail ecommerce* sales	**$13.31**	**$23.39**	**$37.50**	**$52.54**	**$65.09**	**$79.41**
—% change	129.5%	75.8%	60.3%	40.1%	23.9%	22.0%
—% of total retail sales	1.6%	2.5%	3.5%	4.2%	4.6%	5.0%

*Note: converted at the exchange rate of US$1=INR64.12; excludes travel and event tickets; *includes products or services ordered using the internet via any device, regardless of the method of payment or fulfillment*
Source: eMarketer, Aug 2016

Figure 6

The above chart speaks about Total Retail and Retail e-commerce sales in India in billions and the % change in five years from 2015 to 2020. There has been a steadiness in retail and e-commerce sales in India as per eMarketer.

1.9 Significance of demographic profile in online shopping

The significance of demographic profiles in online shopping is highlighted, with a focus on age, gender, occupation, and income as key factors influencing the sales promotion strategies adopted by online retailers like Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal. Understanding the impact of each demographic factor on these strategies is crucial, considering their potential influence on shopping intent, as revealed by past literature.

Demographic factors, such as age, gender, and income, have been consistently identified as major influencers of shopping intent. Previous studies report that internet shoppers are more likely to be younger men with higher education, more internet experience, and higher incomes (Raman, P. 2020; Li et al., 1999; Sin and Tse, 2002; Swinyard and Smith, 2003). Motivational factors, age, and gender were found to affect the likelihood of online buying, and older internet users were observed to be more likely to make online purchases compared to younger users, despite younger users being more

optimistic about internet shopping attitudes (Korgaonkar and Wolin, 1999; Donthu and Garcia's 1999).

Moreover, higher-income and educational households were identified as more likely to purchase and redeem higher-priced brands with coupons, while households with lower wages and schooling were less likely to shop regularly due to the 'opportunity cost of time' (Levedahl, 1988). The study by Kwak et al. (2002) highlighted the influence of attitudes, experience, demographics, and personality traits on online purchasing.

Gender emerged as a crucial demographic factor, with research indicating that there is a gender gap in the use of technology and engagement in online shopping. Studies show that women find shopping and buying more pleasurable than men and that gender deeply influences consumer response to marketing strategies (Bimber, 2000; Ono & Zavodny, 2003; Passyn et al., 2011). Older shoppers were found to purchase as many products as younger shoppers, despite searching for fewer items, reflecting a reluctance among older consumers to embrace online shopping as more convenient than traditional methods (Sorce et al., 2005).

Significant differences were observed between genders regarding price-consciousness, suggesting that men and women attribute different values to price when making online purchases (Rakesh & Khare, 2012). Factors such as gender, age, income, education level, and experience in participating in online shopping festivals were found to impact consumers' decisions to engage in such festivals (Chen and Yao, 2018; Allred, Smith, & Swinyard, 2006).

Given this background, exploring the influence of demographic factors on online shopping behaviours from the perspectives of Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal becomes an intriguing avenue for investigation.

1.10 Major areas of e-commerce promotional strategy

Discounts and deals remain pivotal in driving customers to engage in online shopping. However, companies continually innovate and implement various activities to enhance the shopping experience and boost sales, especially during annual festive periods in India and elsewhere. This thesis explores several sales promotional strategies that influence online shoppers, particularly during festive seasons:

1. Flash Sales Approach:

- Flash sales, a popular online sales promotional tool, is widely used in the smartphone market by companies like Flipkart and Amazon.

- This strategy involves offering products at significantly reduced prices for a brief duration, creating a sense of urgency.

- E-commerce companies use flash sales to gain a competitive edge, divert customer traffic, and induce impulsive purchasing behaviour.

- Notable examples include LeEco, Xiaomi, and OnePlus, among Chinese phone manufacturers, who have successfully employed this promotional strategy.

2. Buyback Guarantee and No-Cost EMI Options:

- E-commerce companies provide buyback guarantees as part of their promotional approach to engage customers and enhance client satisfaction.

- Buyback guarantees allow customers to determine a future buyback value for their purchases, encouraging them to make future acquisitions.

- Tie-ups with financial companies offer no-cost EMI or zero-interest EMI options, enabling consumers to avail products at no cost and pay in equal monthly instalments.

3. Flagship Events during Festivals:

- Festive seasons, especially from pre-Dussehra to Diwali, are crucial for online players to boost their Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) and sales.

- Major e-commerce platforms such as Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal celebrate flagship events like the Great Indian Sale, Big Billion Day Sale, and Unbox Zindagi Sale, respectively.

- These events are supported by extensive advertising through print media, digital marketing, social media, SMS marketing, and more.

4. Customer Review/Recommendation:

- Amazon, a leading global online vendor, relies on its comprehensive review system, allowing users to rate products and provide comments.

- Customer reviews play a significant role, influencing potential buyers based on the experiences and feedback of others.

- In India, this system holds particular importance as positive customer reviews can convert potential buyers into definite prospects.

5. Convenience:

- According to a study by the International Data Corporation (IDC) on Indian consumer behaviour, reviews from in-shop retailers and word of mouth, often from peers or relatives, greatly influence online purchases.

- E-commerce firms, including Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal, focus on providing convenience and ease of shopping by reducing delivery times and entering exclusive partnership deals and tie-ups with banks for electronic goods and accessories.

1.11 Types of Business Model

Indeed, e-commerce in India operates through two main models: the Marketplace Model and the Inventory-Based Model.

1. Marketplace Model:

- In this model, e-commerce platforms serve as a digital marketplace where third-party merchants (B2C) or individual sellers (C2C) can list and sell their products.

- The platform, such as Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal, acts as an intermediary, connecting buyers and sellers without directly owning the inventory.

- The e-commerce entity facilitates the sales process, providing a digital platform for transactions, and often offers additional services like packaging, distribution, and payment assistance.

- The inventory, in this case, is not owned by the marketplace operator, but by the third-party sellers.

2. Inventory-Based Model:

- In contrast, the inventory-based model involves the e-commerce platform owning and managing the entire end-to-end sales process.

- The platform directly owns the products, handles warehousing, and sells them directly to customers.

- Unlike the marketplace model, where individual sellers list their products, in the inventory-based model, the e-commerce entity is responsible for the entire supply chain, from inventory management to order fulfilment.

1.12 Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal

- Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal primarily follow the marketplace model approach in India.

- They act as digital forums connecting buyers and sellers, providing a platform for a wide range of products.

- While these platforms don't own the inventory, they often offer support to sellers in terms of logistics and payments, enhancing the overall customer and merchant experience.

Understanding these models is crucial in the e-commerce landscape as it determines how the platform interacts with sellers, manages inventory, and facilitates transactions between buyers and sellers.

E-commerce entails the buying and selling of products and the provision of online services through electronic media and the Internet. Numerous e-commerce entities in India adopt a marketplace approach. A few examples include:

Amazon	Amazon is an American-based eCommerce web portal founded by Jeff Bozos in 1994 and launched operations in India in June 2013
Flipkart	Flipkart is an Indian-based eCommerce web portal founded by Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal in 2007 and acquired by Walmart in 2018
Paytm	Paytm is an India-based eCommerce online payment app founded by Vijay Shekhar Sharma in 2010
SnapDeal	SnapDeal is an India-based eCommerce web portal founded by Rohit Bansal and KunalBhal in 2010
ShopClues	ShopClues is an India-based eCommerce web portal founded by Sanjay Sethi, Radhika Aggarwal, and Sandeep Aggarwal in 2011
Paytm Mall	Paytm Mall is an India-based eCommerce platform founded by One97 Communications in 2016

Table 1

Source: Compiled from https://digitalrain.in/blog/top-10-ecommerce-companies-inindia/

About 3 major e-commerce players taken for study

FLIPKART



Figure 7

Flipkart, established in October 2007 and headquartered in Bengaluru, stands as one of India's prominent e-commerce marketplaces. Founded by Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal, it initially operated as an online bookstore before diversifying its offerings to include music, movies, and mobile phones. Presently, Flipkart boasts a catalogue of over 80 million products spanning across 80 categories, with the capacity to handle 8 million shipments monthly.

Key Highlights:

- Leading e-commerce marketplace in India.

- Boasts 100 million registered users.

- Operates through 21 warehouses.

- Witnesses 10 million daily page visits.

- Achieved a turnover of Rs 30,931 crore (US$ 4.43 billion) in FY19.

2019	Launched smart assistive feature called Flipkart Saathi launched its online grocery store 'Supermart' in Mumbai. Flipkart brings US brand Nautica board to tap the Indian fashion market.
2018	Walmart acquired a 77 per cent stake in Flipkart for US$ 16 billion. Launched funds to invest in early-stage startups to seed innovation in areas related to the e-commerce ecosystem.
2017	PhonePe crosses 10 million downloads on Google Playstore. Softbank Vision Fund invested in Flipkart after which Flipkart had more than US$ 4 billion of cash on its balance sheet
2016	Crossed 100 million registered customers. Acquired Unified Payment Interface (UPI) based startup PhonePe. It also Launched PhonePe, India's first UPI based app.
2014	Flipkart became the first Indian internet retailer to register US$ 1.9 billion gross merchandise value (GMV). Acquired fashion e-seller Myntra.
2013	Launched PayZippy, an online payments solution for merchants and customers. Sold 100,000 books in a single day.
2012	Launched lifestyle and fashion portfolio. Launched electronics private label DigiFlip
2011	Launches digital wallet. Delivery to more than 600 cities in India.

2010	Launched Music, Movies and Mobiles category. Launched cash on delivery. Flipkart also launched its logistic arm, Ekart
2007	Founded in 2007 and launched books.

Table 2

Updated: April, 2019; Source: Company Website - www.flipkart.com

AMAZON INDIA



Figure 8

Amazon India commenced its operations in June 2013, unveiling its website Amazon.in to provide customers with an extensive selection of books, movies, and television shows. On its inaugural day, Amazon India received over 10,000 orders. As a wholly-owned subsidiary of the U.S.-based e-commerce giant Amazon, Inc., founded by Jeff Bezos in 1994, Amazon India sought international avenues for growth, initially exploring China. However, faced with formidable competition from local e-commerce entities like Alibaba, Amazon shifted its focus to India, launching operations in 2013.

Presently, Amazon India offers a diverse range of products across categories such as mobile phones, computers, fashion, books, sports, fitness, electronics, movies, music, automotive, baby products, toys, and groceries. The platform facilitates direct purchases from U.S. sellers through its Global

Store. Amazon Prime, introduced in India, provides users access to various services, including streaming video, music, e-books, and exclusive offers.

Key Highlights:

- Amazon India, a subsidiary of Amazon, Inc., started operations in 2013.

- Offers millions of products across diverse categories.

- Operates a Global Store for direct purchases from U.S. sellers.

- Launched Amazon Prime in India, providing users with a range of services.

- Delivers to most serviceable PIN codes in India.

- Boasts more than 20,000 Indian sellers and 41 fulfilment centres across 13 states.

- Ranked as the third most authentic brand in India.

- Expanding delivery services to regions like Leh-Ladakh, Lakshadweep, East, and North-East India.

2019	Amazon acquired 49 per cent stake in a unit of Future Group.
2017	Acquired 5% stakes in retail store Shoppers Stop
2017	Partnered with Yes Bank to train entrepreneurs on E-commerce who will in-turn help offline MSMEs and retailers understand technology and sell online.
2017	Bags special recognition Randstad awards for e-commerce
2015	Won Golden Peacock Award Corporate Social Responsibility – 2015
2013	Launched operations In India

Table 3

Source –Company Website: https://www.amazon.in

SNAPDEAL



Figure 9

Snapdeal, a prominent e-commerce company headquartered in New Delhi, was established in 2010, during the early stages of India's e-commerce market. Co-founded by Kunal Bahl and Rohit Bansal, Snapdeal has become a major player, offering a diverse range of over 60 million products spanning categories such as mobiles, tablets, electronics, fashion, sports, daily needs, real estate, and financial services.

Key Highlights:

- Snapdeal operates with a wide-ranging product catalog, exceeding 60 million items across 800 categories.

- The platform boasts a substantial network of over 300,000 sellers, catering to millions of users.

- Its logistics infrastructure facilitates delivery to over 6,000 cities and towns across India.

- Snapdeal is among the most funded companies in India, having secured total funding of US$1.78 billion.

- Funding has been sourced from individual investors, private equity firms, and venture capitalists, including notable names like SoftBank, BlackRock, Temasek, Foxconn, Alibaba, eBay Inc., Premji Invest, Intel Capital, Bessemer Venture Partners, Ratan Tata, Clouse SA, Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, Kalaari Capital, Nexus Venture Partners, Cambrian Ventures, Iron Pillar, and Myriad Group.

2017	FreeCharge sold to Axis Bank for Rs 385 crore in all-cash
2016	Acquires Targeting Mantra, a boutique technology company
2015	KunalBahl, the cofounder, won the The Entrepreneur of the Year at ET Awards 2015
2014	Gets $627 million funding from Japanese multinational corporation, Softbank
2013	Acquires Shopo.in, popular online shopping website
2012	Awarded the Best eRetailer of the Year - Value for deals at India eRetail awards 2012
2011	Received the Red Herring Asia Awards 2011 for leading e-commerce company
2010	Gets launched online

Table 4

Updated: May, 2018; Source: www.snapdeal.com

1.12.1 Comparison of Loyalty Membership Program

	Amazon Prime	Flipkart Plus	Snapdeal Gold
Launched	July '16	June'14	August'16
Cost	Rs. 999 per year (Rs. 499 per year in the promotional period).	Rs. 500 per year	No additional cost (applicable when consumer prepay electronically)
Delivery	Faster Delivery	Faster Delivery	Faster Delivery
Shipping	Free shipping	Free shipping	Free shipping
Quality /Discounting	Early access to discounting deals	Early access to discounting deals	Assurance of quality
Others	Free video content streaming	Priority customer service	Extended 14 day return policy

Table 5

Source: Amazon, Snapdeal, Flipkart, BofA Merrill Lynch Global Research

1.13 Promotions by Major E-commerce Players



Figure 10

Amazon employs a diverse range of promotional strategies, including web-based television commercials, billboards, and online promotional networks. They strategically use search engine marketing to ensure high visibility in search engine results. In India, Amazon relies heavily on word of mouth, encouraging people to share positive experiences with friends and family. Additionally, print media ads contribute to their visibility, and Amazon has positioned itself as a global e-commerce giant with a local touch. Slogans like "AurDikhao" and events like the Great Indian Sale have helped establish a distinct presence in the Indian market.

Flipkart, a front-runner in the marketplace, adopts innovative promotional tactics such as "Big Billion Days," "No Kidding, No Worries," and "Fair-Tale." Utilizing social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, TV commercials, and mobile app promotions, Flipkart has become a household name in India. The company focuses on multi-brand online trade and leverages mouth advertising from satisfied customers. Strategic use of Google AdWords and SEO has further solidified their presence in the online sphere.

Snapdeal, too, emphasizes deals, coupons, deep discounts, and offers to attract online consumers across various product categories. Their promotional campaigns, such as "Dil ki Deal," "Bachate raho," and "Unbox Zindagi," aim to evoke emotional fulfilment among consumers. Other online marketplaces like Shopclues, Paytm Mall, and eBay follow similar promotional strategies, offering a range of deals and discounts to engage their audience.

1.14 Online Marketing

Eley et al. (2009) define online marketing as the process of identifying consumer needs, making efforts to meet those needs with a product, and ultimately encouraging consumers to visit a website where they can be converted into sales. Internet marketing addresses challenges present in traditional marketing, such as overcoming geographical barriers, thereby expanding the potential client audience.

According to Gay et al. (2007), the Internet opens up new opportunities for marketers by reducing costs compared to conventional marketing, providing clients with a competitive advantage. The introduction of the Internet has revolutionized the business landscape, allowing businesses to compete and establish a presence in markets that are geographically distant from their physical location (Dholakia, Fritz, Dholakia & Mundorf, 2002). While there are numerous benefits, marketers engaged in online business may encounter challenges. Gay et al. (2007) highlight issues like the lack of security and safety concerns during online browsing on e-commerce sites. Additional factors include inefficient website functionality and a lack of trust in the company from which purchases are made.

1.15 Online Promotion

Promotion plays a crucial role in the marketing mix, serving as a vital component for commercial success by ensuring customer awareness of the company's products. The promotional mix is a combination of tools used to convey the promotional message to customers (Rowley, 1998). Companies can connect with their clients through effective marketing plans and promotional strategies, encompassing advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct sales, and direct marketing as the five essential communication tools within the promotional mix (Kotler, 1999).

Online Advertising

The evolution of the internet has transformed advertising significantly. Online advertising, featuring both audio and video, has a greater impact than static newspaper and magazine ads (Altstiel & Grow, 2006). Various forms of online advertising include in-line ads, banner ads, and pop-up ads. Banner ads, typically placed at the top of web pages, are widely used, while pop-up ads, appearing without user approval, are diminishing due to website restrictions (Altstiel et al., 2006).

Online Personal Selling

Online personal selling, as a promotional tool, faces challenges due to its virtual nature and the necessity for personal interaction. The Internet is seen as an enhancement to the advertising mix, particularly when businesses engage in personal Internet sales (Fill, 2006).

Online Public Relations

Sponsorships play a crucial role in online marketing, serving as collaboration contracts and website sponsorships in the realm of public relations (Fill, 2006). Online public relations involve corporate communication, product publicity, press relations, and counselling.

Online Direct Marketing

Email marketing stands out as the most popular form of online direct marketing, attracting customers to a website through promotional campaigns or as part of a sales promotion program. Companies use emails to offer discounts, creating interest and encouraging customer visits to specific websites (Filling, 2006).

Online Sales Promotion

Online sales promotion involves stimulating a product or service with short-term added value, providing marketers the opportunity to create entertaining and enjoyable campaigns for consumers (Sonal & Preeta, 2005). The influence of sales promotions is evident in customers' decisions regarding what to buy, what brand to choose, and how much to buy (Gupta, 1988).

1.16 Types of Sales Promotion

According to Percy & Elliot (2009), various techniques of sales promotion exist, each offering unique benefits to customers. These techniques include commercial promotion, retail promotion, and customer sales promotion. Altstiel et al. (2006) further categorize sales promotion into two distinct types: promotion of market sales and promotion of trade sales. Kotler et al. (2005) define trade sales and consumer sales as instruments of sales promotion, emphasizing the importance of understanding the market, goals, and competition in selecting cost-effective methods.

Sales promotion serves to inspire and stimulate purchases (Altstiel et al., 2006). Consumer sales promotion is a tool utilized by enterprises aiming to endorse a product directly to the consumer market (Lamb et al., 2009). Percy et al. (2009) refer to offers focused on customers as consumer sales promotions. The goal of such offers is to expedite the decision-making process for customers, encouraging quicker decisions and strengthening the decision's impact. Kotler et al. (2005) affirm that businesses may employ consumer sales promotion to encourage product trial, persuade customers to choose their product over competitors or reward customer brand loyalty.

When conducting online campaigns, companies decide the type of consumer promotion tools to use (Lamb et al., 2009). In designing promotional strategies, organizations consider and create awareness about customer behaviours. Understanding consumer behaviour involves knowing whether customers prioritize the best market price when making a purchase decision. Consumer sales promotion tools are selected based on defining the main customers and the desired impact on consumer behaviour. The success of the campaign hinges on the strategic choice of these advertising methods (Lamb et al., 2009).

This chapter summarizes the information that is acquired after reviewing previous studies that have dealt with similar aspects. The review of literature mainly covered previous research on similar topics in the form of research papers, theses and dissertations. The compilation of this chapter covers the subject of the effectiveness of sales promotion tools. The objective of the chapter is to familiarize with research work done in the area.

1.17 Online Consumer Sales Promotion Tools

1. Coupons

Coupons involve a permit that customers can use while shopping to save money on specific items. They can be paper slips or digital codes that provide discounts, aiming to encourage quick purchases and boost sales. However, excessive use may lead to a reduction in their effectiveness, and fraud is a prevalent issue in online coupon distribution.

2. Premium

Premiums involve selling products with additional items or services either for free or at a reduced cost. This type of promotion generates curiosity about purchasing a particular brand and can serve as an incentive for customer loyalty.

3. Loyalty Programs

Loyalty programs reward customers for their brand loyalty with points that can be redeemed for product purchases or discounts. This encourages long-term relationships between businesses and customers, allowing companies to identify and reward high-spending customers.

4. Discounts

Discounts involve selling products at reduced prices for a short period to drive customer purchases. This method is effective in shaping product exposure, sustaining customer loyalty, and increasing sales volumes. Discounts can be a part of the marketing strategy to differentiate a brand from competitors.

5. Free Delivery / Free Shipping

Free delivery or shipping is offered when customers make purchases exceeding a certain amount. This tactic is effective in encouraging customers to buy more items, leading to higher profits for online companies.

6. Bonus Packs

Bonus packs involve offering additional quantities of a product at the same price as a standard quantity. This type of promotion serves as a reward for loyal customers and motivates repeat purchases.

7. Cross Promotion

Cross-promotion involves promoting complementary products or merging businesses to enhance sales. Companies collaborate to improve the end result by combining products, providing benefits to both parties.

8. Contests/ Sweepstakes

Contests and sweepstakes allow customers to win prizes through competitions or games. While these tools encourage purchases and participation, the chances of winning are often slim, and legal standards must be considered.

9. Flash Sales

Flash sales involve offering goods at significantly reduced prices for a short period, typically in e-commerce platforms. This promotional strategy attracts customers by providing time-sensitive discounts.

10. Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM)/ Online Customer Review (OCR)

eWOM and OCR play crucial roles in influencing consumer buying behaviour. Positive reviews and recommendations online can significantly impact customer decisions. OCRs, generated through simulated communities, provide peer-generated product evaluations that influence the consumer's purchase decision process. Companies use OCRs to understand customer expectations and improve marketing strategies.

These various online consumer sales promotion tools cater to different aspects of customer behaviour and preferences, offering businesses a range of strategies to enhance their promotional efforts.

CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

The research methodology chapter serves as the framework through which the study's objectives are achieved, providing a systematic approach to gathering, analysing, and interpreting data relevant to the research topic. This chapter outlines the methodology employed in the study, including the research design, data collection methods, sample selection criteria, and data analysis techniques. By delineating the research process in detail, this chapter offers transparency and clarity regarding the methods utilized to address the research questions and objectives.

2.2 Statement of the Problem

The Indian e-commerce industry has witnessed remarkable growth over the past decade, with a significant focus on the Business-to-Consumer (B2C) model for most marketplace companies. Promotions have emerged as a crucial factor driving the ever-expanding consumer shopping experience. Extensive literature and past empirical studies indicate a substantial opportunity for research in the realm of sales promotional activities carried out by e-commerce players. The competition to become the preferred e-commerce platform for online shoppers has prompted continuous innovation and diverse promotional strategies among major players like Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal. This study is aptly titled "A Comparative Analysis of Promotional Strategies of Major E-Commerce Players in India."

2.3 Need for the Study

While e-commerce is not a novel concept in developed countries, it remains in its early stages in India, presenting tremendous potential. The retail industry in India has exhibited a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 9.7% from 2000-2020, reaching a valuation of US$ 1.3 trillion. The phases of growth in the Indian e-commerce industry include early adoption by online consumers, transitioning into 'massification,' and eventually demonstrating customer loyalty through annual purchases per customer. According to a report by Bain & Company, India is projected to increase its online shoppers from 100-110 million in 2020 to 300-350 million by 2025. Factors such as the growing Internet population, affordable data, first-time digital users, and increased online penetration in smartphones and electronics contribute to this growth. The expected Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of the gross

merchandise value in the e-retail market is around 30%, with major players like Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal driving it from $30 billion in FY20 to an anticipated $100-120 billion in FY25 (Soni, 2020).

The primary challenge faced by the e-commerce industry, despite this digital push and supporting IT infrastructure, lies in effective implementation. Customer acquisition is crucial, especially for key online players like Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal, constituting a significant portion of marketers' expenses for promoting their offerings across various available mediums. The high internet penetration and the growing number of online shoppers in India indicate a certain trajectory of growth in the e-commerce sector, making it imperative for e-commerce players to effectively communicate the value in their product and service offerings.

2.4 Research Gap

While a substantial body of research exists under the broader domain of e-commerce, with studies focusing on customers, end-users, supplier evaluations, technological adoptions, problems and prospects, adoption of e-commerce, advertisements, mobile marketing, and promotional campaigns, there remains a gap in the literature regarding various e-commerce promotional strategies and tools employed by companies to address customer-related aspects.

Research studies have explored the impact of discounts on generating more sales, with a preference for coupon discounts among online customers in Malaysia. Coupons have been recognized as a significant variable influencing online shoppers' behaviour. Premiums, as promotional incentives, generate curiosity about purchasing a particular brand. Loyalty program promotions contribute to long-term partnerships with customers. Discounts, an integral part of promotional strategies, shape product exposure, sustain customer loyalty and boost sales volumes. Free delivery is considered one of the most effective sales marketing practices, encouraging customers to procure more items.

However, while these individual aspects have been explored in the literature, a comprehensive comparative analysis of promotional strategies across major e-commerce players in India is lacking. This study aims to address this research gap by examining the influence of various constructs on the shopping experience of online customers.

Contests and sweepstakes represent another promotional approach where customers engage in online games for a chance to win prizes. This method is known to enhance curiosity and excitement among customers (Gay et al., 2007; Kotler et al., 2005; Matthews, 2008; Percy et al., 2009).

The generation and impact of electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) on consumer buying behaviour have been central themes in existing literature (Okazaki, 2009; Park et al., 2009; Kim, H., & Song, J. 2010). Customer reviews are identified as a crucial promotional strategy influencing purchasing decisions (Mayzlin, D., 2006; Nan et al., 2017), with the significance of Online Customer Reviews (OCRs) in online shopping highlighted in prior research. Strategies like "Buy One Get One" (BOGO) free offers are noted for easing brand recognition and recall for future purchases (Gilberth and Jackaria, 2002).

Research has indicated the positive impact of various sales promotion tools, including price discounts, coupon schemes, bonus packs, premium offers, and scratch cards, in inducing brand switching, increasing product stockpiling, and accelerating early purchases (Mittal & Sethi, 2011). Previous studies have emphasized the influence of promotions and value mindfulness in Indian online shopping behavior (Rakesh and Khare, 2012). Consumer responses to online sales promotions, such as free gifts, price promotions, sweepstakes, and contests, have favoured hedonic marketers (Heiens & Narayanaswamy, 2018). Notably, major e-commerce players, including Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal, have implemented successful promotional events during festivals, contributing to increased sales revenue, website traffic, and enhanced logistical infrastructure (Sujata, Menachem & Viraj, 2017; Khanna & Sampat, 2015; Jayakumar, 2016; Arora & Budree, 2016).

While extensive research has explored the effectiveness of various promotional strategies on customers, there is a limited focus on the comparative analysis of these strategies across top e-commerce players in India. Consequently, this study aims to investigate the impact of specific constructs on the shopping experience of online customers.

2.5 Sample Size

For this research on a comparative analysis of promotional strategies of major e-commerce players in India, a sample size of 50 responses was obtained.

2.6 Data Collection Method

For this study, a mixed-methods approach was employed to collect both primary and secondary data. The primary data was gathered through the distribution of Google Forms surveys to participants. Google Forms provided a convenient and accessible platform for participants to respond to survey questions, ensuring a diverse pool of respondents and maximizing data collection efficiency. Additionally, secondary data was gathered from online books, websites, and other reputable resources to complement the primary data and provide additional context and insights into the research topic. By integrating both primary and secondary data sources, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the comparative analysis of promotional strategies of major e-commerce players in India.

2.7 Research Objectives and Hypotheses

Research Objectives:

1. To study the influence of customer loyalty membership programs and annual flagship sales promotions on online customers.

2. To analyze the association between demographic profiles and customer loyalty membership programs.

3. To identify and study the influence of the factors related to promotional strategies of major e-commerce players on customers' shopping experience.

Research Hypotheses:

H1a: There is an influence of Amazon's customer loyalty membership program on online customers.

H1b: There is no influence of Amazon's customer loyalty membership program on online customers.

H2a: There is an influence of Flipkart's customer loyalty membership program on online customers.

H2b: There is no influence of Flipkart's customer loyalty membership program on online customers.

H3a: There is an influence of Snapdeal's customer loyalty membership program on online customers.

H3b: There is no influence of Snapdeal's customer loyalty membership program on online customers.

2.8 Scope of the Study

The study aims to analyze various promotional strategies employed by major e-commerce players and their impact on customers, leading to e-commerce transactions. However, the scope is specifically limited to the following:

1. The research will primarily focus on online sales promotion strategies and customer loyalty membership programs.

2. Respondents for the study will be online shopping consumers.

3. Three major e-commerce players, namely Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal, are chosen for the study based on their Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) and business model.

2.9 Significance of the Study

The research study, which involves a comparative analysis of various promotional strategies adopted by major e-commerce players, holds significance in contributing to theoretical knowledge and the industry at large. The study's importance is highlighted in the following ways:

- It will help identify the types of promotional strategies that influence online shoppers.

- The findings will assist e-tailers in devising effective promotional strategies for regular use, festive seasons, and annual flagship events.

- A comparative analysis of diverse promotional strategies used by e-commerce players will provide insights into the preferences of online shoppers regarding specific e-commerce platforms.

- The study will involve analyzing the demographic profile of respondents concerning the promotional offerings by major e-commerce players.

2.10 Limitations of the Study

- The study is primarily focused on one crucial aspect of the promotional mix, i.e., Sales Promotion concerning e-commerce players such as Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal only.

- The research is confined to examining three major e-commerce players in India—Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal. Caution should be exercised before generalizing the results to the entire industry.

- Data collection is exclusive to experienced online shoppers, excluding non-experienced customers. Generalizing the results should be approached with care.

- The respondents are exclusively from India, and the study does not consider online shoppers from other countries. Comparing the study results with those from other developed or underdeveloped countries may not be appropriate.

Chapter 3

Review of Literature

3.1 Past studies on the effectiveness of Sales Promotion tools

- Throughout history, numerous endeavours have been undertaken to investigate the effectiveness of sales promotion techniques. Sales promotion methods, as highlighted by Ndubisi and Moi (2005), serve not only as strategic tools to enhance brand awareness but also as means to stimulate consumers to embrace new products. Research indicates a strong correlation between promotional efforts and increased purchase volumes, along with decreased intervals between purchases (Neslin, Henderson, & Quelch, 1984). Gardener and Trivedi (1998) observed that premium deals, where additional products are offered at no extra cost, have yielded success as they easily persuade customers to make purchases. Furthermore, scholars like Shimp (2003) and Fill (2002) have uncovered a significant relationship between pricing strategies and product promotion, underscoring the interconnectedness of these elements in marketing endeavours.

- According to Gilberth and Jackaria (2002), buy one get one (BOGO) free promotions are effective in enhancing brand recognition and recall for future purchases. These promotions not only accelerate transactions but also encourage consumers to experiment with new products. Price reductions have been observed to expedite purchases and encourage product trials. Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel (2001) demonstrated that offering coupons enables customers to sample new flavours or varieties of products that they might not have otherwise considered purchasing at full price. Coupons are easily comprehensible for customers and can significantly boost purchase trials. Additionally, Robinson and Carmack (1997) found that vouchers are successful in persuading customers to try out new products.

- Numerous studies have highlighted that different types of sales promotions elicit distinct responses from consumers (Schneider & Currim, 1991). A savvy shopper, who meticulously searches for the best deals, may be particularly susceptible to discounts, whereas an impulsive buyer may be more inclined to respond to flashy displays or demonstrations (Blattberg & Nelson, 1990).

- Promotions can indeed yield positive outcomes by enticing new customers to make repeat purchases of a company's products. However, the evidence does not indicate any lasting favourable impact on brands. This can be attributed to the fact that sales promotions primarily attract occasional existing customers, and only a limited number of new customers are likely to

continue purchasing regularly (Ehrenberg, Hammond, & Goodhardt, 1994). Once the sales promotions end, consumers tend to revert to buying their preferred brands rather than opting for the promoted brand at full price. Research suggests that the profits of promoted brands are largely offset by losses incurred by other brands due to brand substitution.

- According to Gupta (1988), brand switching contributes to a significant 84 percent of the overall increase in revenue resulting from promotions. Gupta's findings suggest that the effects of sales promotions are contingent upon factors such as buying frequency and purchase volume, which ultimately contribute to only 2 to 14 percent of the enhanced revenue, respectively. There is substantial evidence indicating that the influence of consumer promotions is confined to the duration of the promotion itself. While sales promotion can indeed stimulate sales growth during its implementation, once the promotion ends, sales typically revert back to their original levels.

- As part of their thesis report, Berter and Blomqvist (2010) conducted a comparative analysis of sales promotion tools and strategies employed by four prominent American retail clothing websites: GAP Inc, American Eagle Outfitters Inc, Forever 21 Inc, and Bloomingdale's. The study delved into the unique promotional strategies adopted by each of these players in the retail clothing industry. Insights were provided regarding the diverse promotional tactics utilized by these companies to attract and engage customers on their respective online platforms.

- Mittal and Sethi (2011) conducted a focused study on the effectiveness of various sales promotion tools, including price discounts, coupon schemes, bonus packs, premium offers, and scratch cards, among Indian consumers. The aim was to assess the diverse behavioural responses elicited by these promotional tactics. The results of their study revealed that sales promotion tools exerted a positive impact by encouraging brand switching, prompting consumers to stock up on additional items for their wardrobes, and expediting early purchases. However, some researchers argue that this phenomenon resembles a zero-sum game, as the benefits derived from sales promotions are often temporary and tend to normalize once the promotional campaign concludes.

- In their study, Rakesh and Khare (2012) directed their focus towards understanding the influence of promotions and value mindfulness on Indian online shopping behaviour. Their research delved into the impact of digital deals on online shoppers and their behavioural responses. Contrary to expectations, the results indicated that online customers were not significantly influenced by

promotional tools, offers, or deals. The study found that customers did not perceive promotions as a crucial factor when making online purchases. Instead, factors such as quality and safety concerns were observed to have a more significant influence on purchasing decisions. Additionally, the study highlighted that even products or services offered at lower prices might not necessarily entice customers to make a purchase in the online shopping context.

- In their research paper, Khanna and Sampat (2015) explored the factors influencing online shopping behaviour during the Diwali festival season in 2014, with a focus on two major e-commerce giants, Flipkart and Amazon. The paper provided insights into both the positive and negative aspects of Indian online shopping dynamics during the festive period. During the Diwali festive season sale, the findings revealed a mix of positive and negative feedback. Factors such as user-friendly interfaces, appealing aesthetics, convenient payment options, electronic word-of-mouth recommendations, and attractive offers were identified as favourable for consumers making purchases. However, challenges such as hidden costs, website crashes during order placement, timeouts, and logistical delays in order fulfilment were noted as deterrents to positive customer experiences. The study also examined the phenomenon of online shopping festivals, highlighting the significant surge in consumer activity during such events. Both e-tailers employed aggressive promotional strategies to enhance brand loyalty and gain a competitive edge in the online market. The research concluded that factors such as price sensitivity, product specifications, and personalized product recommendations play pivotal roles in consumers' selection of and loyalty to online retailers.

- In their study, Le and Vo (2017) examined customer attitudes towards different formats of website advertising by comparing the attitudinal dimensions of information, irritation, and entertainment across in-line display advertisements, traditional banners, and pop-up ads. The findings of the study revealed varying responses from customers towards these different advertising formats. Specifically, the study found a positive response towards banner ads with an informative attitude. Customers perceived banner ads as informative and useful in providing relevant information about products or services. However, there was a pessimistic response towards pop-up ads, characterized by irritation and annoyance. Pop-up ads were viewed negatively due to their intrusive nature and disruptive impact on the browsing experience. Interestingly, the study found that the entertainment aspect of advertising formats lacked a significant impact on customer attitudes. This suggests that while entertainment value may not be a primary consideration for

customers when evaluating online advertisements, the informative and non-intrusive nature of banners positively influences their attitudes towards such ads.

- In Salvi's (2013) study, the impact of three sales promotional tactics—Buy-One-Get-One (BOGO) offers, discounts, and price reductions—was examined in the context of the branded apparel retail industry. The study assessed seven different buying behaviour responses, including brand switching, trial purchases, increased spending, stockpiling, purchase acceleration, actual purchases, and store visits, to gauge the effectiveness of these sales promotional strategies. The results of the study revealed that discounts, price reductions, and BOGO offers had a positive impact on two specific buying behaviour responses: store visits and purchase acceleration. However, none of these promotional schemes exhibited a significant influence on behaviours such as stockpiling, trial purchases, or brand switching. This suggests that while these sales promotions may attract customers to visit stores and expedite their purchase decisions, they do not necessarily encourage behaviours like stockpiling or brand loyalty switching within the branded apparel retail sector.

- In their 2019 study, Yahya, Hashim, Bahsri, and Dahari explored the influence of sales promotion strategies on the behaviour of online fashion shoppers. The research revealed that, in addition to factors such as price and quality, certain promotional tactics significantly affected online buying behaviour. Specifically, free delivery, discounts, and coupons emerged as the most influential factors shaping the behaviour of online consumers. Among these promotional strategies, coupons were identified as the most significant variable with a high impact on the behaviour of online shoppers. This indicates that offering coupons can be particularly effective in driving desired behaviours among online fashion shoppers, highlighting the importance of such promotional tools in the e-commerce landscape.

- In their 2000 study, Chandon, Wansink, and Laurent introduced a profit congruency framework aimed at understanding how non-monetary and fiscal promotions influence customer responses to sales promotions. This framework recognizes that different types of promotions offer customers varying levels of practical and hedonic benefits. Hedonic benefits encompass aspects such as opportunities for self-expression, entertainment, and enjoyment, while practical benefits include enhanced shopping convenience, savings, and perceived product quality. The authors proposed a benefit congruence theory, which suggests that the effectiveness of a sales campaign depends on the practical or hedonic consequences of the benefits it offers and how well those benefits align with the promoted product. Their findings indicated that monetary promotions are

more effective for high-equity brands in practical utility product categories compared to hedonic products. This suggests that the perceived benefits of a promotion should align with the nature of the product being promoted for optimal effectiveness.

- In their 2018 study, Heiens and Narayanaswamy investigated consumer responses to promotions of online sales within hedonic and practical utility product categories. The results of their research revealed distinct preferences among consumers for different types of promotions based on the product category. For hedonic product categories, promotional tactics such as free gifts, price promotions, sweepstakes, and contests were found to be particularly effective. These promotional strategies resonated well with consumers seeking hedonic experiences and enjoyment from their purchases. Interestingly, the study noted that the limited-hour special promotion was equally favoured by users of both hedonic and practical utility products. This finding suggests that time-limited offers hold universal appeal across different types of products, regardless of whether they are primarily hedonic or practical in nature.

- In their 2017 study, Zhao and Wan focused on understanding the online perceptions of Chinese consumers during Singles Day, one of the largest online shopping events in China. They collected data from 214 Chinese consumers who were actively engaged in online purchases during Singles' Day. The researchers proposed a conceptual framework to elucidate the relationship among four key drivers: promotion, word of mouth, e-store atmosphere, advertising, and consumption rituals. They found that consumer purchase intention was positively correlated with these drivers. Their results indicated that several mediator variables played a significant role in influencing purchase intention. These variables included thoughtless buying behaviour, perceived value, shopping pleasure, and surfing behaviour. These findings highlight the importance of various factors in shaping consumers' purchase intentions during significant online shopping events like Singles Day.

- In their 2017 study, Sujata, Menachem, and Viraj examined the specific impact of 'Flash Sales' on online consumers, focusing on three major Indian e-tailers: Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal. They analyzed various metrics such as sales revenues, website traffic, and logistics performance to gauge the effectiveness of these flash sales events. The results of their study indicated that Amazon's 'Great Indian Shopping Festival,' Flipkart's 'Big Billion Day,' and Snapdeal's 'Unbox Zindagi' had a significant impact in several key areas. Firstly, these flash sales events were successful in generating substantial sales revenue for the respective e-tailers. Secondly, they observed a notable increase in website traffic during these festive flash sales, indicating

heightened consumer interest and engagement. Lastly, these events also led to improvements in logistical infrastructure, presumably to accommodate the surge in orders and ensure timely delivery to customers. Overall, the findings underscored the effectiveness of flash sales events in driving sales, boosting website traffic, and enhancing logistical capabilities for major Indian e-commerce platforms during festive periods.

- In their 2016 study, Yan, Wang, Chen, et al. employed the Stimulus-Organism-Response (SOR) model to analyze unplanned consumption and situational variables surrounding the online promotional activity 'Double 11' on Taobao.com. The study examined factors such as time pressure, promotions, and social atmosphere both before and after the 'Double 11' promotional event.The results revealed that many customers adopted a strategy of allocating in-store slack into their shopping budget to regulate unintended purchases. Several factors were found to influence unplanned purchases, including in-store slack, preparation time, the extent of promotions, and social environment. Interestingly, an increase in unintended purchases was associated with a decrease in the time taken for actual shopping and an intensification of the preparation time.These findings suggest that various situational factors play a significant role in influencing unplanned consumption during promotional events such as 'Double 11'. Consumers may adjust their shopping behaviour in response to these factors, allocating resources differently and potentially impacting their overall shopping experience.

- In their 2015 paper, Liu, Li, Peng, Lv, & Zhang delved into the segmentation of buying behaviour among Chinese online customers using Taobao.com, China's largest C2C e-commerce platform. The study aimed to identify six distinct categories of online purchasing behaviour and assess their preferences towards three conventional promotional tactics: discounts, advertisements, and word-of-mouth. Using an analytical model, the researchers sought to understand each category of online purchasers and their response to various promotional strategies. The findings of the study revealed distinct preferences among different segments of online buyers. Economic buyers, for instance, were found to prefer discount promotions, while direct buyers favoured advertising promotions. On the other hand, active-star buyers showed a preference for word-of-mouth promotions. These results highlight the importance of tailoring promotional tactics to specific segments of online consumers based on their buying behavior and preferences. By understanding the nuances of each segment, e-commerce platforms can optimize their promotional strategies to effectively engage and attract their target audience.

- In their 2017 paper, Nan, Yang, & Dou discuss the influence of customer reviews on online consumer behaviour. The study examines the relationship between customer reviews and their impact on consumers' ability to obtain product information. The findings suggest that regardless of the order in which reviews are presented, they have a significant relationship with the number of helpful votes they receive. Furthermore, consumers are more inclined to purchase products when they perceive lower product uncertainty and higher product ranking based on these reviews. Additionally, the paper explores how the display of reviews can hold different meanings across various e-commerce sites. This highlights the importance of understanding the context in which reviews are presented and how they are interpreted by consumers. Overall, the study underscores the influential role that customer reviews play in shaping online consumer behaviour and their impact on purchasing decisions.

- In their 2018 paper, Elwalda & Erkan introduced the Information Adoption Model (IAM) to examine the factors influencing online customer reviews (OCRs) on purchase intentions. They expanded the IAM with two additional constructs: attitude and intention, resulting in the OCRs Adoption Model. The study involved collecting data from 384 university students, and the developed model was empirically tested and validated using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results of the study revealed several key findings. Firstly, the standard of electronic word of mouth (eWOM), attitude towards eWOM, perceived utility of eWOM, and acceptance of eWOM were identified as influential factors shaping customer purchase intentions. Specifically, the study found that attitude played a significant role in the adoption of knowledge derived from online customer reviews. These findings highlight the importance of attitudes towards eWOM and the perceived utility of such reviews in influencing consumer behaviour. The OCRs Adoption Model provides valuable insights into the dynamics of online customer reviews and their impact on purchase intentions, contributing to our understanding of the role of eWOM in e-commerce environments.

- In their 2014 article, Cummins, Peltier, Schibrowsky, & Nill classified online consumer behaviour into eight categories. They conducted a comprehensive analysis using 942 articles covering topics related to consumer behaviour and social network issues in the online and social media context, published between 1993 and 2012. One of the highlighted categories identified in their study was "online networks and communities." This category focused on the significant role of electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) in the presence of viral campaigns, particularly influenced by opinion leaders. The research underscored the importance of online networks and

communities in shaping consumer behaviour, particularly in the context of eWOM and its influence on viral marketing campaigns. This highlights the critical role of opinion leaders and the power of social networks in driving consumer perceptions and behaviours in the online environment.

- In their 2015 paper titled "Customer Satisfaction in Online Shopping," Jayasubramanian, Sivasakthi, & K identified several factors influencing online shopping behavior and customer satisfaction. These factors include:

1. Price sensitivity: Consumers' responsiveness to changes in prices, discounts, and promotions.
2. Brand preference: The degree to which consumers favour specific brands when making online purchases.
3. Product confusion: Challenges or difficulties encountered by consumers in understanding product descriptions, specifications, or features online.
4. Comfort: The level of ease, convenience, and satisfaction experienced by consumers while navigating through online shopping platforms.
5. Trustworthiness of online sellers: Consumers' perceptions of the reliability, credibility, and integrity of online merchants.
6. Safe and secure payments: The importance of secure payment methods and systems in building trust and confidence among online shoppers.

   Additionally, the paper addresses issues faced by respondents when shopping online, such as delivery delays, product quality discrepancies, and customer service preferences. By identifying and understanding these factors, the study contributes to our knowledge of consumer behaviour in the online shopping environment and offers insights for improving customer satisfaction in e-commerce transactions.

- In his 2016 work, Jayakumar delved into the behavioural lessons extracted from Flipkart's flagship sales promotion strategy, known as the "Big Billion Day Sale." The paper explored various aspects of consumer behaviour and the reactions elicited by opponents to such online purchasing events, particularly focusing on e-loyalty and e-satisfaction. The researcher argued that simply offering mouth-watering discounts in India may not always yield the desired results. Instead, e-tailers must thoroughly comprehend the behavioural consequences of offering massive discounts and deals. This suggests that while discounts and offers may attract initial attention, they may not necessarily translate into long-term loyalty or satisfaction among consumers. Understanding the nuanced behavioural responses to such promotional strategies is crucial for e-commerce giants like Flipkart to effectively engage and retain customers in the competitive online market.

- In his 2016 work, Hartemo centred his attention on email marketing as an effective communication tool. His article aimed to elucidate how email marketing can empower consumers and provide foundational concepts for future academic studies in this area. The conclusions drawn from his paper highlighted the potential of email marketing to facilitate interactive and personalized communication with consumers. By tailoring emails to individual preferences, marketers can effectively engage with even the most disengaged consumers. Furthermore, Hartemo emphasized that emails with explicit consent often encourage customers to actively participate in the communication process. To fully leverage the advantages of email marketing, Hartemo suggested that current approaches need to be updated. This implies a shift towards more innovative and dynamic email marketing strategies that align with evolving consumer preferences and behaviours. By embracing these advancements, marketers can maximize the effectiveness of email marketing campaigns and enhance overall consumer engagement and satisfaction.

- In their thesis report, Berter and Blomqvist (2010) conducted a comparative analysis of sales promotion tools and strategies employed by four prominent American clothing websites: Bloomingdale's, Forever 21 Inc, GAP Inc., and American Eagle Outfitters Inc. The paper offers insights into online sales promotion strategies in general and provides detailed examinations of the approaches taken by each of the four websites. The study delves into the unique promotional strategies adopted by these clothing retailers, highlighting the diverse tactics used to attract and engage customers in the competitive online market. By analyzing the promotional strategies employed by each player individually, the report provides valuable insights into the effectiveness of various sales promotion tools in the context of online fashion retail. Overall, Berter and Blomqvist's thesis report serves as a comprehensive exploration of online sales promotion strategies, offering valuable insights for both academic research and practical application in the e-commerce industry.

- In their 2016 article, Arora & Budree explored the concept of "Basket Loyalty Tussle" between two leading online retailers in India, namely Amazon India and Flipkart. The paper closely analyzed the competition between these two giants to secure customer loyalty in terms of online sales. This included considerations such as offering deep discounts across a wide variety of products, providing diverse delivery options, and utilizing various promotional mediums. The authors emphasized the importance of co-existence rather than fierce competition between these two major players in the Indian e-commerce market. They suggested that both companies could

benefit from focusing on loyalty-building strategies in the future, which would enable them to better plan for long-term success. By shifting their focus towards fostering loyalty among customers, Amazon India and Flipkart could potentially strengthen their positions in the market and enhance customer retention. This approach may involve investing in personalized customer experiences, improving service quality, and offering incentives to encourage repeat purchases. Overall, the authors' analysis underscores the significance of loyalty-building efforts in shaping the future of e-commerce competition in India.

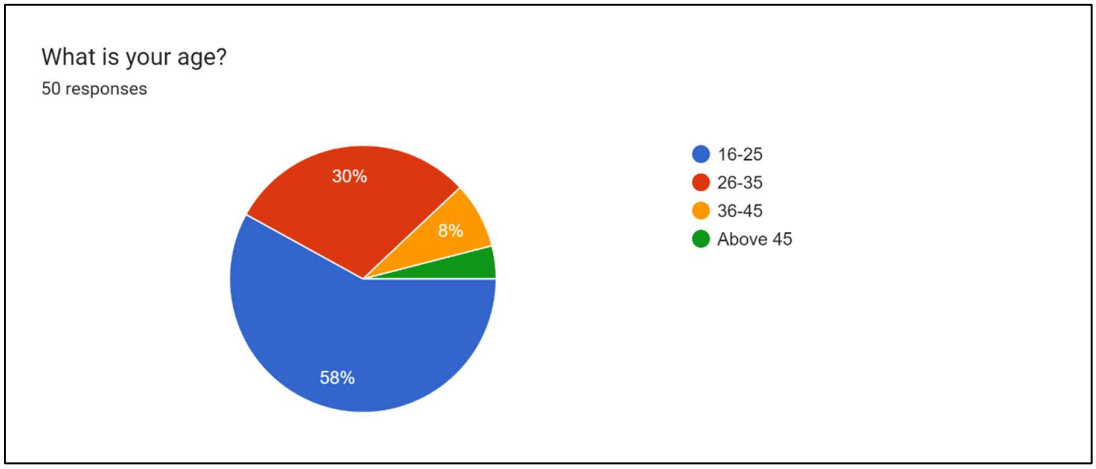
Chapter 4

Data Analysis, Interpretation and Presentation

4.1 Data analysis

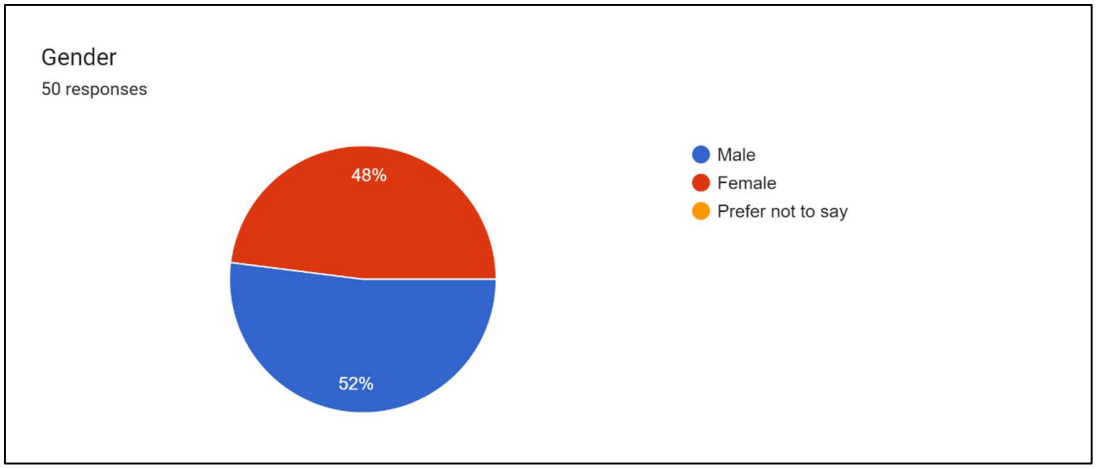
This chapter holds significant importance within the research project. This chapter presents data analyses of the study. The information was gathered via a structured questionnaire. The results of the data analysis are as follows:

Question 1:



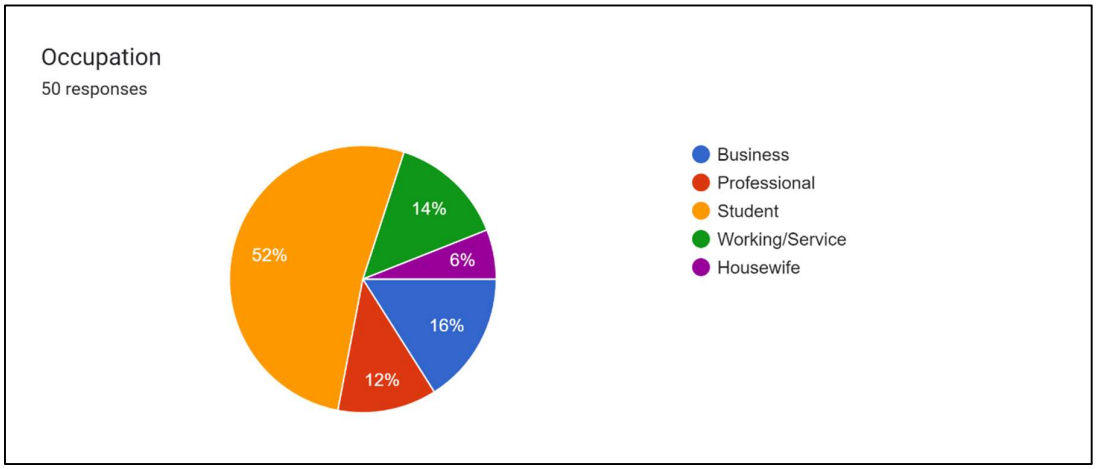
It indicates that 58% of the respondents are aged between 16 to 25 years, 30% of the respondents are aged between 26 to 35 years, 8% of the respondents are aged between 36 to 45 years and 2% of the respondents are aged 45 years or more. It can be inferred that the majority (88%) of the respondents fall between the ages 16-35 and the remaining are above 35 years of age.

Question 2:



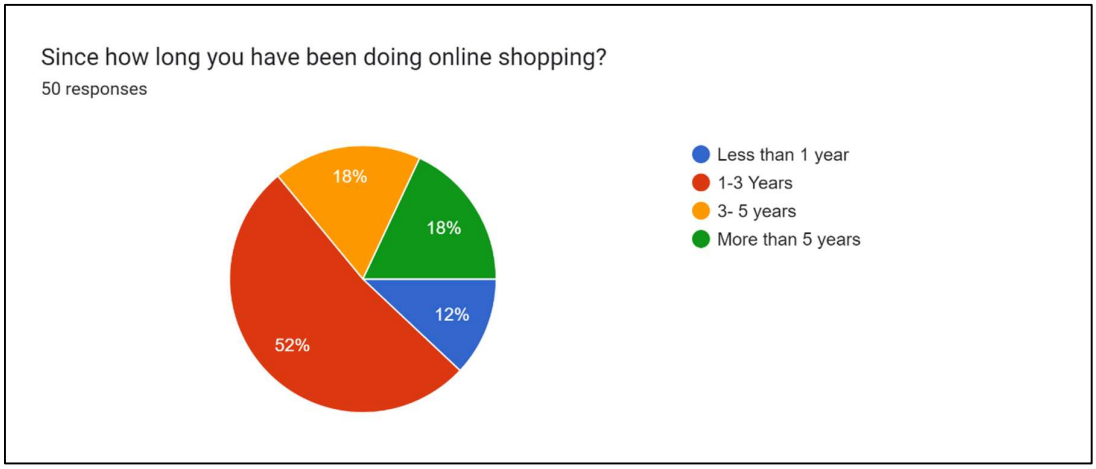
It can be observed that the proportion of male and female respondents for the study is similar. However male respondents are higher as compared to female respondents. The final study sample had 48% female respondents and 52% male respondents.

Question 3:



The distribution of the respondents based on their occupation shows that 16% of the respondents are businessmen, 14% of the respondents are Working/Service, 6% of the respondents are homemakers, 52% of the respondents are students and 12% of the respondents are professionals. It can be inferred that the majority of the respondents in the study are students.

Question 4:

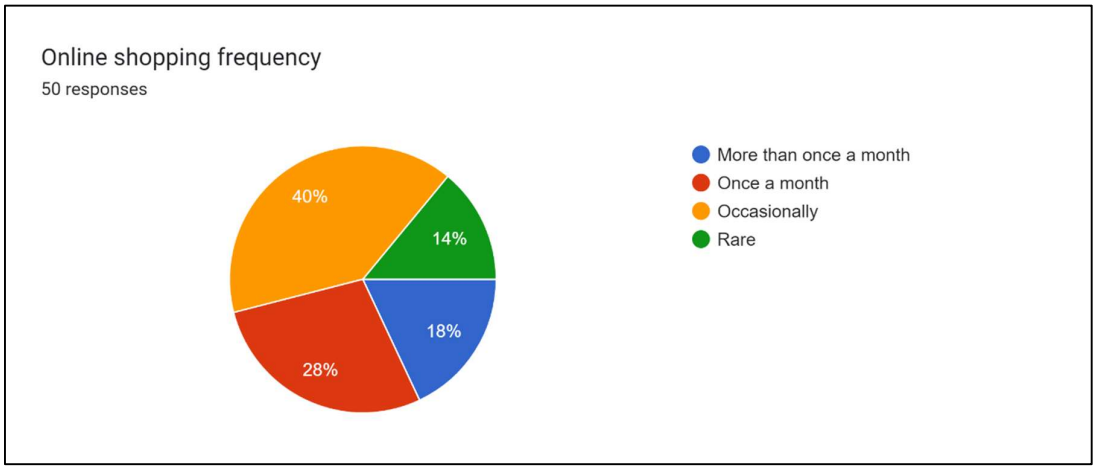


The distribution of the respondents based on how many years they are

been shopping online shows that 18% of respondents are shopping online for more

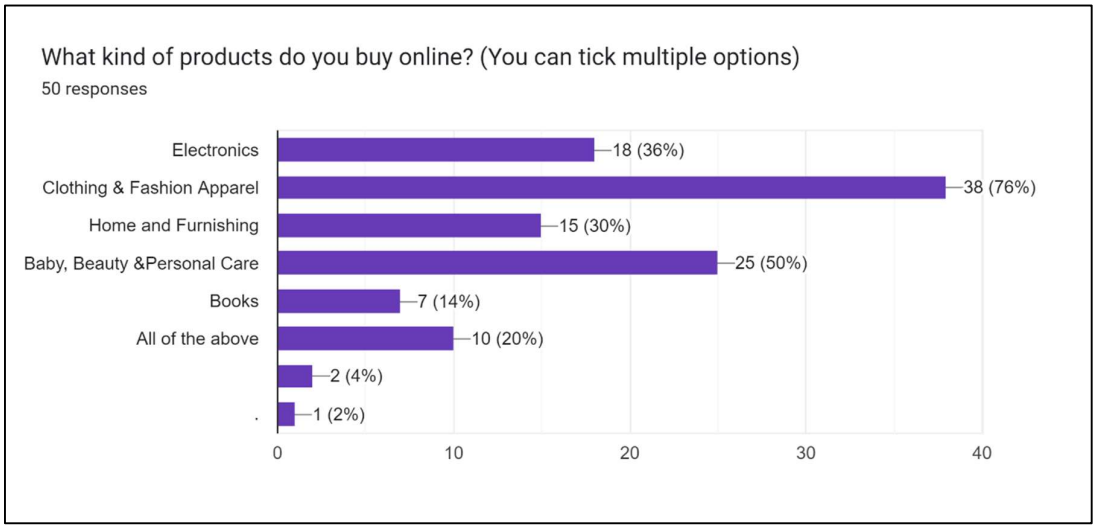
than 5 years, 18% of respondents have been shopping online for 3-5 years, 52% respondents have been shopping online for 1-3 years, and 12% of respondents are shopping online for less than 1 year.

Question 5:



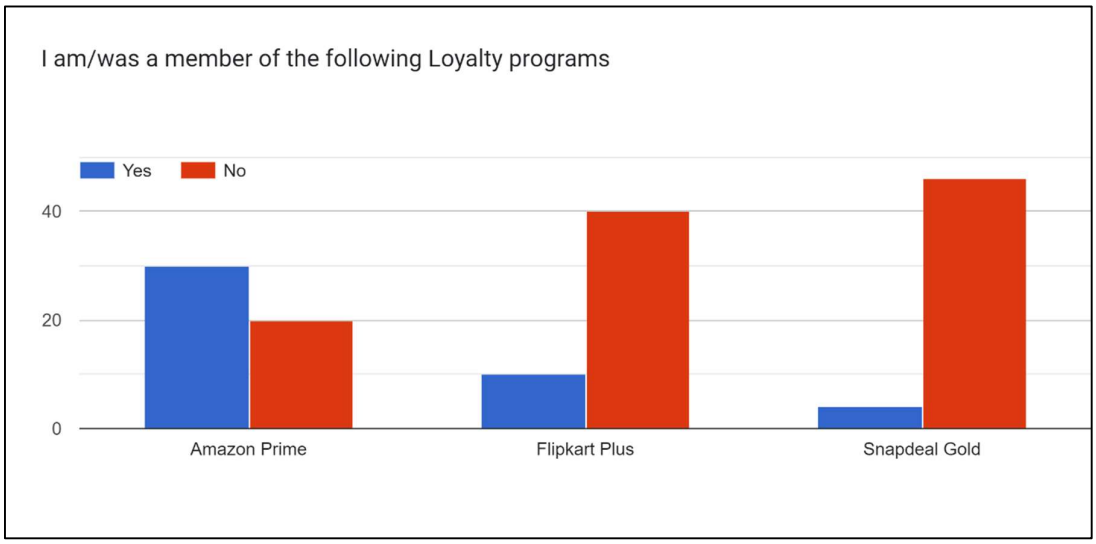
The distribution of the respondents based on online shopping frequency shows that 18% respondents shop more than once a month, 28% of respondents shop once a month, 40% of respondents shop occasionally and 14% of respondents shop very rarely. It can be inferred that the majority of the respondents shop occasionally i.e., during festivals, weddings, special occasions at home, family or friends.

Question 6:



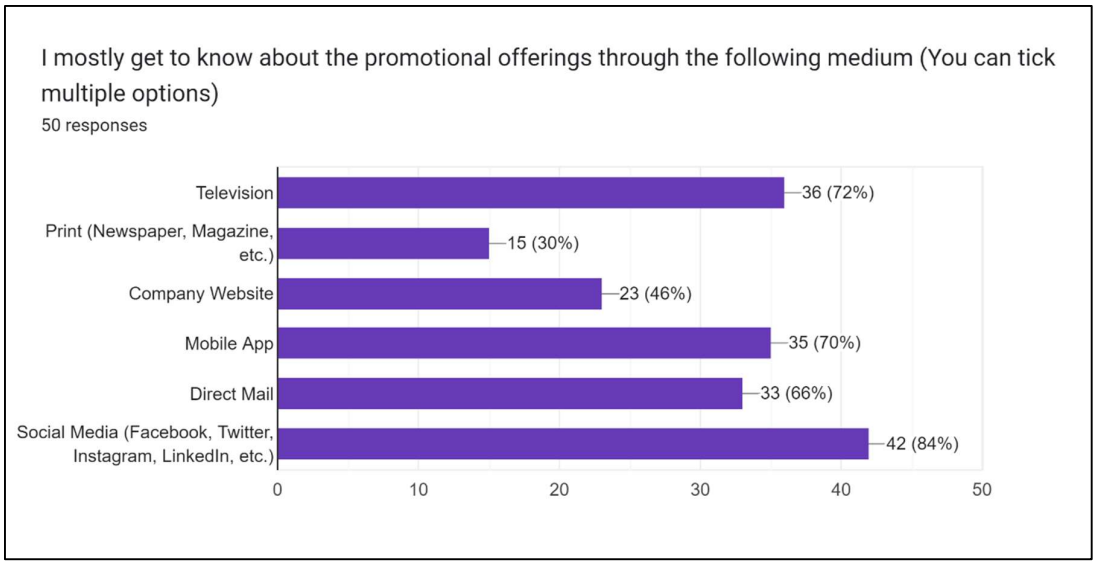
The distribution of respondents based on the Category of products bought online shows that 36% of respondents buy electronic goods, 76% buy clothing and fashion apparel, 30% buy home and furnishing, 50% buy Baby, Beauty &Personal Care, 14% buy books and 4% chose others as the option. It can be inferred that the majority of the customers usually choose clothing and fashion as their preferred categories of products to shop online.

Question 7:



The distribution of respondents based on being a member of the following loyalty programs shows that Amazon Prime has a majority with 30 members being a part of their loyalty program whereas Snapdeal has the lowest number of members for their loyalty program.

Question 8:



The distribution of respondents based on the medium of awareness about the promotional offerings show that 72% of awareness came from Television, 30% awareness came from Print (Newspaper, Magazine, etc.), 46% of awareness came from the Company Website, 70% of awareness came from the Mobile App, 66% of awareness came from Direct Mail and 84% of awareness came from Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.)

Chapter 5
Recommendations, Suggestions and Conclusions

5.1 Comparison of Loyalty Membership Program

Loyalty program promotions play a pivotal role in fostering long-term relationships between businesses and customers. These schemes incentivize regular shoppers with rewards and points that can be redeemed for product purchases or discounts, promoting customer retention and brand loyalty (Lamb et al., 2009; Alstiel et al., 2006; Percy et al., 2009). Key players in the Indian e-commerce market, namely Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal, have introduced their respective loyalty membership programs to enhance customer engagement.

Amazon's loyalty membership program, "Amazon Prime," launched in July 2016, offers customers early access to discounted deals during special occasions, festive seasons, and flagship sale days. In addition to exclusive deals, Amazon Prime members enjoy complimentary access to services like Amazon Music and Amazon Video for streaming movies, web series, and podcasts. The program has evolved, and Amazon now hosts exclusive events like "Amazon Prime Days" for its members.

Flipkart introduced its loyalty membership program, "Flipkart Plus," in July 2014, initially with an annual enrollment fee of Rs. 500. Over time, Flipkart Plus transitioned to a coin-based system, where customers earn coins for each purchase. These coins, accumulated in the customer's account, can be redeemed for Flipkart Plus membership. Members benefit from free and fast delivery, along with early access to discounted deals during mega days and festive seasons. Additionally, Flipkart Plus offers discounts on various services and tie-ups, including movies, music, games, food, grocery, travel, and recharge.

Snapdeal's loyalty membership program, "Snapdeal Gold," launched in August 2016, stands out as it incurs no additional cost for membership. However, the program faced challenges in attracting customers due to limited benefits, offering only fast delivery and easy shipping. As a result, Snapdeal Gold did not gain significant traction, diminishing its importance in the eyes of consumers.

5.2 Conclusion

While e-commerce in India currently constitutes a relatively small proportion compared to traditional offline retail, its growth potential has been substantial and evident over the years. Despite the emergence of numerous e-commerce players in the last decade, the market has been predominantly shaped by the competition between Amazon, Flipkart, and Snapdeal. Amazon and Flipkart, engaged in intense rivalry, have been at the forefront of capturing market share, while Snapdeal has maintained a somewhat distant position. Empirical findings indicate the significant influence of annual flagship promotion sale

strategies, such as Amazon's Great Indian Sale, Flipkart's Big Billion Day, and Snapdeal's Snapdeal Gold, on online customers.

However, the landscape of consumer shopping experiences is evolving rapidly, necessitating continuous innovation in marketing activities and the planning of annual flagship promotion sales. In the context of India's price-sensitive market, sales promotion tools like discounts, offers, deals, cashback, coupons, online contests, and bank tie-ups have become integral. These strategies are likely to persist, and e-commerce players must remain proactive in devising innovative methods to engage online shoppers. The customization of annual flagship promotions and the exploration of loyalty membership programs are key strategies for enhancing the overall shopping experience and retaining customers in this dynamic market.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

on

A Comparative Analysis of Promotional Strategies of Major

E-Commerce Players in India

What is your age?*

- 16- 25 years
- 26-35 years
- 36-45 years
- Above 45 years

Gender*

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Occupation

- Business
- Professional
- Student
- Working/Service
- Housewife

Since how long you have been doing online shopping?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 Years
- 3- 5 years
- More than 5 years

Online shopping frequency

- More than once a month
- Once a month
- Occasionally
- Rare

What kind of products do you buy online? (You can tick multiple options)

☐ Electronics
☐ Clothing & Fashion Apparel
☐ Home and Furnishing
☐ Baby, Beauty &Personal Care
☐ Books
☐ All of the above
☐ Others

I am/was a member of the following Loyalty programs

Amazon Prime	Yes	No
Flipkart Plus	Yes	No
Snapdeal Gold	Yes	No

I mostly get to know about the promotional offerings through the following medium

(You can tick multiple options)

☐ Television
☐ Print (Newspaper, Magazine, etc.)
☐ Company Website
☐ Mobile App
☐ Direct Mail
☐ Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.)